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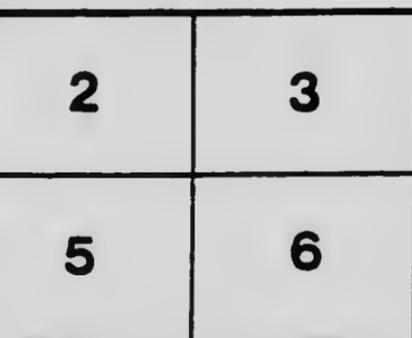
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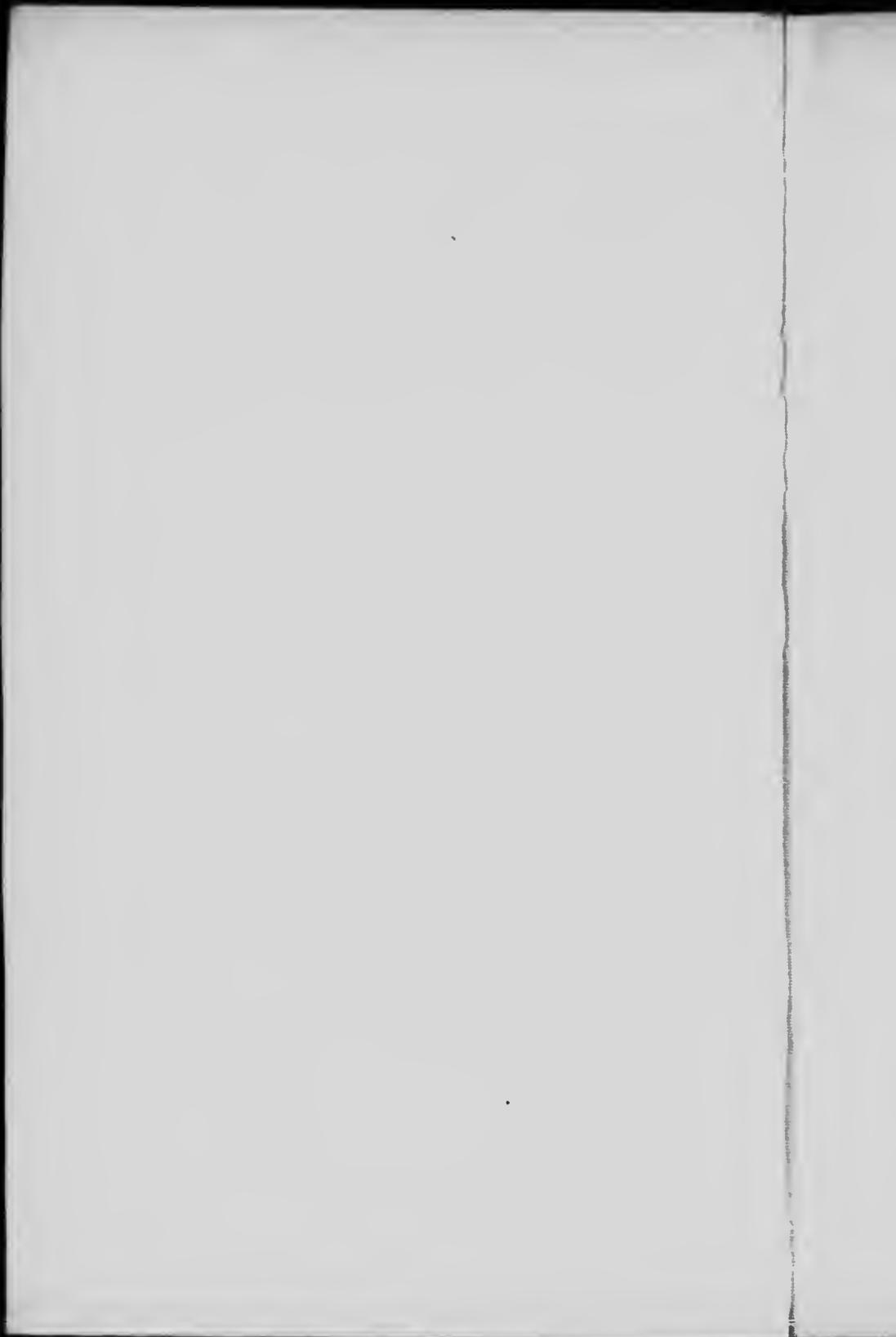
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CHLORIS *of* *the* ISLAND











"SHE CLUTCHED WITH HER FINGERS AMONG THE STONES"

CHLORIS OF
THE ISLAND

A Novel. By H. B.
MARRIOTT WATSON
With Illustrations

TORONTO
LANGTON & HALL
1901

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CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND





CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

CHAPTER I

THE FIGHT IN THE "THREE FEATHERS"

IN the month of May of the year 1805 a chaise was travelling at a great rate across the rude moorland between Feldway and the sea. The two horses were kept at a fast trot, and broke now and then into a canter under the whip of the postilion, so that the carriage rocked and pitched over the stony ground, and the occupants rolled from side to side and jostled each other within the body of the coach. One of these was a young man, most elegantly dressed in the height of the fashion.

"The devil!" said he, as he was thrown against his companion, and he laid his arms about her. "Dorothy, you repent not?" he asked, tenderly. "Tell me, my love, that you are happy. Faith, I would have you saying so all day."

"Yes," she murmured, "I am happy, yet I fear."

"Pooh!" said he. "What should you fear? I am with you, and a match for any half-dozen rogues. Let me tell you this, sweetheart—"

But at this moment, ere he could proceed further

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with his reassurance, the chaise came to a pause, sharply.

"Why, the devil! What are you about, fool?" cried the young man in a fury, and, flinging open the door, he abused the postilion roundly.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the man, humbly enough, "but, knowing you were flying the law, I thought I'd mention that there stands a horseman yonder."

"Gad! so it is!" cried his master, in alarm; "but pooh, one man! D'ye think he has cut us off, Payne? He may have others with him. He stands by the cross-roads. There's his face against the moon, damn him! Well, what do I care? Drive on, and drive over him, rascal. The lady and I must reach the port to-night ere twelve."

So saying, he pulled to the door, and the chaise rattled on at a sharper pace even than before. The young man looked out of the window. "Faith," he said, "this looks like the high toby, Dolly. I will blow a hole in the scoundrel. Damn me, if Sir George shall take me now—not if I have to eat a dozen of his rascals."

He primed his pistol and loosened the sword by his side. "D'ye think I'm not fit for one—or a dozen, Dolly?" he continued, with a perceptible swagger in his voice. "The deuce take me, but I will bring down a brace at one shot. By the Lord! he moves, and is forward to attack us! No doubt he has some fellows behind him. Now's my chance fallen to me. Duck your head, Dolly dear, and I will settle his account."

With these words he threw open the window and laid his pistol across the wood-work. The horseman, who was at rest some twenty paces away on the cross-road, suddenly dug his heels into the nag and came with a cry towards the coach.

FIGHT IN "THREE FEATHERS"

"Stand off, by Heaven! or I will send you to the other place!" shouted the young man.

The horseman reined in quickly, and broke into laughter.

"You hot colt, Jack!" said he. "Put up your toy. I am no fly-by-night, nor yet an officer of the law."

The coach came sharply to a stop at an eager command from the young man, and he leaped forth ere the wheels had ceased to roll.

"Hang me, Roger, but you should have had a bullet in your stomach in another five seconds. What brings you here? You never were closer death. I can't brook to be stopped now. But I'm devilish glad to see you. See, I've done the trick; I've put out the trump. Here she is, pretty girl!"

"Is this Miss Holt?" asked the new-comer.

"Aye, 'tis Dorothy. Come out, sweetheart, and let Mr. Warburton see you. He is my very old friend, as you have heard."

The girl stepped diffidently from the chaise, and the three stood in the rising light of the moon. Warburton made a sweeping courtesy, which she acknowledged as deliberately.

"You are bound for the port, Shirley?" asked Warburton.

"That is so," said Shirley. "We are bowling along for Redmouth, and must fetch there by midnight when the boat sails."

"Whither do you go?" inquired Warburton, after a silence.

Shirley laughed, as though tickled by a sense of his wisdom. "Why, to London!" he answered, "the last place we shall be looked for. I'll be bound Sir George will not suspect London. He will hunt the country

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and go north. He will keep his eye on Gretna Green. My faith, we'll plague him."

"Sir George Everett is a shrewd man," remarked Warburton, and stared at the girl whose face was ill-revealed in that fine thin light. "It is a grave thing to abduct a ward in Chancery," he said, in his slower voice. "Have you considered what you are risking, Miss Holt?"

"Damme, Warburton, I will have none of these croakings," interposed Shirley, angrily. "D'ye suppose she wants to listen to an old raven like you? You shall not prevent her."

"Zounds, man, I wish to prevent no one," said the other, with a laugh. "You need not fly out on me. I am here only to bid you Godspeed. I wish you happiness and Miss Holt too. I intended to catch you."

"You've a good heart, Roger," said his friend, as swiftly veering in his mood. "Hang it, you shall ride along with us, and see us despatched. What's this I see yonder? Why, 'tis a light in a window."

"'Tis a way-side tavern," said Warburton.

"Gad, then, you shall toast Dolly and drink to our luck. Come along! Those fools will not be on our track. I will have you drink to us."

Warburton good-humoredly followed the impetuous fellow, and, leaving his horse in charge of the postilion, entered after the girl and her lover. They came into a cosy little room and sat to a rude table, Shirley ordering port-wine and brandy.

He was a good-looking, very young, and eager fellow of middle height, with dark glancing eyes and a strong complexion. Warburton, on the other hand, who was some seven and twenty years, stood very tall and broader, and was wholly of another cast. He had the brown English hair, and his eyes were indefinite

FIGHT IN "THREE FEATHERS"

between gray and blue, bright and clear as steel. His face was of a particular healthiness and somewhat tenderly shaped, save for the jowl, which was large, harsh, and dominant. The whole aspect of his face was that of strength, even of brutality, yet he carried with him an air of good temper, even to the point of patience. His actions were as deliberate as the gaze which he now fastened upon his friend's companion.

What he looked on was a slim and delicate creature of some nineteen years, neither high nor low in stature, but properly modulated in her figure. It was in her color that she showed so delicate, which was of a soft golden-pink that stole to and fro of her cheeks with her emotions. Her eyes were wide blue, and her tresses, gathered in the pretty ostentatious fashion of that time, were golden brown and crimped. The fine features of her countenance sparkled with light and faded, as an ember glows and cools, in turn. Her looks were infinitely seductive, and changed and wavered, breaking in a score of embarrassments under Warburton's gaze. His eyes left her face slowly, and as if for the first time conscious of their boldness, and strayed leisurely down her body, from the high girdle at her bosom along the yellow silken gown. Then he lifted his glass.

"I drink luck to Miss Holt," said he, in his deep voice.

"Hang you! to me, Roger, also!" said Shirley, impulsively, "you shall not drink to her alone. She is Miss now, but she shall be Mistress to-morrow—stab me, she shall."

"Why, where are your manners, Jack?" laughed Warburton. "D'ye think I was going to couple you with this pretty figure? You may couple yourself, not I. I own to a jealousy against it."

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He laughed loudly and good-naturedly, as though he saw unusual humor in his jest. But Shirley leaped to his feet in a passion of rage, and with an oath.

"What! Would you make eyes at her under my very nose?" he cried, red as a turkey-cock. "I will teach you a lesson in manners. I see now why you pursued me so far, you with your pretences of friendship. But, gad! you are found out, and I will cut out your false heart."

"Peace, silly fool!" said Warburton, sternly. "You are like a pistol at half-cock that flies off anyhow. You insult this lady. She turns color at your insinuations, and if there were time and place, it is I that would teach you a lesson. But, faith! we are a sorry wedding-party. I have given you my toast; I add to it your name, Jack, you fool. Here 'tis; and now I will drink it myself. To your fortune and happiness, and confusion to Miss Dolly's guardian!"

"Bravo!" cried Shirley, with every symptom of his fury fled, and now laughing gayly.

The girl shifted her eyes under Warburton's glance, and the pink flooded her golden white cheeks. There was vanity in that face, thought Warburton, and there was cleverness; but there was timidity also. He drained his glass and set it down.

"This brandy paid no taxes," said he. "'Tis a good omen that you also shall deceive the law."

Shirley swaggered out of the tavern laughing, and presently they were again upon the road. The way now was descending from the high, bare moorland into a long and broken combe, sheltered with the great walls of the hills upon each side, and black and ragged with woods. The trees sought the cover of

FIGHT IN "THREE FEATHERS"

these close valleys from the wildness of the sea winds, and here they grew rankly, full of leaf and blossom, in this rich May weather. The road had narrowed, forming but a track cut through a thicket, and fenced from the bottom below by a hedge of thorn. The sky above was plunged in darkness, as the clouds overran the moon, and at the same time the noise of voices came from behind like a clap on Warburton's ears.

"Jack, they're on you," says he, shouting through the window, and urged on the horses himself with a stroke of his whip.

The chaise increased its speed, rattling and shrieking on its axles, while the postilion shouted and plied his whip; but the sounds drew nearer from the rear, and the padding of horses at a fast gallop was now audible in concert with the human voices. It was evident that the runaways would be overtaken.

"'Tis no use," said Warburton, above the noises. "You have no hope, Jack, to outstrip them."

"I have a pistol, damn 'em!" shouted the other.

"What, you fool!" remonstrated his friend, "you would proceed to that extremity. You will be hanged. Here they come. Sit still, you block-head!"

As he spoke there was the thunder of hoofs upon them, and out of the blackness emerged three horses abreast, their noses to the earth, their feet lashing and pounding in that fierce descent. The moon had broken out of her bondage, and lit a clear space of sky, throwing of a sudden these furious riders into relief. The chaise, which was still running quickly, was pulled sharply to the side by the postilion, in order to avoid the onset; the horses backed in alarm upon the verge of the road, which here was unguarded

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by any fence or hedge. Three figures flashed forth into the brightness and drove upon them.

"By Heaven, what are you doing?" demanded Warburton angrily, and his chestnut, struck in that headlong passage, swerved and stumbled among the horses of the chaise. "The devil take you!" he cried, as with a noise of ringing laughter the riders swept by and plunged forthright into the pitchy darkness of the steeps beyond.

The chestnut reared and flung out his feet, and the chaise backed and toppled, threatening to roll over the edge into the valley below. But Warburton sprang from his seat swiftly among the struggling horses, and, seizing them by the reins, dragged them, partly by force and partly by sounding oaths and cajolery, into the road again. The imminent danger was over, and he came out of the medley of legs, holding his left arm. Shirley had sprang out of the carriage, and now met him.

"What's the matter?" he cried, anxiously.

"A kick from my own nag, the fool!" said Warburton, breathing heavily. "He should know me by this time."

"By God! I could teach these gentry manners, had I the chance," declared Shirley, furiously.

Warburton stared down the road into the darkness, rubbing his forearm. "There was a woman with 'em," he said, musingly.

"The more shame upon her!" said Shirley.

"'Tis the Carmichaels," interposed the postilion, speaking now for the first time.

"And who the deuce may they be?" inquired Warburton.

"They're a considerable family hereabouts," explained the man, "and upon Lynsea."

FIGHT IN "THREE" FEATHERS

Warburton made no answer, but approached the chaise, putting in his head. "I trust you are not incommoded, Miss Holt," said he, politely, "nor too greatly alarmed. 'Twas nothing save some uncivil riders."

"Damme, I thought 'twas Sir George, at last," said Shirley, with a laugh. "Confound those Carmichaels! I am in a sweat to keep my fingers on the trigger. Where are we, Payne?"

"At the bottom of the combe lies Marlock, and 'tis but a walk to t' e sea thence," said the postilion.

"Marlock!" said Miss Dorothy, in surprise, "why, 'tis here Sir George has a house."

"What!" cried Shirley, laughing. "'Twould serve him finely if we set ourselves up there. Hark! I hear the water," he went on, abruptly, "I smell the sea. By Heaven! Dolly, we are within an hour of the harbor, and safety. None can take you thence." He consulted a large gold watch under the moon. "What's o'clock? Why, 'tis early yet, and we shall take some food together ere we move farther. We have eaten nothing these six hours, since we left Feldway. Payne, drive on."

They renewed the descent of the combe, and shortly after the chaise drew up before an inn, from which swung the sign of the "Three Feathers."

The room into which they came next was long and low in the ceiling, with a black oaken wainscot; and two tables were spread there, one at each end with a space of some twelve feet between them. On the threshold of the door, Shirley, who was leading the party, stopped with an ejaculation of disgust.

"What! There are guests here already!" he exclaimed. "Landlord, can you not find us another chamber?"

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The innkeeper, who was at their heels, regretted, with a helpless humility, that this was his only guest-room. "But they will not interfere with you," he added, hastily; "they are gentle-folk, like yourselves."

Impatiently Shirley strode into the room, and the eyes of the two men at the table next the door rose to his and fastened there with undisguised indifference. A woman, who was seated in a deep chair before the fire, did not so much as turn her head.

"Go on, Nick," says the younger of these two men, helping himself to a generous glass of brandy. "What did you when the mare slipped?"

The man addressed still stared at the strangers out of his bold eyes. He was over Warburton's age, as tall, but slighter, and in every other particular in contrast with him. Black was his hair, and stark and black was his aspect, his face of a handsome swarthyness, and the only character in the face that spoke not of foreign blood was the grayness of the eyes.

Shirley and his party seated themselves at the further table, and in no good-humor the young man gave his orders, calling for a flagon of Madeira. By this time, the younger man at the first table had recognized the presence of Miss Holt, and was gazing at her with interest, even with admiration. His mouth dropped open in his unconscious wonder to see her there, and then he looked at his companion with a smile. He cracked a walnut with his fingers, and threw it at the fire with a gesture of disgust.

"Bah! Tremayne," he said; "you've buried them too long."

"Aye, sir," assented the innkeeper, "'tis late for them."

Warburton eyed the pair with curiosity. They were both tall, and the one was as fair as the other

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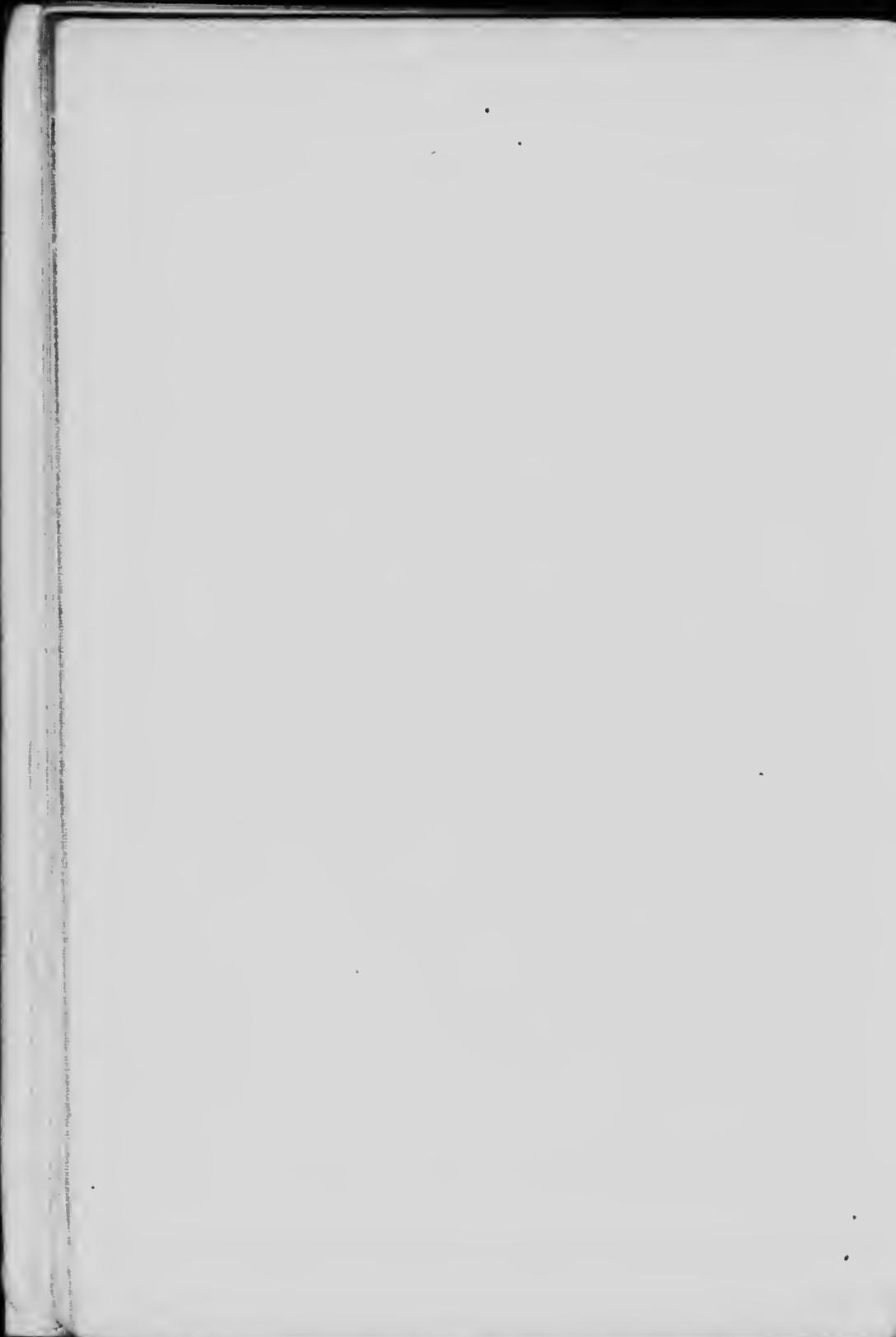
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THE INNKEEPER REGRETTED



FIGHT IN "THREE FEATHERS"

was dark. Both were dressed with taste, and some distinction picked them out. Both faces were at that moment directed upon his table, and he observed with surprise that out of eyes of the same color sprang two very diverse expressions—the one defiant, lowering, the other gay, debonair, and kindly. If these were brothers, as a nameless resemblance seemed to suggest, they were discriminated by a marvellous incongruity.

The two resumed their conversation and their drinking; and presently Shirley and his lady and his friend were engaged upon their supper. Under the influence of the wine and food Shirley recovered, and laughed and talked a good deal. At both tables there was much liquor drunk, but the two strangers were drinking brandy. Presently the younger called out in a louder voice.

"Sis, you'd best sip of a glass," he said, addressing the woman in the chair. "Come, sis, be not foolish. You will be sensible of the cold."

She paid no heed, and he swore a little, laughing, but resumed his talk with Nick. Presently the girl rose from before the fire, and, walking leisurely to the door, went forth, her face undetermined in the low lights of the room. As if some reins were relaxed, of a sudden the two brothers' merriment broke out noisily. They had drunk a great deal of spirit, and showed no signs of abating; and now the effects of these potations came to be manifest, particularly in the younger. The talk swelled so loud that Warburton could scarcely catch what was said at his table, and Shirley, who was constantly dipping his nose in the Madeira, glanced up angrily and scowled. As it chanced, this ugly look was noticed by the younger of the brothers, who jumped quickly to his feet.

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"I trust we do not inconvenience you, sir," said he, with a fine bow.

"You do—damnably," said Warburton, shortly and coolly.

"That I should be unwilling to think, seeing the presence of this lady," pursued the other, easily. "Gad! I am a chatterbox, madam, and I must hear my own voice."

"Get you back; you are drunk!" cried Shirley, furiously; "you insult this lady."

"Leave them be, Philip; we have no time," called out his brother, impatiently.

Philip made another bow. "Gad! you are frank," he said, lightly, but speaking in a somewhat uncertain voice. "I may be drunk, but I know my manners, and better than to charge the offence upon a gentleman in the face of a lady."

Shirley made a movement to rise, but Warburton's strong fingers were upon his arm.

"Peace, you hot-blood," he murmured; "you said yourself they are tipsy."

The stranger walked back to his table, picking his way with a mixture of dignity and diffidence, but his brother uttered an oath under his breath, and rang loudly on the bell for the innkeeper.

"Another bottle, Tremayne," said he, curtly.

"Certainly, sir; certainly, Mr. Carmichael," returned the man, subserviently.

"Did you hear?" cried Shirley, in the act of lifting his glass. "Carmichael was what he said, Warburton. My God! but 'tis they that drove against us. Here, landlord," he called, "what name was it you called just now? Was it Carmichael?"

"Hush, sir; yes, sir," said Tremayne, in a low voice, and casting a glance of fear towards the other table.

FIGHT IN "THREE FEATHERS"

"Damn me, man, d'ye suppose I care for your terrors?" said Shirley, flying out. "I am glad to know 'em—that's all. I have something to settle with 'em."

"If you sit not down, Jack, I will break your neck," said Warburton in his ears. "You should be ashamed of yourself, with Miss Holt here. Contain yourself."

Shirley flung off the arm which detained him. "Hands off! 'Tis the second time you have set me back. I will have it out with these Carmichaels," he said, quite loudly, for he was now inflamed with wine.

At the sound of their own name the Carmichaels looked over, and a curious hard smile moved upon Nicholas Carmichael's face. Warburton was vaguely aware that behind that furtive sneer was latent some strenuous emotion, but the man spoke calmly enough.

"Well, sir, and what want you with the Carmichaels?" he asked.

Shirley rose to his feet. "'Twas you rode us down," he said, angrily, "and I would wish you to know how I think of you."

"Ah, 'twas you, then, in the runaway chaise, was it?" said Nicholas Carmichael. "Hang me if you should not have been spared if we had known you carried so handsome a lady." He spoke with a laugh, and his manner was even more insolent than his words. Drink had bred in him a black passion. Philip Carmichael sat across his chair, in his long and fashionable coat, giggling foolishly.

Holding Shirley back by force, Warburton spoke with command. "Sir, you were best to withdraw. You are not fit for a lady's presence."

Nicholas Carmichael turned his gaze on him, and deliberately lifted his glass.

"I will propose you a pretty toast," he said, "the prettiest toast in England, by God! and there sh-

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stands." He got no further, for Shirley, drawing his sword sprang out upon him.

"You base-born lout!" he cried, and his weapon clashed upon Nicholas Carmichael's.

"Hold, gentlemen—hold!" cried Warburton, in a loud voice. "There is a lady here. Cease, if you have any shame."

"By God! Nick, that's true," exclaimed Philip Carmichael, suddenly sobering. "Put up, Nick, you tiger."

But these interpositions were of no avail, for both men had drunk deeply, and each was swollen with anger. At the first onset Shirley's point, carrying all before its vehemence, struck into the flesh of his opponent's arm. Carmichael drew back, his dark face colored, and, his eyes shining like gray wolves', he hurled himself in his passion upon the youth. His sword flew over the guard like a streak of fire; Shirley dodged and wavered, threw up his hands feebly, and then he fell heavily against the table, and came to the floor.

"My God! what's this?" cried Philip Carmichael, now wholly sobered.

Warburton sprang forward. "You have killed him," said he, furiously. "A foul deed to take a lad's life!"

The room was wellnigh in darkness, save for the fire; for the candles had been overturned in that fatal fall. Nicholas Carmichael made no reply, and his features were working still, unrecovered from the frenzy. The innkeeper was shaking like a wand and crying out. Warburton stooped over the body, and fingered at the breast. As he did so the door opened and the girl who had previously gone out returned, carrying a light aboye her head.

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"YOU HAVE KILLED HIM!" CRIED WARBURTON



FIGHT IN "THREE FEATHERS"

"What is this?" she asked. "Why are you in darkness?" and her eyes paused on the group and the body.

Warburton's attention momentarily strayed to the new voice, and he beheld, rising out of the pale light of the candle and set upon a tall figure, a full white face, about which gleamed red-brown hair. The fire-light flashed upon a dull green habit, and a three-cornered velvet hat crowned the head. These impressions he realized afterwards; at the moment he took in nothing save a new presence.

"What is this?" she repeated, wondering.

Nicholas Carmichael turned. "'Tis nothing, Chloris," said he, harshly, "save that some one has been speaking ill of the Carmichaels and has been punished."

She stared, and uttered a little trivial laugh of scorn.

"They will learn wisdom in time," she said.

"Get away, Nick, get away," said Philip Carmichael, earnestly; "I tell you, you are best away."

He was looking at Warburton anxiously, who still bent over his friend.

When Roger Warburton looked up he met the eyes of Dorothy Holt. She stared at him, white, stricken, and bewildered, and she choked on a sob.

"He is dead for sure," he said, quietly, and turning suddenly ran out of the door, through which the Carmichaels had already departed.

When he reached the street the Carmichaels were already on horseback, and the innkeeper was crying out to them that they had ruined him, and that this affray would be terrible news in the country-side.

"'Tis all right, old cock," laughed Philip Carmichael out of the darkness, for he seemed to have resumed

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his equable gayety. "You know where we are to be found."

"Ah, 'tis a grave matter, Mr. Philip," cried the frightened landlord.

"Well, well, set it down in the bill, Tremayne," called Philip, indifferently, as he launched his horse down the street.

Warburton had sprung into the roadway with a stretch of his long legs, and came now among the Carmichaels. They turned and struck away from the inn, and, in a great gust of indignation and fury, he grasped wildly at the reins of the horse nearest him.

"Come down! Come down!" he shouted. His hands, fumbling in the night, came upon a woman's skirt, and as the horse plunged forward, simultaneously the knob of a heavy whip struck on his face. He let go the bridle and stood in the road gazing into the blackness, through which the Carmichaels were galloping for the sea, as though his physical sight might follow after them and reach them, while goutts of blood, unnoticed, trickled from his cheek-bone and distained his cravat. Then he turned on his heel and walked back to the "Three Feathers."





CHAPTER II

ROGER WARBURTON REMAINS

WARBURTON re-entered the inn with a smile upon his face, and stood in the hall, deliberately patting the red abrasion on his cheek with a kerchief. Here the innkeeper, Tremayne, met him, displaying many marks of agitation.

"This is a terrible business—a terrible business, sir," he kept repeating.

Warburton eyed him coldly, seeing in him a mere craven, who shrinks from risks and responsibilities.

"You must prepare a room for the lady," he cried, shortly; "she will have to stay here to-night."

"Was she—was the gentleman married, sir?" asked Tremayne.

"No, the lady was to have been his wife. 'Twas a runaway match," said Warburton, turning from him.

"Good God—to think of that! I would have given worlds that it shouldn't ha' happened!" cried the miserable innkeeper.

Warburton opened the door of the long room, which was still in darkness. The wood fire spluttered and danced and shot long streams of light across the wainscot. Shirley's body lay stretched as he had left it, a patch of yellow flame illuminating one side of the face. Beside him crouched

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

Dorothy Holt, gazing with stupefaction at the dead. He addressed her :

"Come, Miss Holt; I have ordered a room for you. You had better drink a stiff glass and rest."

"What would you do with me?" she asked, in a little whisper, as though she were surrendering herself like a child.

"You shall go home to-morrow. 'Tis too late to-night," he returned. "I will convey word to Sir George."

She burst out sobbing so that her body was shaken.

"Come, come," said he, very kindly, "let me lift you. You are no weight, madam. There is a room elsewhere which you must seek."

He led her, half supporting her with his arm, through the doorway, and presently conducted her to her chamber. On the threshold he paused.

"Will you send me back to-morrow?" she whispered, clinging to him.

"Perish me if I don't!" he said, heartily. "I'll have you at home to dine comfortably, I promise you."

"What will you do?" she asked, with an hysterical sob.

"I am needed here, Miss Holt," he replied, after a perceptible silence; "yet I will see you home, child," he added, soothingly.

"Don't leave me!" she pleaded, with an outburst. Her slender arms were about his shoulders.

"You have my word, child," said Warburton, imperturbably.

She leaned her brown-gold head towards him, and cried fiercely in his ear, "Kill them—kill them for me!"

"Faith, my dear," said Warburton, good-humoredly, "I am going to do that for myself."

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ROGER WARBURTON REMAINS

He put her gently through the door, as if he had more important matters which called him, and descended to Tremayne.

"The time is near eleven o'clock," said he. "I would be awake at six to-morrow, and the lady too. Also give word to the postilion of what we intend."

Yet these designs were not carried out according to his purpose, for scarce an hour was passed when there was a deep commotion at the door, and a knocking followed. Warburton looked from his nightcap, and then, throwing aside the curtains, peered into the night. What he saw there drove him quickly from the room, and he came into the hall as a short, brisk, elderly man entered.

"Sir George Everett," said he, bowing solemnly.

"Mr. Warburton," said the older man. "I know your family. I expected not to see you here, nor that you would meddle in this business."

"I assure you, sir, I have meddled in nothing," returned Warburton, coolly, "but I desire you to take a seat with me in this room."

Sir George Everett waved his hand impatiently. "I do not know how you stand, sir," he said. "but I shall know shortly." And then to the innkeeper, "Have you a lady here that arrived with a young gentleman, it may be some two hours back?"

Tremayne hesitated and stammered.

"Come, quick!" said the baronet, impatiently.

"'Tis true, your honor, that two such entered here some time back," replied the poor innkeeper, "but indeed I am not responsible."

"Bah!" said Sir George, interrupting; "I care not what you are responsible for. Let the lady know that I am here."

"Sir George," said Warburton again, "I repeat, I

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desire you will take a seat with me to discuss certain matters."

"Be damned if I do," said Everett, irritably. "I have had pother enough in this pursuit as it is, to lend myself to more talk."

"Well, sir," said Warburton, curtly, "then you will have it. Your ward's name is sadly tarnished by this flight."

"She may be picked out in spots for what I care," said Sir George, pettishly.

"Nay, you do yourself injustice," remonstrated Warburton. "But she must go back with you."

"My good sir, I am come for that," said Sir George, impatiently, "and to clap her friend in jail."

"That you may not do," said the other. Everett regarded him questioningly. "He has been struck dead. He has had judgment delivered on him already," said Warburton, ironically. "He has escaped you, sir."

"Why, the devil! what is this?" demanded Everett.

"'Twas a bloody fight with some black bravo," said Warburton. "He lies yonder, and your ward is asleep in her room."

Sir George Everett lifted his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders. "'Tis a bad piece of work, as I hear it from you," he said, "yet I may confess it mightily conveniences me."

"They would be at sea otherwise," explained Warburton.

"Pish!" said Sir George, with a sneer. "The jade does not know her mind, and she hath no heart." He commanded the innkeeper to fetch her down; and in response to Warburton's objections: "I tell you Mr. Warburton, I will tarry no more here. The sooner the better, though we ride all night."

ROGER WARBURTON REMAINS

Yet when his ward was brought he addressed her not unkindly.

"I catch you on a fool's errand, miss," he said. "Go, prepare for a return forthwith;" and he added, with some sensible consideration in his voice: "You are to go home, child. This is no place for you, and you have no right here."

"To-morrow," said she, exhibiting some spirit for the first time—"to-morrow I should have had a right."

"All flesh is grass," said he, with a grin. "You are in bondage again, for all your trickery. Yet I would not be hard. Dorothy, you must obey me."

Her eyes dwelt on Warburton's face, as though making an appeal to him, and he came forward.

"Can I be of service, sir? Use my offices if you have any need of them. You are welcome."

"No," said Sir George; "you will stay here, I suppose. You are kind, but I can manage a wayward girl. We shall lie somewhere upon the road. I will not have her here. You are right to stay. I thank God it has ended comfortably," with which queer sentiment he bowed to Warburton and withdrew into a private room until Miss Holt should be ready.

When these were gone, Warburton himself went up to bed, considering with himself not a little. He had resolved to stay until the coroner had sat upon the body; and, indeed, if he had desired to depart, he was not allowed for this reason. He was a witness of the death, and he asked no better than to give his evidence on that cruel deed. Warburton was but slowly moved, but once in motion he stopped with difficulty. At present his deliberate wits were engaged in turning over the incidents of that tragic night, and neither he nor any other could determine

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as yet how they would affect him. He had a notion, but there was nothing of it expressed upon his smooth face the next morning, when after a wholesome breakfast he began to put questions to Tremayne. He wanted to know who were these Carmichaels, and by what right they bullied the country-side.

"They're a proud race, sir," was the innkeeper's answer; "they've always held themselves high, and other folk, too. They live on Lynsea."

"Lynsea," said Warburton. "Where is Lynsea?"

The innkeeper pointed out of the window. "If you mount that bluff of sand, sir, you will look out upon the Gut to the northwest, and the Gut is what separates Lynsea from the mainland."

"Ah, 'tis an island," mused Warburton, "and these gentry own it?"

"It was the property of the Tantellions," explained Tremayne, "and Sir Stephen Carmichael bought it from the heir-at-law some fifteen years ago."

"They give themselves airs for such new-comers," said Warburton.

"I would not say any harm of them," said the landlord, hurriedly; "they are very good customers to me. But Mr. Nicholas has a quick temper; no doubt of that."

The phrase tickled Warburton's sense of humor agreeably, and he laughed aloud.

"Why, yes, he has a very quick temper, as you say," he said. "A quick temper has Mr. Nick. We might say that there is something of the devil behind him, and spurs him on. He is an ugly enemy."

"That is so, sir," ventured the innkeeper, respectfully, but with a clandestine look at his interrogator. "No man hereabouts would like to cross Mr. Nicho-

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las. Not that he is not generous enough, but he has a sore temper."

"Aye," says Warburton, in a dry, meditative voice.

"'Tis a nasty cut you have, sir," pursued Tremayne, as if not unwilling to turn the conversation. "Was it a fall? I have a simple for an open bruise on the bone."

"Thank ye, I will not use your simple, landlord," answered Warburton, slowly. "No, 'twas no fall. I think it was a blunder. I dare say I shall carry that mark with me to the grave. In truth, I would not lose it immediately. It has some close associations which I do not wish to dispel. I will keep it open, that I may be reminded. I should be loath to miss that scar for some time to come."

Tremayne, who was a very brisk man with sharp eyes, but a sad coward, studied his averted face attentively and with anxiety. He showed uneasiness in his guest's presence and reluctance under his examination, which facts had been noted by Warburton, whose observation was quick enough, if his brain worked leisurely. It was plain that the man went in fear of these Carmichaels, but for what reason Warburton could not guess.

The inquest was appointed for four o'clock that afternoon, and towards three Warburton was informed that Sir Stephen Carmichael begged the honor of an interview. He descended and found a tall and venerable man, who accosted him with great ceremony. He had the gray eyes of his family, and also its high stature, and he was about sixty years of age, though his long hair was as white as at four-score.

"Mr. Warburton," he began, with much grace, and leaning heavily on a stick, "I am come about this mis-

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erable affair. I deplore it. That unhappy youth—” he made a vague and indifferent gesture towards the room in which lay the body of Jack Shirley, waiting the coroner. “I lament the trivial origin of modern duels; but I am not a young man.”

“The stroke,” said Warburton, coolly, “was an evil one. For an older man so to thrust a young lad, and with such vice, was assassination. Moreover, the affray was provoked.”

“Ah!” cried Sir Stephen, with a sigh. “You agitate me. My poor Nick! He has a damnable temper. We are of Irish blood, Mr. Warburton, and it breaks out. I am too old, but Nick is young, and he has a devil.”

“Aye,” said Warburton, nodding, “that he has.”

Those keen eyes were bent on him, as though they could strike into the private chambers of his heart and pry out what he thought. But Warburton stood like a wall of stone, impervious and impenetrable, and after a pause the baronet turned away with an impatient adjustment of his fingers, as though he would dismiss forever this stolid, stupid Englishman. But what he said was dictated by a delicate courtesy and characterized by fine manners.

“I trust I have not disturbed or offended you in this call, Mr. Warburton,” he said, “but I could not resist the impulse to tell you of my profound regret. I know nothing which has upset me so these many years.”

“You are very good,” said Warburton, civilly, bowing.

There was nothing said after this, and Sir Stephen left, walking with difficulty by the aid of his stick. When he had gone the younger man returned to his occupation, and read quietly until the coroner was announced. Then he made his way into the long

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room, where the body of the unfortunate boy was exposed upon a table.

Coroner's inquests in those times, and particularly in such outlying and private corners, were by no means ordered with the formality and precision of later days. Yet there was about this a fine show of decorum and all the austerity which characterizes English justice. Nicholas Carmichael gave his evidence, which was supported by his brother ; and the poltroon, Tremayne, corroborated both. The story, as they made it out, differed in some particulars from that which Warburton had to tell. According to these three witnesses, the dead man had conducted himself truculently, and so provoked a quarrel. He had defamed the Carmichaels, and challenged Nicholas to the duel. This had its rise in an unfortunate accident which occurred earlier in the evening. The Carmichaels had been riding hard down the combe, and unluckily collided with some horses in the darkness. These, as was subsequently discovered, were conveying Mr. Shirley's chaise. Mr. Shirley had chosen to take affront at this accident, and had used it to provoke Mr. Carmichael. The version was exceedingly plausible; nay, Warburton himself could not contradict it in any detail. Yet the spirit of that fatal conflict was not rendered in such a mild translation into language. Nicholas Carmichael's ferocious eyes still sparkled in Warburton's fancy, and he regarded the man as he gave his evidence with amazement and curiosity. He was dull and dark of face now, a sombre, even a sullen, temper cloaked him ; he was not alive nor quick with anything, but handsome still and black and graceful, as Warburton had learned all the Carmichaels were graceful.

The innkeeper it was who most excited Warburton's

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anger. He was visibly affected with fears, and shrank from questions. Yet he bore out the brothers' statements, acknowledging that Mr. Shirley was the first to attack, but declared that he saw nothing of the fight, since he had rushed from the room in search of some one who might interfere between the combatants. It was not long ere Warburton could see in what direction the result would lie. He displayed no animosity in his own evidence, for he had already decided that restitution for this crime must be exacted outside the courts of justice. The law, or at least those rude jurors, living under the terror of the Carmichaels, would look upon it benevolently. He admitted, therefore, that his friend had been excited by wine, while adding that he had been very justly aggrieved by the accident in the combe. "What I want to say is this," he said, deliberately, looking at Nicholas Carmichael, "that this man wilfully and viciously killed a boy of twenty-one, who had little skill and no head, and who was already half-tipsy with wine."

He was called to order sharply by the coroner, who admonished him that what he saw and not what he thought was required of him.

"I have said what I have to say," said he, simply, and stood down.

By assiduous study and the most diligent consultation those free jurors came to a conclusion, which, however negligent of official form, must have admirably suited the Carmichaels. They found that "the deceased was dead, having been killed in a duel with Nicholas Carmichael, Esq., of Lynsea, who had endeavored to avert the same, and upon whom no responsibility rested."

"In fact, sirs," summed up the coroner, upon the

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top of this deliverance, "Mr. Carmichael's honor remains unstained."

Warburton listened without a word, but his nostrils distended and his cheeks flushed slightly. He met Nicholas Carmichael's sneering countenance, and stared on him full for some minutes. Then he left the room and put on his hat, walking down to the village, which was a scattered collection of houses gathered to the sea. Here some time later Philip Carmichael met him, and gave him an impudent and friendly nod.

"Gad! this is a devilish nasty business, Mr. Warburton," said he, easily—"a devilish nasty business."

"I suppose it is," answered Warburton, eying him. The younger Carmichael stared as though he were puzzled by this exhibition of indifference.

"He was a hot-head, was Shirley. So, too, is Nick. Nick has the deuce of a temper."

"So I have heard," said Warburton. "So Sir Stephen Carmichael was good enough to explain."

Philip's face looked something perplexed. "You have seen my father?" said he. "Well, I'm devilish sorry for it all—so I am."

Warburton nodded and passed on. Sir Stephen also had expressed his sorrow for the tragedy, but that was before the verdict. Warburton was shrewd enough to guess with what intention the old gentleman had called upon him. Yet there could be no furtive design in Philip Carmichael's chatter. Perhaps the family was not wholly bad.

When he regained the "Three Feathers" the inn-keeper attended him, seeming now more cheerful and sprightly. Warburton's disgust did not sound in his words as he congratulated the man on being clear of a trouble.

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"I go to-morrow with the body. The boy must lie with his fathers," said he.

"Ah, sir, I was intending to ask you that," said Tremayne, briskly. "Now these sad events are over, you will be thinking of going. I'm sure I'm sorry to lose your custom, sir, seeing that there is little enough—"

"Nay, worry not yourself, my good fellow," interrupted Warburton, "I shall return."

"Return!" echoed the innkeeper, in a voice which rang at once with amazement and disquiet.

"Aye, sir, return," pursued Warburton. "The truth is, Tremayne, I like your wine, and I have a particular zest for your brandy."

"To be sure, sir," said the fellow, whose face had fallen cold and flabby.

"He wants me gone," said Warburton to himself, as he strolled out of the inn and made his way towards the dunes. "Why the devil does he want me gone?"

He walked in a meditative state for an hour or more, taking the strong winds that blew off the water. But just as he was purposing to return he saw below him on the sandy beach of a little cove a man's figure busy with a boat. He watched it idly until the skiff was launched, when of a sudden (he knew not how) a familiar character brought the man's identity to his mind. It was Tremayne.

Warburton watched him laying his course for the island of Lynsea, which rose a mile away to the north-west, and he frowned.

"Now why the devil," he communed with himself—"why the devil runs this sorry fellow to acquaint the Carmichaels that I am not leaving Lynsea? I seem to be of some interest to them," said Roger Warburton, "and, by God! so shall I prove."



CHAPTER III

THE HOME OF THE CARMICHAELS

THE village of Marlock was stretched upon a little flat which stood open to the sea, between two ranges of high cliffs. This gap in those defences of the sea-wall was, indeed, the bottom of thecombe where it ran out upon the sea-shore, spreading fan-like in the act. Behind, thecombe was clothed with wood and farmlands to the edge of the moorland above, but the space in which the village had grown was barren of all save grass and sand and some small bushes. The salt winds from the open sea swept it and drove back the vegetation into the friendly valleys; dwarf shrubs covered in the hollows of the tussock-covered dunes; and creeping plants lived furtively and bred among the ranker grasses. Upon any day save that of high summer the place wore a desolate and dreary look, with its white houses gleaming in the eye of the sun, the gray expanse of flat, and the yellow dunes that rolled upward into the heights of the north. It was a cold spot, too, when the sea-winds broke into the gap and fled shrieking up thecombe, as though escaping from fiercer spirits out at sea, or, maybe, pursuing something in their turn, even into the warm bosom of the land. Upon the southern side of the village the cliffs rose swiftly to a great height, run-

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ning hurriedly out into the water half a mile or more, and terminating in a promontory against which the huge waves threshed all day and all night in the tempestuous seasons. Indeed, this cape was always at war; the broken water about it was never silent, but grumbled and tossed even in the gentlest weather; and the wind snapped in and out of the caves that the tides had worn through many ages. On the stillest day these winds were screaming, no doubt because of reverberations among the many hollows of the rocks; and though the water was at peace the tide could be heard sucking in the holes below, and drawing off and returning with a moaning, seething sound that was not comfortable to the ears. Yet this great wall served to protect Marlock upon one side from the fiercer gales. Out of the village itself you might descend upon a reach of fore-shore which ran northward for a mile, under the great dunes. These were precipitous towards the sea, and covered with the coarse grasses that inhabit such soil. But as the land ran to the north it sloped outward into the ocean, which fell away, and fell away before the advancing dunes until a second point concluded the movement, and stood up like its southern fellow to the assaults and investments of the elements. Marlock thus lay in an arc of the land, and huddled from these rough friends. The space between the village and the northern point was filled in with a great waste of dunes, mounting and descending, so that a man might wander there for days uncertain of his way. It was from these melancholy hills that the traveller's eye might fare still farther north and strike the island of Lynsea.

The island lay beyond the point, and scarcely half a mile from it. It was embayed in a curve of the coast, and, thus protected, faced a piece of mainland

HOME OF THE CARMICHAELS

that was bright and smiling with fields and hedges, and rich in trees. The country here, in fact, had quite another appearance, for the harsh winds did not reach these farms, which were as safe as in the refuges of a valley. The habitations of this tract of coast were sparse. It forbade and lowered on the cultivator. There was work indeed for fishermen when the weather served, and even now on this May afternoon a little fleet of boats stood at anchor off Marlock, their noses pointing from the land, and straining at the cables before a brisk southerly wind.

Warburton had returned from his mission, the dead body of the unfortunate Shirley reposed in the vault in which his fathers lay, and now, that melancholy office concluded, his friend stood upon the bleak dunes and kept his gaze towards the island of the Carmichaels. Here the assassin (as Warburton held him to be) had sought refuge, and here he must be sought and brought to bay. The sun was shining warmly and the water was dancing merrily. It was of a deep blue, the color of lapis lazuli, but close to the shore the breakers showed their white heads, and a low thunder rose in the air. Warburton turned and walked in a leisurely fashion, yet as one whose mind is determined, towards the village. The dispirited prospect of the bare dunes did not affect him; he was not one that moved to the impressions of his environment. His sensibilities were dull, as dull as his senses were sharp; nay, rather, they were grave and slow, and found no passage to his soul. The bland sea invited him, its treacherous flaws hardly discernible upon the immeasurable face of moving water. He descended into Marlock and passed to a group of fishermen who stood chatting by their boats.

"Which of you has a boat for hire?" he asked.

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A sudden silence fell upon them, and none hastened to reply.

"Come," said Warburton. "I see a flotilla yonder, kicking at anchor. What's amiss with a job?"

"Where might you be going, sir?" inquired one of the fishermen.

"Oh, deuce take you! I have a mind for a sail. I offer good money," returned Warburton, impatiently.

The man cocked his eye at the sky. "It will be blowing later," he observed, reluctantly.

"Come, come; that's my business!" exclaimed Warburton, with asperity. "What is your price? Shall we say a guinea?"

The sum appeared to overcome the laziness or the distrust exhibited by this fellow, for he began to push his dinghey into the water. The others of the group exchanged glances, but were silent.

Warburton was in no way irritated by these signals between them. He stepped indifferently into the dinghey, and was pulled out into the open water where the fleet rode, rolling in the swell. The fisherman jumped aboard his boat, and set about hoisting the sail. This took him some time, and meantime Warburton sat in the stern watching. He had not missed the point of the reluctance with which his request had been granted. The anchor was already up and hung at the prow.

"There's your coat in there," said he, nodding to the dinghey, and the man, obeying the suggestion, stepped over the side into the smaller boat. Warburton threw off the painter and pushed up the tiller. The boom flew over and the canvas cracked.

"Hi!" called the fisherman in alarm.

"No, my man; I want not your help," said Warburton. "I will manage the boat myself."

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“WHAT’S AMISS WITH A JOB?”



HOME OF THE CARMICHAELS

The space separating them widened swiftly. The man cried out between anger and amazement.

"Oh, go to the devil!" said Warburton, imperturbably, and threw up the tiller. The freshening breeze struck her; she began to hum like a top; and, heeling over, flew out across the bar.

He laid the course towards the northern point round the corner of which the island of Lynsea was hidden. It was now three in the afternoon, and there were several hours before the fall of darkness. Warburton considered that he had time enough to carry out what he was come for. The wind took him abeam, and, whistling merrily, drove the cutter through the huge rollers of open sea at a great pace. Little time had passed when he turned the point at a safe distance, and began to run down upon Lynsea under a stiff breeze which was now full abaft. Warburton was not an expert sailor; to confess the truth, he knew very little about the sea, and what he did now he was accomplishing mainly by guess-work. The rudiments of navigation were vaguely appreciated. His mind floated about among them, very much as his boat now bobbed upon the tide that made for Lynsea. Yet, when once his mind was set, nothing might turn this obstinate fellow. He had resolved to reach the island and make some investigations, and he would not go back until this object was effected. Yet, save to a sailor's eye, perhaps, there was nothing in the prospect of the sea to alarm. The sun grew warmer, the water brighter, and the cutter dipped her beak and galloped faster than ever. It was a pleasure to live in such a race, and the blood sprang more rapidly in Warburton's body—all his arteries pulsed with satisfaction. In a very little time he had slipped down upon the southwestern margin of the island. This was very rugged to the eyes, bearing

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

the brunt, as it did, of the rough storms that blew along the coast. The cliffs were fully one hundred feet in height, and descended sheer to the sea. They were naked, jagged, and misshapen—most stern and inhospitable guardians of that remote domain. As the wind bore Warburton closer, his attention was caught by the figure of a woman upon the summit. He made this out to be a woman, even at that distance, by the skirts that were driven and blown with the wind. He fancied, too, that she held one arm to her hat, or it might be that she screened her eyes from the sinking sun in her seaward gaze. The current was spinning about the outlying rocks, drawing faster and faster under the wind; and even upon Warburton's unskilled mind it dawned at last that he was piloting among many perils. He spied beneath the green water a great stretch of blackness, which he guessed to mark a reef, yet, with the wind and tide, it was now too late to avoid the path. He kept the tiller firm, and she jumped gallantly to the danger, sheering into the open water with a little grinding sound below. At the same time he heard a voice crying above him, as it were out of heaven, and looking up, regardless of his rudder, he saw the woman upon the cliff, now nearer, still shaken and torn with the wrangling winds. He could not hear her words—they were lost in the roar—but guessed that she meant to warn him.

"What is the use?" said he, grumbling. "The devil is in this boat. She has taken the bit. They may warn me, but what I want is that some one shall catch and stop her."

In the nick of time he put the tiller round, and upon the verge of the great rocks at the foot of the cliff, where the waves were breaking white in a tire-

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less, pitiless assault, the cutter stopped, turned, and with a kick slid past the point, and, backing into the new course, danced away for the Gut.

From here to the shoreward side the island stretched for about two miles, and it was upon this northern quarter that the house stood. The coast, though broken as upon the other faces, was low in parts and thickly wooded, and upon the slopes behind Warburton could see sheep and cattle. The tide still ran, for by an odd criss-cross of currents, due to winds and the configuration of the land, all the body of that water seemed to be posting hard for the channel which separated Lynsea from the mainland. In the Gut itself, as Warburton found afterwards, was a great race of seas, tumbling and heaving perpetually, with that quick current ever drawing towards the rocks. For this reason the narrow road to the mainland was rarely used; and there was another and a better reason which will appear later.

Warburton steered the cutter under the land, and, spying a pebbly beach in a little cove that opened pleasantly, he put her nose ashore. In a few minutes she had grounded, and he leaped out. Making the boat fast, he walked inland through a great grove of waving tamarisks. The path was twisted and closely beset, so that he could not see to what he was advancing; and the house burst upon his view with the suddenness of a surprise as he turned a bend in the narrow path. It was by no means large, but had an ancient look, and stood upon a rise at the back of an ample garden, much sheltered by trees. Warburton's gaze went to it upward, across a reach of pleasaunce pied with flower-beds. It peeped among the trees, its eyes twinkled on a broad green lawn, and down avenues of pine and oak and fir, interspersed with patch-

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es of border, in which the spring flowers were rising. A white portico fronted the garden, opening upon a white stone terrace, from which descended white stone steps.

Warburton had barely made these few observations when he was startled by a voice in his ear.

"You are welcome, Mr. Warburton," it said; "if you had only said you were to arrive, we would have met you."

It was Sir Stephen Carmichael that stood at his elbow, very bland and venerable, supporting himself upon his stout stick.

"I was not aware, sir, that I was trespassing in your garden till this moment," replied Warburton. "I offer you my apologies. It was inadvertent."

Sir Stephen waved his hand politely. "We are charmed to see you. No doubt you are come on business with us, or you would not be here."

"I doubt, sir, if there is any business between us that may be settled out of hand," said Warburton, slowly.

"You are the better judge, it may be," returned Sir Stephen, equably, "but I suppose you have come to try. This is a very private island, though we Carmichaels are delighted to exhibit it to any friend. If it is so we may claim you, Mr. Warburton, I shall be honored." He looked keenly into the young man's face, but read nothing there save bluntness and obstinacy.

"No, I may not lay claim to any such privilege," was Warburton's answer, deliberate and cold. "I have no doubt that there are many who enjoy your friendship, sir. As for me, I am a passing stranger."

Sir Stephen elevated his eyebrows. "Ah, you must be here on business then. I had a notion it was so. Well, if you will pardon me, we will sit

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"SIR STEPHEN STOOD AT HIS ELBOW"



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here to discuss it, as the house is far and I walk with difficulty."

"I do not think, sir, that there is any matter for conversation between us," said Warburton, slowly.

"Come, come!" said Sir Stephen, impatiently; "or why are you here, a stranger, as you say?"

"Being a stranger, I have blundered, sir," said Warburton. "It is possible to excuse in the stranger what may not be pardoned in another."

Sir Stephen looked thoughtfully towards the arbor which lay under the ilex near by. Some reluctance was visible in his expression.

"If that is so, sir, we will make no more ado about it," he said, presently, with a return of his blandness, "and if you will honor me so far, as a stranger, as to drink a glass of madeira with me, why, I am content you should go, and I will show you on your way, so that you shall not fall into this accident again."

As he spoke he entered the arbor painfully, and, after a pause, Warburton followed. Sir Stephen sat down, and, drawing from a little cupboard a bottle and glass, set them on the table.

"I thank you, sir, but I have no palate for wine," said Warburton, politely. "'Tis a pity, as I have no doubt the liquor is wonderful."

The men's eyes encountered across the table.

"Ah," said Sir Stephen, after a silence, "and my gout troubles me. 'Tis a pity we are both debarred. We might have pledged each other, and drunk to peace and happiness."

The bottle remained unopened, and Warburton rose, bowing. "I thank you, sir, for your consideration," said he; "and now I will be gone."

"Aye, and I will see you on your way. I would

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not have this unfortunate mishap befall you again," replied Sir Stephen. "These coasts are rough."

"You describe them well, sir," agreed Warburton.

The two men descended to the water's edge through the tamarisks, the elder with difficulty. Warburton courteously waited for him, and on several occasions held back the branches that protruded across the path. He pushed off his boat and jumped in; and without a word more the two men exchanged bows and took off their hats. Sir Stephen watched the cutter till she disappeared round the elbow of the cove; after which he mounted slowly to the house, with a deep shadow upon his face.

Warburton stood out to clear the next point, as also to fill his sails. He was still under the lee of the island, and made but little way by reason of the strong flow beneath him. But as he crept out his quick eyes discovered something that moved upon the face of the cliff above the point he was endeavoring to pass. The verdure of the hills came down to the sea-margin, and trees and shrubs overhung the water, aspersed here and there by the scattered spray. But where this nose of land abutted the scarp was torn and rugged; no vegetation clung there, and the detritus of crumbling earth and rock descended in a precipitous shoot towards the sea. Upon the top of this slide was the figure at which he was gazing. Suddenly and with an exclamation he threw over the tiller and brought the beak of his craft into the wind; for he had perceived that the form was that of a woman, and that she stood in peril. The cutter moved slowly, but by degrees came under the point, where a deep pool of water lapped among the rocks. High above him he could see the woman, her back

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towards him, and now sunk upon her hands and knees in an effort to prevent herself from slithering downward with the loose shingle. Her attempt to crawl upward brought a commotion among the debris; the shingle poured down in a shower, and she slipped with it. It was evident that unless she could secure a firm footing she must inevitably go down with that treacherous shoot upon the rocks and into the wells between them. Warburton did not hesitate. He threw the painter about a point of rock, and, springing upon the ledge nearest him, began to climb the ascent. The slope lay at an angle of sixty degrees or more, but he guessed that one ascending from below would have a better chance of progress on the rolling shingle than one under whose feet the mass could gather impulse from above. He called to the woman to lie still, for she was now cast prone upon her face, clutching with her fingers among the stones, and step by step he won his way forward. The shingle slipped from under him, but he moved on, crawling on hands and knees, and making use of the few tufts of grass that had sought harborage here and there. The ascent took him ten minutes, but he accomplished it, and came up to the quiet figure. He laid a hand upon her arm.

"Come, leave yourself to me; look down and follow where I go," he said.

She obeyed him without words, and with deliberation. Warburton began his return. He had chosen his path carefully in the places where the soil was firmest, and he guided her. Ten minutes later they stood upon the ledge of rock against which the cutter rose and fell with a grinding sound. She was a slim, tall girl, and he recognized her now on the instant. It was Miss Carmichael. Unwittingly he put

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his hand to the scar upon his cheek ; but she broke out warmly, her face aglow.

"You have saved me, sir," she said. "I owe you my life."

"Nay," said he ; "but I have saved you, maybe, some bruises."

"I was a fool to venture," she cried, impatiently ; "they have warned me against these shoots. I should have been dead but for you."

Warburton gazed at her. She wore a straight gown of green, girdled tight under the bosom and flowing loosely, and her face and her eyes glowed under her emotion. He could almost see beneath the light skirt the long fulness of her limbs, shadowily denoted. She appeared more handsome even than he had thought.

"I will put you ashore," he said, and would have helped her into his boat.

She leaped from the rock lightly, and watched him while he cast off.

"Was it not you I saw from the cliffs?" she asked, suddenly.

"It was you who waved to me, madam?" he inquired. "I owe you my thanks for that, though I understood nothing."

"You are a stranger to these shores," she said. "Have you been to see my father?"

"No, I have been to see no one," he answered, briefly.

He understood that she had not identified him as one of those present in the inn.

"Pray, pardon me if I am too curious," she replied, with the grace of her family. "But few strangers visit here. It is a rude coast."

He put her ashore in a little sheltered wood, and

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stepped back into his boat, staring at her fully, yet not uncivilly. Her red-brown hair gleamed in a ray of the setting sun, and over her fine eyes the long brown lashes curled. A gust of cool air, snapping round the point, set her garments fluttering. He surveyed her with critical eyes. Again the suspicion of those long lines was yielded through the flowing gown. He turned his head aside, a queer little smile upon his face. He saw in her a very beautiful woman. She was twenty years or so. He had no doubt but they should meet again.

"If you are a stranger to these coasts," she said, with some hesitation, as though she were reluctant to reflect upon his seamanship, "you will find it wisest to stand out from the cliffs. The wind blows strongly."

He thanked her and bowed low, shoving off. She watched him moving slowly, until he fetched the point, even as her father had watched him from the cove.





CHAPTER IV

THE SKITTLES AND THE CAVERN

WHEN Warburton ploughed round the snout of the island and faced southward he had reason to admit the prudence of Miss Carmichael's warning. The sea was like a huge and moving moor, black with the impending darkness of the sky, and barren of all save that blackness. The wind roared into a gale, so that he dared not point direct for the beach at Marlock. He hauled the sheet taut; the canvas stood stiff as a board, for she was drawn almost into the eye of the wind, and racing even so she swooped out to sea. It was Warburton's desire to run up as far as he might and tack in under the cape below Marlock. But now he learned for the first time with what violence the gales blow upon that coast. The southwest flung him out into the centre of a heaving ocean, and tossed him like a pot on the water; the waves rose so high as to take the wind out of his sails, which flapped and fell, and then settled again into line with a ripping, cracking sound. The cutter plunged, shipping the green water at every forward motion; and about and above him gathered an increasing darkness.

When he rose upon the crest of the water he could discern far off and dwindling still the faint lights of Marlock. He could not doubt that he was being



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driven off the land, and that any chance he might have had of getting back would be destroyed by the fall of night. Warburton was no sailor, but he was a man of determination, and sheer force of purpose carried him through that struggle. Despair only settled upon him finally when, the direction of the hurricane veering, he was hurried precipitately into the wilderness of mingled night and water without so much as a star to guide him. Yet even now he was resolved to keep his little craft afloat. He could not see a yard before him, nor was it possible to discriminate between the cutter and the environing darkness. His hands, which held the tiller, were frozen with the cold, yet still he clung to that office as to the last hope. To add to his plight, a cold rain began to mingle with the wind, and cut like knives.

So far as he could judge he must have been three hours tossing helplessly upon the sea when he thought he saw glimmering ahead a dim yellow light, such as might stream from a cottage window. That friendly beacon struck new life into his heart; his numbed fingers pressed the tiller with fresh spirit, and presently he had drawn close enough to make out whence the light issued. It came from the lanthorn swung in the head of a small schooner, faintly visible. She was close-reefed, and was evidently riding out the storm; yet even as Warburton made this discovery, and with a sigh of satisfaction prepared to bring the boat nearer, the schooner lurched forward, the lanthorn shone upon a spreading pack of canvas, and she began to walk away at a brisk pace.

This unexpected withdrawal astonished Warburton, but he was now aware that the worst of the gale was past, and guessed that those upon the schooner had decided to make sail. It was clear, too, that she was

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making for some port hard by, or she would not have been riding in the offing. He shouted aloud, but the wind was still crying, and his voice did not carry. As long as he could keep her in sight, however, he cared not; and, moreover, he reflected that it would be no easy matter to board the vessel in that tumbling water. With cheerful alacrity he bent to his work, which was now only to follow at the best speed possible. The cutter was running with the wind abeam, so that he concluded the gale was beating from the south. She made way very rapidly, and only once or twice did he lose sight of his leader. After an interval of time he was surprised by a great flare ahead, appearing to rise from the schooner. It flamed forth and died down, and presently a glare on the horizon answered it. Warburton understood these lights for signals, and supposed that they must be usual upon such wild nights—hospitable lamps to draw the adventurer home. The light on the horizon flashed again, and this time as though it hung high in heaven; so that he wondered if they were approaching the cape outside Marlock. The rain had now ceased, and the wrack overhead lightened perceptibly, displaying white gleams of a moon among the ragged edges. She swam among the clouds like a silver fish, now floating on the shallows and now sinking in deep gulfs. In these revisitations of light Warburton could at length make out his position. Before him, a black hull upon the water, the little schooner, lying to the wind, was heeling for gray and ghostly cliffs that rose out of the waste half a mile beyond. Warburton gazed in amazement, for she seemed to be careering upon destruction. In a little they were close enough to reveal more detail, and to Warburton's surprise he recognized the cliffs as those that formed the deadly

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point upon the island of Lynsea—the Skittles, as they were called in those parts.

Warburton altered his course in dismay. Were the men mad? The schooner flew towards her ruin, as it seemed to him, with increased speed. He recalled with a shudder the reefs among which he had picked his way at so great a hazard that afternoon; and now there was the added peril of darkness and a stronger wind. But of a sudden there came back to him the thought of those signals, and what they must mean. These men were neither blind nor set on their own death. As this idea flashed in his brain he made his course afresh, steering in the track of the schooner. What all this signified he knew not, but this he knew, that where the schooner went he also could go, and that he was resolved to do so.

His small craft lay hidden under the wake of the larger vessel, and in the black trough of the sea. Yet he might not have escaped the notice of the sailors had not all been so taken up with the approach to the rocks. But now the moon failed, and night resumed her kingdom, so that he could detach little or nothing from the surrounding blackness. Again a light streamed out from the cliffs, and this time he could see that the schooner was close in, lying under the great rocks, and tossing, as it appeared, among a thousand deaths. The beacon burned brightly and lit the water with ensanguined flames, yet Warburton came on still unnoticed. The shadows of the Skittles hid him; he moved among them furtively, without sound or signal. The hull of the pretty vessel with her long spars flickered against the iron wall. He saw her slide swiftly forward as though she would crack like an egg upon the rocks; she was visible thus for one instant—and then she was gone.

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Warburton strained his eyes through the obscurity. She was rapt out of sight as though she were some wraith of a vessel that melted into the air. But of that he was not afraid. Some guess of what had happened inspired him. Quickly he shot the cutter round the nearest point, and she too rolled among the terrible Skittles. The light above went out.

"Damme!" said Warburton, under his breath, "but they will have me drown yet. I forgot their cursed light. The Lord deliver me from these ugly knives!"

The cutter was swinging along at a rate of six or seven knots; she was dancing with a light heart among sharp and jagged edges. At any moment she might strike and founder, for at that pace she would break like glass. Warburton raised his voice and cursed angrily, calling imprecations upon the inhospitable crew that had so deserted him.

"I will let her go," said he to himself, "if I am split in two for it."

Suddenly he was aware that his sails were flapping; he had come out of the wind. All was black about him. He put forth a hand and searched vainly in empty space.

"Now where the deuce am I got to?" said he. The water was sucking and lapping with a great noise, which notified to him the neighborhood of rocks. But it rose with low and muffled reverberations, and that set a new idea going in him. He poled his boat cautiously in the direction from which he thought the sounds issued, and presently his fingers touched a wall. As they did so a faint light sprang up about him. It was the distant hospitality of a bright glow far away, but it showed him where he was. As he had imagined, he was in the mouth of a great cave.

Warburton had already framed a theory which would

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well explain this nocturnal entry of the schooner, and at this sudden confirmation of his suspicions he was not greatly surprised. That these were smugglers he doubted not, which was one reason why he had followed them. Smugglers could hardly be using the shelter of Lynsea without the knowledge of the Carmichaels. In any case, he was anxious to get to the bottom of the mystery, and counted himself lucky to have fallen in with the schooner. This then promised to be merely the opening of his adventure. The suffused glow revealed to him a pathway cut in the rocks which led deeper into the cavern. He could see nothing of the schooner, but supposed that she lay farther in, and was possibly hidden by a turn in that huge catacomb. But he waited not either to make more particular observations or to come to a decision upon his actions. He made the boat fast to a projecting needle of rock, and, creeping upon the ledge, made towards the interior of the cavern as swiftly as he might.

Cautiously he turned an angle, yet for all that caution was fetched abruptly into the light of torches and into the presence of a bustling, noisy scene. The cavern was the theatre of a miniature dock. In the foreground, beached upon a shore of sand and shells, lay the schooner, while under the conflagration of torches a score of men were plying to and fro, rolling barrels and shouting orders to one another. No doubt they deemed themselves secure in these intestines of the cliff; there could be no unwelcome visitor upon Lynsea to overhear these rumblings from the bowels of the earth; and were any such walking upon the heights above or putting past the Skittles, the roar of the water would effectually drown all other noises. Warburton was aware that a low com-

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motion filled the vault; it was like some monstrous shell that hummed with the wind and tide. The sounds of the sea crept into all the corners and moaned dolorously. It was as though a hundred thousand voices whispered together out of the dark recesses. A central light flared near the schooner, and lit up the face and figure of one whom Warburton knew well. It was Nicholas Carmichael, his black hair tossing loosely, his strong features marked with excitement and red with light. Roger Warburton smiled in his heart, for he had come upon his revenge very easily. He had not looked for so easy a triumph. Here was the connection between the Carmichaels and that illicit trade established beyond question. He saw now what was the nature of their influence in the neighborhood. Mostly the men wore the look of foreigners, and some had golden rings in their ears, but some he guessed as natives of Marlock. All these observations he made swiftly, and ere he turned his attention to his own safety. It was in the nick of time that he did so; for Carmichael had walked quickly and unexpectedly towards the ledge of rock, in company with two others. One of these was speaking glibly in broken English, and using his hands and eyes expressively to eke out his narrow vocabulary.

"But I assure you, sar, there was no boat," says this fellow. "You are mistaken. Indeed, but there could be none." "I tell you," said Nicholas Carmichael, impatiently, "there was a boat, and we took it for yours. I thought you had laid it up below. She came upon your tail; damme! right under your counter."

The foreigner shrugged his shoulders. He was a polite man, but obstinate. "If monsieur thought so, monsieur might look and see. Monsieur was wel-

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come to his illusions." With an exclamation of disgust Carmichael leaped upon the rude ledge and came striding towards Warburton. The significance of this conversation had not escaped the latter. He knew now that his discovery was certain, that it might be deferred but could not be prevented in the end. He had no time to retreat and gain his cutter, and even if he were able to do so without attracting attention, he had no hope to put off in that darkness among unknown rocks and without the aid of any wind. The darkness betrayed him a thousand times worse than the light. Yet he took advantage of that darkness now, as the only plan upon which his wits could hit. He stooped, and, with Nicholas Carmichael scarce twenty feet from him, he dipped soundlessly into the water and slid into the black shadow that the schooner cast. For the second time this nefarious boat gave him succor, but how long his respite would last he did not bother his mind with wondering. It was impossible for him to venture from this refuge, for the torches glared upon the water upon each side of the dark hulk, and to move in either direction would be to risk detection, which was almost certain. So he lay under the water and waited, trusting to the turn of chance. Presently after he could espy Nicholas Carmichael running swiftly along the ledge, and he knew that the cutter had been discovered. Carmichael leaped to the beach, and turned furiously on the foreigner to whom he had been speaking.

"You fool, Ditrán," said he, "the boat is there; we have a spy among us."

The words suddenly started the Frenchman into life. He threw down the cigar he was smoking with an oath, and himself disappeared along the ledge by

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which Carmichael had returned. In a short time there was a hubbub among the smugglers, all work ceased, and they began to explore the recesses of the cave, lighting fresh torches, and scattering in the search. The peril was now imminent over Warburton, but he kept his place quietly. One thing the new illumination of the cavern showed him. This was a mammoth burrow, into which he had penetrated—a warren of holes which distributed from the central hold. Several of the smugglers applied their torches to the entrances of these passages, and peered into them; but Nicholas Carmichael shouted to them presently.

"Cease, you fools!" he said. "He cannot have reached the beach, since he followed the schooner, and we were all here to have seen him. He must be harboring on the water-side."

Warburton heard the words, and knew that sentence had been pronounced on him. He turned over, looking right and left to see if he could discern any way of flight; but there only remained the entrance to the cavern, up which the flood of the tide rolled heavily. Yet he would be captured if he stayed where he was. He took a breath into his chest and dived under, striking out across the line of light towards the mouth. How long he was below he could not guess, but his head was splitting ere he came to the surface, and found to his chagrin that the tide had deflected him and that he had risen in the fiercest arc of that illumination. A shout announced that he was seen, and a bullet smacked upon the water by him. Also, several of the smugglers plunged into the sea towards him. He cast a quick glance round. He was within ten yards of the beach, and two evil-looking fellows stood abreast of him, one of whom

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was pointing a pistol, while the other held a long knife. A few strokes brought him to the shore, and he sprang out like a dripping sea-god. The pistol flashed, and missed; and ere the two men knew what he purposed, or could move to avoid it, he had cracked the two ugly foreign heads together, and had rushed on, leaving two insensible bodies on the ground.

He ran for the back of the cavern, where he had seen the openings, and after him sped half that lawless crew. The first hole he reached was less than the height of a man, but when he had entered, the room increased, and he ran forward in total darkness over a rough, rocky way, and, as it seemed to him, downwards. There were several turnings in his flight; he went at random, as in a maze, and heard roaring through the alleys the sound of his own feet and those of his pursuers. Presently, above this dull sound of echoes, he was aware of something different that saluted his ears. Even in that headlong flight his cool wits had not deserted him. It struck on his senses with a menace; he came to an abrupt pause. He knew it for the washing of the rollers against rocks. At the same time a cold wind smote his face; he put out an arm, and the spray of the open sea besprinkled him.

As he recognized this new danger, and it came to him that he stood somewhere in a lip of the cliffs, with the ocean growling and leaping from below, he caught the noise of feet, approaching cautiously. There was silence next, and Warburton huddled down into the rock, straining his ears to listen. After a short space of time he heard a laugh, a flint flashed, and the light of a torch was flung out upon the waters.

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"Gone over, by God!" said Nicholas Carmichael; and as the words left his lips he saw his enemy.

A smile played about his mouth, which was passionate and cruel, and he raised his pistol. Warburton held his already in his hand, but he knew that the priming was damp from his immersion. He flung the weapon hard at Carmichael's face, but he, dodging his head with an angry laugh, brought his pistol to the sight, pointing at Warburton's heart.

"I pay a double debt, Mr. Warburton," he said, and pulled at the trigger.

At that moment there was a short cry, and out of the darkness of the interior cavity stepped Miss Carmichael.

"You shall not, Nick," she cried, angrily. "You are blood-guilty. I will not have you so stain yourself."

"Get you gone, Chloris!" said Nicholas, savagely. "Interfere not!"

Dropping the torch she held she sprang at his arm. "Nay, I will be obeyed! I command obedience!" she cried, fiercely. "Do you think you have some poor serving-maid to reckon with? Put that down, you madman!"

Nicholas uttered an oath. "Silly jade!" he cried. "Hands off! I will have my way on this spy!"

"You shall do naught," she said, and seized his wrist in both her hands.

Her brother shook himself, to wrench his arm free, so that she swung and swayed like a tiger-lily in the breeze, backward and forward towards the verge of the hungry sea. Nicholas Carmichael's flambeau wildly rocked in the struggle. Warburton suddenly stepped forward, and setting his strong grasp upon Carmichael, pulled him backward so that he lay at his full length

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CHLORIS SEIZED HER BROTHER'S WRIST WITH BOTH HANDS



THE SKITTLES AND THE CAVERN

upon the ground. Gently he detached the girl from her fast and angry grip.

"Let him be, madam," said he. "I am sufficiently in your debt."

He bound together securely the hands of the writhing Carmichael, and, picking up the torch which had fallen, dispassionately surveyed his prostrate enemy.

"Mr. Carmichael, I grudge not your attempt upon my life. It is not the first time I have been 'twixt the devil and the deep sea. Madam, I thank you. You have saved me. We are quits."

"Quits!" she echoed, looking on him with astonishment, her bosom rising and falling with her heavy breath.

"Aye," said he. "That is how I regard it."

"I measure things in no such broker's way," she burst out. "Yet you were better gone. There is a passage hence through to where your boat lies. Hasten, or there will be others upon you."

Nicholas Carmichael lay glaring alternately upon his sister and Warburton. His passion appeared too great to find vent, yet he spoke then in a hoarse voice:

"You shall repent this, Chloris. Know you not that this man is a spy? He is come to betray us."

"'Tis not true," she answered, hotly. "This gentleman saved my life on the shoot to-day. He is here by an accident."

"He is Warburton, by God!" cried Nicholas, rolling impotently in his bonds.

"What!" she called out, struck aghast by dismay. "Are you he that was in the inn? You are our enemy?"

"I am claimed so by Mr. Carmichael," said Warburton, with a sneer.

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

He turned with a bow to pass into the opening which Miss Carmichael had indicated to his sharp eyes, but she sprang towards him, a new expression shining in her face. 'It was alive now with an unreasoning passion.

"No, stay; you shall not go! You are a spy upon our doings!" she said. "That, then, is why you were upon the island this afternoon. 'Tis that brings you here now. 'Tis treachery you harbor in your heart. My God! I am too soft. Nick, stop him! He shall not go forth and betray you!"

In her passion and excitement she advanced towards Warburton, whom this quick outbreak had amazed. But, shrugging his shoulders, he stepped into the passage without answer, and descended quickly towards the mouth of the cavern. When he was gone the girl ran to her brother and slashed with a knife at the knots that held him at his wrists and ankles.

"After him, Nick!" she cried. "He shall not escape you! I will not have your neck in the rope for him!"

Nicholas Carmichael needed no instigation; he flung himself into the opening, and flew down the passage. When he reached the great cavern he flung a stream of light from his torch across the water, and there, at scarce twelve yards' distance, was Warburton clumsily poling out his boat. Nicholas shouted, and the cavern rang with hollow sounds; the alarm brought some from the interior to his side; and seizing from one a brace of pistols, he began to pepper the retreating cutter. A splutter of fire broke out also from the smugglers who had reached him.

"He must not escape, damn him!" cried Nicholas. "Put out your long-boat, Ditran. The devil may be split in the Skittles, yet we must not take a risk. He holds all our lives and liberties."

THE SKITTLES AND THE CAVERN

As he spoke, the cutter turned a point in the rocks and disappeared from view. Nicholas started about to carry out his own orders, and found Chloris by his side, panting, disordered, her gaze fixed wildly upon the vacant space of tumbling water from which Warburton had vanished.





CHAPTER V

WARBURTON GETS A WARNING

THE dawn was changing the face of heaven, and a dim light crawled over the waters, revealing the huge rocks which formed the entrance to the cavern. Warburton brought the cutter through these gates, and she began to bob among the ragged points of the Skittles. There was a moment of anxiety as he was spreading sail, for she fell off and on helplessly among those hidden reefs. But presently she got her wind and started away. The light was clear enough now for him to see the outline of the island. The tide ran under him, and he was past the point in a very brief time, making for the open sea. But short as was the interval he could spy, in looking back, the shadow of a second boat riding among the Skittles. He was being pursued, and he knew that every moment the light would spread, and the chances of his escape would diminish. His capture depended upon the speed of the boats, and, more than all, upon seamanship. Warburton was well aware of this. The long-boat stood out after him, and it was plain that he was seen. He could perceive now that the distance between them had lessened, and he could count the three black figures in the stern. It took him very few minutes to decide that he must be caught if he continued in this



WARBURTON GETS A WARNING

course; that nothing could save him, and that he would have to fight upon a crazy boat, and fight without weapons against three armed men. Instantly he put about the cutter, and, veering swiftly, she turned her nose towards the coast once more. If he must fight he would fight on land rather than upon that rough, unfriendly element that had so betrayed him.

The tide and the wind were making round the northern coast-line of Lynsea, and, as in the afternoon, the cutter flew sharply along. The long-boat also changed her course and darted after her prey, but Warburton kept his hands firmly on the tiller and his gaze steadfastly ahead, peering into the brightening sea. There was no more than a hundred yards between the boats, and this space was slowly decreasing. The tide grew under the cutter, and she spurted as if aware of the danger. He was now opposite the cove in which the Carmichaels' house lay, and he could see the dark trees faintly visible in the mirk. Yet he dared not run in there; the island was too hostile; that would be to venture into a den of wild beasts. The plan that he had conceived was more daring, and yet more prudent, as it seemed; he had resolved to run for the mainland by the eastern channel.

This intention soon became clear to his pursuers, and they made new exertions in order to come up with him. But though they were constantly drawing closer, the gap filled so gradually as to make it evident that Warburton would get round into the channel first. And presently the cutter began to leap; the water drew faster; with all the strength of those secret currents she was galloping for the Gut. Warburton could not have turned back now if he had desired to do so. He could but pilot his craft. She swung into the Gut with a seething noise, as of an

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

angry meeting of two foes. The waves splashed aboard, drenching him. He was buffeted about. Suddenly the whole of that water seemed peopled and alive. Its body was torn by different currents and variable flaws, so that it was broken and ran all ways. The cutter knew not on which course to lie, but tossed like a shell and took the seas at each jump. She rolled and thumped, and the tiller kicked itself from Warburton's hand. In a flash the boat plunged broadside on to that raging water; and to Warburton's eyes she was but preparing for a last great dive into the depths, when as unexpectedly a gust struck her and she righted, dripping from every inch of canvas. He scrambled for the tiller, seized it, and endeavored to set her towards the shore. But there was no order in her movements, and the rudder had no authority over her. She sprawled like a drunkard, reeling and falling and picking herself up, and then flew about on a new course, only to carry out the same tactics there. The devil was in her. She thrashed towards the shores of Lynsea, but as Warburton made up his mind to run her aground there at any hazard, away went her sprit, and, nosing the spray, she spurted for the mainland in a flurry. The seas caught her, shook and racked her; she shuddered in their fierce embrace; and down from the pinnacles of the island swooped a gust of storm and blew her upon her side. She lay whining and groaning between the buffets of wind and sea. A log might not live in such water. She staggered forward on a new tack, half full of green water, and to those that watched her from the long-boat she stood in the eye of the rising sun. Half a dozen deep lurches seemed to threaten her fate. Those in the long-boat by the point outside the Gut saw a tall figure standing in

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WARBURTON GETS A WARNING

the stern of the cutter and reaching towards the sail. She took the bit in her teeth and leaped on paces under the wind; then she came down with a smack upon the bubbling surface, rolled like a dolphin, and disappeared from the vision in the hollow of the waves. The pursuers in the long-boat waited breathlessly; they knew better than to adventure the Gut. When the cutter reappeared she was floating, her keel to the growing lights of the sky; she tossed weakly—she had given up the unequal conflict.

"By God!" said Nicholas Carmichael, "the Gut has him. We are saved the trouble"; and without any further words he put the long-boat round again.

When the cutter rolled over and under, Warburton, who had seen that the struggle was become hopeless, flung himself as far towards the shore as he might. He struck the crest of a rising wave and was carried forward on its advance. For a time he was beaten about in the maelstrom, merely keeping himself afloat, and in no wise resisting the flow of the sea. This conduct undoubtedly proved his salvation, for he was accidentally taken in the tow of a current and went spinning for the shore; whereas if he had struggled for himself he would have lost this chance. Indeed, so rapidly was he driven from the scene of his shipwreck, that five minutes had not elapsed ere he was flung savagely upon the sands, even as though the elements were weary of him and kicked him aside with one last vicious blow. He put out his arms, clutching at the sand to resist the plucking of the backward wash, and when it passed he crawled out of the reach of the water.

Here he sat for some time, motionless, but slowly regaining wind in his body; and then he rose and began to go along the shore. He saw at a glance where he

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

was; for this was the beach of a little empty valley of marsh and stream, separated from Marlock by the great dunes. Towards these dunes, which stood black against the rising sun, he now made his way. Yet he had got no farther than a dozen strides when he suffered a queer sensation in his balance. He knew not if he were falling, or, if so, in which direction. The beach moved up to meet him, rocking faintly. He passed his hand across his eyes, wondering how he had become suddenly giddy. Then he looked down. The flat sands stretched before him to the dunes, reddish gray, moist and vacant. Swiftly he fell forward upon his stomach, wrenching with all the force of his strong muscles to draw his feet free. He was upon the edge of a quicksand.

This discovery was made in the nick of time; another step would have carried him into the running slimes of the bog, in which he would have been engulfed instantly. As he lay there he could see the liquid mass quiver and shift, as though its evil mouth watered at the prospect of its victim. Slowly his legs came loose and drew out with a sucking sound; the quicksand groaned after its escaping prey, like a mandrake that shrieks in the grass. He had sunk into that horrible jelly in his struggles, but, lying lengthwise, it might not gape wide enough to swallow him. He crept back into safety, and did not rise to his feet until he felt the sand beneath him, hard and dry. Then he surveyed his position. A little stream dribbled down to the sea close by. He resolved to move upward by this, and strike across the hills when he reached the firm land.

There were four miles of wandering ere he reached Marlock. He had had nothing to eat or drink for fifteen hours; he was wet and sore; his muscles ached

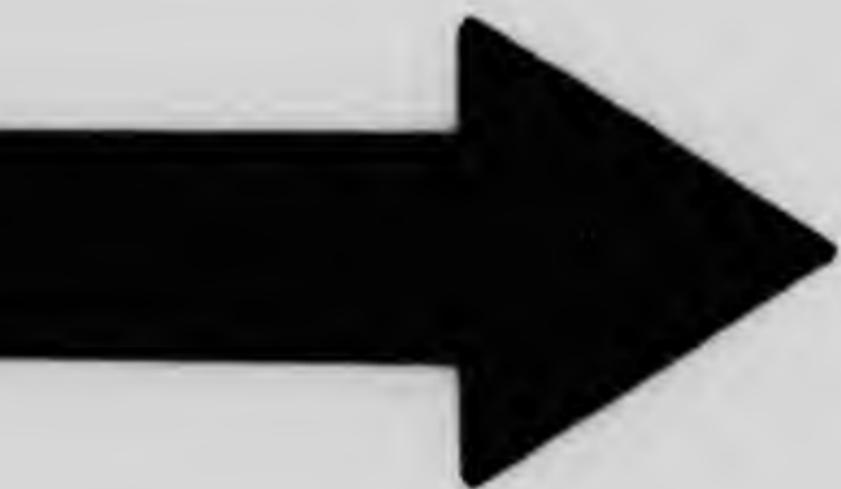
WARBURTON GETS A WARNING

in arms and legs. He went slowly, picking his way on the seaward side lest he should lose himself among the hollows. The morning sun was high in the east and burned brightly; it struck and glittered on the bastions of the island. The Gut roared in the foreground of the picture. Ere this scene vanished finally behind an elbow of the hills, Warburton stood and regarded it thoughtfully. He was thinking of the Carmichaels in his patient and obstinate mind.

It was not until late in the afternoon that he awoke in his room in the "Three Feathers." The sun was striking through the diamond panes that looked towards the sea; and by these tiny windows he saw two horsemen riding from the shore. He recognized them even at that distance, and hastily finishing his toilet he descended and came out into the open space before the inn. Immediately upon that Nicholas Carmichael and his brother dashed round the bend, with the noses of their horses pointed for the combe. Warburton stood, drawn straight and tall and strong, in the very centre of the scene; and of a sudden the elder Carmichael started and his horse swerved. He looked upon Warburton, glaring and amazed, and reined in. Apparently he would have swung from his saddle, but his brother laid a hand on his arm, pleading with him. Warburton watched the altercation, and presently the elder seemed to assent reluctantly. He shook his reins, and the two cantered past the inn, Warburton still watching them impassively, till they vanished in the wood about the combe.

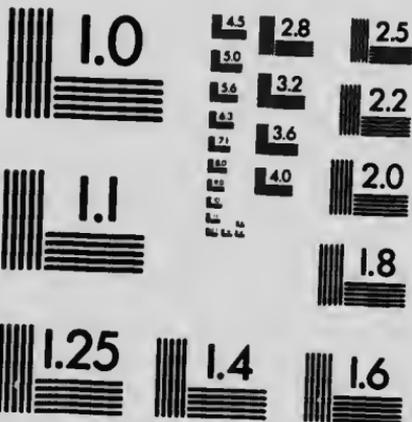
Warburton guessed that he had been accounted dead, and that his reappearance had been the cause of Nicholas Carmichael's fury. It was clear, too, that this black marauder had been dissuaded from a public and personal assault, but how long would Warburton





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CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

be free and secure? He did not inquire. Yet it was with no surprise that an hour later he heard the inn-keeper knocking on his door with the news that Mr. Philip Carmichael desired to see him.

The younger Carmichael greeted him in a friendly fashion. He was dressed very fastidiously, and wore a spruce air, as of a young buck who was used to ogle pretty women.

"This is a devilish awkward business, Mr. Warburton," said he—"devilish awkward. You have made a mess of it—a devil of a mess."

"Why," said Warburton, "I had supposed that I came off very well, seeing the odds against me! I assume 'tis to my attempted assassination that you refer, sir."

"Damme! you use rough words, Mr. Warburton!" replied Philip. "You play the spy and must look for the spy's fate. You should have spirit enough to stand the risks, sir, like a brave man. Gad! I run my risks without whining."

"I have not whined, sir, to my knowledge," returned Warburton. "I was merely endeavoring to discover the reason why I am honored by this visit. One of your name, of course, is always welcome; still—perhaps you would explain."

"Hang your wit!" said Philip, bluntly. "We know where we lie, both of us, sir. I can tell you, Mr. Warburton, that you are in a dangerous position. You walk upon a plank, sir."

"'Tis to threaten me you are come, then?" inquired Warburton, raising his eyebrows.

Philip laughed. "I see no need to quarrel over terms," he said, shrugging his shoulders gracefully. "The fact is that you know too much, Mr. Warburton, and there are those who will not endure that. You are dangerous."

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WARBURTON GETS A WARNING

"It appears, sir, that we are both dangerous," said Warburton.

Philip eyed him. "Is it your intention to be so?" he asked, presently.

Warburton gave him back his survey with even more equanimity.

"And if it were so?" he asked, in his turn.

Philip Carmichael stared at him. "Do you not know that such a confession would seal your ruin, sir?" he said. "You have seen the country here, and guess how it is carried on, and where its interest lies. I think you can form a guess, too, at what you hazard. This is not London, Mr. Warburton, and the King's writ is very lightly regarded here. You could have us hanged. Yes, but ere that could happen, damme! where would you lie? You have to deal with men who do not hesitate, sir; who live by steel and fire, and shrink not from these. But, faith! I threaten nothing. I but point out where these wicked fellows may break forth. I am here on another errand, which is to enlist your sympathy."

"In what object, Mr. Carmichael?" inquired Warburton, civilly.

"Why, sir, you have seen too much, and we would have you forget. I would ask your word, sir, between gentlemen, that you will go home and keep your tongue. What you have witnessed and suppose shall be considered no affair of yours."

"You ask me to promise oblivion, but 'tis my misfortune to have a good memory," said Warburton.

"Zounds! let your memory act how it will! 'Tis your voice I would control," said Carmichael, amiably. "You have taken offence, no doubt, at your pursuit; yet others have taken offence at you. I know not how you came to be wandering among the Skittles."

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

"Poor, storm-tossed mariners must go somewhere," said Warburton, politely. "Whither better than to the hospitable shores of Lynsea?"

Philip Carmichael paid no heed to this ironical answer. "I am asking you as a favor, Mr. Warburton," he said, "will you not pledge me your honor to be silent? You are no spy of the law."

"I doubt," said Warburton, slowly, "if you know exactly what I am."

"No, I'm damned if I do!" said Philip, frankly; "but I know what you will be if you are not wise and take a piece of friendly advice."

"Why, you threaten and cajole me in different breaths," said Warburton, smiling.

"I want you out of this," said Philip, shortly, and turning looked towards the sea in an unusual silence.

"Sir," said Warburton, after a pause, "I am indebted for your frankness and your courtesy. You have addressed me with plain arguments which I will not pretend to answer. I am a simple man, and I confess that I am not aware why this interest should be taken in me. I had thought to move about in Marlock like any stranger, but it seems I am sought out and good advice is pressed upon me. I am indebted to your family, sir. But this air suits me, and I like the liquor of this inn. I doubt not it comes from a good cellar."

Philip Carmichael turned sharply about—a frown upon his handsome face.

"I will tell you this, sir," said he, angrily, "that, since you find the place so promising, you are like to stay here."

"Nothing would serve me better, sir," said Warburton, imperturbably. "I will stay while I will."

Philip Carmichael examined his companion carefully and with some wonder.

WARBURTON GETS A WARNING

"Do you think, Mr. Warburton, that you are quite aware of your position?" he asked, at length. "You fancy you can give information and avenge your treatment of yesterday. You conceive that you have the bridle on us. Well, you are wrong—damnably wrong. You can do nothing. I advise you for your good, and you reply only with sneers. Curse me if I waste my temper on you! I am done with you. But you are a marked man. Your life is not your own, but belongs to others, who will reap it when they choose. And in that harvest, by God! sir, you shall lament this most obstinate madness."

"I wish you a good-afternoon, Mr. Carmichael," said Warburton, as the young man thrust on his hat, and, swinging his whip impatiently, strode towards the door.

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CHAPTER VI

WARBURTON STRIKES A BARGAIN WITH HIMSELF

A LETTER came to Warburton the next day in a hand he did not recognize; and he was oddly surprised when he discovered that the writer was Miss Holt. She wrote from her guardian's house, asking if "those wicked wretches had had justice done on them?" but her chief point, it appeared, was to give the news that Sir George would shortly visit his house by Marlock, the lady accompanying him. "I shall revisit that scene, which is so terrible," she declared, "upon which I have wept such tears, and which has broken my courage. I pray I may have grace to bear so sharp a trial."

Warburton took the intelligence with impatience. "Why the deuce does she write me this?" he asked himself. "She should know better than to clog my actions. If she be here, interfering, she will betray us both. Sir George shall keep his home, or at least the girl shall." Forthwith he sat down and penned a letter to Sir George, in which he urged him not to carry Miss Holt forward with him to the sea, "for," said he, "'tis compassionate to suffer time to eclipse these memories. She has passed through such an ordeal in these parts that she will shrink to face them again; and 'tis wiser in yourself, sir, not to sear the wounds that are already new and terrible."



WARBURTON STRIKES A BARGAIN

He comforted himself that this appeal would prevent the disaster, and, addressing the letter to Sir George Everett, handed it to Tremayne for instant despatch.

He had now to decide what course he must take in regard to his discovery on the island. He guessed very well that if he opened his mouth he would run a very great risk; and, indeed, he was not at all sure if these lawless people would wait for him to speak. He could bring disgrace upon the Carmichaels, but he was in no haste to do so. He reflected, for one thing, that only Nicholas Carmichael would be involved by his evidence. And, moreover, he doubted not that by this time the cave was empty, and showed no traces of the use to which it was put. All he could do, then, was to warn the revenue sloop, and wait until the smugglers should be caught by a raid of the coast-guards. The revenge appeared to him to be inadequate, to lack dramatic justness. Besides, there were other members of the family involved in his vendetta. What penalty should be exacted of Sir Stephen Carmichael himself, of Philip the reckless, and what of Chloris Carmichael, that cruel Gorgon with her handsome face? The scar burned still upon his cheek to remind him of that Jezebel. He would have no ruth for her, nor for any of the abominable blood. Yet he was not ripe for his vengeance; these people must wait for the proper dues of their outrageous lives; and when the time came he who had taken up the cause in honest indignation at his friend's murder should also exact payment for his own scurvy treatment.

He passed the next few days peaceably enough. There was no attempt to molest him. The innkeeper was civil beyond ordinary, and more than usually

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timid. Warburton deemed him to be acquainted with the transactions between the Carmichaels and himself. He was clearly in the confidence of the smugglers, which was the explanation of his good liquor. Possibly he was used by them as a spy to give warning of his guest's movements. Warburton knew that the smugglers must be aware that he had not given notice to the authorities, for otherwise they would have struck some blow. But what puzzled him was the reason of their silence. He wondered that such desperate adventurers as Nicholas Carmichael and his friends must be should give him so much liberty and the chance to betray them. For if they reckoned upon Tremayne's vigilance they were trusting to a sorry creature. Warburton laughed at the thought that he could be affected by Tremayne. He stayed quietly, therefore, at the inn, awaiting the arrival of the revenue sloop, which was due presently on that coast, and casting patiently in his mind the various courses which he might take.

The arrival of a second letter from Miss Holt nearly a week later amazed him. She communicated the information that Sir George Everett, with herself, would arrive that same day, "about two of the afternoon, in that lamentable village of Marlock. Alas! sir, 'tis well named, for I will confess that to me the sound is ominous. I shudder at it. It is like a passing-bell in my ears. I shall never forget that bight of sand and sea and that act of blood."

Warburton frowned and swore. Sir George Everett, then, had not deigned to take his advice. "Damme!" said he, "he has no manners; and as for this pretty creature Dolly, she breathes too many sighs for my taste. I shall be mightily embarrassed by her."

Sir George's house lay at the back of a small ra-

WARBURTON STRIKES A BARGAIN

vine towards the moorland, and to reach it from inland it was not necessary to pass through Marlock. Warburton had identified the place by inquiry, but there was nothing further from his purpose than to take Miss Holt's hint and present himself at the house that afternoon. Indeed, to avoid her he had thought of leaving Marlock for the time. He issued out of the "Three Feathers" towards evening and bent his steps up the combe. It was growing dusk, and a pleasant little wind blew off the moors. He walked long and briskly, and came out upon the upland as it fell dark. Here he was aware suddenly of whispering voices in the copse, and next a shot rang out and whistled past him. He paid no heed save to quicken his steps, and there followed a second shot, which ploughed across his sleeve. He stopped and listened. Thus he stood in the full glow of what light remained, and must have been visible from the copse even plainer than before. But no further discharge occurred. After pausing some minutes he began to move forward again; and again his ears were saluted by the report of a musket. Warburton stopped, considering with himself. He guessed at what this signified; he was invited to return; by these uncivil greetings he was warned back. He began to appreciate the justice of Philip Carmichael's threat. He was not to be allowed to leave Marlock until the free-traders had done with him. He gazed at the piece of wood from which these signals had come, and then, leisurely turning, retraced his way to the inn. He was not prepared for an encounter with hidden assassins, but he was quite ready to add to his growing grudge against the Carmichaels. He was also a little exercised by the forbearance of his enemies. Why was he not shot? Yet it might very

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well be that they were unwilling to provoke the active hostility of the Crown, and face the outcry which would follow the murder of a gentleman of such position and such powerful connections. He felt indeed that Nicholas Carmichael would stay at nothing, yet Sir Stephen and the younger brother might have some influence over that dare-devil, and more prudent counsels might have prevailed.

Warburton had had news of his imprisonment; he was now to learn something further. Even in the daytime he recognized that he was watched. It was never possible to affirm absolutely that any particular fisherman or idler had his eyes upon him, but Warburton was certain that the whole village was in a conspiracy to keep him in view. He might not stray; he knew too much. He was treated much as a cat treats a mouse ere she finally kills it. But Warburton was not troubled. He walked a good deal among the dunes, where no man came, and here he saw no marks of any spies. Probably they deemed that wilderness a sufficient prison in itself, for the sea and the marshy valley above the quicksand were the only outlets from it. One day he returned from his travels among these desolate hills, and on re-entering Marlock took a circuit up the ravine. He had forgotten that this route led him close by Sir George Everett's house; he had turned inland merely to be rid of the crying sea that tormented his ears all day. But he was aware presently of his vicinity by the figure of a girl approaching down the lane. She stopped a few feet away. He bowed profoundly.

"'Tis you, Mr. Warburton," she said, eagerly; "I thought you had gone. I wrote you two letters!"

"Aye," said he, slowly. "I received them, Miss Holt."

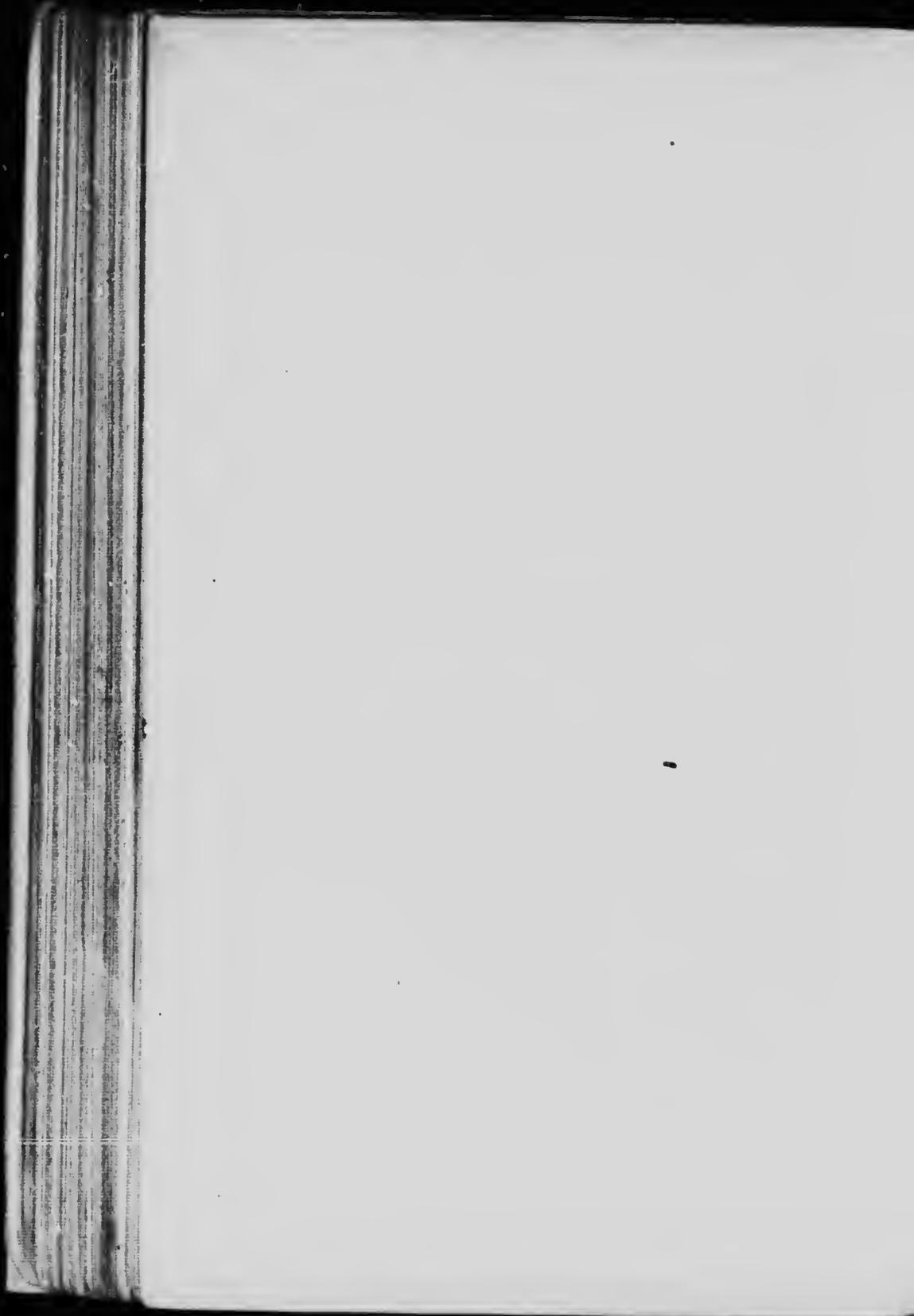
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“WARRERTON BOWED AS THE VISITOR ENTERED”





WARBURTON STRIKES A BARGAIN

"But you answered nothing," she exclaimed, with some petulance.

"That is true. There was nothing to answer to you, madam. Yet I made bold to write to Sir George. I would not have had you here."

She opened her eyes. "La!" she said, "was it to persuade Sir George against my coming that you wrote?" He bowed. "He got no such letter," she went on. "There was nothing came to him from you, or I should have heard. But had I known, Mr. Warburton, that you desired me away, indeed I would not have come."

Warburton was perplexed. "He got no letter," he repeated, and suddenly the reason was clear to him, so clear that he wondered at his own simplicity in expecting any letter of his to arrive at its destination. The cords were about him more tightly than he had thought.

"I have vexed you, sir," she said, seeing he did not reply to her last words.

"That you have not," he returned, promptly. "Gad! madam, no such prettiness as yours could vex me. But I will confess that you have disturbed my plans. I shall have to reform them, Miss Holt; you must fall into line with me, I beg you."

"You can depend upon me, sir!" she cried, eagerly. "I will work with you. You shall have my poor assistance. Heavens! that I should be treading on this melancholy soil! I will not rest till we have brought these miscreants to book—in the name of that dear martyr!"

"He was very dear to you, madam?" inquired Warburton, regarding her steadfastly.

She lowered her eyes, her face brightening with color. "Aye, that you should know," she said, in an

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

hysterical murmur. "'Tis a sacred memory I hold. I am sworn to cherish it. Judge you, Mr. Warburton, how deep a debt these Carmichaels must discharge to me."

"I have no doubt that they will discharge it to the full," he answered. "Yet how do you suppose this will be?"

She lifted her gaze to him again, and it was now almost demure in its expression. Softness commingled there with a certain wistful pleading, as of a child that begs silently for assistance. Her prettiness touched him, though he was aware of some strange capacity that animated her looks. She was nervously wrought, yet contained herself.

"The law," she said, simply, "has failed to reach them. It may only be through private means that they may be punished. Perhaps vengeance shall be executed righteously in the very mode by which the crime was wrought."

Warburton understood well enough what she intended: she looked to him. The sentence was not so simple as her voice would have it. He smiled quietly to himself, but answered, gravely:

"It is right that we should wait the course of events. Justice delays, but her hand is strong in the end."

"I pray God it may be strong!" she cried, sharply, a sob choking in her throat.

"I shall beg to pay my respects to Sir George," said Warburton, stolidly, after a pause.

"He will be honored, sir," said she, quickly, in another voice, and surveying him amiably with all signs of her recent emotion gone.

He took off his hat and left her. Her eyes sparkled after him restlessly; she was fevered to her marrow, afire with contending emotions in that frail body.

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"SHE STOPPED A FEW FEET AWAY"



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WARBURTON STRIKES A BARGAIN

Warburton turned the corner of the lane out of her sight, and came face to face with Miss Carmichael. She looked him strongly in the eyes, with some fierce earnestness.

"Mr. Warburton, I would ask you one thing," she broke out. "Are you a spy?"

Warburton drew up beside her coolly. "Madam," he answered, with deliberation, "by what right do you put such interrogations upon me? You know me as a stranger, as one who has had the good fortune to aid you in a little difficulty, and who owes you some thanks. Yet you claim the right of inquisition?"

"Ah, sir!" she cried, quickly, "I forget nothing, but I remember also how we last met. What did you in that secret place?"

"I admit no claim on your part to question me," he replied, coldly, "but I answered you as a woman. The wind blew me to sea, and I returned in what I fondly imagined to be the friendly wake of a schooner."

Her eyes danced. "I knew 'twas so, or somehow so," she said, swiftly. "I beg your pardon, sir, for what share I had in that adventure."

"Nay, madam," he said, shortly, "but if I recall the particulars aright, it was you that protected me."

"'Twas I that would have been your death!" she cried, impulsively. "I, that owe you my life!"

"You owe me nothing," he said, bluntly, "and for what I owe you: we are quits."

"Quits!" she called, aloud, "'tis the second time you have spoken that ungenerous word. Are you a trafficker in pawns and pledges that you deal so formally? I know nothing of the word except in respect of my enemy. It has no place in my dictionary."

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

"'Tis possible that we regard it in the same light," he answered, with meaning.

He had desired to convey to her that she must not look upon him as a friend, or even as an indifferent stranger; yet she put no such interpretation upon his sentence.

"Sir," she said, hotly, "you have said you are no spy. What are you, then?"

"You will remember, madam," he said, "that I have some secrets that I have not blabbed."

"I can make nothing of you," she said, in despair; "your face is a blank wall that holds all things privy and silent. But yet you must abide your fate."

Her moving face was figured with some strong emotion, and stirred him deeply.

"Why," he said, slowly, "a duel, Miss Carmichael, is a duel. What is fought for is fought for. I like not your brother. He is foreign to my ways and fancy, and I think he is too hard and skilful for boys."

She gazed at him, drawing a deep breath, and put out her hand to touch his.

"You make a mark upon me which I do not understand," she said, with animation, "but I see you as you are—an honest gentleman, who saved my life."

"I have said we are quits," he said, impatiently.

"No! no!" she cried, in a burst of anger.

"I will not have that or any such action laid to my credit," he said, deliberately.

Her voice was as rapid and rich with feeling as his was cold and orderly.

"Ah, you are generous!" she cried. "I know you are no spy."

He answered nothing.

She came a little closer, and again set her fingers on his arm, but this time they gripped him warmly.

WARBURTON STRIKES A BARGAIN

"Mr. Warburton," she said, in a low voice, "I am told that my brother Philip warned you. Why are you here?"

"I am not used to take warnings," he replied, scarce heeding her words, but affected strangely by the clutch of her hand.

"They said you had the chance to go," she went on. "It was madness in you to stay."

He cast his eyes upon the fingers that moved upon his sleeve, and thence his gaze shifted to her face and body. There was the blaze of some passion in her gray eyes which he encountered.

"I have said that I take no warnings," he answered, considering within himself that she should not so beguile him to flight. He had no doubt that she was sent on this errand by her brothers, to cajole him into a promise of secrecy.

"How came you to seek me here?" he asked.

"I followed from the inn," she said, simply. "I was resolved to see you."

"I will stay where I will," he said, bluntly. "None shall move me till I will."

Their eyes met again, and there was some despair that looked out of hers. He felt the thrill of her hand upon him. She dropped her arm.

"You are a fool!" she cried, suddenly, and with savage vehemence—"a fool to throw your life away! Do you think I do not know what the end will be? Oh, but you are mad, sir, you are mad." And then, "Mr. Warburton, I beg you to desist," she pleaded. "Be not moved by this blind obstinacy. Conquer your pride. What if others have maltreated you in error? It was, 'twas I also, that sinned. Do you bear a spite against me? And if not, why against others? They desire no harm to you, I do believe."

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

He listened imperturbably. "Why is it, madam, you show such anxiety in my behalf?" he asked, plainly.

"Because I desire no man's death in innocence," she burst forth with passion.

"Nothing shall move me," he said, with a coldness that was almost brutal.

She turned on him like a storm. "Why is it you stay?" she cried. "Is it only out of injured pride? Who was that that left you in the lane? Is't she, then, that keeps you?"

"Madam, you spy upon me," he remarked, with a sneer.

"No, I chanced to see her. Are you ashamed of her?" she cried, white now with her animosity. "If it be she who keeps you, with those wandering eyes, we shall not be rid of you. But you shall die where you rest and in your folly."

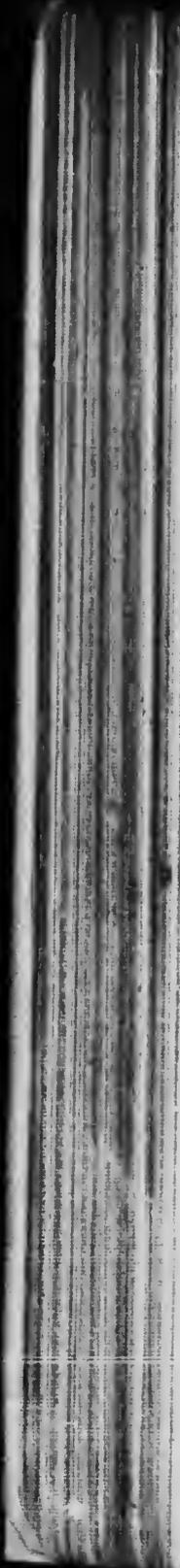
"Madam," he said, quietly, "the lady is she that loved a dead friend."

She came to an abrupt pause, almost ceasing to breathe, and he eyed her in silence. He had an odd sense of discovery in that moment; it stirred sharply in his heart, and went out. He knew now that he was master; against that passive force of calm and determination she would beat in vain. Her blood and her sex alike betrayed her; they were no match for one of that cold race and patient manhood. She knew nothing of this; the spirit of such a creature bent not to reflection; it felt, it suffered, it rejoiced, and was bitter, passionate, and cruel in a breath. But there was some faith she drew from him in those brief seconds. An impression passed into her blood, although she guessed not whence her impulses had sprung. She gasped in her breathless emotion, and

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WARBURTON'S UNCLE



WARBURTON STRIKES A BARGAIN

he, in his turn, put forth his hand and touched her gently.

"You are kind, Miss Carmichael," he said, softly, "but indeed I tell you that you mistake me. Others shall do as I will, not I as they."

Her eyes kept his face. "I have done what I could," she said, with a sigh, "but you despise my advice." She turned away without more words, and he looked after her. There was that in her quick, lithe gait that again affected him.

"By God!" said he, "a handsome girl, a devilish handsome girl—and as devilish as handsome. I will have the devil in her cast down. I will exact a proper penalty from my lady jade. Damme! I will exact what I will."





CHAPTER VII

UPON THE LAWNS OF LYNSEA

ON the afternoon of the following day Warburton resolved to visit Sir George Everett. He was in no way anxious to do so, yet he felt that common politeness demanded the ceremony, now that he had been discovered by Miss Holt. Accordingly, under the vigilant eyes of the innkeeper, he set out for the valley in which Sir George's house was placed. It was a walk of a mile or more by very pleasant lanes now bright with late lilacs, and dropping the gold of the laburnum. He had by this time come to ignore the watch under which he lived, and though he supposed that some one followed him on this occasion, he cared not, and gave his attendant little thought.

Sir George, who was an irritable, plain-speaking, honest fellow, full of many bothers, which he took hardly, received him with some warmth. He had come here, he declared, to be quit of his daily troubles; he was pressed by the affairs of his country, was being urged into political courses which he would rather avoid, and denounced all his neighbors for rogues and nincompoops.

To Warburton's mind he seemed a brisk, capable man, who would do his duty, if with much grumbling, and put the responsibilities with which he charged himself above his convenience. This consideration

UPON THE LAWNS OF LYNSEA

renewed in him the doubt if he should communicate his knowledge as to the illicit trade on Lynsea. He turned the matter over in his thoughts.

"Sir George," said he, "I believe you to be a justice?"

"Aye," assented Sir George, "I have had the hanging of several rascals."

"A man might lay an information before you even in these parts?" asked Warburton.

"For certain; a magistrate is a magistrate, and carries the King's authority with him where he goes," returned Sir George, with dignity.

Warburton sat considering.

"What is it makes you inquire?" asked the baronet.

Warburton opened his lips, but at that moment the sound of wheels upon gravel caught his ear. He looked out of the window and saw a chaise drawn up before the house, and the flanks of the horse were steaming as if he had been severely driven.

"Why, what is this?" said Sir George, who also had peered out. "These people are in a mighty hurry, it seems." As he spoke the door of the room opened, and a man-servant approached, announcing a visitor.

"Who is this?" said Sir George, harshly.

"'Tis Sir Stephen Carmichael, your honor," says the man.

"Ah, I have heard the name. He has some estate by here, purchased from old Tantellion," said Sir George, with a nod. "I am honored by this visit. Show him in."

Warburton stood and bowed as the visitor entered. Sir Stephen's gaze rested lightly on him for an instant as he returned the bow, yet Warburton fancied that there was inquiry in the look. He leaned upon his thick staff and was magnificently civil to Sir

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

George, deploring his gout, which had held him from calling before. His eyes, nevertheless, as Warburton thought, were fixed like a cat's upon his host, watching and wondering. He appeared to be seeking for some information. Warburton laughed softly. He was aware now why the horse was so lathered with sweat, and what this ceremonious visit signified. They were afraid of him. Yet it must have been manifest very soon from Sir George's friendly bearing that he knew nothing. The sharp senses of Sir Stephen were not likely to miss that fact. Indeed, he glanced at Warburton presently with a faint smile, in part of condescension and partly of reassurance. Warburton laughed aloud this time, but checked himself and rose, bidding the two good-day.

No sooner was he out of the house than he espied Miss Dorothy ascending the drive. He would rather not have met her, but could do nothing save go forward, for he was visible to her plainly. But when he reached her he was smiling and debonair.

"Faith, you walk abroad a great deal, Miss Holt," said he.

"What have I to do but to walk?" she said, with a sigh. "I am too deeply intricate with life to pluck my fingers at home."

"Poor creature!" said he, eying her. "But you must not suffer sorrow to eat you like a canker. You are too handsome a young lady to wear sackcloth all your days."

"I will talk no more of it," she said, quickly; "'tis no pleasure to a town gentleman such as you, sir, to entertain lachrymose maidens."

"Nay, I believe I am not modish," he declared.

She glanced at him furtively. "Sir George saw your honored uncle, my lord Crayle, in Town but a

UPON THE LAWNS OF LYNSEA

week ago. La! he was greatly flustered, having his wig blown from him."

Warburton laughed. "Fie on his bald head! I would I had seen him. Poor devil! he shows his years badly."

"They say that Crayle Park is beautiful," observed the girl.

"'Tis so," he murmured, indifferently. "'Tis a pretty place, and mightily expensive."

"Mr. Warburton," she said, suddenly dropping her voice to a whisper, "there is a man who is hiding in that hedge and spying on us."

"Indeed! Faith, let him spy," said Warburton, heartily. "I am not ashamed to be seen in such company. Gad! no, madam, I am proud of the proximity."

He did not even turn his head, but his eyes twinkled good-naturedly in her face, which had run delicately pink.

"But why should he spy on us?" she asked, fearfully.

"How should I know? He is a curious villager, madam. He has heard that a new Toast has arrived here. In truth, you have already a visitor."

"Who is that?" she asked, following his upward glance at the chaise.

"'Tis Sir Stephen Carmichael," he answered, with a grin.

She started and made as if to go. "I will not see that dreadful man," she said.

"On the contrary, you will find him a most civil gentleman," he declared. "Sir George is greatly taken with him."

She hesitated, a change passed across her features, and she said, haltingly, "You are right, Mr. Warburton. You have lectured me justly. I will not give

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

way to my prejudices. I must do my duty to Sir George's guests." She bowed to him prettily, and, staring at her in surprise, the man returned the salutation. Then he descended the slope with a shrug of his big shoulders. Indeed, he had not at all fathomed this dainty creature of dimity, and he began to comprehend this.

A warm belief in the treachery of the Carmichaels and their nefarious plans possessed Warburton. He had reason enough for his faith, and nothing could subvert it. The arrival of Dorothy Holt vexed him, for he saw in it at once a trespass upon his own campaign, and a personal danger to herself. Her presence on that coast could only enforce the warning of his own. The conjunction would signify to the Carmichaels that they were pursued by vengeance. It was clear that they suspected him, alone, of that design, and how greatly would Miss Holt assist their conjectures into certainty! In any case, he stood himself in a desperate peril, and he would have none join him in the hazards. A girl of such delicate mind and body had no right to interpose. Her strength should be the measure of her participation, and she was as weak as the bent upon the dunes or the water that washed in the shallow trough of the Marl.

Warburton came down to the village hastily the next morning, sharpness and impatience in his voice.

"What boat is that?" he asked of a fisherman, and pointed into the offing where a white sail was tacking northward. He had his answer in no very civil terms: "It was Pavitt's boat."

"Aye, but who sails in it?" he inquired, more sharply.

The fisherman gazed at him, and professed his ignorance.

UPON THE LAWNS OF LYNSEA

"I believe that a young lady has put out for a sail," he added.

Warburton remembered himself in time. He had already tried several times unavailingly to hire a boat here. Even his friend from whom he had taken the little cutter, and who had been extravagantly compensated, was deaf to his offers. He made no sign of his emotion.

"Oh, a young lady!" said he, and turned indifferently away. He had no doubt now that what he had suspected was true. There were no visitors in Marlock, and few young ladies to go a-sailing for amusement. Miss Holt was in that boat, making for Lynsea; and that she had succeeded in getting a boatman to take her showed upon whose authority she went. She was going on the invitation of the Carmichaels. To Warburton's fancy the web these islanders spread lay thick and deadly about Lynsea. They enticed like sirens calling in the ears. No doubt it was Sir Stephen himself who had offered the hospitality of the island with that fine grace of his. What did they want with her? And what motive carried her to that black spot? Warburton could not answer this riddle, but feared vaguely. He began to go by the dunes northward towards the village upon that side which, embowered in a smiling country, seemed to stand remote from the winds and wars, and the darker secrets of Marlock and the island. It was more than two hours ere he reached his destination, but he was successful at once in obtaining a boat. As he put forth, the mid-day sun was shining upon the green land and the loose, quiet water; but a mile away southward the heights of Lynsea rose black, solid, forbidding, under a passing shadow of cloud, obscured in a twilight of mystery.

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

No sooner had the boat left the shore than a man ran out upon the beach, breathless and red of face. He stared stupidly after Warburton.

Warburton ran down to the island swiftly, in the stream of a full tide. He recognized it as a more urgent duty to intercept the girl, or at least throw over her some protection, inasmuch as he had said nothing to her of his own adventures. She was therefore not forewarned. She forbode nothing, and had accepted the invitation to Lynsea without misgivings, if with no alacrity.

It was impossible to guess what incentives the ceremonious Sir Stephen had used.

The thought flashed through Warburton's mind that she had been inveigled thither to detach her from the vendetta of which they must now have been persuaded; and if so, it was still necessary that he should be present to defend himself from a betrayal. In any case he thought no more as to the wisdom of his course; he was resolved to reach Lynsea, and to discover what this visit meant. He had got half-way to the island when he noticed in the wake of his boat, far away, a second boat, steering in his tracks. This he watched for some time, and at length remembered his state of supervision by spies, which, in the excitement of his recent discovery, he had completely forgotten. Plainly he was being followed, and he was anxious to be rid of his followers. He had thought of making for the cove of tamarisks by the house, but now he changed his mind. He turned the boat's head, as though to run down upon this harborage, but no sooner was he by the sheltering point than he slipped past it, and poling under the lea of the wooded land, round the jutting crag one hundred yards beyond, disappeared into a narrow neck of water which

UPON THE LAWNS OF LYNSEA

formed a sort of creek and received the volume of some upland streams.

Tying the painter to an overhanging bush, which also hid the body of his boat, he landed, and climbing the hill above, dropped cautiously down upon the valley of the homestead.

The road he took was by thick coverts, already in full leaf, but green and yellow, and not yet hardened and deepened by the summer sun. There was no foot-path; he made a way for himself among the young wood and undergrowth and springing ferns; and the tall sycamores that sheltered him with broad fingers from the sun, concealed also the immediate prospect. He had descended into a bottom, in which a ribbon of brook trickled pleasantly towards the sands. The waters of the sea broke peacefully upon a hidden beach; he could almost hear the fret of the shells as the wavelets rolled among them. But he knew not yet where he stood, nor whither he was wandering. As he came to a pause in this indecision, he thought he perceived that the copse was sparser in one direction, and in this he moved. The bushes opened out, the spaces spreading into little glades, in which flowered the bluebells in a multitude. He went forward still, passing a clump of yews, and the next moment there broke upon his vision a widespread pleasance, bright with blossoms.

The sun stood at his zenith, yet the cool sea-breezes subdued the heat of that early summer day. Under the warm influences of a genial season the foliage and the flowers had started into quick, full life. The lilac was alive with odor, and the laburnum with bold gold, while in long, low hedges that lay formally across the lawns, the white rosettes of the guelder gleamed in a profusion like great white daisies. Wafts of fragrance

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

ascended from the Florentine iris in the purple beds, and the elegant stems of the columbine rose in bunches from the foliage, lilac and white and blue.

In the centre of this lawn of flowers and flowering shrubs was an ancient dial, on which the shadow of the style pointed past noon. Below this, upon the greensward, half enveloped by the tall spikes and the umbrageous star leaves of the lupin, lay Chloris Carmichael, her chin upon her hand, her gaze rambling idly over the blue and empty sea.

Warburton stood watching for a brief time in silence and without demonstration. Not a particular of that fine prone body escaped his steady eyes, from the copper-brown hair to the foot that tapped easily and in a measured rhythm upon the lawn. He saw here no tigress frantic against her foes, not even a woman shaken with vehement fears or vehement passion; it was merely an idle girl that dabbled among the grasses, and let a vagrant fancy loose among the clouds. The impression of her face and posture was purely sensuous; he judged that she swayed between her physical feelings like a scale in balance that moves to the touch and vibrates inordinately with each commotion. She seemed to him now more of a girl than he had supposed, and she might have innocent thoughts. It was clear she was quite happy; she had the air of basking in delight as she basked in the sunshine. She drew Warburton's eyes with admiration.

As he stood there her gaze unexpectedly alighted on him, and she got to her feet swiftly and came running to him, every sign of her quiet vanished. A blaze of some feeling flared in the iris of her eyes, so that they turned almost the warmth of her tresses. She went off, as Warburton reflected, like a gun snapped at half-cock. But why she ran thus upon

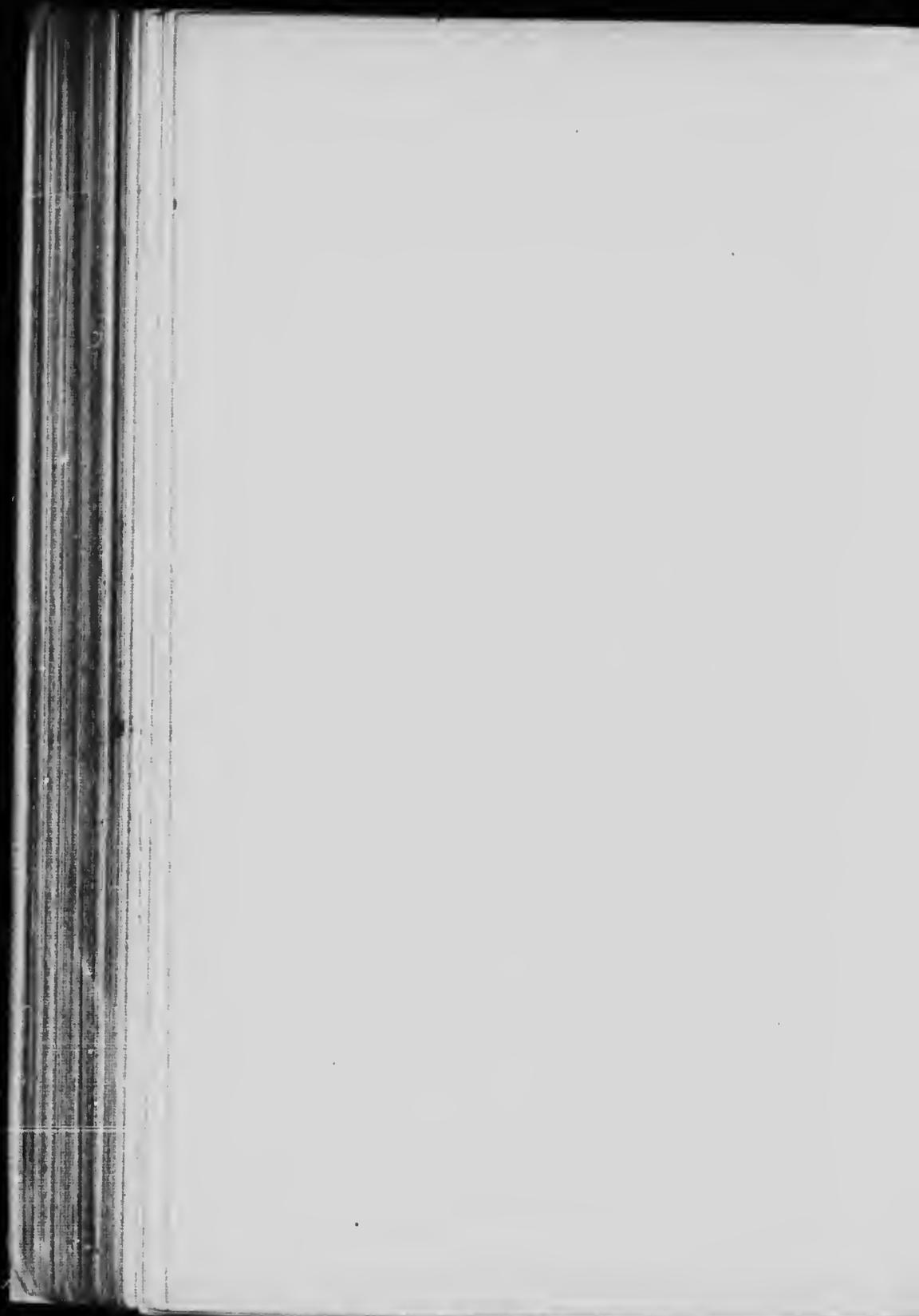
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UPON THE GREEN SWARD LAY CHLORIS



UPON THE LAWNS OF LYNSEA

him he could not guess; yet he had not long to wonder.

"What have you come here for?" she asked, eagerly. "Do you not know, Mr. Warburton, that you are mad to venture here again? You must go back."

"I came here of purpose," he answered, slowly, "and by Heaven! I will not go back until it is accomplished."

"What purpose?" she said, swiftly, but in what was almost a murmur. "You must go back."

He read the restless sparkle that died and flamed in her face; there seemed no secret now in the trembling of those slender hands. She beat again upon him as vainly as she had beat before. A spirit all fire prevailed nothing against such solidity; the great wind broke and roared in vain upon the battlements, and afterwards issued a still, sweet voice.

"You must go back. You must give up your purpose."

He put out an arm to her. "I will not go back, Miss Carmichael," he said; and the excellence of her presence, the temptation of her neighborhood, thrilled him to the marrow. "By God! but you are Chloris to me," he said, "and Chloris you shall be, for all the Carmichaels in Christendom."

"What mean you?" she panted, swaying under his grasp, yet facing him with open, burning eyes that were neither afraid nor ashamed.

He drew her closer roughly, and still she shrank not; the blue knot of ribbon at her bosom rose and fell like the undulation of the sea; she was carried nearer till it came to rest upon his coat, fluttering into stillness; and then a convulsion shook her body through.

Warburton suddenly and abruptly put her away, surveying her out of disturbed eyes. Some doubt of his interpretation of her had sharply stung him. She

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

surrendered herself to him with more than the passion of a maiden, but it was certainly surrender. He distrusted his judgment; this slim, full, passionate girl thwarted him. He knew that he was master, and yet he had this flash of uncertainty. His steady mind wavered like a reed, and then settled again into its stiff decision. He saw her a handsome, glowing creature, animated with bright blood and the devil of a spirit, and touched by her senses to gross issues. She was an amazingly beautiful animal, to love, to be jealous, to hate, and to be cruel. Like all that heathenish house, she had the distemper which should put her outside the pale of consideration. In his insular intolerance and ignorance of this unfettered foreign blood he regarded such people as a pest in the kingdom, deemed them as far from the healthy norm as lunatics or outcasts or the tenants of thieves' alleys. A strong sensation stirred in him now as he recognized the truth; he put out his arm again with something betwixt a laugh and a gasp, but Chloris Carmichael withdrew a pace, her wonderful eyes upon him. They consumed him with their regard.

"What purpose has brought you here?" she asked.

"Chloris, 'tis you, I swear!" he exclaimed, eagerly, reaching for her.

She struck up his arm angrily, then turned away, her head fallen heavily upon her bosom. He watched her go some steps, and then pursued after her, catching her hand.

"Let me go," she said, earnestly—"I beseech you, sir, to let me go!"

"Nay, dear," he said, "that I will not. I am not done with you."

The color rose hot in her cheeks and then with-

UPON THE LAWNS OF LYNSEA

drew, leaving them of the pallor of death, while her eyes were frightened and glistened with emotion.

"I may not," she pleaded; "for pity's sake leave me! Be merciful. Nay, sir, you have shamed me. I have forgotten all my modesty and what my maidenhood requires."

"Faith," thought Warburton, "she plays me well," and would have pulled her again to him.

"Do you not see? Is it not enough?" she cried, crimsoning afresh and with an angry stamp of her foot. "Oh, you are a brute, to torture me so! I hate you! Let me go, let me go—ah, let me go!" and her voice passed from the passionate accents of anger through those of piteous entreaty into a soft sob of contentment, as she was drawn within his arms.

The next moment she was flying through the pleasure, across the lawn, and by the hedges of the way. She sped like Daphne, and upon her heels followed that merciless pursuer. The way ran among the copse again, and down by tortuous courses to the sea. The loose white gown of the fugitive flew out behind her flying heels; the skirts jumped and fluttered, spreading like a flag, her bronze hair, fallen from its confines, rained upon her neck in a bright shower as she darted from sunlight into shadow in her flight.

Suddenly the copse ended once more, and Warburton found himself abruptly upon the margin of an ordered garden, with the white house of the Carmichaels frowning upon him. Scarce out of arm's-length the girl too had come to a pause, panting hard, the color deep in her face, yet with a startled expression in her eyes, and an admonishing hand. Twenty paces distant stood Sir Stephen Carmichael, eyeing them strangely, and with him was Sir George Everett.



CHAPTER VIII

THE BEGINNING OF THE ADVENTURE IN LYNSEA

WARBURTON stood for a moment irresolute, stayed in the very heat and flurry of his chase. He cast flashing glances at the silent group, and then moved forward slowly to it. Sir George broke into a cackle of laughter, being the first to give tongue to any sound.

"Gad! what is this game of nymph and satyr?" he said. "It is an Arcadian grove that you keep in this pretty island of yours, Sir Stephen. But, faith, you must present me to this maid. I vow she is a toast, whoever she be."

"She is my daughter, sir," said Sir Stephen, dangerously civil.

"Oh!" said Everett, sweeping off his hat, "a thousand respects and admirations, madam. Forgive an old man his blunders, for my eyes are not what they were. They look through dark glasses, yet, Miss Carmichael, I protest they find you fair."

Chloris said nothing, but merely bowed, for she had her eyes on her father with some anxiety, her face warm with her confusion and her excitement; and, turned thereby to a sharper beauty, she glowed like a jewel in the sun. Sir Stephen waited until Warburton reached him. He had cast a glance at his daughter, and after that continued to regard the young man.



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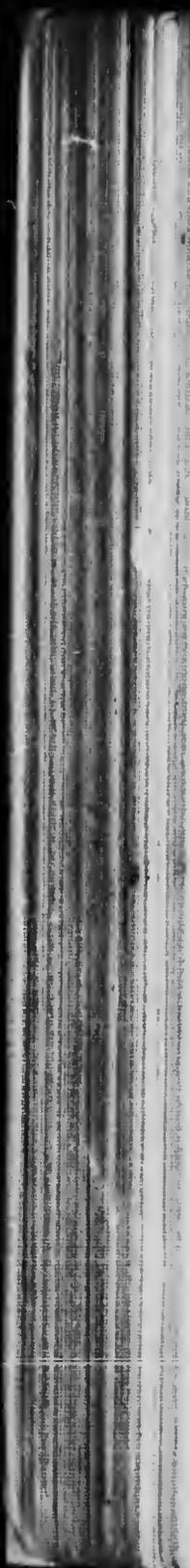
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The two confronted each other, and Warburton gravely saluted the company. He made no explanation of his odd arrival, nor attempted to refer to Chloris.

"I should offer you an excuse, sir," he said, "for my trespass again upon this island; but I am over on business. Yet if I had known what now I know I need not have come," and his gaze dwelt lightly on Everett.

"Any man that comes on business has a right here," said Sir Stephen, coldly. "Yet last time you came on no business, but as a stranger who trespasses."

"I will trespass no more," he answered, "for I see I am not needed here."

"What, Mr. Warburton!" said Sir George, in a friendly voice—"You are not going already? You shall go back with me."

"Sir, I must beg you not to cut short this honor you have done us," said Sir Stephen, quickly. "As for Mr. Warburton, no doubt you think it strange that we meet so coolly. But you are aware of a sad accident that befell some time since. My son Nicholas is a hot-blooded fellow; there was no excuse for him save wine, and a quarrelsome temper on both sides. Well, what will you, my dear sir?" He shrugged his shoulders expressively. "But Mr. Warburton and my son are still at loggerheads. It is wiser they do not meet. Hence my recommendation. He is better away, lest another quarrel be brought upon us."

"Why, damme! Warburton, you are pugnacious," said Sir George, reproachfully. "Let ill alone. Shirley was a hot fellow too—poor devil! It is no affair of yours. I had forgot that there was any such bother; and Heaven is my witness that we cannot carry other people's worries. I am glad to be quit of them. Besides, the girl's heart was not in it. Yet

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I must be going immediately, and I will take you home."

"I entreat you to spare me yourself a little longer, sir," said Sir Stephen. "But Mr. Warburton is another case. You see he looks morose and broods. He had better begone," and he laughed lightly and pleasantly.

"By the Lord! but my girl must not see this Nicholas of yours," broke in Everett, suddenly. "It escaped me. She cannot have known when she consented to come. Heavens! she breaks out like a bitch when she is spiteful. She must be carried away at once."

Sir Stephen, seeming to resign, motioned his guest gracefully towards the house, as though he would offer him his last compliments. He called his daughter to him, and, leaning heavily upon her shoulder, went up the lawn. Warburton followed, for he had not yet done with Sir Stephen. At the terrace of white stone the old man paused, lifted his hand from his daughter's shoulder, and turned on him.

"Hark you! Mr. Warburton," he said, more harshly than he was used to speak, "you were best away. I think no gentleman should require a further intimation."

"I am not here as a friend, nor yet as an acquaintance, sir," retorted Warburton, sharply. "I am a piece of the law, a hook of interrogation, to question you. I will not go without my answer. What is it you want with Miss Holt? Your family have done harm enough. You should be ashamed to raise your hand again."

"Is it true?" asked Chloris, swiftly, of her father. "Is Miss Holt here? Who is Miss Holt?"

He did not reply, but frowned on Warburton. "I

BEGINNING OF THE ADVENTURE

have warned you to be gone," he said, and with a gesture of authority dismissed his daughter within the house. "You know how matters stand here. I do not give warnings in vain. You have declared yourself hostile, and we are in a state of war. Do not suppose that the Carmichaels will forget that. They forget too little and achieve too much. I give you leave to go now. Yet there is something to explain in what I saw just now. I shall ask for some explanation of what conduct you showed towards my daughter."

"Sir, I explain nothing," returned Warburton, coolly. "Your daughter may."

Sir Stephen's eyes flashed, but a look of doubt entered them, and he tottered up the steps on his stick without answer.

Warburton went down the pathway, but, as he turned the corner of the house, almost ran against Dorothy Holt and a companion. This, to his astonishment, he recognized as Philip Carmichael, very cheerful, very handsome, and impudently smiling. He grinned the wider on seeing Warburton, but opened his eyes full.

"Lynsea seems to hold an attraction for you, Mr. Warburton," he observed. "It is not every one who loves us so much."

"I am here to fetch Miss Holt," he answered, simply. "It is not well for her to be here."

"Faith! I am the better judge of my behavior," retorted the girl, sharply. "I am not in your charge, Mr. Warburton."

"No; I was unaware that your guardian was with you," he answered, "or I would not have ventured upon this liberty. Yet now I am arrived here, I would urge you to return. Miss Holt, 'tis not seemly."

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The color rose in her face, though she was plainly flustered by his rebuke. "'Tis ungentlemanly in you to lecture me," she said, "as if I were not a better authority on manners! I know what becomes a lady, sir."

"You are here a guest of those that slew one you were to have wed," he said, bluntly, being angered with her.

"La!" she said, with a little quiver, "you need not to remind me. I bear it in my heart. But, indeed, I made a silly blunder in supposing a duel was not honorable, however cruel it be. But, indeed, sir," she said, turning prettily on Philip Carmichael—"but, indeed, indeed, 'twas cruel in your brother. He was most uncivilly drunken."

"That he was," assented Philip, nodding.

Warburton was amazed by this change in her spirit. He had never understood her, and he could make of her even less than nothing at the present moment. What he saw clearly was that the grounds of that hostility were slipping from under his feet. If this girl should give up there would be no excuse for him to maintain a feud, since his was a wrong incomparable with hers. He stared on her stupidly, but, getting his thoughts again, begged to have a word with her in private. Philip Carmichael stood apart, rapping his top-boots with his whip, or idly chafing with it his smalls.

"What does this conduct mean?" asked Warburton.

"You must not ask me," she said, veiling her eyes with her long lashes; "you must trust me. I have trusted you."

He frowned impatiently. "You have brought me here on a fool's errand, because I thought you in danger."

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PHILIP CARMICHAEL AND DOROTHY HOLT

BEGINNING OF THE ADVENTURE

"In danger!" she echoed, with surprise in her voice. "Aye; it is probable that we both are in peril. These Carmichaels have no scruples. Already my life has been attempted. See yonder fine fellow—how he watches us out of his soft eyes!"

"But why do they want your life?" she asked, breathlessly.

"Because I have some of their secrets—I hold them in my power," he answered.

"What is this secret?" she whispered, with a furtive glance at Philip. But he lounged and appeared to take no heed.

"No, I cannot tell you that," he replied. "To do so would be to expose you to a great peril. They shall know that you know nothing. I will make that safe before I leave. But you would be safer away. This man is one thing, but where is Nicholas Carmichael, I ask you?"

She shook her head and shuddered. "I was told he would not be here. I could not have faced that murderer," she said, and it was evident that she spoke the truth.

"Get your guardian back as soon as you may," he urged. "Miss Holt, you know not this family, nor what they have to guard. Their blood runs like fire in them; it is as volatile as a spirit and always in flame. They are stark animals, with fine hides and handsome faces. God pity those that offend them!"

"Then you run great danger already," she cried, "and God must pity you!"

"Nay, madam, but I think God shall pity more those that offend me," said Warburton, grimly. "Come, get you back," and he laid a persuasive hand upon her arm. This act of entreaty might easily have borne another meaning from a little distance,

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and so Philip Carmichael interpreted it. He opened his eyes and stared, and then resumed the tapping on his boot faster than ever.

Warburton turned aside, and Dorothy met her escort with an engaging smile. "La! Mr. Warburton is tiresome; he will harp upon that which is gone; he thinks I must be forever wearing weeds and long faces."

Philip disappeared into the house with this enchantress, but Warburton was destined to another encounter. He descended the terrace steps to the lawn, and hardly had he done so when Chloris Carmichael came upon him with a rush.

"Who is that?" she asked, breathlessly. "Is it Miss Holt that is here? It was that girl that I saw walking from you the other day."

"True," answered Warburton; "she is here as your guest."

"I want her not," said Chloris, fiercely. "I hate her face. She is a sly doll. I know what she is here for—to deal treacherously by us. I will tell Nick."

"You will do nothing of the sort," said Warburton, sharply. "There has been enough mischief done by your house."

"Who are you to command?" she asked, indignantly. "I will put Nick upon her. Philip is a fool, but Nick shall answer her purpose."

"What!" said Warburton, in reproachful tones. "Your brother slew this child's lover upon the verge of their match—would you in your turn slay her?"

"That I would," she flamed forth—"and you, too! I would give you to death willingly. You are brutal and treacherous. I think you are a spy. What are you doing here with this girl?"

"I am upon private business," he returned, sternly.

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"I will not suffer any wild woman to question me. You break out too madly, Madam Chloris."

He moved away, but she put herself in his road. "Is it true, what you say, that you are not in league with her?" she asked, eagerly, her anger vanished. Almost she implored him to deny the charge.

"I should be sorry to league myself with any woman," he answered. "I would count myself a fool and more if I trusted my neck to any chit."

"Forgive me," she said, quickly and penitently; "but I could not guess what brings you here."

He examined her fixedly. "You will learn some day," he said, with a faint laugh, and swiftly carried her to his breast. She was still a moment, and then wrestled with him like a tiger. He laughed and put her down. He knew he had authority upon her, and was joyous in his confidence. She was drawn by the lode of his implacable will and strong nature, and he had no doubt as to her feeling for him. What he did not understand was its character; he took it to be of coarse grain—it was delicate, intangible, fierce, and magical as fire. He had now two of the Carmichaels under his hand; he could dance these to his tunes, and he must spread his net for the others. There was no yielding in his purpose; he was adamant; the highest and strongest passion might hammer on his heart in vain. The man had set his face one way, and not even black Nicholas Carmichael, with his spirit of a devil, could move him aside. In truth, the pieces on both sides were dangerous beyond the ordinary. The two had met their match in each other.

Warburton descended still farther upon the lawn, meaning to go by the copse through which he had

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arrived; but he was aware presently of some one who called his name, and twisting upon his heel, awaited the approach of Philip Carmichael. The younger Carmichael came up with some excitement shining in his face.

"Whither are you bound, Mr. Warburton?" he asked. "Are you making for the cove?"

"No, sir," said Warburton, bluntly.

"You are a very rash man, I warn you," said Carmichael, in an indifferent friendly tone.

"Have you run after me to tell me so?" asked the other, with a sneer.

"Yes, I have. You have shot the mark, and something more besides. Nicholas is away, as you see, or you would not stand there so solidly. My father cajoled him away. Damme! Nick is a madman, and he knows nothing of our visitors. You have your own game to play, Mr. Warburton, but you are matching yourself too highly."

"That is as may be," said Warburton, grimly, though he was somewhat amazed to discover in what fear even his own house held Nicholas.

"Well, I warn you in a friendly way; I have no quarrel with you for myself," said Philip, impatiently. "You are welcome to the news—that you were pursued from the mainland, and that he who followed has sought out Nick, who is upon his way, vowing to be rid of you."

"Ha!" said Warburton, without emotion. "This devil will come post-haste, then."

"Word has come before of his purpose. You have just time to avoid him."

"Why did you tell me this?" asked Warburton, curiously.

Philip shrugged his shoulders. "I know not. We

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have enjoyed enough of violence ; I am for a short holiday. I would rather you went."

"Heavens, man, can't you restrain your own madman?" broke out Warburton, coldly.

"I see no reason why we should, in your case," flashed out Philip, with a sneer.

Warburton made no reply for a time; then, "You will hasten Miss Holt from the island?"

Philip nodded. "I will pack 'em off at once. My father knows. I wish no more trouble with Nick. Miss Holt is an elegant woman."

Warburton felt a faint and passing thrill of pity that this well-meaning and undisciplined young man must be involved in the fate of his family. But he could not spare it for the sake of one half-righteous soul. He bowed politely, as if the interview were thus closed, and resumed his journey. The fine breath of the wind tempered the heat of the afternoon, yet Lynsea appeared to shine and glisten almost in a tropic haze. The way was long and by side-paths, for Warburton knew not the direct road to the creek in which his boat lay. He was neither foolish nor foolhardy, and he had resolved to get back to Marlock even before Philip's warning. That that good-natured, arrogant youth had menaced him with alternatives did not in the least affect Warburton's plans. He was not the man to be dissuaded out of a purpose by false pride. If Philip Carmichael cared to believe he had taken the hint and fled in alarm, why, he was mighty welcome to his faith. On the summit of the slope between the valley of the homestead and the wooded creek Warburton came to a rest. Overhead there was a huge calm spread upon the face of heaven. In the far north a great white cloud hove in sight and anchored; but presently it

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began to move slowly, swaying under a wind, and breaking its cables, stood into the blue, and lumbered across the sky with all sails wide. Below, the sea was skipping with white-heads. He let his gaze gently along the line of the coast until it entered the narrow arm of the sea for which he was bound. Something there arrested his eyes, and he arose and watched. A boat was putting into the creek, and even as he strained to see who piloted her, disappeared from his view. Hastily he began to descend over broken ground and among furze and bracken to the water. His figure might be easily discerned by any one upon the beach below, but he could see nothing save the strait of the sea and the little arm of wood which bordered it. As he drew nearer, however, a boat shot out, the occupant poling with his oar, and behind him trailed a second boat—cutting a line of foam. The man presently dropped his oar and set the sails. They drew slowly under the land, but she slowly labored out, the second vessel tossing in her wake. Clearly this was in tow. Warburton was puzzled, and then, instantaneously, and inciting every nerve in his body, fell a thought. He quickened his pace, and, leaping down the hill like a hart, he reached the shore. The man with his two boats stood out a hundred yards, gathering a fuller wind. Warburton sprang at the place where his skiff had been concealed. It was gone.

He ran along the beach of the creek towards the open sea, shouting, but the thief paid him no heed. At the distance he could make nothing of his face, but his figure appeared to be that of a sailor.

Warburton drew a pistol, primed it, and, taking a steady aim, fired. After the report the smoke wreathed in a heavy cloud, and was blown upward,

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and there were the boats still slipping out to sea. He put up his pistol carefully, realizing the futility of further efforts. He had been robbed, clearly enough ; but with what object ? The question danced in Warburton's brain, and received an answer. Philip had been anxious for him to go, but Nicholas would have him stay. This thief, no doubt, was the spy who had followed him. He had had his instructions, and acted on them. Warburton was left on the island. There was only one inference possible. Nicholas Carmichael meant that he should not leave it.





CHAPTER IX

WARBURTON MAKES A DISCOVERY

WARBURTON stood upon the brink of the sea for some time engrossed in thought. As yet he did not see clearly what course it would be best to take. He was filled, for one thing, with an amazing flare of anger, which thrilled and excited him. He turned in his mind to Nicholas Carmichael, as one ferocious animal to another. This man meant death, and death he should have. If he were to be kept on the island in order to wait that death, he would stay willingly, but the death he should await would not be his own. In a cloud of fury his temperate eyes were veiled, as he struggled with the various chances his mind cast up. He must have remained there by the creek for half an hour, at the end of which time he looked up fortuitously and saw Nicholas Carmichael descending the hill towards him.

With that recognition, unexpectedly his doubts and madness passed, and he grew to be as cool as was habitual with him, and his plans formed themselves rapidly. As he himself expressed it, he had not yet done with the Carmichaels, and he was not ready for a personal encounter with Nicholas. His fingers itched to clasp upon his pistol as he watched his enemy drawing swiftly closer, but his purpose stood



WARBURTON MAKES A DISCOVERY

like iron; he turned and made his way into the thicket, whence he kept a watch upon the new-comer. Nicholas Carmichael came hastily to the beach and looked about him in quest of some one. Far out at sea the boats had dwindled to a spot upon the water. Carmichael gazed at this fleck of white and then cast about him. He came down to the water's edge and fell to an examination of the sandy shore. The marks of Warburton's boots, as well as of the thief's, lay here in some confusion; yet Nicholas found what he sought, with his eyes bent on the ground, and came upward towards the copse in which Warburton was hidden. Here he stopped, for the signs led him no farther; yet he had settled this much, as Warburton guessed, that his creature had got away with the boat and that the man he hated and purposed to slay was still on the island. He turned and went quickly away, striking across the hill by a foot-path, which Warburton perceived for the first time; and when he was gone some way, the object of his quest issued from his concealment and followed carefully after him. The road taken by Nicholas Carmichael ran over the spur behind the creek, and, instead of dipping down into the vale of the homestead, struck along the chine of the hills towards the western side of the island. It passed under cover for the better part of the journey, being hedged about by profuse and greening woods; but here and there the path emerged upon the bare hill-top, and it was on these occasions that Warburton was obliged to be careful. The whole distance was no more than two miles, for the island was tiny, yet the caution with which both proceeded made the way long. Nicholas Carmichael looked about him a great deal, which made Warburton the more wary. If he had only looked behind, or

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deemed that danger might spring from that quarter, it is possible that he might have caught his enemy and come to grips with him. But the thought that he might be followed never entered his head; the pursuer knew not that he was pursued; his eagle eyes went right and left, and his ears opened like a pointer's; but no signal of his victim's pursuit was brought by wind or bush. Warburton kept as close as he might, no sword to hamper him, but his pistol primed and to his hand; and it was thus they two came down from the summit of Lynsea, and, dropping slowly, passed into a dark green bower of junipers that lay dwarf and creeping upon the bluff southwesterly face of the island. There was now scarce a score of paces between them, and it was plain to Warburton that Carmichael had given up any thought of finding him upon the way, and was bound upon some other business. What this might be he had yet to guess. Suddenly Nicholas came to a pause by a huge juniper, and, stooping, crept below the bush; there was some shuffling and waving of leafage, and then all was still—he had vanished.

Warburton crept as near as he dared, peering at the spot. But he added his discoveries together, and began to guess pretty well what this disappearance portended. Here must be hidden an inland entrance to the galleries which led to the smugglers' cavern. He made a note of the spot in his mind. "Indeed," ran his thought, "it will be of service to have this information. Captain Postgate, of the *Osprey*, should be glad to learn so much when he comes to make his surprise."

He waited for some time in his hole, and was rewarded for his patience by the reappearance of Nicholas Carmichael, who issued forth of the passage, followed by several others. At a glance War-

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Warburton perceived these to be, not natives, but foreigners. They were French to their finger-nails, stained with tobacco, and he guessed that the smugglers' schooner was even then within the shelter of the cave. Why did they venture forth in this daylight, when their natural business should be underground, among bales and casks? The answer came patly to his mind—Nicholas had need of them; they were called out to execute vengeance for him; the secret which he dared not entrust to the villagers on the coast might be confided safely to the foreign tongues and tough consciences of these lawless Frenchmen. A hunt was forward, and Warburton himself, who watched them file up the pathway, was the quarry these desperadoes sought.

When it seemed safe, he left his refuge and surmounted the rise in the rear of these fellows; but by this they were gone, and he could not discern in which direction. Warburton, as is very plain in these pages, was no coward, but he was not yet sure that it was in keeping with his policy to remain on the island. He was one against a dozen, and very ill-armed at that. Moreover, he had other business in his head, and trusted that he should bring these Carmichaels down in a great ruin all together. Yet the problem before him was to reach the mainland; and now he hit upon an idea which seemed to promise success. The Carmichaels had their boat, no doubt, at the landing-stage in the cove; he would use that. His own boat had been stolen by their agents; he would steal theirs.

The time was now towards six o'clock, and the sun was yet high and bright on the uplands; but as he began to go down into the northern valleys the shadows drew out and evening fell upon him. His prog-

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ress was very gradual, for he had to keep a strict watch, and several times he found that he had exposed himself in the open fields to any that might be spying for him. Hard on seven o'clock he reached the cove in which the homestead lay, and, using even more diligent care, got down to the water's edge. He moved very patiently under a belt of tamarisks, slipping point by point towards the little jetty which was plain in the dull light. Indeed, that dulness which had come with the lapse of evening threw up the white woodwork into sharper notice; the colors of the land and the reflections of the water stood out boldly, now the sun no longer glared upon them. They glowed of themselves and with no borrowed brillianee. Warburton wondered if he himself were visible as clearly and with such atmosphere; and as the thought flashed in his mind he was struck still, arrested by the warning of his eyes. Under the tamarisks, lying into the neutral darkness of the sand and rocks, was the outstretched figure of a man. He was here, no doubt, as a sentinel, yet his attitude was such as justified the assumption that Warburton had not been seen. Manifestly, to gain the jetty and capture the boat privily was impossible; the adventure would be one of risks and of conflict. Warburton had to decide if he would be wise to make the attempt. He had a pistol, but there might be more than one watcher. In any case the affray must raise an alarm. He considered his courses carefully, and resolved to take the risk.

Creeping now within the tamarisks, so that he might not be observed, he went as silently as possible between the bushes, and presently judged that he had reached a spot above the sentinel. Then he dipped down again to the margin of the beach. He

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peered forth from his ambush, scarce drawing breath; and below him, still prone upon the sand, lay his victim. He had the air of a fisherman, or it might be that he was merely a servant of that house; but from his open fingers dropped a musket, and it appeared that the warm evening and the fresh airs of the sea, together with that silence and solitude, had turned him drowsy. He nodded, hovering between sleep and waking. Warburton leaped swiftly from the tamarisks upon him.

There was a short cry of alarm, followed by a gasp as Warburton's fingers settled about the man's throat—but he was beyond resistance, and lay quiet, his eyeballs protruding from the sockets as though in terror towards his assailant.

"My good fellow, indeed I must trouble you," said Warburton, politely. "You shall have no damage of head or limb, but only these finger-marks. I war not on such as you, who are put about to make a living, I dare say. You must be bound, friend."

He dragged the man towards the jetty, and discovered there some pieces of rope, with which he secured the fellow's hands and feet. "I have done the same for your master before this," he said, "and, please God, shall do again, and more also. I forget no favors and no debts."

He stood over the body of his victim, regarding him complacently, and now alive with genial sentiments. At his elbow the Carmichaels' huge boat lapped on the water, chafing gently against the jetty.

"I will make bold to borrow your tub," said he, cheerfully. "'Twill serve my turn, and you can still lie watching, gun in hand. You shall not have deserted your post, my good man."

Even as the ironical words left his lips he was

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aware of some change that passed over the man's expression, in the air, and, of a truth, in the very witness of his own senses. The next instant a sharp pain struck into his arm; there was a roar of sound, and he reeled about, his face towards a number of figures that broke out of the passage in the tamarisks. The situation exacted a solution forthwith. Fight or flight were the alternatives urgent upon him. They beset his resolution—the armed men hurrying towards him, and upon the other side the cutter swaying on her heavy chains. Yet neither was possible. He grasped this almost as an instinct, and simultaneously had taken the jetty in a bound, and was over the beach into the dense thicket, with the pursuers barking angrily upon his heels.

His strong, fine muscles carried him through the bushes at a good speed, and his weight assisted him. Though four or five were upon his track they had no chance to catch him, at least until he reached the open. The tamarisks gave way to a loose wood, heavily carpeted with creepers and ivies, and this ran up to a considerable height and poured over the brow of an eminence. By the time Warburton had gained the summit he was sure that he had outstripped the pursuit.

"Live to fight another day," he murmured, breathlessly, and examined his single weapon carefully. He was not greatly chagrined by the failure of his raid; on the contrary, he dismissed the thought and turned cheerfully to his next duty. He was agreeably hungry, not only from long abstinence, but from the wholesome air, and had no difficulty in deciding what must come next. He must forage on the island, and as he could not hope to break into the house, he would try the cave. Clearly, if the schooner were

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there, food and drink also would be there. He struck across the hill in the growing darkness with more confidence, but still with care and vigilance. He supposed that his flight up the hill had not been credited, but that they conceived him to have taken the easier way towards the back of the valley. Yet the island was so small that they would soon discover this error and make in a new direction. Night drew down, however, and befriended him once more, and now he found his way but slowly, for the lack of a moon. Stars were lit one by one in the heavens, and a host were soon shining out of mild white eyes. Several times he blundered as to his direction, but at last came into the blackness of a wood which appeared to him to be close upon the entrance to the passages. No sooner was he safe in this refuge than he heard the noise of feet, and hastily hid in the undergrowth. The sounds approached, and the faint glow of the sky discovered to him the tall form of Nicholas Carmichael, with a following. If these were they which had chased him by the sea, he could not guess, but evidently the hunt was still out. As they filed past, Nicholas Carmichael's voice was raised angrily against some other, cursing arrogantly, and a single word dropped into the listener's ears. It was but one word, and yet it had a significance for him. Nay, it set his brain to think and his heart to beat; for suddenly there was spread before him the plan and policy of these man-hunters. *Cordon* was the phrase spoken in the French jargon of the smugglers. This, then, was what they proposed. They would run a line of sentinels across Lynsea and beat up the island, slowly and patiently driving him to his doom, till he either died or surrendered to die, or was thrust for refuge into the roaring pools of the

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Skittles. He stared after the vanished party, and then jumped to his feet.

"'Tis well," said he, grimly; "they have left the way open. Whence they have come I go," and began to move fast towards the spot which he had marked in his memory.

He was not long in hitting upon the juniper-bush and, bending low, crept into its recesses. This brought him, as he saw, into a thicket of junipers huddled close together; and here, by groping, he came presently upon a huge rock. Below this yawned a cavity very much like a great rabbit-hole, but worn smooth with the constant passage of bodies. This was the entrance to the smugglers' cavern. Warburton let himself carefully down, and found the way slope gradually, and the burrow rise to the height of a man standing. He pressed forward, therefore, with ease, and even with celerity, for all the darkness that hung round him. Fifty paces brought him round a turn in this earthen gallery, and before him opened the vast spaces of the internal vault, filled with the murmur of water and glowing with twilight. It was as he had supposed: the gallery gave access to the cave, yet was used only by passengers going to and fro, and not for the transport of goods.

The light which dimly illuminated the cavern streamed from two flaring torches upon the shore, and beyond these rose the graceful figure of the schooner, silent, dispeopled, and riding like a phantom in that light. There was no mark or witness of the presence of man. Yet the schooner had but newly arrived, for the floor of the cave was the theatre of abandoned activity—strewn with barrels and bales in great confusion. Warburton could conjecture how highly his silence was rated, seeing that Nicho-

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las Carnichael had deserted this busy scene with all hands to accomplish his capture. The irony of his presence there pleased him and moved him to a grin. Then he began to move towards the schooner, still watchful and alert. He encountered no one, and presently, relaxing his vigilance, he gave his attention to the merchandise that was scattered over the cave. Most of the bales and barrels had been freshly landed, and stood upon the margin of the sea; but behind these was a great pile of casks reaching almost to the roof of the vault. His hunger and his thirst oppressed him, and urged him to an exploration. It was probable that some one or more of these barrels had been tapped for the convenience of the smugglers who spent so many difficult and earnest hours of work here; and consequently he bent his steps towards the pyramid of casks. They were of many sizes, but offered no evidence as to their contents. Wine he desired, but brandy would content him. He searched vainly for a tap or cock in those innumerable kegs. Just as he was giving up in despair, and was proposing an examination of the schooner, he noticed that one of the casks lay haphazard upon a ledge of rock, upon which it had evidently fallen from a tier in the pyramid. The hoops that encased it were bent and broken, and to his eyes it seemed that the wood-work bulged and a hole gaped. He went towards it, thinking that he had at last found what he wanted—a vent for the good French liquor—but came to a pause in disappointment. A hole had been riven in the barrel below, where the point of rock had taken it; it must be empty. He put a hand upon it to roll it over, but was astonished by an unexpected resistance. The cask was not empty. It flashed into his thoughts

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that it must contain tobacco; and as he looked, the keg, shaken under his rough hand, moved slightly, and a thin black stream of granulated dust poured forth from the rent upon the rock. It was gunpowder.

Warburton stood still for a time after this discovery. It set him thinking deeper than before. Why was this powder stacked in the cavern? The problem cried for an answer, but received none. He abandoned his search and walked towards the beach where the torches were streaming. He climbed the side of the schooner, and began to ransack the cabin. Presently he came upon some meat, some biscuits, and a long bottle of brandy. This last was admirable to the palate, very light and fine, and it filled the head with thin and spirited fumes. He sat and ate and drank not sparingly. In the midst of this task he was disturbed by a fresh sound that broke on his ears and set him frowning. It issued from a cabin near by, and he promptly made search there. The light was strong enough for him to determine the body of a man lying on the floor among some empty boxes. Warburton stooped over him, and the heavy breathing told the tale of his condition. Moreover, he recognized the fellow as the man whom Carmichael had addressed in that cave previously as Ditran. It was the French captain. He had a quick inspiration.

"Monsieur Ditran," said he, politely, "I will make free of your pockets, if you have no objection. Sure, I am pushed too hard to be particular."

He went over the man's effects carefully, and was not opposed by that drunken creature. Presently he stopped, examined the signature upon a paper, started, and eagerly examined it again. Fi-

WARBURTON MAKES A DISCOVERY

nally he turned it over and scrutinized the superscription.

It was in French, inscribed to Sir Stephen Carmichael, the address was "The Camp, Boulogne," and the signature was "Napoleon."

H





CHAPTER X

SIR STEPHEN CARMICHAEL SWOONS

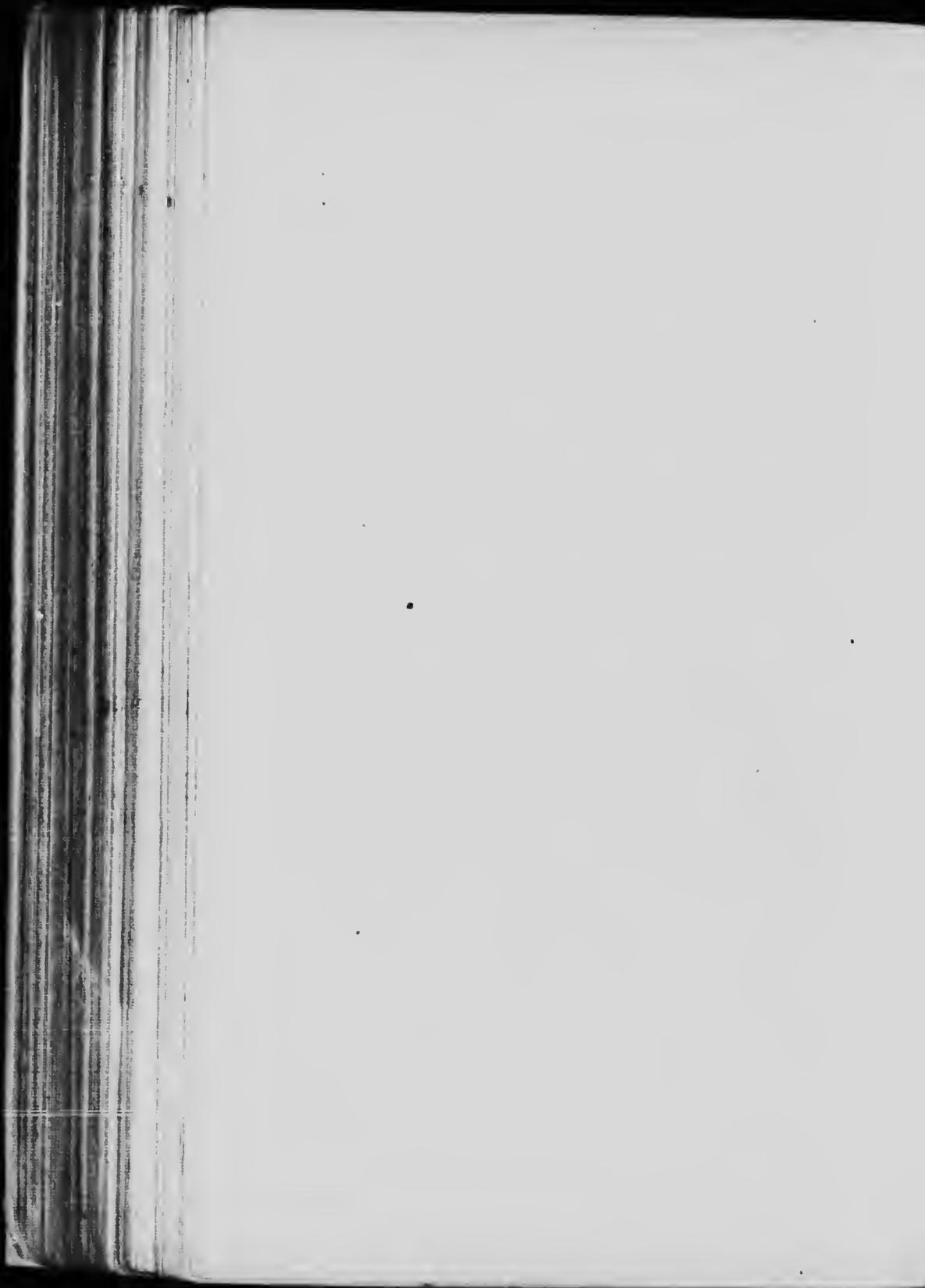
WARBURTON stood with the letter in his hand, surveying it, in that uncertain light with a heart that throbbed beyond its habit. The vista of a history spread out before him and narrowed into the distance. There was that in his knowledge now that would string up these Carmichaels higher than Haman. He interpreted the letter boldly and with wit; there was no chance to go behind it; it scored a deeper crime upon that family. Sir Stephen Carmichael, he remembered, had purchased the island some thirteen years since. Whence had he come? No doubt his record might be traced, if it were of any value to trace a record in the past, with these infamous witnesses to his treason. The man himself had spoken of his Irish blood, and there was the fount of this treachery. Away upon the coast of the Pas-de-Calais lay the vast army of the Emperor which had been gathered for the destruction of England. He waited there upon his fleet, but he was known to have agents in Great Britain, spies and go-betweens, that would carry him information and stir up the disaffected elements of the kingdom. It had been always the hope of these Irish rebels to obtain the assistance of the French; they had conspired for that end a dozen times, and many had perished in the conspiracy.



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WARBURTON STOOD WITH THE LETTER IN HIS HAND



SIR STEPHEN SWOONS

There was ever a cry across the water to the partisans of the Revolution. Houses had been dishonored for it, men had died for it, and women had wept. Well, there was one more house for dishonor, one more man for death, and one more woman for tears. He understood now the meaning of those kegs of powder, so carefully stored in the vault. Nay, he had a clearer appreciation of the hostility of the Carmichaels towards himself. They were not only smugglers; that trade was but a feint—they were something greatly worse. They had a deeper secret to guard than even he had fancied.

He put the letter in his pocket and went back to his food. He had no fear of that comatose hog that grunted on the floor. . . . lively emotion of triumph filled and inspired him and moved him to exhilaration, so that he drank deeply and was borne upon brandy into a yet greater intoxication. When he reflected upon what he had in store against the Carmichaels he could have laughed aloud. He grew restless to be about this business, and, finishing his glass, clambered hastily over the side of the ship, and made his way to the gallery by which he had entered.

He issued into the night among the junipers with the soft cool breath of the wind in his face, and that face he set steadily towards the house of the Carmichaels. His brain, usually slow and calm, was so quick and hot now that he scarcely considered into what he might be advancing. Somewhere upon the eastern corners of Lynsea was the cordon moving upon him slowly, quietly, as irresistibly as fate. Yet towards this he marched. A cunning thought held him: that they would not look for a second attempt upon the jetty and the cutter, but would trust to finding him hidden in the coverts of that island.

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So he picked his road to the valley of the homestead.

The spirit he had drunk mounted in his head and drove him forward recklessly. He thirsted for an encounter, all his customary prudence dispersed by the ascending fumes; and in the grove of tamarisks which he had now reached he turned uncertainly, with his gaze towards the invisible house. At length he altered his direction, and, instead of moving downward to the beach, began to climb by the devious pathways towards the gardens. The silent, indifferent stars held the sky, free of cloud or wind; outside the gentle sounds of the ocean there was nothing broke the stillness and peace of the homestead. The house stood before him, a dim mass of whiteness, and out of one shining eye poured the rays of a candle in an upper storey. He drew nearer, and as he did so noises streamed from the declivities towards the east, betraying to him the approach of the hunters. Laughing softly, he crossed the terrace, and put his face against the window nearest, peering in. Then he turned the handle, which gave, and he entered for the first time that house of traitors. He closed the window gently and looked out upon the lawn, and he thought that he could make out a figure passing by. "Twas just in time," said he to himself. "None will look for me here, and I shall be free of the boat when they go by." He left the window and felt his way along the wall, until he happened upon a door, which opening, he passed through and found himself in an ill-lighted chamber. It was long, and lined to the ceiling with books; a library, the place of a student rather than of smugglers and assassins. Assiduously his glance went about the walls, prying into dark corners, and then, passing the

SIR STEPHEN SWOONS

single faintly burning lamp, lighted upon a gray shadow at the far end of the room.

Sir Stephen Carmichael sat in a huge chair, a book resting on his knee, and his quick, fine eyes fastened upon the intruder. He was so still and equable in his bearing that Warburton doubted if he were not asleep, or dead, maybe; and that long and shrunken body looked somewhat pitiful and frail, as if inviting compassion, not the deadly penalty of sin. Yet no such thought made any appeal to Warburton, who saw before him one that harbored criminals, and was himself the most criminal of all—a traitor to his king and country. He was glad to be thrust thus upon his enemy in the heat and ardor of his vengeance; his mind contemplated no mercy, doubted not, nor wavered. Full and serenely master of itself, yet shaken with a warm intestine passion, his will confronted Sir Stephen; and before something in that iron regard the old man winced and quailed. He had, in truth, spent uncomfortable days for some time past. Alert as was his fancy, and vigorous his intellect, he paid the debt of his race in a certain odd superstition of mind. He was held by spells, and swayed by signs and tokens which duller blood would not recognize. Luck and fate were not mere words to him, nor even ethereal and intangible abstractions used to mark and cover our ignorance; they were fiercely real and had fought till now for him with incredible constancy. Yet the advent of this cool-eyed stranger had struck him with doubt, then with impatience, and at last with dismay. He had not realized how greatly separate were these two spirits that differently animated his own race and that of Warburton. The stubbornness of the younger man alarmed him, and, above all, his trick of secrecy; it

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loomed formidable before him. Here was no loose blabbing tongue, with the common English phlegm but that intolerable and maddening quiet, with good temper, resistance, silence, and a strong will which was apparent in every word or act. Sir Stephen Carmichael was growing old, and suffered physically and maybe it was in part owing to this failing power that he had lost confidence; yet he had still authority over his features, and nothing appeared on his face of all this as he looked on Warburton—as little, indeed, as was written upon the young man's cold and smiling countenance.

"I have trespassed a third time, sir," said the latter bowing ceremoniously.

"No doubt this time with a better excuse, Mr. Warburton," replied the old man, quietly. "Yet I beg you will get on with your business and be done, for I can ill support a long interview."

"Ah, sir," said Warburton, gravely, "indeed I grieve to see one of your honorable family in such an evil plight. 'Tis the gout you suffer from, I believe."

"I pray you, sir, make haste and be done," said Sir Stephen, impatiently.

"My dear sir," said Warburton, with a great effusion of manner, "I will do my best to oblige you. I will come to the point, and that is one which will prick you pretty nearly, if I am a judge." Sir Stephen waved his hand with some nervous irritation. "I am a slow, dull-witted fellow," resumed the other, "and I would not pit myself against such bright creatures as your sons, but I can put two and two together to make four."

"It would sometimes be best that they should make only three, Mr. Warburton," said Sir Stephen, slowly.

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"Aye; I take your meaning, sir," returned Warburton. "You are good enough to warn me, as I have been warned before by your forethought. But this I assure you, that my mind is mathematical, and in sums of addition I can make no mistake. No, sir, I must make it four, and four I make it."

"Well, sir?" said Sir Stephen, sardonically, for he was now sharp and resolute, quite master of himself.

"Well, I have no long business with you, sir," went on Warburton. "It is soon told, and the telling is that, in return for your good consideration of me, I am to offer you back a warning on your own part. I warn you that I hold your secret."

Sir Stephen laughed gently. "My faith, sir, but this is ancient history," he said. "I think we are all agreed upon what you know, Mr. Warburton, and agreed upon this, too, that what you know is dangerous, and that you should be suffered to exchange it for something else."

"You are graciousness itself," said he, "but I think you do not catch my meaning, sir. I have said that I hold your secret, and I leave you to guess how much that means. There may be anything between a trifle and a matter of supreme gravity in such a phrase."

"I am no hand at guessing," said Sir Stephen; but his face had undergone a slight change; its expression was set, and his voice was quieter.

"Yet I may not leave without acquainting you," said Warburton. "Let me jog your wit, sir, which should be sharp, being Irish." The old man cast him a searching glance, and slowly lifted his book from his knee.

"I am afraid that your efforts are vain, sir," he said. "I know you to be a dangerous man, and you have the credit of that compliment. But I am in no humor

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to talk with you, and it is not customary to pl guess-work of business. Say what you must s and go."

He spoke with asperity, and also with dignity; b Warburton even now could not deny himself the satiric faction of using his fears as a cat does those of a captured mouse. He knew well enough that Sir Stephen Carmichael was wondering exactly how much he knew, was fearing that he knew all, yet was warily resolved not to go too far in his speech until he had discovered.

"It may be, sir," said Warburton, "that I wrong you in supposing you privy to these things. You yourself shall be the judge of that. But there is no doubt that this property of yours is used for the Free Trade, and that one of your sons, at least, is a partner in it."

"Why, that is so, as I believe, Mr. Warburton," said Sir Stephen, politely; and there came into his voice a faint note of relief.

"'Tis a serious matter, sir," said Warburton.

"No doubt 'tis that," said the other, nodding. "I will make you a present of it. I dare say that you can manage it with Nicholas. I leave it in his hands."

The thrust made Warburton smile. "Once more I can only bow to your generosity, sir," he said.

"And now, if I may conclude our business is over," went on Sir Stephen, pointing at the door. "You will perhaps do me the favor to retire, and maybe you shall find my son ready to your hand."

"Nay, my dear sir, but that is half only of my business," interposed Warburton, lightly. "There is more behind." The baronet sank back heavily into his chair, with his arms along the wood-work and his moving eyes upon his tormentor. "I had the privi-

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lege to make a new discovery this day. 'Twas an accident, but I bless my long legs that took me thither. Do you know some caves upon the island, sir? Well, there is a very drunken sailor at this moment in hiding there, who parted with some news to me not an hour since."

Sir Stephen stirred. "What news?" he asked, shortly, but his gaze never left Warburton's face, shifting over it tensely and vigilantly.

"Why, the cave is full of gunpowder," said he.

"Indeed; I know not what their merchandise may be," said Sir Stephen. "You tell me news. Gunpowder, is it?"

"Good wine, sir—good wine and good brandy, if I may judge from what I have drunk in Marlock. But on occasion powder, there's no doubt."

"'Tis very interesting," remarked the baronet.

"Yes, sir, and there is more behind that. This drunken Frenchman is possessed of strange papers." Sir Stephen started visibly, and then controlled himself. "And one of them I borrowed lest he should lose it. Indeed, as 'twas addressed to yourself, I made free to make myself a post for you. Maybe you will recognize the hand of your correspondent," and with that he drew the letter from his pocket and displayed it before the old man's eyes.

But he was silent for a time, showing now no emotion on his face, and then he said, slowly: "What use, sir, is it, that you will make of all this? I imagine that it is not for a jest that you come to tell me this."

"You are right," said Warburton, soberly. "I am not used to waste my time, even though the sport should tempt me. I tell you this because I desire to give you a warning, as I have said."

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"You mean," said Sir Stephen, "that you would make some terms with us."

"No, I will have no damnable compromise," said he, with an oath. "It is not for that I have spent my time and run my risks here. I swore to hunt down those that accomplished the foul murder of my friend, and those that abetted it. But in a little, sir, I found the task widen under my hand, and you know how that came about. I seek a cruel assassin, and what do I find? Why, a nest of traitors, a pack of bravos — a house that holds not one single member but is contaminated with its disease and vice. This island harbors and feeds a brood of vipers, and they must perish. That is my warning."

Sir Stephen Carmichael's eyes wandered restlessly over the young man's face, as he spoke with this heat and not a little dignity; but his tone was unchanged in his reply.

"You forget, Mr. Warburton, that it is you who have had your warning, and now stand in some danger."

"From your son!" said he, with an exclamation of angry impatience. "From your son! Do you think I do not know that? I am quite aware how I stand, and that the island is being beat for me this very moment. And if I am taken, do you suppose I do not understand what that signifies? Bah! but I shall not be taken; and I am here, because I am of that confidence, to warn you."

His words flowed quickly and with more feeling than he was accustomed to exhibit, yet his senses were not greatly dulled by that emotion. Out of the tail of his eye he saw Sir Stephen's hand go slowly, as if stricken with palsy, across the arm of the chair and pass in that decrepitude to a little round table

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that stood by. The act was noticed, yet hardly appreciated until of a sudden he made a discovery in another glance. One swift step took him to the table, and the next instant he had snatched up the pistol that lay upon it, with which between his fingers he turned fiercely upon the other.

"What the devil!" said he, blazing with his passion. "You would butcher me so coolly as that? By Heaven! but I think these Carmichaels be the very spawn of Satan, with their handsome looks and foul treachery. There is no vice this blood of yours does not hold, and you shall all swing together for it—by God! you shall."

Sir Stephen's hand still rested upon the table. "Sir," said he, "I was about to have said ere this gross and unmannerly outbreak that it was not from my son that you stood in danger, but rather from myself first. Nay, not that pistol," he said, nodding coolly towards it. "I am no friend to such methods. But I was considering that, after such discoveries as you have made to me, and what has passed, there is no choice left you but to give me the honor of a meeting."

"A meeting!" said Warburton, in amazement. "You are bed-rid, man."

"You cannot escape on that plea," said Sir Stephen, with a sneer, and for the first time there leaped in his face a look of Nicholas—a look of black and angry passion. "If you will be good enough to take down that pair of swords behind you—"

"Sir Stephen," said Warburton, more coolly, "you know not what you are about. I may not fight with a crippled man."

"You fear," he said, sharply. "Give me the sword."

"I will give you no such thing," said Warburton, obstinately.

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Sir Stephen's eyes flashed in a fresh blaze. "I will take a course to make you, coward!" he cried, harshly, and as if with a wrench rose in his chair and flung the iron inkstand sharply at Warburton's head. It struck him in the neck, opening a red and ragged wound below the ear, and the victim of this unexpected outbreak fell back before the blow, and then leaped forward.

"Now, some one shall judge between us, whether 'tis you or I play the coward," he said, between his teeth, and he threw one of the swords towards his assailant. Sir Stephen Carmichael leaned back upon the table, supporting himself in position with one hand upon the oak. He thrust out his weapon, and the two blades encountered, and fell away. Leaning forward with his weight partly on his wrist, his leg motionless, his body gently moving, but his arm swift, certain, and deadly, Sir Stephen Carmichael applied his point with every artifice of the experienced swordsman, and with much of the suppleness and dexterity which had once been his. He was chained to his table, but he could make the points; and his defence was greatly superior to his enemy's attack. Warburton flung himself upon it in vain, now wholly oblivious of the disability to which he had previously objected. The old man fought like an accomplished duellist, and kept him at bay, with a little devilish smile in his lips and the ferocity of Nicholas glancing in his eyes.

The light was low, so low as to impede that conflict, but it was the older man's sight that suffered the more. He contented himself with steady, dispassionate resistance, and Warburton's temper rose with his ineffectual attempts. He came harder, and was pierced in the shoulder; the grin stiffened on Sir Stephen's face. Warburton broke away, and with an impatient

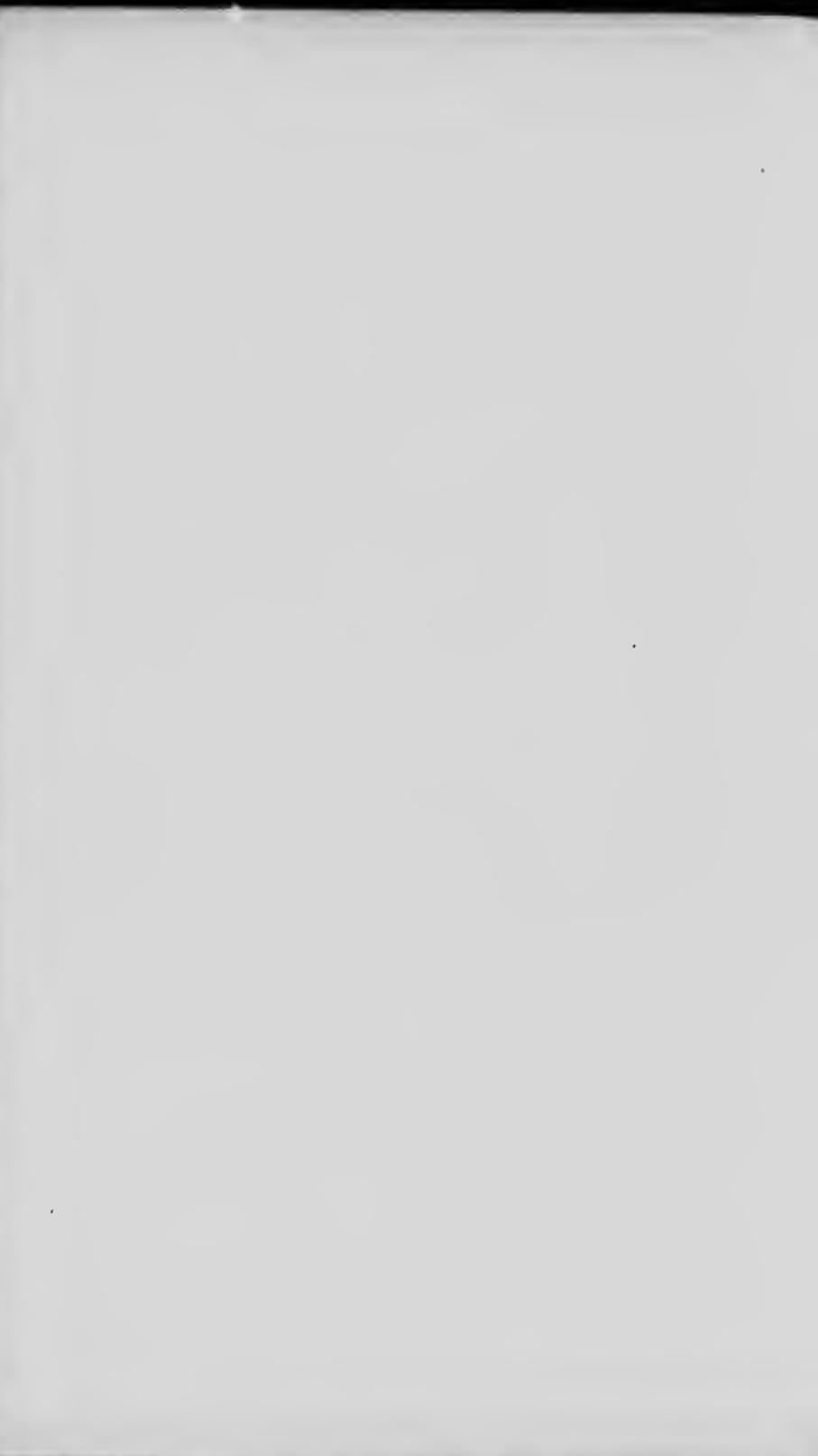
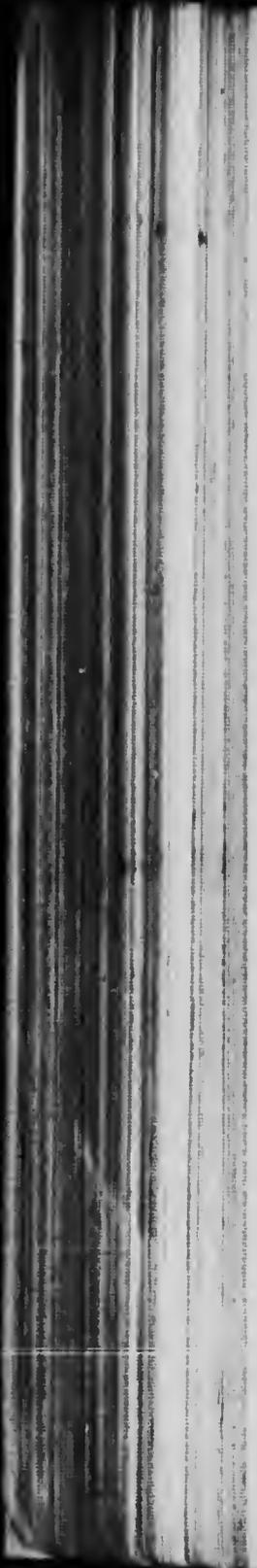
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SIR STEPHEN LEANED BACK UPON THE TABLE SUPPORTING HIMSELF



SIR STEPHEN SWOONS

oath hung upon the attack. His muscles were lean, tough, and flawless; he was fitted for continuous endurance; and the play heightened his spirits and his enjoyment. The prick in his shoulder goaded him, and he settled down to a grim beleaguerment. But this course in time wore down the older man's strength. His sword went to and fro with the same fierce mechanical skill, but falteringly, more slowly, and with less precision. The power in his body, which had fast, went out like a tide that races seaward over a league of sands, and Warburton read the truth in his yellowing face and ensanguined eyes. Sir Stephen breathed hardly, and doubted not what he saw in the other's face. It was death that must be written there—the death which he had himself invited. What concerned him most was this painful struggling, this dull and formal resistance, that drew his blood like drops of sweat and turned his arms and shoulders to lead. His looks seemed almost to plead for the end, and his point wagged feebly in the air. Warburton stood off and dropped his weapon to the floor with a clatter. He laughed.

"You want death, old man," said he. "By God! you shall not have it that way. You cannot choose your end, as you will learn. It was a fine thought to make me the instrument, but you know that it is not possible. I was a fool to be tempted. I am no hangman." The words were brutal enough, but Sir Stephen did not wince; he only stared, unable indeed to make answer for his heavy breathing. Observing him, Warburton turned away angrily. "By Heaven!" he cried, "it was a damnable trick to drag me into it. You would have me a butcher, and an old man my sheep. Not I—not I. I will leave you to the proper hands, and what revenge you have baulked I

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will seek elsewhere. There are others of your blood I will have my stroke at all."

He turned on his way to the door with a sneer and an ugly laugh; and Sir Stephen followed him with his look.

"Where do you go?" he gasped, in alarm.

"Why?" said Roger Warburton, aflame with the heat of this recent contest, as well as with the heady spirit. "Why, this house, I think, stands desolate. There is none here but one."

"That is I," cried the old man. "True, that is I."

"Nay, not you, but another," said Warburton, recklessly, "and her I shall find above. There is a light that twinkles in an upper window. It beams kindly upon me; faith, it called me from the night; it hailed me across the hills. I shall be welcome."

"You lie!" cried Sir Stephen, hoarsely, and was shaken like a reed.

"Nay, I speak verity," said Warburton, laughing. "Ask to-morrow, and you shall be answered."

"It is—it is her—" The attempted words failed in the old man's mouth as the door shut with a clang behind Warburton. He rose to his feet, struggled to follow, and, tottering, fell with a groan into his chair, unconscious.





CHAPTER XI

THE UPPER ROOM

A BROAD low stairway rose from the hall into which Warburton was come, and ascended in short stages to the upper floor. Windows with mullions looked out upon the valley by day from these high landings, and gleamed by night with jewelled eyes. The wood was ancient oak; it was black and naked and shining under the light, and Warburton's footfalls rang low and deep and loud as he mounted on his way to what his wild whirling brain and giddy purpose designed. A window stood open upon the head of the stair, giving upon a black, mild night, still as a graveyard, and fragrant with the breath of flower and sea. A little low moaning entered out of the darkness, seeming to reach from an infinite distance away somewhere upon the horizon—babbling, continuous, and very weak and pitiful.

These sounds upon that silence struck Warburton's ear pleasantly. He heard in his fancy the sea lapping about the crags of the Skittles, as when he had been forced upon his perilous voyage; so he heard it now, but lamentable, crying like a child or some poor crone; not angry nor menacing nor sullen, but whimpering, taken up in a plaintive melancholy, like one driven to despair and knowing no refuge or recovery. There was no doubt but he had triumphed over the

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

Carmichaels; he had turned their fortunes and would humble them in the dust. They should cry for mercy to him, if any of that proud, rebellious house might cry. And now he was assured of his just vengeance upon all. The thought stung him strangely into an excitement which sent his blood newly bounding in his heart. The hunters were upon the hills, out upon the chase, and the quarry lay here, safe as a fox in his earth, and with his teeth in an unexpected victim. What vengeance he might not wreak upon the father that would he exact of the child—nay, of all the children of that abominable blood. Animal they were, and as animals they should atone, whether they died or lived, and in what kind soever they paid the debt.

Warburton's mood was by no means so simple as it seemed, even to himself. It was a plexus of sentiments that moved him—indignation, the resolution of an obstinate character, the memory of wrongs, the lust and pride of conflict, a certain fierce brutality, and along with them interweaving and mutable emotions, an incentive sharper than them all, a strong personal fire that swarmed and burned in his vitals. He had never refused to recognize his admiration of Chloris Carmichael; she kindled in him an intestine war that had rent and ravaged his stout spirit. But though he could not in his honesty shut his eyes to a great fact, he could stare and pass by. Her beauty would have melted him like wax had he not been of so desperate a purpose; the memory of it followed him now in his upward passage, taking him in the nostrils like a strong fragrance that sets the heart throbbing and the throat to gasp. He felt himself free at this moment to give rein to his admiration; he would no longer stare and go by, and there was delirium in the

THE UPPER ROOM

thought of this unaccustomed license, with which his head whirled, and every sense, awake and wide and delicate, cried out, drumming and thrilling under that magical influence. His body was become of a sudden a most populous and changing scene of sensations; variable flaws flew over his consciousness, now hot, now cold, but dancing, intangible, indistinguishable, and charged with an immeasurable power; and under all was one high tide drawing him onwards, set for one shore, and throbbing heavily as it drew.

His passionate pulse ceased as he knocked on the door and awaited an answer. The sound of his feet had gone up before him, and came softly, like muffled echoes, to Chloris Carmichael's ears. She rose from her chair and threw back her copper-red hair.

"Who is that?" said she, under her breath. "'Tis not Nick, and it cannot be Philip. He has too great a tread; he comes deliberate."

She listened to the footsteps, which came to cease outside her room, and there fell the still small knock, as it were of some one humble begging for admission, or of one, maybe, that knew he was welcome.

"Who is that?" said she again, wondering. "There is none of the servants walks like that. He comes too confident."

She stood, her hand trembling upon the deep, worn, oaken sill of the window that was an eye upon the park, the dress over her bosom rising and falling more quickly now, her wild gray eyes alight and frightened. There came a sound of knocking once more, still very low and quiet.

"Who is there?" she called, and made a step forward, but drew back.

"'Tis I," said Roger Warburton, in his cool, clear voice. "'Tis I; let me in."

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

"You may not come here," she cried, putting one hand to her heart. "Mr. Warburton, you must go."

"'Tis I," he said, in the same clear tones. "'Tis I; open to me, Chloris."

"What do you want in this house?" she cried, with increasing agitation audible in her note. "There is no safety here."

"I am not in search of safety," he answered. "Open."

"What do you seek?" she asked, wildly.

"What I seek I shall find," he answered from the back of the door. "Open—open."

Chloris was at the door, and she wavered; then set back the latch with a swift, convulsive action of her shaking fingers; the handle turned, and Warburton stood before her in the room. She made no movement from him, but stood regarding him with a warmth of color in her face, and changing, flickering eyes.

"What do you want here, Mr. Warburton?" she asked, in a voice which had been steadied by an effort. "This is no place for you. Why are you not gone?"

"I am come for you," he replied.

"You should have left the island," she went on, swiftly, paying this no heed. "It was rash and foolish—it was a crime in you to delay. And what do you here, in the heart of this very house that hates you?"

"There is one that does not hate me," said he.

She struck her hand passionately against the wainscot. "I—I abhor you!" she cried. "Get you gone out of my sight! I will never see you more! I call God to witness, I will never see you more!"

He answered nothing to that outbreak, but fastened his gaze upon her wonderful face. "I am come for you, Chloris," he repeated.

THE UPPER ROOM

"You are in danger," she sobbed. "I warn you that you are in danger. Who is below? Where are they hidden? How did you enter? Have you slain them all—father and brothers?" she sobbed.

"Nay," he said, "but they are out hunting me upon the hills; the house is deserted; there is no one here within sound or sight."

"They will come back," she said, weeping. "They will not leave the house unguarded. They may be here at any moment. Please go, before they return and find you."

"They will not find me," he answered, quietly.

She sprang towards him furiously. "You—you—What is it you mean? You shall go into the night and die where you will. They shall catch you on the hills. I will hand you over to them, and they will kill you. You are a coward, and a spy, and a traitor. The gallows is your due. I thank my God that I have still two brothers to rid the world of such as you."

"Cease, Chloris," said he, with authority. "I tell you I am here for you. Understand me. Faith, child, it is no use to struggle against your fate. It is your destiny that what I will that you shall do."

"I will do nothing of what you will, but only what is my will," she said, pitifully.

"Child, your will is mine," he answered. "Come, give me your hand," and he took the hot, quivering fingers in his grasp, and set it to her beating bosom. "I know what is that pulse and how it throbs."

"It comes of hate!" she broke out.

"Nay, but love," he said, clutching the struggling fingers tighter. "Do not fight me like a bird that fights the hawk. That is folly, Chloris. You love me; look in my eyes. Yours, my dear, are round and

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

sweet and wild—a great gray sea that breaks tumultuously. You think that love is drowned there—overwhelmed by this storm of fury. It is nothing of the sort. Wait a little, and I shall see it rise again, warm, soft, and beautiful. Chloris, look in my eyes. You shall not drop your lashes.” He seized her face between his hands and held her to the light, flushing bright and hot, and shaken with alarm. “There it rises,” he said. “It is a resurrection from that great sea. She gives up her dead. Dead! Faith, not so—’tis alive and quick. Chloris, my sweet, you are a handsome liar. You love me. By Heaven! you love me.”

Her eyes, naked and transparent, glowed upon him, and he drew the face nearer till his lips pressed full upon hers. Then she drew back, snatching herself, as it were, with a great wrench, out of the peril that she feared.

“I will bring Nick upon you,” she said, convulsively. “You are cruel to be here.”

“I can make no discrimination between words so delicately,” he returned, caressing her. “Let Nick come. Cruel! Indeed, I know not; I give no time to words. ’Tis what I feel and do that interests me.”

“But you are our enemy,” she cried, still resisting. They say you are sworn to destroy us. I may not love you.”

“Aye,” said Warburton “’tis true, I am foe to this family. I believe I am worse. I think there is none of whom this house of Carmichaels stands in such dread. It is impossible that there should be anything but hostility between us.”

“Yet you come here!” she cried. “You say you love me. What would you do? Ah! why are you here?”

“I am here to exact vengeance,” he answered,

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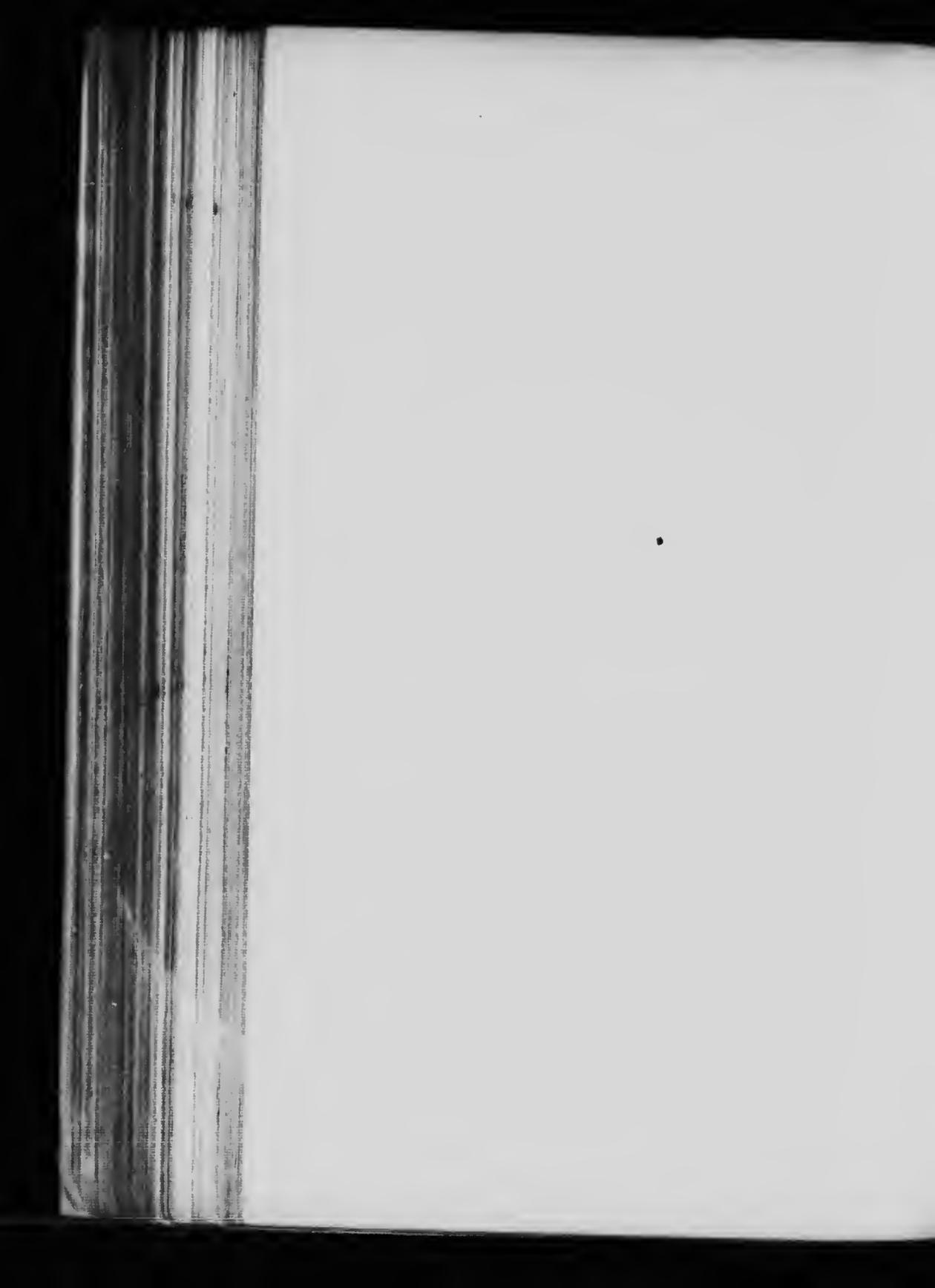
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“CHILDREN, YOU LOVE ME!”



THE UPPER ROOM

grimly. "Your father and your brothers lie in my power. I have the noose about them. I vowed I would wipe out the blood that ran such a color."

"I may not love you," she said, and moved to the window, her face now lowered. "'Tis wrong in you to ask this of me. 'Tis unnatural."

Warburton smiled, for in his eyes was the light of triumph. "Unnatural!" he echoed her. "No, my dear, but very much in tune with my feelings and yours. I read you like an open page. I am come to take vengeance on your house."

She shook again with a swift succession of emotions. "Would you take vengeance on a woman?" she cried, pitifully.

"Aye," said he, "on a woman, were she you."

"What! on me, on me?" she wailed, covering up her face.

"I read you like an open page," he said, again. "I can compel you, Chloris. I give not a curse what motives press me; I know that I love you, and where my hand is laid, there it stays. I am frank to you, for I love to see your face and its fears. But I shall claim you, child—you are mine."

"I am not yours," she answered, passionately. "I am myself; I am my own. Do you think a Carmichael is slave to any? You can take no vengeance on me, unless you slay me. Here!" she cried, in a sharper and more resolute voice, and pointing at her heaving bosom—"Strike here! Yes; you shall strike here and slay me. Execute your revenge in this house, if you will. I have nothing to oppose to it. There is a dagger to your hand. I bid you strike!"

Even in the full quick rush of his hot feelings, Warburton was arrested by some thought which rose up like a warning post before him. His course, so

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swift and giddy as it had become, yet was stayed for a moment by a suspicion—a vague and distant realization—that here was something different from what he had looked for. This voice and cry called from another spirit than he had imagined—a fainter spirit, a more innocent spirit; the soul of a child rather than of a woman. But the fancy flashed and was gone; his speed was so headlong that he might not tarry to analyze the situation.

"I will not slay you," he said. "Men do not kill what they love. You are mine."

He took her in his arms, and once more her mood yielded and she wept.

"Cruel! You hate me and my race," she sobbed.

"Nay, not you," said he; "but your race is evil. You come of a black blood, Chloris. Come, why do you weep? It is foolish. Is this the hard heart that is sorry for herself, and laughed a month ago at a poor man's death?"

"I knew not he was dead," she sobbed. "I thought 'twas but a quarrel."

And again something was stirred uncomfortably in Warburton's hot brain, but it passed; he drew her closer still.

"Weep not," he said, softly.

"I weep not for myself," she said. "I know not why I weep. It may be that I weep for the brothers and the father you would destroy."

"Sweetheart," said he, "fear not! 'Tis enough that you love me."

The breath of her nostrils stirred upon his neck. "I love you; I love you!" she whispered, brokenly.

"Why, dear, I knew it from the first," said he. "I am sworn against your house, yet you love me, and shall do as I desire."



CHAPTER XII

THE EYES OF CHLORIS

SUDDENLY there was a knocking upon the door. The girl stood for a moment aghast, and then ran with swift speed and shot the bolt softly and inaudibly, turning a blanched face to Warburton.

"Chloris, Chloris," called Nicholas Carmichael's voice. She was deathly white and deathly silent, and her features were in the grasp of a rigid terror.

"Chloris, it is I, open," cried Nicholas Carmichael, as Warburton had cried some time before.

"What is it you want?" answered Chloris, at last. "You are too late to enter."

"Pooh!" said her brother. "Let me in, and be not foolish. I desire some talk with you," and he rattled the handle of the door in his impatience.

"You cannot enter, Nicholas!" she cried, breathing deeply, and with some vehemence in her voice. "I am— 'Tis too late. I am not prepared for you."

"Damme!" said Nicholas. "Why all this ceremony?"

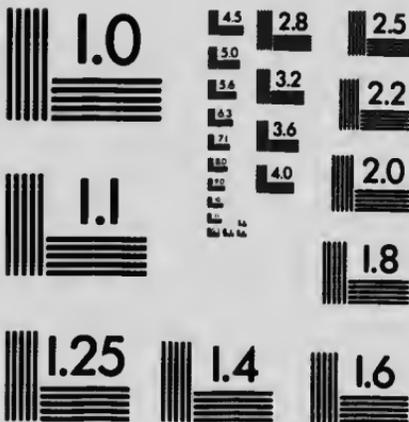
"I am disrobed!" she cried, with a gasp in her throat; and on that followed a little silence. "What is it you want with me? I will dress and come to you."

"Open the door," he said, roughly, and shook it again. She cast a terrified look on Warburton, who



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CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

had stood still, his face inanimate, watching her dispassionately now, and even with a look of wonder. He made a sign, and, stepping back, put the lamp low, shrinking into the shadows. Chloris unbolted the door and faced her brother.

"Are you gone to bed?" he asked.

She held herself within the darkness lest he should perceive. "'Tis late," she said. "What want you?"

"Chloris, there is some damnable business afoot," he said, angrily. "Have you seen my father?"

"Nay," she answered, "I left him in the library reading."

"True—there he lay when I came in. But why? Know you why we are on the hills to-night?"

"There is a cargo run?" she suggested, faintly.

"Would that leave the house deserted?" he asked, with a sneer. "'Tis that damned meddler, Warburton. We had a line across the island to catch him, but he has escaped us. He entered the house."

She uttered a cry.

"'Tis my father says so," went on Nicholas. "There was a duel, and the devil left him for dead. Whither did he go, I ask you? He entered the house; his feet went up the stairs."

"Went up the stairs?" she echoed, blankly.

"Aye," said he. "Do you know anything? Have you heard anything? You have been awake."

"I—I—dozed," she murmured.

"It is nonsense," said he. "You would hear such sounds."

"It may be he went lightly," she said.

"You must have heard him," he urged, impatiently. "Come, Chloris, it is important that I should know. He holds all our lives, damn him! Did you hear no noise?"

THE EYES OF CHLORIS

"There was only the sound of the sea," she replied, after a pause, "and a bird that sang in the thickets."

"Pish!" said he. "What do you tremble at?"

"What would you do with him, Nicholas?" she asked, tremulously.

"Hang him to the cedar; throw him on the Frenchmen's knives—I care not what, but he shall never leave Lynsea alive. Why do you tremble? Your voice shakes. What is it you fear?"

"I—I fear for you, Nicholas," she answered, brokenly.

He laughed. "Better fear for him," he said, scornfully.

"I fear for my father," she said.

"True; he is desperately ill," he answered. "You may fear for him. It lies against that man, Warburton. There was a sound of weeping in the room, sister. How came you weeping?"

"I was weeping for myself, brother," she answered.

"Bah! what have you to weep for? We Carmichaels are of stiffer stuff. You are no pap-child with day-dreams."

"I have no mother, Nicholas; she is long dead," said she, very low to hear.

He was silent; and then, "You heard no sound?" he asked again.

"I heard nothing save the sea and the late birds calling," she said. He turned away with a brusque good-night, and Chloris, at the door, listened to his descending feet. Then she closed the door and turned to Warburton, where he lay hidden in the obscure shadows. He put up the lamp, and the illumination showed her countenance as white as her gown.

"I have saved you," she burst forth, eagerly, moving her slender hands towards him instinctively.

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

"No; you have saved your brother," said Warburton. She watched him with a heaving of the bosom and a long shuddering in-drawing of the breath.

"Is my father dead?" she asked, in a whisper.

"If he is dead," said he, coldly, "'tis by no act of mine. He would force a duel upon me, but I could not fight an old man. I could have pierced him through, but I threw down the sword."

"How can you escape?" she asked, wildly.

His brain was beset with doubts; he seemed to himself in a haze by which things were distorted out of their just proportions. In that room he could not think rightly nor determine his plan among these bewildering emotions. The huge body of that strong will and nature, shaken in its foundations, rolled and wavered and might not come to rest.

"I will go," said he.

She clung to him. "How can you go with those awaiting you?" she asked, pleadingly.

"Tut, child, I will go. I do not fear them," he said, putting her with decision from him. He was so greatly harassed with his thoughts that even her touch was nothing to him.

"Let me come with you!" she cried, beseeching him with her spirited eyes. "If you must die, I will die with you."

"You speak wildly, Chloris, dear," said he, more gently. "Get you to your bed and slumber. I am arbiter of my fate, and no woman."

She let him go. "I cannot move you," she said, shortly. "It is true what you say. There is no one who can persuade you. Go, then, to what awaits you. I cannot help you."

He laughed. "I will help myself."

She sprang upon him in a tide of passion and put

THE EYES OF CHLORIS

her arms about his neck, crying out that she loved him, and that he should not die, while Warburton listened with quiet patience, soothing her. Already he had set his face to the hills and the sea, and was already in his mind rapt into some conflict in the night. He put her aside and went to the door.

"Sleep soundly, child," said he, and vanished into the darkness very quiet and sudden. Chloris Carmichael ran to the door and stood listening to his footfalls till they died away, and then she heard the creak of a door that was opened in the distance, at which she flew like a frightened bird to the window that looked on the park. She threw herself upon the sill, and there, half leaning and half sitting, stared out of the jewelled panes into a starless night, as if she could rend and dissever the blackness and discover what she desired. Warburton passed through the empty hall unhindered, and, opening the great door, stepped out upon the upper terrace. As he went down the slope of lawns he turned and looked at the upper windows. From Chloris's room the yellow eyes of the mullions peered down at him, and, as he watched, the window slid open and Chloris's face appeared in the gap, gold with the yellow lamp and the golden hangings. He saw it again, when he looked some time later, from the margin of the park, but blurred and faint and dwindled. It was infinitely little in the vast blackness of night. It shone to him like a friendly star or beacon guiding him upon his course; yet so little might that tiny speck of light avail against the immensity of darkness that, when he cast back a glance again, it was wholly gone, swallowed and confounded in the melancholy night.

And yet this night, which had grown so thick, was hardly among Warburton's foes. Its shadows were

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

friendly to him, serving him for a refuge as he threaded his way across Lynsea. He travelled in that darkness as safe as in a ship over stormy waters and among treacherous rocks. He had a plan before him, marked out quickly, and slowly and tenaciously developed; for he was resolved to leave the island ere the morning rose and exposed him to his unscrupulous enemies. There was one way to do this, and, so far as he could see, one way only. No boat was available, and he must swim to the mainland. The point for decision in his mind was at what place to jump off upon this hazardous enterprise. The Gut was but half a mile across at the narrowest, yet he had already had a taste of these roaring seas, and he shrank from adventuring there again. On the other hand, to reach the village from which he had embarked that morning would be to swim more than a mile. Sometimes he thought of the Gut with a growing resolution.

"Aye; the Gut it shall be," he said.

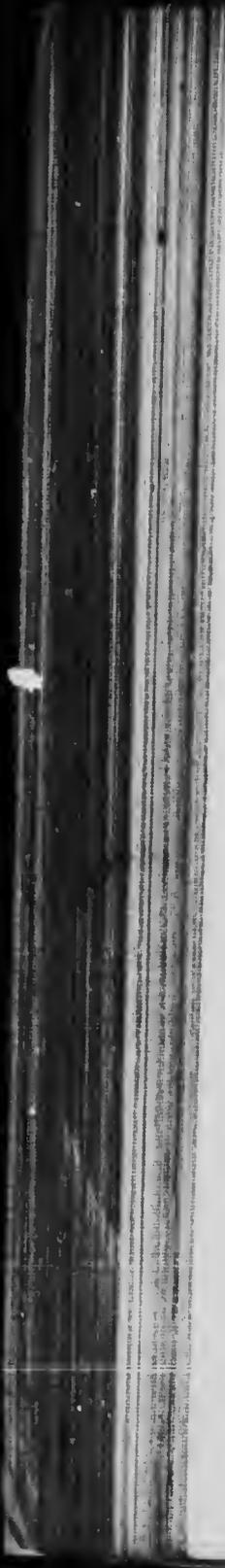
But at once returned the memory of the cutter afloat bottom upwards, and of a man tossing wildly to the dwindling stars. And through the current of these grave reflections passed a most bewildered dread, that assailed him and came back freshly to the attack, biting and stinging in his conscience. Now that he was fairly in the open he could not throw off the amazing doubt that had beset him in Chloris's presence. Had he done her a wrong in his interpretation of her conduct and her character? Was it possible, after all, that she was what she had seemed this night, nothing but a white and passionate soul, capable of a great sacrifice, generous to the pitch of folly, and blazing with sincerity? His mind moved very reluctantly upon its hinges and very gradually, yet it appeared to be turning obstinately in that di-

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SHE STARED OUT OF THE JEWELLED PANE INTO THE NIGHT



THE EYES OF CHLORIS

rection. A man of sharper wit or a keener imagination would have come to a conclusion at once, and taken one direction or another. But Warburton was not of such stuff. He was slow, conscientious, dogged, and he labored upon his problem with patience, good temper, and courage, yet with increasing dismay and rising agitation. By the time he had reached the beach he was a tangle of troubled doubts. His heart beat strangely, and his body went hot and cool in the alternation of his emotions. Had he brought ruin upon one poor, pitiful girl, destitute of her friends, and under the bloody hands of that ruthless house? The supposition brought him up with a gasp and a shudder, and he muttered to himself, standing upon the brink of the water and eying an invisible and moaning sea.

"By God! but I should deserve what I am promised," he exclaimed, with an oath. "Yet," he added, "I will never believe it; I cannot credit it. She is too like a witch. 'Tis in that blood."

Heaven was stark blackness, in which not even one small white star opened. The wind came off the land, sweet and sighing, and out of the abyss before him rose the hollow voices of the channel, some near and loud, and others very faint and distant. The flaws and the tides were moving in the Gut, and the waters rocked and fought together. Warburton, from his post on the margin of the sands, could see the water gray-black at his feet, but it joined the general darkness at a little distance and became, not a stretch of ocean, with tumbling waves and rollers, but a monstrous musical and terrifying song, drummed out the night and droning in the ears.

He heard it with but half his mind, for he was sorely beleaguered by his remorseful doubts. A wave of

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

shame struck out from his heart and overwhelmed him, so that he cursed savagely and made a vehement step forward. He slipped, his face struck the cool sea, and the next moment he was in deep water and the tide was drawing him outward.

"By Heaven! 'tis the best thing," said he, as he flung his arms out in a great stroke. "'Tis a foe that I can fight, and, at least, 'tis no woman."

This was now the third time he had been obliged to give battle to that outlandish sea, and it passed through his head that his fortune must indeed be involved in the waters of that broken coast. The third time, according to the voice of superstition, was accounted ominous, and he could not guess whether for him the omens were good or bad. For one thing, because of the ink-black quality of the sky, he was not aware in what course he was travelling. It might be seaward, or it might be towards the mainland, or, indeed, he might be hurrying fast for that ruthless and formidable channel. All that he could do was to keep himself afloat and husband his strength with gentle strokes, which were sufficient to maintain his progress in the current. Lynsea had dropped away from him like a vanished phantom, and he rolled forward into the unknown spaces among crested waves and down moving hollows. Presently he began to hope that he had escaped the tides that make for the portals of the Gut, for he could not but suppose that the water otherwise would be greatly rougher. Yet he might very well be crawling out upon the face of the ocean, farther and farther from land. And next he fell to wondering how long he could keep himself afloat. He plied his strokes with economy, yet even so the aching of his arms and shoulders warned him that a term would come to his physical endurance

THE EYES OF CHLORIS

sooner or later. He tried to guess how soon it would be, or how late. Alas! he was clear now that it must come soon, and not late.

The salt was in his mouth, and heavy weights dragged at his feet, as though he were being pulled in silence downward into those immeasurable deeps by clutching hands. The cold waves buffeted his face, surging under and around him, and he tossed like a chip, submerged and rearing; there was in his ears a dull and vacant roaring as of a sound from unfathomable wells far away. He knew that this struggle could not last. Yet, strangely enough, his wits were sharper and his mind more tenacious than ever; while his senses flowed slowly from him, and their impressions grew dull, feeble, and unreal, the life burned brightly in his brain, turning him to the contemplation of things bygone and distant. In this flutter of dying fires within him his emotions were more delicate and keen than they were used to be in broad life; he recalled events, to pass judgment and be sad. There seemed few corners in his life which did not yield up their secrets in that moment; the light flooded them, revealing their most private ghosts.

The heir of a most distinguished name, and himself already a man of some fortune, Warburton had lived his early manhood like his fellows of that epoch. Yet now what sins he had committed came back upon him with some compassion for himself, and some shame and sorrow for others. The drab and parti-colored pageant of his life passed in disarray before him, and faded, leaving one face that watched him out of deep gray and kindling eyes. It moved not, but stayed within the brain, steadfast, still, and sad. If he stared up into the black sky, it was there; and if upon the cold water, there too it rested, gazing on

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him. The revulsion in his mind was swift and sudden and overpowering; he felt that he cried out in an agony; every nerve was heightened by this physical exhaustion. He would have hid his face, but he could not hide hers; she abode haunting his memory. He was now only dimly conscious of her, and that she had risen out of the sea and bent over him, succoring him with those kind, wild eyes. A fierce light issued from them, but it was the light of—what light was it? He had thought this was savagery, the character of that strange blood which was exhibited in her father and her brothers; but what inspired that bright hot light that sprang in every feature of her countenance? Nay, he recognized it now; it was what he had never seen in those cold and continent faces of his countrywomen; yet surely it had a name, and that name he knew. . . . He laid his head upon the wet bronze hair that streamed over her bosom, and her cool white fingers went to and fro upon his brow. All sounds fell into a low and very distant murmur; the wind and the waves rocked him; and then there was of a sudden a jar, a convulsion shook him, and his feet were upon sand in shallow water, while his body rose and fell with the movements of a great patch of sea-weed on which he lay.





CHAPTER XIII

THE CHAPEL ON THE DUNES

IT was some time ere he regained his numb consciousness and made out his position. The tide had carried him hither and thither at its will, and when weary of him, had cast him up finally on some barren shore. He lay in a quiet pool, ebbing and flowing with the sea-weed; for the flood had turned and was running seaward again. Yet, as his senses and his sensations returned, and as he awoke to new life and some of his customary strength, he was aware of the dawn beyond the moorland, breaking gray and misty. Behind him the waves thundered upon the beach; before him rose the whins and bracken of the moorland; and by these signs he guessed that he must be somewhere beyond the village from which he had borrowed the boat, and more than a mile north of Lynsea. He dragged himself out of the pool and stood up with his face to the east; after which he began to go slowly along the path that should lead him into Marlock.

When he awoke in the "Three Feathers," the first thing that struck his eyes was the revenue sloop riding in the offing; and at that appearance once more revisited him the doubts and questions of the night. It was still early in the afternoon, and the sun burned with ferocity, striking angrily upon the white houses

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

of the village, down the street of which Warburton sauntered. If his step was slow his thoughts ran quickly and impatiently, but in another current now from that in which they had flowed before. He was subject to a gross reaction, which dissuaded him from all his previous fancies and reasonings. He clung with all that was generous in him to his nocturnal thoughts, yet this hard and infidel spirit was carrying him rudely away. He experienced a great revulsion, and his old hostility surged up in him, as grim, ruthless, and desperate as ever. He looked back on his pursuit, his escape, and the long struggle with death with new animosity in his feelings towards the Carmichaels. They were but common bravoës and cutpurses, and deserved the rope of the law and whatsoever personal vengeance he himself might take. The events of the previous night seemed a long way off, and had a different look now that he was come to himself and under the rule of no emotion. He felt in his pocket with complacency for the paper that would send these gentry to the gallows and blot out their ignoble name.

The sloop lay under the cliffs below Marlock, rocking on a summer sea, as Warburton came down to the beach; a gig had put out and drew towards the shore. He watched the landing idly, and was suddenly surprised to hear his name.

"What! 'tis Mr. Warburton, is it not? I had expected to meet none of my acquaintance in this wild place."

He gazed closer at the speaker, who was quite young, very elegant of dress and person, and had a pretty, smiling face. He had just stepped ashore from the boat.

"I recognize your face, sir," said he, bowing, "but upon my life I have forgotten the name."

THE CHAPEL ON THE DUNES

"Gellibrand, sir," said the young officer, with an air of ceremony. "I have met you at Sir Bennet Grove's—you and my lord Crayle."

"Faith! you are right," said Warburton, with another bow. "I knew not that you were on the *Osprey*."

"I am in command," said he. "Captain Postgate has got his promotion, while I rot in this wilderness, egad!"

"You will do me the favor to dine, Mr. Gellibrand," said Warburton, civilly. "I am at an inn, with a damnable *cuisine*, and rare brandy. Sure," he laughed, "that should interest you. You shall lay your hands on the contraband that way if no other."

Gellibrand smiled, but appeared somewhat uneasy under this jest. "I am now on the coast," said he. "'Tis an outland place and full of reckless spirits. There is no company fit for a gentleman, I am told, save Sir Stephen Carmichael, hereabouts. I had not reckoned on yourself. I will accept your invitation with pleasure."

"You will go to call on Sir Stephen?" asked Warburton, viewing the young fop thoughtfully.

"Why," said he, elevating his eyebrows in a most affected manner—"why, damme! 'tis the only gentleman, so they say; and he has a handsome daughter, I have heard."

"That is true," said Warburton, slowly. "If they say he has a handsome daughter, they say truly, but rather less than truth."

"What!" cried Gellibrand, ogling. "You have seen her? You are a dog, Mr. Warburton—damme! a right-down desperate dog, for all the world like my lord Crayle, your uncle. But I shall see her; gad!"

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you shall not have the better of me. I am even now upon my way there, at Sir Stephen's invitation."

"You have an invitation?" inquired Warburton, curiously.

"That I have, sir. It reached me by a lugger two days since. Gad! I take it friendly in Sir Stephen. He had heard of me in these parts, and offered his *devoirs*—a damnable fine gentleman. I have heard of him—kept from court by his infirmities."

Swiftly Warburton took a resolution. He would not suffer this silly lieutenant to pay his visit, but would thrust another duty upon him. It tickled him to fancy with what a different face this fine fellow would land upon the island, and he was pleased also to think that Sir Stephen's cunning had been frustrated by an accident. He put his arm in the lieutenant's.

"Gad! sir, I will take no refusal," he said, laughingly. "Your visit will keep. I have you now, and you shall be my guest. I'll warrant I give you better liquor than any that paid his Majesty. Besides, there is Sir George Everett, here, of whom you have heard, and a monstrous pretty creature is his ward."

"Miss Holt?" said Gellibrand, preening his hair. "She that ran away? Lord! I have no taste for light flyaways. Let them that steal 'em keep 'em. I want no stained goods."

"Fie!" said Warburton, rallying him. "She is an innocent. She is not tarnished. You shall see her and judge. I wager that she touches your fancy, as she touched poor Shirley's."

"I shall touch hers, Mr. Warburton. I have a pretty coat to my back, when I have the whim," said Gellibrand, complacently. "By Heaven! these girls

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like a brave coat in his Majesty's livery. I am in your hands, sir."

Warburton led him amicably towards the "Three Feathers," and presently glasses were laid upon a table in the garden, and a bottle of wine was fetched by the obsequious innkeeper. Warburton took off his hat, bearing his head to the mild air, and pledged his companion.

"Now we have you here, Mr. Gellibrand," said he, with his blunt civility, "we shall make a difference in this neighborhood. It has run too wild, I tell you."

The lieutenant cocked his hat and sipped his wine, bridling. "Perish me, Mr. Warburton, you are right! I will make a difference. Postgate was lazy and loved his bottle—not but what I have a palate for good liquor; but, stap me! I know my duty to the Lords of the Admiralty as well as his Majesty's Customs. I will burn 'em out of their holes."

"And I shall drink no more such wine," says Warburton, whimsically.

"Gad! that's so; I had forgot that," said the little lieutenant. "I wonder whence this comes—ripe liquor—damned ripe liquor. Faith! I should not be drinking of it, now I think of it."

"What, Mr. Gellibrand!" said Warburton, in surprise. "You refuse a little from your host! I tell you that is paid for. 'Tis mine. And whence comes it? What the devil do you know? You can but have your guess, as I have mine. I shall take it ill of you if you secede. By Heaven! I will not be denied."

"You say rightly. Damme! no offence," said Gellibrand, hastily. "I will drink your bottle. Well, here's to your good health, Mr. Warburton, and our common prosperity, if I may join myself with you. And, egad! I would add an honored name to that,

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

and that's my lord Crayle, your uncle. I hope his health holds, though, hang me! if I should say so, saving your presence, Mr Warburton. The devil! Let my lord's health be, eh? He, he! What say you to toasting a girl? Gad! if that Miss Carmichael is what you say, I will beg leave to propose her. Here's to her! Excuse me, Mr. Warburton; 'tis long since I have seen a gentleman, and one of your quality. I am your obedient servant. Well, here's to— What the devil is her sweet name?"

"She is Miss Carmichael," said Warburton, eyeing the dwindling bottle.

"To be sure; and what's t'other, Mr. Warburton? My soul! yes. That little catkin that bolted. Well, she may have stains on her. I care not; 'tis nothing to do with me."

As he drank deeper he talked more garrulously and more foolishly, and out of his conversation started the vanity, good-nature, and boastfulness of his character.

But Warburton had little interest in him beyond the resolve to keep him from Lynsea for that day, and watched him grow tipsy with contemptuous indifference, answering shortly or not at all to his rambling questions. As they sat together by the briar hedge of the little garden a shadow emerged and fell swiftly upon the table. Warburton looked up, and started to perceive Chloris Carmichael standing between him and the sun. Her face was set with a glance of horror and fear towards Gellibrand, who, chattering incessantly, did not notice either the apparition of a stranger or Warburton's start.

"Carmichael," said he, piping loudly. "'Tis a good name, and one related, I believe, to my lord the Marquis of Heywood. I will pay him a visit for sure. Damme! that I will."

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Chloris's gaze flew to Warburton, and the color overwhelmed her fair skin in a flood; her under-lip trembled. He rose, and, making some indifferent apology, strode towards her, where she had withdrawn among the bushes.

"You are set down with that man?" she whispered, in awe. "What are you telling him? Oh, sir, sir, withhold your tongue!"

"'Tis my own property," said he, coolly, for he was nettled by her tones and what in her he supposed to be anxiety for the safety of her brothers.

"True; 'tis your own," she said, sadly. "Yet I must have speech with you. Does this man know what you hold over us?"

"I will tell him when I choose," said Warburton, sullenly.

She laid hold of his arm with her fingers. "You shall hear me first. Swear to me that you will hear me first. I have something to communicate. I cannot stay now, for Philip awaits me in the village, and I must not be known to be here. Yet I must see you. I dare not come here. You will be kind, sir, if you will meet me as soon as you may on the dunes in the ruined chapel. You will find the way easily;" and, as he made no answer, broke out fiercely, changing sharply as she was wont, "You shall obey me; you shall come. I have a right to demand it. Mr. Warburton, by Heaven! you shall come."

"I will promise, and I will come," said he, sullenly moved to the depth of his slow mind.

She turned and fled as the lieutenant's head rose over the bushes, and Warburton met him with a frown.

"Perish me, Mr. Warburton," cried Gellibrand, "petticoats, and, damme! pretty ones. You have an

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eye. What is the creature's name? Gad! this place is hot with 'em. I flatter myself I am come to green meadow and can eat my fill of grass."

"Drink your fill; best drink your fill, lieutenant," said Warburton, who desired not to be troubled further by him. "I think there are five strong sailors that I saw, who will carry you, if you be indisposed to walk. 'Tis a man's duty to his friend not to leave any heel-taps."

"Damme! I leave none," said Gellibrand, gravely. "I should think it shame to do so in company with a generous drinker like yourself, sir. As for the sloop, hang me if I care what becomes of her this weather. 'Tis a wretched trade, this catching of smugglers."

Yet Warburton saw him sufficiently advanced to be unsteady on his legs, and conducted him safely to his boat, which carried him aboard the *Osprey*. Once there, he was not likely to venture upon his threatened visit to Lynsea and the Carmichaels—which was all that Warburton desired.

He himself, quit of his fool, set forth at once to keep his appointment with Chloris. He was confident that he knew what she had to say, and was annoyed of it; yet oddly woven in his anger and impatience was a feeling of admiration, of belief, of surrender. He took his way across the dunes with his large stride, revolving these tender and curious and perplexing matters in his mind. For once in his life this resolute man could not come to a resolution; and the wavering puzzled him, even alarmed him. Backward and forward he swayed, drawn hither and thither on the quick pulse of passion, with his mind and his will rising and falling in a see-saw, unable to catch at any firm conclusion to save them.

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AS THE LIEUTENANT DRANK, HE TALKED MORE GARRULOUSLY



THE CHAPEL ON THE DUNES

The lieutenant had stayed long and departed drunken, so that the time was drawing late when Warburton started to walk across the sand-hills. Moreover, he had no very clear knowledge as to the site of the chapel in which he was to meet Miss Carmichael. He had a greater care for her than she had for herself, and he did not desire to set tongues wagging by open inquiries; for why (these gossips would ask) should he be seeking the ruined chapel so near the fall of evening? Thus it was that he was delayed long upon the way, going by tedious circuits and spying gradually to the scene of that assignation. The month was already far gone, yet the moon had grown so late as to bring down the shadows upon the valleys of the dunes and showed the long boats in a dismal color of darkness. The heat of the sun, gathered all day into these pits of sand, now rose in a close vapor, which there was no wind to scatter. The air was harsh with the heat and clammy with moisture, so that he walked in discomfort, plodding across the broken gray spaces with a rising anger. And suddenly, in a little hollow, under the shelter of a mound of sand, stood up the bleak and roofless walls of the abandoned church. Long since had it fallen into disuse and decay. Its structure dated from early British Christianity, and its site was witness to a curious distribution of inhabitants about that ugly wilderness.

Warburton entered by one of the gaps in the walls and passed down the sandy aisles, looking for Chloris; but ere he had gone a dozen steps he saw her approaching swiftly from the heap of fallen masonry about the chancel.

"You have been long," she said, not with any reproach, yet with an impatience.

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"I was entertaining a drunken fool," he answered, briefly.

"Ah!" she said, quickly. "You told him nothing? What said you to him?"

She looked on him very vehement, very beautiful, and most deeply moved; and something in the wild attractions of her face checked Warburton's bluff reply.

"I have waited until I should see you," he said, instead. "I have kept my promise."

In the midst of the satisfaction that shone on her features she turned suddenly cool, and her eyes dropped, her smile died away, and she fingered her hands together with nervous embarrassment. His coldness abashed her.

"Mr. Warburton," said she, speaking with some of his own deliberation and with a studious calmness, "'twas but yesterday I learned how you are pursuing a great and sore hostility to those of my family. They have fallen under your displeasure — I know not with what justice, nor upon whose side is the right. Nay, sir, I do not ask to know. But if there be some wrong on theirs, I ask you if your cause is wholly righteous. You are following a vengeance, which 'tis not yours but God's to exact, and which, when He comes to His proper time, He will take, for sure, upon those that are guilty. Why do you arrogate to yourself His functions, you who are but a man? Will you not, sir, give up this conflict, and cease to plot revenges—leave Time to bring its destiny, and the Almighty God to punish how and where He will?"

She faced him now with her lips parted and the warm blood glowing in her cheeks as her excitement rose; but he stared straight in her countenance, an-

THE CHAPEL ON THE DUNES

gered with her pleading, and seeing in her once more but the traitorous daughter of a traitorous race.

"Is it this that you came all this way to ask of me?" he inquired, coldly. "If 'tis so, your trouble might have been spared. I can give you nothing that you ask."

"You shall give it!" she cried, passionately, making a step to him. "My father is ill; he is at death's door, and they say 'tis your act. Is it so great a favor that I ask of you, I that am what I am?"

He gazed at her coldly. "Cease! I care not," he said, brutally.

All the blood in her body seemed now to run of a sudden to her face and hang there; she was red like a carnation flower, and her parted lips quivered, while her eyes bedewed themselves with . . . She touched him as she had touched him once before, and upon that magical touch he winced and stirred.

"For my sake," she urged, softly, blooming like a tender child, half afraid, half ashamed, and wholly innocent. "Nay, but for me you will do this."

Warburton withdrew a step, drawing a heavy breath. He put out an arm as though he would thrust aside this terrible temptation. She was a witch—she was a devil.

"I will do it for none," he said, harshly.

Chloris was silent; then: "Yet," she whispered, "twas I that saved you last night, I who beg this from you now."

"I have said," he answered, "that 'twas your brother you saved, not me."

"What is't you mean?" she asked, with quick breathlessness. "Are you in earnest? I cannot understand you. You are strange. You spoke certain things to me last night. Ah, my God! how you

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

spoke them! I have trusted you. Are you false—are you false—are you false?”

“What I have said, I meant,” he replied, stubbornly. “I have said nothing but what was true. I warned you, Chloris, that I was the foe of your race, and that it should not matter to you. You cannot help yourself.”

“Ah,” she said, low, “your love is that which kills. It asks all and gives nothing. 'Tis a pitiful sort of love.”

“I care not what you call it,” he said, roughly. “I am master.”

Swiftly she clung about him. “Dear, give me this—give me this, dear. This hostility stands between us and disaffects us. I will not have anything stand between us.”

He strove to detach her, but in vain, for his hands refused their office.

“'Tis you who are in peril!” she cried. “I would have my father die in peace. Yea—but I fear for you, too. Think how desperately I am to be pitied, who stand in danger to lose father and brother and—and you, at one cruel stroke.”

He caressed her hair. “You shall not lose me, Chloris, dear,” he answered, grimly. “You are strung too high.”

“Promise me—promise me that you will leave Marlock at once,” she pleaded. “Promise me that you will not run these awful risks. Ere Nicholas knows that you are alive and here, you may escape inland and reach London—there to—there to—”

“'Tis impossible,” he said, even more grimly; “your brother must already know of my presence. I have been at the inn all day.”

She wept and wrung her hands. “True,” she



"CHLORIS CLUNG TO HIM DESPERATELY"



THE CHAPEL ON THE DUNES

sobbed, "'tis too late," and quickly falling away from him pointed a shaking hand towards the broken pillars of the aisle which were slowly being enwrapped in the falling darkness.

"There," she whispered, hoarsely, "you see yonder? There is that which speaks to you of your fate. 'Tis too late. You have brought your destiny on yourself. Even already they have you watched again. There is no escape for you."

Warburton turned sharply at her words and peered into the gathering gloom.

"Who is there?" said he.

"'Tis a spy," she whispered back.

"He has seen you?" he cried, anxiously.

"I care not," she said, raising her head without shame.

"You must not be seen. 'Twould be your ruin," he urged.

She laughed slightly. "I am not ashamed to be here," she said, "nor to be seen here. I care nothing what they know. I care only if they should take you from me."

"They will never do that," said he, softly.

But with a passionate cry she was gone on his words, snatched like a ghost into the shadows of the night. He ran forward between the columns of the aisle, calling to her, but nothing answered to him out of that vacancy which had swallowed her up. "Come back! come back!" he cried, and came out into the darkness of the open spaces, calling among the hillocks of sand. "Come back! come back!"

But no voice responded to the name he whispered into the empty dunes.



CHAPTER XIV

THE SPY

WARBURTON was now thrown into a fresh state of indecision and wonder. He was profoundly moved by the revelations and sensations of that evening, yet could not make up his mind if he was so affected justly. He feared, in this condition of suspense, to trim his course either one way or another, which was most unusual with him. He recognized, as well as Chloris herself, that he was in greater danger than ever; indeed, it might be that he knew it much better, for he doubted her acquaintance with the deeper and blacker secrets of that house. She bore that in her face which convicted her of honesty, but he could not guess what was the mainspring of her action towards him. He had deemed that he knew, and now he doubted—nay, more than doubted. He went cold again with the thought, as it had come to him the night before upon the margin of the sea and upon what had proved the very threshold of eternity. It was here that his uncertainty lay, not in the matter of his peril. It would be easy for him even now to make his communications and seek the shelter of the sloop of war and the protection of his good friend Lieutenant Gellibrand. If he took that course he did not see in what particular he could be

THE SPY

harmd by the furious Carmichaels. Yet he was not of the mind to take it. Now that Chloris was gone, he was still farther from it than ever, even although he had rejected her appeal with brief ceremony and suffered her to cry in vain. There was never a man less given to introspection than Warburton, but there was never one so honest to himself withal; and, while he doubted his judgment, his heart dwelled upon the girl, and he passed between alternations, unaware of the currents that drew him. When at last he came to a resolution in respect of part of his deliberations, he could not have analyzed the reasons. Yet he had determined not to lay an information at present, and not to ask the hospitality of the sloop. The disorder of his doubts, a certain cool and contemptuous courage, and behind all a vague notion that by this delay he was accumulating his power and adding to the Carmichaels' sufferings—all these combined to influence him to his resolve. And no sooner had he settled his mind than his steps turned away from the village and the low-lying dunes, towards the valley in which Sir George Everett's house lay; for there was some dim thought in his head that drew him to see Dorothy Holt, and yet he could not have said in what point she was associated with his latest purpose. He had resolved to bide his time, but would she?

The night had fallen deep when he reached the house, and he received an amiable welcome from Sir George and his ward. The former was full of news from town, and not a little engaged and embarrassed by what related to himself. There was talk in London of the great army which Bonaparte had gathered on the shores of the Channel, and 'twas whispered that its camp-fires could be seen from the coast of Kent, gleaming o' nights like glow-worms on a hill-side.

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

"The people say 'tis a disgrace (so Mr. Morley informs me), and are in a stir to be rid of this Boney, who has threatened them so long. Sir," said Sir George, warming, "old as I am, I would take horse for London to-morrow if I thought that there was not spirit in this country to depose that fellow. I would offer myself for his Majesty's service in whatever field. I am a civilian, sir, but, old as I am, I hope I have that heart."

"Why," said Warburton, "so have we all, let us hope. But we are hedged in by our sea; we are given no chance. Let us come to quarters, and I have no doubt as to the issue."

"Damme! sir, nor I. That's true," said Sir George. "And here is Pitt (bless him!) with a new treaty, so they say, to bring in Russia and Austria and drive the First Consul out of Hanover. Mr. Morley acquaints me of that, and that I am wanted in the seat. They look to my support, and they shall have it, Mr. Warburton—they shall have it. We must put aside our private feelings in such times—with Boney's army-fires alight!"

"You would leave Marlock, sir?" inquired Warburton.

"I must think; I must consider," said Sir George, and broke off, frowning, his eyes upon the younger man's face. "What is that, Mr. Warburton? Faith! not dirt? You haven't befouled yourself. 'Tis a bruise, surely. Who has mishandled you? You have come through the wars?"

Warburton instinctively put his hand to his neck, where the edge of a red and narrow cut peeped from beneath his dress.

"'Tis a wound," said Sir George.

Dorothy Holt's face shone upon him expectantly,

THE SPY

her lips parted with eager curiosity; and he met her gaze.

"'Tis nothing," he answered, slowly—"a scratch, sir; an accidental scratch."

"It has the look of purpose," said Sir George, laughing; "but I know you to be no firebrand. But come; we left you upon the island yesterday. When did you leave? An excellent gentleman is Sir Stephen—a handsome family, too, but black, too black."

"Miss Carmichael is not black, sir, if I am not mistaken," remarked Warburton, indifferently.

Dorothy's eyes dwelt upon him with their incessant and importunate movement. He had the thought that they begged of him for news, and waited their time, impatient, but assured. This confidence and this attitude irritated him. Sir George, as if suddenly remembering something, turned his eyes quizzically on his visitor.

"Not she; I had forgot," he answered, cheerfully. "A damned fine girl, so she is; and I was a good judge once—as good as yourself, sir."

Warburton made no reply, and the baronet left the room by an unexpected movement. At once the girl took a step to Warburton.

"You have something to tell me?" she asked, eagerly, yet appealingly.

Warburton did not speak for a moment; and then, "No, madam, I have not," he said, simply.

Her expression changed on the instant; her faint and delicate eyes were set upon him mournfully, as a child whose mouth puckers at a refusal.

"You have been wounded," she said, softly. "I knew it was that. How dreadful! Those terrible people! Tell me, what did they do with you? What have you done with them?"

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

Warburton showed nothing of his impatience upon his features nor in his voice. "I assure you, madam," he said, "that 'twas an accident—a foolish accident. Nothing has happened, and the Carmichaels, for all I know, still inhabit their island."

Dorothy turned her face away and heaved a sigh. "Ah! I am glad you are not harmed," she said, with some emotion. "I was afraid, when I saw you there, that death was in your mind. You looked murderous, Mr. Warburton—so violent; ah! so ferocious—and justly so. I feared for you—with those cruel men and that treacherous woman. I feared for you." She shuddered.

Warburton heard without an expression on his face; it bore no vestige of feeling; not even the hostile reference to Chloris moved him from his aspect of placidity.

"You have too spirited a fancy, madam," he said, shortly. "'Twould be well if you should curb it."

She raised her hands with a gesture of helplessness. "Maybe, sir, but in truth I cannot. I have too much upon my heart. And it is not you, Mr. Warburton, that should reproach me with my sentiments—you who were a friend of one I loved."

"Troth, ma'am, I reproach you not," answered Warburton, steadily. "But you are set out to over-jump yourself. I was upon the island, and now I am here. You are all dreads and flutters like a town-bred miss, not of the country fields and moors."

"I vow I detest the country moors!" she said, with petulant asperity.

Warburton opened his eyes at this snall outbreak, but she recovered herself and went on with the pleading gentleness to which she was accustomed. "I am not mistress of myself when I think of some things,

THE SPY

Mr. Warburton, and you must give me credit for that. I burn when I consider that horrid house. Will you not take me in your confidence and tell me how you will punish them? You have promised to take vengeance, and you are not of the kind that breaks a vow. These Carmichaels—"

Here he broke in roughly. "I am not come here to speak to you of the Carmichaels," he said, imperatively; "it will do no good to chatter about them. What has been has been, and what shall be shall be."

"What!" she cried, in angry amaze. "Will you not go forward? Have you surrendered? Is the duty to fall upon me alone?"

"Cease, cease, child!" he answered, sharply; "there is a time for all things, and I am here for something further."

"What is that?" she asked, cowed by his manner.

He fixed his clear and merciless gaze upon her. "This air does not agree with you, I think, madam," he observed, coldly; "you take no good from these sea-coasts. You were better away."

She raised her arms in angry petulance. "La! would you treat me like a child? 'Tis the second time you have done this. You attempted to keep me from Marlock, and now you would send me away. Perchance you would work through my guardian again?" she ended, sneering.

"'Twas what was in my mind," observed Warburton, coolly.

She eyed him askance, and her fit of anger dropped swiftly from him; he knew her to have no courage against him.

"Why would you have me gone?" she asked, sullenly.

"Why, you said just now you detest the country,

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and you were best with Sir George, pirouetting in town."

"'Twould not be town," she answered, with a shrug of her shoulders; "he would go to an abominably dull house."

"Well, you do not call this gay?" said Warburton, whimsically.

"Ah," she answered, laughingly, "I have my duty here; I have what occupies my life."

He looked at her again with wonder, for he was puzzled by her changes and her irreconcilable emotions. Of one thing he was certain—that he did not like her, handsome as she was; and below all an unpleasant suspicion rose and grew that he was being deceived and played upon. The idea bewildered him and made him disagreeably angry, so that he spoke rudely.

"Then you must do your own work," said he; "I will be no party to it."

She turned white. "Indeed," she said, her voice tremulous with fury as she held herself against the mantel—"indeed, you are soon and easily converted, and 'tis clear by what parson."

"You shall hold your tongue, silly," he interrupted.

"I will not—I will not!" she cried, hysterically. "I have been played with and browbeaten enough. You are no less than a bully, sir. Oh! 'tis plain what has diverted you, and I would think shame of it. 'Tis those flying petticoats," she said, laughing in her anger; "'twas a fine picture—indeed!"

"Hold your tongue!" he thundered, and she saw him for the first time hot with passion. He trembled—and she whimpered.

"Madam," said he, after a pause, and very quietly. "I have no command over you, nor any authority to

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"DOROTHY'S EYES FLASHED"



THE SPY

stay or direct your actions. Speak on, therefore, and pray excuse me that I interposed so roughly. But you shall not speak it out to me, if you speak it to any," and, turning with a bow, he made quickly for the door. But ere he could reach it she was between it and him, with a new beseeching look.

"Forgive me," she begged, "I am beside myself. You are most generous and kind. I would not bring upon me your just anger."

"Nay, Miss Holt," he said, "I have nothing to forgive; you have a rash tongue, that bolts like a mad-cap mare, but I bear you no ill will. 'Tis the privilege of your sex."

He bowed again and went forth; and the eyes of Dorothy Holt followed him, sparkling and flashing. She bit her lips and frowned in the impotence of her rage and her humiliation.

But Warburton walked down the lane under the influence of no less anger. This girl had affected him most unpleasantly, and he had said what he had no intention of saying when he entered the house, and had done what he had never thought to have done. Apparently, as he reviewed the scene in his mind, he had washed his hands of the vendetta, and withdrawn from his loose partnership with Miss Holt. He stood now at a wholesome distance from the plot and might even be safe and—with Chloris. There was the thought that set him aflame of a sudden, rising like an incendiary in his heart; and so agreeably did this prospect seize him that he felt at once the reaction of doubt. Was it right and well that he should have done what he had done? And had he not been moved to his action by the influence of that magic beauty? He who had never questioned himself now bemused himself with wonder, and saw

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

vaguely and with dismay that he hung in the balance between desire and duty. As he crossed the sand-hills towards Marlock he was aware of a mutter of sound in the waste about him—a mutter in that dead still night. Immediately upon that he staggered, and covered himself from the blow, and was grappling his assailant with his iron hands.

The man was tall and sinewy, but he swung like a rod in the wind under Warburton's arms and labored in his throat.

"Strike, strike!" he said, in his French tongue and thus acquainted with the news of another enemy Warburton lifted the foreigner with a huge sweep of his arms and flung him with a crack upon the ground. He rolled over sharply, ceased, and lay still, and there was silence upon the dunes, save for the dull noise of feet that ran into the distance. Warburton stooped for his assailant, who moved not, his head thrust horribly aside, at dreadful ease, his neck snapped like a twig.

"Dead," said he, and coolly pulled forth his watch from its fob, examining it under the faint stars; for he knew it was that the knife had struck and sent him reeling. "Eleven o'clock," said he; "it has stopped then. I will remember it against the Carmichaels. 'Tis an hour that shall mean much for them, for so shall the hands remain until I have done with 'em."

He left the body where it lay, and leisurely resumed his journey to the "Three Feathers." Here he drank a nightcap and sat in thought until, taken by a new idea, he rose and tried the door of the inn. It was closed and barred.

"Good!" said he to himself; "yet, if I know them, they will not give up on this attempt. This house is not safe for me, yet it shall be safe to-night." So

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THE SPY

saying, he went up-stairs and found the room in which he had heard that Tremayne, the innkeeper, slept. Pushing the door open, he entered, holding his candle above his head, and Tremayne, who was in bed, started up in a terror.

"Sir — sir," he stammered; "is it anything you want, sir?"

"Yes," said Warburton, bluntly, throwing the flare upon the wretched man. "You are to come with me."

Too deeply shaken by his fears to dispute this imperious order, Tremayne put on his clothes, and presently was being conducted about the house.

"Bar all the doors and the windows," commanded Warburton, "and see you bar them well. I will not have you a piece with that murderous rabble that seeks my death."

"You do not believe that, sir?" stammered the innkeeper, pale as a corpse. "You surely don't think that of me? I swear to God that I am ignorant—"

"Pish! take not God's name on your coward's lips," interrupted the other, contemptuously. "I declare, I would sooner respect Nicholas Carmichael than this craven!"

"Sir, if Mr. Carmichael has any design against you, I know nothing of it," protested the poor creature. "I keep to my business, and—"

"That is what I desire you to do, and will see that you do," said Warburton, slowly. "I will not have spies upon me. You carry news of me to Lynsea. I know you for a go-between, and I tell you this, Mr. Tremayne, that your neck is in peril. It needs only that I give the word, and the noose is tightened."

"For God's sake, sir—" began the innkeeper, and was silenced by a gesture.

"Give me the keys," demanded Warburton. He

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

took the jangling bunch, and, "Now you shall sleep with what spirit you may," he added, and, marching the man back into his room, closed and locked the door behind him. Then he went to bed and slept untroubled.



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CHAPTER XV

PHILIP TALKS

THE affair of the French assassin could not be long kept secret, nor was Warburton the man to favor secrecy. On the contrary, he was resolved himself to give information, which he laid the next day before a magistrate, and which included a brief and ready account of his adventure. There was naturally no suspicion cast upon his story, nor did any one suppose for a moment that he held some news in reserve—namely, the cause and origin of this attempt upon him. It was a perplexity to Warburton why he did not simultaneously make a breast of it and reveal the whole sordid plot, thereby at once avenging himself and his friend and placing himself under the protection of the law. But he did not; his lips were silent on this subject; and with grim complacency he dwelt upon the fears which this interview of his must arouse in the Carmichaels. How much longer would he endure them, and permit them to suffer the tortures of an expected vengeance? He did not know, yet said he, "Their hour shall strike! 'Tis eleven o'clock. I have sworn it shall be that, and in the mean time let them keep vigil against it."

Whether the news of the Frenchman's death had reached Lynsea he was not aware; but certainly one of the Carmichaels was not keeping vigil, nor even

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displaying any uneasiness as to the future. On his return to the inn, Warburton discovered Philip engaged in the very agreeable office of drinking hard with that hard drinker, Lieutenant Gellibrand. He did not like the association, but showed nothing of this feeling upon his face, coolly nodding to the younger Carmichael and gravely saluting his friend. Philip Carmichael was far gone in liquor, but kept his head and his humor wonderfully, and as for the lieutenant, the wine had made him boastful, according to its custom.

"I see, sir, you have made the Carmichaels' acquaintance already," he said, with an ironical intention.

"True, Mr. Warburton, you see us together like a pair of cooing doves," said Gellibrand, gayly. "Mr. Carmichael did me the honor to call this morning on my boat—a narrow-chested, sweltering box, not fit for a gentleman's reception. Hence you see us here, where I came by your kind introduction yesterday."

"Aye," said Philip, with an impudent wink at Warburton, "and drinking of good stuff, too."

Wonder, and some admiration for the fellow's cool rascality, dawned in Warburton's mind; for there he lolled, who was one of a family banded to kill him, who was himself no doubt privy to the plot, and, above all, who was aware that the man he mocked and goaded so had in his hands the reins of life and death for all that blood. Warburton stared on him and sat down before the table.

"That is right," said Gellibrand, heartily. "Fill your glass, Mr. Warburton. 'Tis good stuff, indeed, though you hinted at strange sources yesterday. But what care I? We are drinking now, and I'll give you

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a toast. Here's to the King, God bless him! and to hell with Boney!"

Warburton watched Philip Carmichael, who tossed off his bumper recklessly, echoing the words, "The King, God bless him! and to hell with Boney!"

He smiled to himself, recognizing what finished hypocrites were these people, who would feign so heartily, even with the knowledge that he held their secret. Philip turned to him amiably.

"I have been promising the lieutenant a happy holiday," said he, engagingly. "He is here to hunt the free-traders, as you know, sir. Well, I have assured him of a fight. He wants a fight," said Philip, wagging his head foolishly, "and, by God! he shall get it."

"'Twill be enlivening in this dull place," said Gelli-brand, complacently. "I ask your pardon, gentlemen, but there cannot be more like you. I all do myself the pleasure to call upon Sir Stephen to-morrow—to-morrow at the very latest," said he. "It may be that between you you can set me on a scent for these fellows—damn 'em!"

"We will do that, Mr. Warburton—eh?" laughed Philip. "Gad! lieutenant, you shall have your stomach full of swords and pistols, which shall give you the ache there. Perish me! this is a wild and fearless coast, and none here fears a King's man."

"Unless it be our host," said Warburton. "But I think you are too hot, Mr. Carmichael. You speak too bravely of these smugglers. They are, I doubt not, a savage people, but they may be bended and broken very readily. It is to get at 'em that's the trouble."

As he spoke he looked fixedly at the young man, who scowled, and then laughed.

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"Aye, they say there's no traitors among the free-traders," he went on. "To find 'em out's the difficulty. And if any one had the knowledge of their secrets, it is said that it would go hard with him. Damme! I believe they would not hesitate about him."

"That is what I have heard," said Warburton, "and I believe my gossip. But come, lieutenant, you are mightily concerned in this coast now. I will show you a sight that should interest you, and Mr. Carmichael, too, though he is no stranger."

He rose, and Gellibrand also rose, protesting that it was early to break up a pleasant company; yet both followed him eventually, and, passing down the village, came to a house that stood on the margin of the sands.

"I have here a surprise for you, sirs, and a puzzle," said Warburton, with his hand on the door, and he flung it open, disclosing a dead body stretched upon a table. Gellibrand stared in bewilderment, but Philip Carmichael started, fell back, and then approached to gaze into the foreign features.

"How came this here?" he asked, presently, with a look of suspicion at Warburton.

"Why, he was picked up dead," said he. "But he does not appear to be of these parts. He has an ugly black look."

"'Tis a Johnny Crap," put in Gellibrand. "I know the breed well."

"What! is't a Frenchman?" asked Warburton, with surprise in his voice.

"Aye, for sure," said Gellibrand, confidently. "I have sent many of 'em to Satan, and I should know."

"Well," said Warburton, looking at Carmichael,

PHILIP TALKS

"'tis a puzzle, indeed, how comes this fellow here in Marlock. What do you make of it?"

"Make of it? By Heaven! 'tis plain as a pistol!" broke out the lieutenant. "He is one of the gang of which we spoke. We are close on the scent."

"Put your nose to it; put your nose to it," said Philip, laughing tipsily.

"I need no reminder, sir," answered Gellibrand, scornfully. "I am here to do my duty, and I will do it, drunk or sober." He stopped in his scrutiny of the corpse with an exclamation and an oath, "Why, the man's neck is broken."

"An ugly death," commented Warburton, indifferently.

"A fall from a cliff," said Philip, eyeing him.

"Maybe, maybe. Yet such a man as this might have been chosen for an instrument by those free-traders; he might have struck at that man you spoke of, and have failed. Yet, of course, this was not so, Mr. Gellibrand. You can see he is a foreign thief. The body was found in the dunes, and 'twas I that killed him."

"You?" said Gellibrand.

"Why not?" said he, coolly.

"Gad! why not, why not? That is true," said the lieutenant. "He is a gallows-bird. Well, I should ha' hanged him anyway."

Philip Carmichael looked exceedingly troubled, for all the wine he carried; he had reached a point in soberness at which he lost recklessness and began to be alarmed—the more, indeed, that his brain did not follow very alertly. Gellibrand turned away, offering excuses—for he was now suddenly inflamed with the duty of making inquiries—and Warburton and Philip Carmichael were left together by the corpse.

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

"Were you attacked by this man?" asked the latter, quickly.

Warburton nodded.

"Last night?" pursued Philip.

Again the other nodded. "At the hour of eleven," he said, shortly.

Philip shrugged his shoulders and went out by the door, but in the village street he was overtaken by Warburton.

"Mr. Carmichael, as we are met this way, it would be foolish in us to part without speaking plainer. You guessed my meaning yonder?"

"You threatened us Carmichaels," said Philip, sneering.

"There are too many threats in the air," said Warburton, calmly. "I am threatening nobody. But you have enemies, and this accident will make Gellibrand one of them. You cannot afford to provoke more."

"I do not see what the devil it has to do with you, sir," said Philip, angrily. "Why do you not speak and be done with it? Use your knowledge, Mr. Warburton. I'll be damned if I care! You have no proof save your words."

"What!" said Warburton. "Have they not told you?"

"I know you were caught in the caves and escaped," said Philip, sullenly. "What odds? Next time you see the caves they will be empty, and there is none in the country who will not go against you."

"Pshaw!" said Warburton, "I am not speaking of the free-trade."

"Then what the deuce are you speaking of?" demanded Philip.

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"Come, Mr. Carmichael; you must know it is a graver matter. But perhaps they have not told you that I know."

"Perhaps you will be good enough to inform me what the devil you do know," said Philip, with rising anger.

"The game is up," said Warburton. "You stand about a foot under the gallows!"

"God damn you! Mr. Warburton, will you not come to the point?" said Philip, with something of his brother's savagery.

"You are a nest of traitors, you Carmichaels," said Warburton, with a sneer. "I have documents to prove it."

Philip Carmichael stared in sincere amazement, and swiftly Warburton realized his innocence. "I thought you knew," he went on. "This Lynsea of yours harbors Bonaparte's powder and masks his preparations."

"It is a lie," said Philip.

Warburton shrugged his shoulders. "Faith! man, I have a letter from Bonaparte to your father in my pocket."

Philip sprang at him suddenly, laying his hands about Warburton's neck. The other threw him off.

"Would you throttle me, lubber?" he said. "No, you shall not have it. Must I break you as I did the Frenchman?"

Philip Carmichael fell away, breathing hardly, and the scarlet of his face faded into a terrible pallor, while the glare in his eyes went out. He was struck in a moment an abject and pitiable creature.

"Before God! I know nothing about it," he said, miserably; "and I was to have taken a commission in the army. My God!"

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

Warburton experienced a sensation of pity for him but only asked, curiously: "Does this news affect you? How are you involved, if you are ignorant? You are a smuggler, but no more."

Philip flamed forth at him. "Damn you! keep your tongue quiet. They who ply words for their weapons are in danger to have steel from others."

"True," said Warburton, nodding towards the house in which the Frenchman lay.

"You will use this against us?" inquired Philip, in a surly tone and after a minute's silence.

"I have given you one piece of information," said he; "why should I give you another? Rest, and be thankful, where you stand."

Philip Carmichael suddenly broke into a laugh. "You have chosen a queer office," he said. "I wish you joy of it. It suits your insensate blood, egad. You may go to the devil your own way. I go mine."

He swaggered off with an arrogant carriage, his handsome face flushed, reckless, and defiant, and presently entered the tap-room of the "Three Feathers," where he was respectfully welcomed by the company. The Carmichaels were feared and admired on that coast; they were understood privily to be the centre of the illicit trade, and none thought worse of them for that, not even the neighboring gentry, while the common villagers held them in respect for their singular prowess in this business. Philip Carmichael stood drinking in this society for a considerable time. He had received an ugly blow, even for one so airy and indifferent as himself, and he returned to the interrupted bout with ruffled feelings. But soon the wine took its effect upon him, so that he reached again the point in tipsiness from which his encounter with Warburton had shaken him, and it was with a merry

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heart, and whistling a light catch, that he strolled forth of the inn and went down the road towards the sea.

A pretty apparition rose unexpectedly in his path, and he came to a pause in the middle of his lilt.

"Miss Holt, I declare!" he said, gallantly saluting, while his face lighted up. "I protest, Miss Holt, that the sun has broken out of a sudden."

"La! I hope not," she said, laughing. "'Tis close as it is, and uncommon sultry. There will be thunder."

Philip Carmichael waved his arm vaguely at the ocean and the cliffs beyond, as though he would embrace land and sea in his authority. "No," said he, decisively, "there shall not, I promise you. I will not have your handsome clothes wetted. You are like some fine lady of state; not like any of us rustics. Stap me, Miss Holt, but the sight of you makes me drop into town manners and mincing voices. I have a difficulty with my words, 'pon honor."

This was true enough, as Dorothy Holt saw at a glance, yet she was by no means offended; 'twas the habit to drink deeply, and, moreover, there was a better chance to set this reckless fellow talking when he carried so much. Even the trace of mockery in his handsome face did not anger her, and she smiled prettily on him.

"'Tis you that belong to towns and courts, Mr. Carmichael," she said, bridling. "You have a way. La! what keeps you to this empty spot?"

"I am kept here in chains, madam," said Philip, endeavoring to bring his legs together for a ceremonious bow. "I'll not speak of the divinity, but, gad! I feel her; she draws me like the moon the sea tides. Damme! 'tis a proper image—that so she does."

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"Then you had better persuade her to go to town, so that you may be drawn thither also," said Dorothy, laughing affectedly.

"Madam," said he, gravely, "will you go to town? I assure you that 'tis the only place where you would receive your fit homage and respect."

"No, indeed," she answered, tossing her head. "But I am dependent on my guardian, who abominates London. He is enamoured of your lovely island."

"You shall come again; you shall come again," exclaimed Philip, grandly.

"Indeed, may I? La! you are kind. It is handsome of you to put up with a helpless girl. But I will ask Sir George, and he will make a party with Mr. Warburton, and we will take you by surprise."

"Perish me! it must not be Warburton," said Philip, frowning.

"Not Mr. Warburton!" she echoed, as if in amazement. "Why, I supposed him a friend to you! He was on the island that day, and we left him there. We left him talking with Miss Carmichael."

Philip's frown grew to a scowl. "Damme! he is a lubber. He interferes when he has no right. He is no friend of mine—not he. He is too deuced righteous. I have a quarrel with him."

"La! not a quarrel!" she said, opening her eyes. "I pray you, don't quarrel. 'Tis for cats and dogs, and not mortal men. There was a duel fought between my lord Goodwin and Captain Hale when I was in town. There was blood spilled horribly, and my lord Goodwin died of it. 'Twas shocking. Fie! no; never quarrel, Mr. Carmichael. There is none worth it, not even a woman."

"This is no woman," said Philip, fixing his admir-

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ing gaze on her. "Yet I can think of a woman to fight over. But, Lord! I don't know why we should fight. He is too stiff. I think he is a fool."

"Heavens! you relieve me," said she, with a sensational sigh. "I feared 'twas on my affairs you quarrelled. I saw you in the road some time since, and your voices were high. I thank Providence it was not my poor self that provoked it."

"I would it had been," said Philip, inflamed by this coquettish approach. "He should ha' died to-morrow—that I swear!"

"Well, if 'twas not on me, on whom did you quarrel?" asked the girl, tossing her face saucily. "What beauty is it you honor so far?"

"Gad! did I not say 'twas no woman," said Philip, with his bold eyes on her. "If 'twas not you, 'twas none, madam. I swear it!"

"Indeed, but I doubt you," she murmured.

"Pish! 'twas nothing, save that he threatened. Will not that convince you?"

"Threatened!" she said. "Indeed, that is strange, for any one to threaten a Carmichael. I had heard different of you, sir," and she languished at him.

"Gad! madam, so you have, and you are right. They who threaten the Carmichaels carry their lives insecurely. But this Mr. Warburton must have a care. He supposes he has the whip-hand because he has run his nose into a secret. He would take upon himself the office of Government and spy at once. Well, we shall see. We shall lop his nose off, and what value will his letter have then?"

"Letter?" said the girl, swiftly, and Philip Carmichael's stupefied wits were dimly alarmed by her change of voice.

"What letter?" he asked, vacantly. "I said noth-

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ing of a letter, madam. We shall lop his nose, I promise him. I dislike the man's meddling. He has no concern with what does not concern him."

"Indeed, Mr. Carmichael, I assure you that you do him wrong," said Dorothy, pleadingly. "I cannot believe that Mr. Warburton would presume upon another. He is a gentleman, sir, of much esteem and good family, and I do believe his heart is sound and honest."

Philip stood grinning at her. "I would you stood my advocate, egad!" he said, admiringly.

"Indeed," she said, flushing, with her lids downcast, "I do not wish any one misinterpreted in this poor world. But I am late, and Sir George will be stamping. Adieu, Mr. Carmichael," and with a sweet and pitiful smile she bowed to the young man and passed on through the village.

Philip Carmichael continued his leisurely walk to the beach, there to pick up a boat for Lynsea; but Dorothy Holt went inland with quicker steps and a heightened pulse. The hysteria latent in her threatened to leap out in cackling laughter; her excitement was too sharp for continuance. She was alone, but she smiled joyously into the quiet copses and down the empty lanes. Every fibre of her sensitive flesh pricked with a vicious desire for vengeance, vengeance—though she understood it otherwise—not so much now on account of a man struck down in the prime of youth by a cowardly stroke, as because of that dreadful humiliation which a woman had suffered, the ruin of her hopes, and the exactions of unsatisfied vanity and ambition. She believed she had a sacred duty laid upon her, and her worldly, sentimental, cunning head had conceived a plan to accomplish this. She had got sufficient information from Philip Car-

PHILIP TALKS

michael to put the plan in operation, and she was resolved to do so. It was something to know that Warburton held a secret of her enemies, for this was how her quick mind interpreted Philip's admissions. There was a letter. Moreover, there lingered in her mind two other foolish words in that drunken braggadocio—"government," he had said, and "spy." Though she knew not, nor could guess, what that letter contained, nor on what it bore, Dorothy Holt was confident that she could make use of it; and so while Philip, all unaware of his indiscretions, was whistling indifferent on his way to the island with the tiller in his hand, she was smiling and glowing with her thoughts under the brow of the moor.





CHAPTER XVI

THE CARMICHAELS TAKE COUNSEL

PHILIP CARMICHAEL piloted his craft to Lynsea, and, leaping upon the jetty, ran up the tamarisk grove towards the house. Here his sister met him, and, with a quick outbreak of light and color in her face, sprang to him and asked him if he had been in Marlock.

"Why, yes, I have, sis," said he, good-naturedly. "I cracked bottles with Mr. Lieutenant Gellibrand by orders. And a damned pleasant buck he is, though he swaggers in his cups."

Chloris paid this opinion no heed, but searched his countenance eagerly, as though she hesitated to ask more and would have read there the answer to her unuttered question.

"Was it Marlock?" she at last said, speaking rather low. "And is there news from Marlock?"

"Not a jot," said he, idly; and then making a call upon his memory, "Stap me! yes, there's one dead there that we know."

"My God!" cried Chloris, white at a blow and trembling.

"Tut! there's no harm," said Philip, who was still warm enough with the wine to miss her agitation. "'Twas Jules, the long-legged fellow, though you may not have seen him. And that brings some-



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thing to my mind, and I will have it out with Nick."

"Jules!" she breathed deeply, placing her fingers upon the bosom of her dress. "No, I know him not," and the color ran back into her face till it glowed once more. "There is no other—dead?" she asked.

Philip cast a glance at her. "Faith! you are all for skeletons to-day, miss; you are turned into a ghoul in your taste for corpses. But I cannot oblige you; you must do your own killing; or maybe Warburton will do it for you."

He laughed at his weak jest, and Chloris struck in hastily: "Mr. Warburton," she said; "what of him? Is he—"

"Why, 'twas he killed this fellow," said Philip, more soberly. "His damned stiff body and tough arms were too much for the Frenchman. Gad! he had me about the neck myself to-day."

"He was attacked?" cried Chloris, sharply.

Philip shrugged his shoulders. "Better ask Nick," said he. "I know nothing of it. He broke t'other's neck."

"I am glad he broke his neck! My God! I am glad he broke his neck!" cried Chloris, fiercely. Philip turned on her eyes of surprise, and she broke out at him. "'Tis true!" she exclaimed; "and I would to God he would break the necks of any other guilty of such a dastardly attempt!"

Philip grinned. "'Twas not I, sis," he said, with mock terror. "'Twas not I, indeed. You must have it out with Nick, and in truth I will help you. He has no right to take the command so greatly in his own hands. Because my father is ill he thinks he has full liberty and authority over all. Hang me! he shall hear otherwise, shall Nick." He advanced more

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quickly to the house, and suddenly stopped, while his jaw dropped on a most discomforting recollection. "By God! it cannot be true," he said, almost to himself. "Yet I will have that out also," and he hurried into the house with an angry step. The room which he entered was the library, and was tenanted by Nicholas Carmichael, who stood by the window with an impatient look upon his face, while Sir Stephen lay upon a couch in a corner.

Philip's loud footsteps broke the stillness.

"I tell you what it is, Nick," he began, angrily, "you take too much upon yourself; you ignore the rest of us, and will end in fetching us into trouble. This house does not exist on behalf of Nicholas Carmichael alone; there are others of your blood, including my father."

"What is this bad temper?" asked Nicholas, darting a glance at his brother.

"You know well enough. I go to Marlock to effect some business with Gellibrand, according to your recommendation, and I find you have been practising your tricks on Warburton. He had me by the heels nicely. Damme! I hadn't a word for myself."

"What the devil is it you mean?" asked Nicholas, impatiently.

"Why, nothing, but that your ugly little plot failed, that's all," sneered Philip. "Jules lies with a broken neck, and Warburton moves about as stern as a magistrate and as cool as a hangman. Faith! and it will come to his hanging of us some of these days. 'Tis an ugly plot—a damnable ugly plot!"

Nicholas Carmichael had started and frowned at the news, but now he himself asked, contemptuously, "What plot?"

"Rubbish!" said his brother. "You know what I

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mean and all about it. If I am to risk anything I will have a voice in it, and that's flat. I won't have you passing behind me and handing over my head. I know the man has to die, but he shall die squarely; and, however he dies, I will not have you drag us all in without consultation."

Chloris Carmichael, who had followed her brother, and stood unperceived in the doorway, uttered a low cry which no one heard. Philip turned to his father on the couch. "Sir, were you privy to this plan of Nicholas's? I will not believe it. He thinks he is master here."

Sir Stephen's hand was lifted weakly, but out of his palsied face looked still strong eyes. "Your brother," said he, speaking low and slow and most indistinct, "must take precautions. He acts. There is great peril on our house from this man."

"I would kill him myself in proper fight," said Philip, impetuously. "Let us do it as it should be done."

"You are at liberty to do it," said Nicholas, harshly. "You will save me trouble. It must be done, and now," he added, decidedly.

Again Chloris breathed a low and troubled cry from her post by the door, but Philip broke out again.

"And here's another matter. What is this about Warburton and a letter? I demand to know the rights of that, and if what he says has any truth."

"What does he say?" asked Nicholas, shortly.

"Why, that you are traitors to the King," said Philip, hotly, "and he has a letter from Bonaparte to prove it."

Nicholas looked at his father, and some communication sprang between them. "What he says is true," he replied. "We are for Ireland, and not the red-coats."

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"What!" said Philip, in amazement. "You are in treaty with the French!"

"Fool! do you suppose there is any love between Carmichaels and the English?" asked his brother. "You should know our history better. The Carmichaels stand for a united Ireland and the breaking of the chains."

Philip, sobered and astonished, was silent; then he made a gesture of dismay. "I should have known this before; it was my right to have known it," he said, sullenly. "I care not a curse for Ireland. I was brought up English, and I would have joined the army. Damme!"—he turned angrily on Nicholas—"I tell you I would do it now, and help to fight this Bonaparte with whom you are intriguing."

Nicholas turned from him with silent contempt, but at that instant there was another voice within the room, and Chloris was at the window, her face hot with passion.

"We are traitors then, are we?" she cried. "Traitors to the country in which we live? I have lived to learn much to-day, and that is to be ashamed of the blood which runs in my body, and of which I had always been so proud. I thought it stained by nothing; but he was right—Mr. Warburton was right. Our blood is dishonorable; we come of an infected race. I would not have believed the tale if I had not heard it from your lips."

"Stay, Chloris!" said Nicholas, angrily. "You will say what you had better not. You have said too much. You are a child, and know nothing of such affairs."

"I know this," she exclaimed, passionately, "that I would die rather than stab a man in the dark—and that's our blood! Said too much! I have not said

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a tithe of what is owing. See, Nicholas Carmichael, I have put up with you as blood-brother of mine, deeming you hard and cruel, and partaking of that heat which I share myself. But I had never thought you treacherous nor cowardly, and that is what you are."

"Silence!" said Nicholas, furiously. "Father, bid her be silent."

The old man on the couch lifted his hand feebly, but no words came from his lips, which labored under paralytic excitement.

"I will not be silent!" she called. "Have I not heard what you would have done in Marlock last night, and how you set bravoes on Mr. Warburton, a brave man, if your enemy? He, at least, is an open foe, and professes nothing; he does not strike by daggers in the night. But I warn you that he will pull you to destruction, as you richly deserve. My father knows nothing of this. He is fooled by you. I—I know nothing of politics and state, but—good God!—I am a traitor, we are an infected race," and she flung up her long arms helplessly with the short sob of a returning reaction.

Philip uttered an uncomfortable laugh. "Gad! sis, do you cast your eyes that way? I believe you have a fancy for the man."

Sir Stephen turned upon his daughter deep eyes of an inscrutable sharpness, as if he could tear forth her secrets; but it was Nicholas who spoke, in calm, white heat.

"You shall go to your room, madam," he said. "Do you suppose I am going to listen to these hysterical indictments? Bring your charges against others, but not your family. What is this man Warburton to you that you should be so anxious for his

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safety? And as for the other matters, you confess you do not understand. You are a mere child a nurse, and would be at your mother's strings had she lived, poor lady! You are better in your room than meddling in what concerns you not."

"Had my mother lived you would not have been what you are, Nick," broke out Chloris, bitterly.

"Bah!" he cried. "What shame is it to be an enemy to the country you hate?"

"'Tis the country that has harbored us and befriended us," she returned, sadly. "But I will not intermeddle with your designs; they are nothing to me, save that I must bear my share of the shame. I would ally yourself with Bonaparte, in God's name do so; but you shall not commit murder. That at least, is not part of your political plan."

Nicholas made no answer, but a sour smile passed across his face. Chloris turned swiftly to her father.

"Speak, father," she urged. "Tell him this must not be—that he exceeds himself. His black passion carries him too far, and he shall not so disgrace the name as to associate with bravoës and assassins."

Sir Stephen shook his head, having not yet the power of speech, but his expression was unhappy and marked with alarm, as he followed his daughter with anxious, wondering eyes. Nicholas spoke roughly.

"What do you know of my actions, or what I am privy to? You know too much. Because your Mr Warburton is assailed, am I his keeper?"

"God shall judge whether you be or not," she answered, solemnly. "You may hide much from me but not from Him."

Nicholas shrugged his shoulders. "'Tis time you were in your room. Go to your room, simpleton, and pray or what you will. We have business."

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Her eyes flashed back at him, but she went, withdrawing slowly and with dignity, and, going, cast one glance at Philip, who stood uneasily gnawing his thumb and frowning. Sir Stephen still gazed after his daughter with that fearful, questioning look.

Chloris locked the door of her room and confronted her terrors. She had recognized the hard, black mask which Nicholas Carmichael's face was wont to become on the eve of some desperate resolution. He was then in a still whiteness of anger which would subsequently break and leap in a tempest of flame. She feared him and his designs, and sat above in her chamber waiting until their deliberations should be brought to a conclusion. Her heart fled to Warburton instantly, fluttering like a bird that would defend her young; she dreamed of danger to him, now that she knew how unscrupulously he had been attacked. The shame, too, of that new revelation overbore her, who had all her life been familiar with the free-trade conspiracy and thought no harm of it. The countryside was in league to thwart his Majesty's customs and the stern laws, and there was none who lived upon those coasts who would think badly of the smugglers. But this traffic with one whom the common air about her had taught her to consider as the enemy came upon her with a stroke of horror. She moved among the news bewildered, able to fix her mind upon one fact only, and that was the increased peril in which Warburton stood. If this were the secret he held, what would not be plotted against him? He was not safe a day, nay, an hour nor a minute, longer. He must be warned, and yet, with the warning fresh in his ears, she knew that he would heed it not. What course could she pursue to save him while yet there was time? She deliberated until

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in her excitement her brain swam, and yet no way opened out of the blind and terrible road.

Chloris was aroused some time in the early darkness of the evening by Philip's voice calling on her. She opened the door, and he entered.

"Well," said he, with a grimace, "still sulking, sis?"

"What have you been doing?" she asked, quickly.

"Oh, the schooner," he answered, lightly. "She must leave to-morrow night at latest."

"Is that all?" she asked, sharply.

He examined her face. "Faith! you're a spitfire," he said. "No, there's naught that you need trouble your head with."

"You have some new plot against Mr. Warburton?" she cried, fiercely.

Philip did not deny it. "Come, sis, do not be foolish; the man must go somehow. I hate this business of Boney's, but you see 'tis impossible now that we should let him go."

"What, you will throw in your lot, then, with that traitor Nicholas?" she asked, with heavy breathing.

"No; he may be damned!" said Philip; "I will not meddle with it. I am for King George and not King Boney. I'll be damned if I move a finger! But Warburton must go. Come, Chloris, you must see that much."

She put him aside without a word, as though she by that act spurned with contempt a voice that had no weight, and passed softly and rapidly down the stairway into the hall. At the back of the hall a door stood ajar from which a light streamed, and this she pushed open, stepped across the threshold, clicked the latch behind her, and was face to face with her brother Nicholas. Out of her own features had been suddenly struck all the emotion and anger which she had

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previously exhibited; her brow was serene, pale, and splendid, and only the quick fluctuations of her dress witnessed to that internal passion. She had controlled herself such as never Carmichael had before; under so great a burden of love and fear she walked.

Nicholas Carmichael was of a hard, hot spirit, capable of fanaticism, ardent to the point of insanity. The Irish blood on which the race was founded had been joined in these Carmichaels by a sterner northern current, as their very name witnessed, and these two forces—antagonistic, yet confluent, and mingling in amazing incongruity—were present and visible especially in the elder son of the house. Sir Stephen was a lithe and durable man, whose native ardor had been subdued by the deposits of age; he offered now a cold, contained face to the world, yet underneath the fires burned still—which was why he cherished to the end the ideals of his patriotism. In his son these characters were enlarged and informed with extravagant enthusiasms; his spirit was open and large, and his mind as narrow as the way to heaven. Apart from their color, beauty, and their strong emotions, there was little in common between Nicholas and his brother, or Nicholas and his sister. Yet, if he had an affection for any of his family, it was Chloris whom he loved, and he eyed her now thoughtfully, and even kindly, and with a calm as great as her own.

"What is it you want, Chloris?" he asked.

"Nick, Philip tells me"—she spoke slowly—"that you are making a plan to contrive the death of Mr. Warburton, whom you have already twice assaulted. Is this so?"

Nicholas uttered an exclamation of annoyance. "What! Must we go through this again?" he asked.

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"I have told you that I could lend no attention to your advice. It is foolish in you."

"It is true, then?" she said, quickly. "You are going to slay him by any trick or cowardly device you may?"

"My plans are not for hysterical girls," he said, shortly, turning to the wall, on which hung many weapons.

"Listen to me, Nick," she said, commandingly. "You are entering on a warfare in behalf of some ideal of yours. I say nothing against it, for it may be that you are right when you accuse me of ignorance. But one thing I may ask, and do ask: that this war be fair, and—and that it does not involve you in the arts and practices of the assassin. Take down your sword and musket by all means, if you will, but take them down honestly, and take your own risks and in the face of your enemy."

"Do you accuse me of cowardice?" he asked, with a sneer.

"No; but of treachery and dark deeds which are worse than cowardice," she said. "For the coward at least has the excuse of his vice, but the brave man has none. I will not believe that you meditate a crime, Nick. It is impossible."

"That is right," answered Nicholas, coldly, "believe nothing, but go back to your broidery."

"Do you think I will go content with that?" she cried, giving way to the fire in her blood. "Do you think I do not know what your purpose? You are a devil, Nicholas Carmichael, but you shall not have your way."

"Why," said he, with a cool, contemptuous smile. "I think you are wrong, Chloris. 'Tis the gentleman himself that has armed us with our opportunities. He holds too long."

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"Wist!" she cried; "and because he has not given you up to justice you would destroy him? What generosity! What gratitude!"

"You do not understand," he answered, impatiently. "He is holding out for purposes of his own. Do you not suppose he knows the dread and doubt that hang over this island of Lynsea? He has us in his grip, but he shall wait too long."

"Nick! Nick!" she pleaded, putting her arms on him. "Do you not see by his silence for so long that he cannot mean to betray you? He would have done it else. What reason could he have for silence? I believe, Nick, that he has repented of his determination to be revenged; nay, Nick! Nick! it may be that he has had his revenge," she cried, sobbing on his shoulder. "Who can say? Who can say? But give him the chance. Let me dissuade him. I will take the office on myself, my brother. I feel sure that I could persuade him to silence. Let me try. Let me try."

Nicholas scowled on her darkly. "I do not understand this," said he, "nor what this scene means. What business have you in these matters? What have you to do with this man, Warburton, that you plead so for his life?"

"I would plead for any brave man's life," she answered. "I would plead to save you from the stain of blood-guiltiness."

"Bah!" he returned, sharply. "There is more warmth in your voice and body than comes of any fine theory. What is't has happened to you? I have a thought that you look too kindly on this fellow. Better shake off such silly sentiments, for he is bound to die. We cannot let him live. What is it to you?"

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Chloris dropped his arm and stood up, white, and shaking like a reed in the wind, all her passion, long unnaturally pent, broken out of hand and keeping—the living daughter of that untoward race.

“What is it to me?” she repeated, and in so blind a madness did she speak that his face was blurred before her eyes. “I will tell you, Nicholas Carmichael. He is more to me than you and all my blood, more than my life; a thousand times more than you,” she repeated, stamping her foot, while her pallor was instantly charged with a heavy shock of blood. “You are welcome to the news, I am proud of it, I glory in it. There is that between us that none can destroy or render null.”

Nicholas uttered a cry of rage and made a step towards her, but she drew back. “Hear me!” she cried. “I tell you that I would not change what has been. I belong to him; my soul and my life are swallowed up in him; he commands me. Yes; it is I, the girl, your sister, that prayed and played with you, who speak; I the maiden, the sanctuary of ignorance, who was kept to childhood and knew nothing, dreamed nothing, learned nothing, and desired nothing. Behold! I am now newly come to my proper estate. I am a woman, Nicholas Carmichael, and I rejoice in that crown of womanhood. You cannot hinder me; and as for the man I love, he shall not die. I tell you he shall not die!”

As she spoke her brother's face grew livid with the intensity of his fury; his eyes shot blood, and his mouth was set horribly; his frantic fingers moved swiftly to the wall, and with an inarticulate cry he pulled a dagger from the rack.

“He shall not die!” cried Chloris, savagely triumphant.

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"NICHOLAS STRODE FROM THE ROOM IN HIGH PASSION"



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Nicholas raised his arm, the light gleaming on the blue steel and in his violent eyes, and for a moment he hesitated. Then he flung down the weapon.

"Fool!" he said, hoarsely. "Now he is assured of death," and took a step towards the door.

She uttered a cry and moved towards him, as though to hold him back, but with a movement of great force he thrust at her brutally with his arms, and she fell, striking her head upon the table, and rolling thence to the floor. Nicholas Carmichael strode from the room in his high passion, not looking behind him, and, when in the hall, turned the key in the door.

"Ere she rise again, her lover will have perished," he said, savagely, to himself.





CHAPTER XVII

WARBURTON MAKES A SURRENDER

CHLORIS opened her eyes in faint wonder and gazed about her prison. Originally part of the ancient hall, this chamber reached to the height of two storeys, and was lighted from windows set aloft in the oaken walls. It now served Nicholas for a private room, and bore the appearance of an armory, so set and bristling was it with weapons and trophies. Half-way up the walls ran a narrow balcony from which once musicians had played to the guests within the hall. Chloris lifted her head from the floor, and it ached dully, throbbing from her temples to the nape of her neck. She passed her hand across it to stay the melancholy pain, and, behold! it came back to her streaked with blood. Slowly she disentangled out of her confused memories the picture of that quarrel and that struggle, and with this inflowing recollection came the prick of fear and the desire for action. There was danger abroad for Warburton, and she must bring him help, standing between him and death. No longer would she plead with her unnatural brother, for the hour was gone by for words, and nothing short of deeds would save her lover. It would have been best had he consented to her wishes—left the Carmichaels to the hand of God, and withdrawn from that inhospita-



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ble and deadly coast. But he had refused, and she had now no thought to move him; her passion had gone into the wave of those bewildering emotions which had reached her lately, and had come forth, solitary, pure, whole, and unscathed. It must not be that which should give way, for there was no power to stand against that, no force upon this world—nay, and no hopes of any other; and since Warburton had denied her request, and still stood for vengeance, she must yield him his vengeance. For his love, and to preserve him, she would break all the sacred ties of blood, and make a holocaust of what she had till now guarded equal with her own life and honor.

Chloris saw this one way clear before her, for of a sudden the clouds rose from her bewildered and aching brain and all her course was 'incredibly distinct with light. An ancient ink-horn stood upon a table, and here she sat down to write, under an inspiration come she knew not whence.

"SIR" [so her pen ran quickly],—"My brother, Nicholas Carmichael, has plotted a wicked deed. He designs the death of Mr. Warburton, now in Marlock, and is on his way even now to accomplish it. Hasten, sir, to put Mr. Warburton under your protection, and to seize my brother, Nicholas Carmichael. Sir, if this be not evidence enough, I charge him with free-trading. The boat lies now in Lynsea rocks. I beg you, sir, to take him and hold him.

"Your faithful and obedient servant,

"CHLORIS CARMICHAEL."

When she had finished, she sealed the letter, addressed it to a justice in the neighborhood of Marlock, and put it in her bosom. Then she cast her eyes

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busily about the room; it was her jail. She tried the door, which would not budge, and no windows opened near the floor. High above the balcony was set the one communication with the world beyond, now fast dwindling into darkness, but still faintly visible under the lingering western glow. If she were to escape, it must be by this, and, her fears goading her forward, she cast about for some means to reach the window. The balcony was gained from a closet beyond by a short winding stair, but she found the door of this closet locked, and no efforts of hers could loosen the heavy oak. Abandoning this route, she examined the walls with swift flying eyes. They were, as has been described, covered with weapons of all times and countries; trophies of arms were converted into curious and orderly figures, strung from nails and cords. Would they bear her weight?

Chloris drew up chairs to the wall below the gallery, and standing tiptoe upon these stretched forth her slender arms towards the trophy next above her, which was fixed some feet lower than the gallery. She caught the butt of two muskets, one in each hand, and with a jerk flew upward, swaying against the wall. Yet the structure held even under that rude shock, and, shifting her hold, she pulled herself by stages higher and higher, until she hung in the very centre of the arms, and rested her feet also on that staunch stack. Gaining her breath, she measured the distance with a glance, and, pausing not, leaped with out-cast hands across the intervening space between her and the gallery. Her body struck the rails heavily, and with the blow she was almost hurled down into the room below; yet her eager fingers stayed her in time, clutching fiercely, greedily, and there she hung for a little, half in, half out of

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the balcony, until, her strength and life returning, she was able to crawl over the rails and drop in a heap upon the gallery floor.

She was on her feet in a few minutes and had the long window open—a slit of visible twilight twenty feet above the gravel path which bordered a little orchard lawn. Below was no foothold, merely vacancy until the ground, and there was but one way down—to leap. Chloris did not shrink, though at another time the thought of that great fall would have sent in anticipation a horrible jar throughout her body. Instead she put her hands to the sill, slipped lightly through, and dropping to the full length of her arms, was thus momentarily suspended above freedom. Then she let go and fell. Her feet struck the walk dully, and every bone and sinew and fibre in her delicate body seemed to rip, break in pieces, and crumple into a hot mass of pain. When she gathered herself together and staggered to her feet, she found to her surprise that she could walk, for it had seemed to her that life itself must have cracked in that horrible shock. She moved away, therefore, as swiftly as she might, dragging one leg behind the other, her torn muscles aching acutely, but her mind still fast set and pointing one way only, and her courage still indomitable and ardent.

She crept down silently into the little haven where the pier jutted into the water. The cutter which was used by the Carmichaels was gone, but she chose the larger of two small boats in the house, and, shoving it on the pebbles, launched it upon the broad face of that gray inviolable sea. Outside the haven she ran up the rag of sail and stood away from the island, purposing not to cross to Marlock, where she might be noted by Nicholas or one of his creat-

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ures, but to make for the village higher on the coast which had been the scene of Warburton's grave adventure. Chloris was an admirable hand with sail and oar, but by the stillness of the night she made slow progress, though she pulled with her aching arms to aid the flapping sail. Inch by inch, it seemed to her, she in her craft crept over the water across that lonely mile, watched by idle and benignant stars and accompanied with the lazy wash of the reluctant ocean. Yet foot by foot she drew near to her destination, and at last ran the skiff ashore near by Vincehallow and entered the village. Hatless as she was, and breathing her distress with every deep inspiration, she startled the good people of Vincehallow, who recognized her at once. The miracle of her beauty, glowing brighter and fresher under her physical efforts, struck admiration to the heart of the village youth whom she addressed. She had a letter (she said) which must reach its goal at once; it was for Mr. Powis, of Laycross. It was a tribute to her face as well as to her agitation that this large-bodied and frank-eyed young man became the messenger, and, once he had started, under particular orders to push on with all speed and at all hazards, Chloris went back to her boat. Yet now that her mission was over, she began to doubt its success. If this man should fail to reach Laycross in time, if Mr. Powis should refuse to act upon such rude evidence even if he were to act, but to act tardily—in all these cases it would spell Death to Warburton. Now that her messenger was gone, she was frantic in her mind that she had suffered him to go, and had not herself undertaken the journey, broken, sore, and wounded as she was. And upon that succeeded the determination at least to see Warburton,

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to offer him a last warning, to plead yet again with him, to see if perchance he even now (God forefend!) might not be sacrificed to her brother's fury—nay, even at the lowest to set eyes once more upon him, to hear again his voice, and to mingle again with his the accents and caresses of love.

She turned from the sea, when the little running wavelets came up about her feet out of the vast invisible, and went briskly landward, her face to the dunes, upon the other side of which lay Marlock and her lover. For a time she walked with strength and animation, sustained by her excitement and the warm desire to reach him; plunging over rough ways, by quiet lanes, and across broken fields, until at length she descended into the valley under the dunes. But here the difficulties of her journey grew, for the path was heavy and cumbered with vegetation; so that after some experience of it she regretted that she had not kept to the road—the longer route, but the surer. A stream down the valley made a morass of the rough fields, and she picked her way wearily through boggy, shining patches, stumbling in the darkness over the inequalities, descending into ugly pits, and falling athwart hillocks. Down below her, away by the sea, as she and all the people of that coast well knew, stretched the quicksands, open-mouthed and ravening. Chloris at last reached the dunes, up which she clambered, dizzy and drearily spent. The pain in her head grew steadily, and the aching in her body seemed as though it would pull her down by the way at every step, yet there was still two miles between her and Marlock, two miles of miserable waste and solitary sand. All the signs and appointments of night were now in the sky, and the obscurity added to her difficulties. There was one

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large star which hung silver on the horizon, and towards this she unconsciously pushed her way; it shone steadily, not with the inconstant twinkling of the field about it, but lucently, mildly benignant, a hospitable glory in the heavens. Yet this vanished from her sight as she went down into the pools of sand, rising again with encouragement as she climbed the interminable mounds. Chloris's feet mechanically beat upon the shifting earth, carrying her, as she hoped, to her goal; but by this time she flagged, her spirit had worn itself placid, even indifferent, and no longer was any human feeling vital in her mind. Although she strove to that one star, it was not with any expectation of reaching it; for she had ceased to revolve in her thoughts the end and motive of her journey. It was just a dismal wilderness she tramped under lonely stars and by unfriendly seas. The roaring of the gulfs beyond the cliffs filled her ears with distant clamor, acquainting her that she was still working towards Marlock; yet, not that she considered, had not the voices of the sea grown louder, and was she not therefore approaching the margin of the land? This reflection drew her to a pause, and she stood with her weary limbs shaking under her. A vague fear assailed, seeming to threaten formidable issues, that perhaps she had gone wholly astray and was come to another coast. Surely she could not have wandered for so long among the dunes without reaching some end, unless, indeed, she had gone round in a circle like some lost traveller in hell. The drumming of the sea saluted her ears and called her nearer; and so once more she resumed her journey moving now in the direction of the sound. And presently, although she saw nothing, when she had topped a rise, the flying winds from off the bay took her in

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the face roughly, and would have rent her garments from her. They strove to throw her down, and she clung instinctively to the grass for succor, for out of the depths rose up a hollow murmur as of some creature moaning hundreds of feet below. She stood, as she conceived it, upon the verge of a precipice, battling with a foe that would cast her over; and thus with slow steps and dread at her heart she crept back whence she had come, not knowing whither she went or to what new perils she was exposing herself. Once at a safe distance from the cliffs, she began to hasten with all the speed of which she was capable, and as if pursued by a phantom terror, away from the sea, inland once more, and towards the interior fastnesses and silences of the dunes.

Roger Warburton returned from a visit to the revenue sloop late in the evening. Gellibrand was in earnest as to his crusade, vowing to his friend that he would not leave one smuggler on the coast that was not clapped into jail—not he. Indeed, he intended what he said, and he was, besides a fop and an admirer of beauty and rank, as smart a sailor as any in the revenue service. All that he wanted, he declared, was a hint. "Put me on a smell, Mr. Warburton," he boasted, "and I ask no more. I will fetch the vermin home. I'm main glad I saw that Frenchman; it gives me a thought, and I would like your advice, since you know these parts."

"I know 'em very scantily," said Warburton, "but you are welcome to my information."

"Have you heard talk of the free-trade, as they call it?—damn 'em!"—asked the lieutenant. "I shall be obliged to you for the news, sir. Thank you for the offer. It is right for all to join hands that his Majesty may not be defrauded, and he who holds

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his tongue, if he knows anything, is a rogue, sir, and that's flat. He deserves hanging with the others."

"Ah," said Warburton, "but these gentry hold together."

"Hold, sir!" cried Gellibrand; "damme! they shall swing together. I will not be denied—I will not be denied. I will be off to-morrow, the first thing, to take counsel with Sir Stephen Carmichael. He should know a good deal."

"Aye, he should know a good deal," agreed Warburton, "but I hear he is sick abed."

"Sick, is he? Gad! I am sorry to hear it. Then I will pay my *devoirs* and be polite. I must stand on ceremony. I should have visited him before."

He saw his visitor off with deferential and alert politeness, and Warburton's boat dropped away for Marlock. As it left the sloop a cutter, wonderfully handled, sprang out of the gloom across his wake, and fluttered suddenly up into the wind. He looked back with curiosity at her, but saw no one on board, partly by reason of the growing darkness and partly because of the plunging canvas. He headed his own boat for the shore, but after a moment's indecision the cutter put about and bore down on the sloop. It was Nicholas Carmichael who stepped aboard the latter, wildness in his eyes, but outwardly possessed and civil. He had recognized Warburton, and the struggle in his mind had been sharp and brief; but, after all, it was of most immediate importance to discover what he had been doing on the sloop, and how much Gellibrand knew. As for Warburton, nothing now could save him, and ten minutes more or less would take nothing from the fulness of his punishment.

But Warburton was at last serious in his resolve to guard himself, for he saw that the time was come

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when, if he put any value on his life, he must act prudently. He had almost composed his mind to end this business next day and send the Carmichaels to what the law would exact of them. Yet he had still some considerations to ponder, and he wanted peace and solitude. When he had landed, therefore, he went, not towards the "Three Feathers," but through the village and along the cliffs, where the cool breezes blowing off the sea were soft and pleasant to the flesh. He was aware now that it could not be long before his enemies would strike like a Finian's more, and that they would strike deeper with more purpose, and by surer agent — even perhaps to-night. Presently turning from the beach he walked inland, making for Marlock by a shorter route. It was already dark, but the way was now familiar to him and he stretched his long legs briskly to the walk. He had eaten and drunken well on board the *Osprey*, and desired nothing now save a glass of good contraband spirits and a bed to sleep in, for he had much to do, and must rise betimes with the sun on the morrow.

The gentle radiance of the field of stars spread about the black dunes, discriminating between hills and hollows, and turning the night to a gray mist. He came soon upon the chapel ruins in the hollow, and passed into the aisle, which held a deeper quality of darkness within its walls; but between the massive broken pillars he came abruptly to a stop, for something lay at his feet, whiter than the darkness and softer and warmer than the cold, hard earth. He struck a light that flickered, a pale thread of flame in that deserted temple, and he was looking down upon the quiet face of Chloris.

With an exclamation of dismay, and a great fear at his breast, he stooped and lifted her, feeling at her

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

bosom for the remnants of life; and next, lifting her in his arms, as if she had been a child, he stepped out of the ruins. Below the chapel, in the heart of the sand-hills, stood, as he remembered, a little cottage inhabited by no one, and now fallen to become the merest skeleton of boards, plaster, and rafters, through the gaps in which the winds fluttered at will. Towards this refuge he picked his way, and, arrived there, lighted a candle, and set her upon a rude couch of boxes. He poured some brandy into a glass and put it to her lips; she opened her eyes upon him and smiled faintly, trustingly, happily; after which she closed them again. Meanwhile Warburton was making a busy examination of her, and from the marks and signs upon her garments he guessed that she had come far and had probably been seeking him with news. He felt a spring of affection break newly from the heart that he had hardened, and Chloris Carmichael no longer seemed to be the sister of Nicholas or the daughter of her father, but a beautiful and devoted woman whom he loved. He touched her hands soothingly, and she looked up again at him with a start.

"You shall tell me later, dear," said he; "drink again of this." She shook her head, anxiety once more regaining its seat in her expression.

"You are still safe, then?" she exclaimed, and drew a breath of relief. "But you will not be safe long," she added, quickly. "Nicholas has sworn to kill you. You are to die to-night."

"And yet," said he, smiling, "I am alive."

"No, no, you do not understand, sir. I do not think you appreciate your danger. The deed was in other hands before, but now Nicholas has taken upon him-

WARBURTON MAKES SURRENDER

self the purpose; God forgive him, and that he is my brother!"

Her voice broke, and she explored his face with trembling, as if she feared that he would impute this to her, and begged him not to cast her off for the sins of her house.

"I shall have him laid by the heels to-morrow," said Warburton, curtly. "I have waited long enough."

"Ah, you have waited too long," she said, and rose to her feet uncertainly. "You must not go back to Marlock this night. I beg you, promise me that. Mr. Warburton, I have, by the providence of God, caught you in time in this strange and unexpected fashion, out upon this wilderness. 'Tis written, sure, that I was to warn you not to return to-night."

Warburton smiled. "I am afraid of no assassin, even if he be your brother," he said, bluntly.

The irony which he had not intended, or himself seen, was unheeded by her, who pleaded anew for his life.

"God is my witness," she declared, "that I have never asked anything of you, Roger Warburton, that was granted to me. Give me this one thing now. It is a little matter I ask of you, yet it is a great matter to me—'tis all in all, for 'tis your life. Give me your life, I pray you, sir, and you shall do otherwise what you will."

"Tush, sweetheart," said he, "I will do what I will in any case. But you must not be alarmed. Indeed, I may not consent to you; for I must carry my dearest lady to a shelter and safety."

"This shall be my shelter and my safety," she cried, vehemently. "Look you, I have travelled all the way from Lynsea, as these stains do witness, to

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

accomplish this. And as I came I said in my heart, 'I will warn him, and he will obey me.' But then my heart questioned me, 'Nay, you will warn him, and he will laugh at you'; and which is right, my heart or I? Nay, I declare that I shall have my way, and that you shall tarry here this night, and here I will keep watch over you."

The emotion was tremulous in her voice, and Warburton, looking at her, answered nothing. He was sensibly moved by this declaration, and by the thought that she had suffered these fatigues and pains to help him.

"Did you lose your way, Chloris?" he asked, gently. "How was it you came into such a plight, poor child?"

She shook her head, for she would not speak of what had happened.

"You must not concern yourself about me," he added.

She gave a start and caught him by the arm. "What is that?" she cried, in alarm. "Did you hear that?"

Warburton listened, but only the sound of the rising wind upon the dunes reached him.

"Nay," he said, "'tis but the night growing wild, that warns me you must be off."

"No, no!" she cried, gripping him by the arm. "What is that? Hush!"

Warburton held his ears to the exterior vacancy of the wilds again, and again comforted her.

"Be not afraid," he said; "'tis but the wind searching under the eaves. Hark! it whistles through the holes and crevices."

"You will be safe to-night if you stay here, then," she said, pleading with him in a voice that was full

WARBURTON MAKES SURRENDER

of cajolery and agitation. "I do not think they can harm you here. Come, sit down, and I will watch you while you sleep."

"I think you are unstrung, child," he answered, quietly.

"Oh," she broke forth, "cannot you understand that I am pleading for your life? I would not speak without knowledge—on mere secret fancy. Stay and save your life."

"And to-morrow?" he asked, lightly.

"To-morrow also you shall be safe," she replied; "that is my part. I have accomplished that at least."

"How do you mean?" he asked, in astonishment.

"What have you done to protect me? How can you, a girl?"

"I have taken such a step," she said, swiftly, and with some solemnity in her manner, "that no more plots shall be laid against you. You shall walk safely after to-morrow, and the wicked men that seek your life shall seek in vain."

"What is't you have done?" he asked, puzzled.

She sobbed. "I have given up my brother to justice," she whispered.

"What!" he cried. "You have done this for me?"

"I have sent word of the plot; I have told of the free-trade. He will be seized by the morrow. Oh, my love—sir, if you care one tittle for me, stay here to-night, so that what I have done shall not be in vain."

Warburton answered her with no word, for of a truth he was astounded by this news and by the revelation of her sacrifice. He had not dreamed that she would rise to such an abnegation of her family, and confusedly he began to piece together his notions of her into a new woman. He had not understood her. He

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

had refused to budge one foot for all her tears and entreaties, while she had voluntarily immolated her house and herself to preserve him in his obstinacy. Slowly a thought grew out of the chaos in his mind and he caressed her hair softly, affectionately, but with abstraction.

"How did you send word and to whom?" he asked slowly.

She told him in her whisper, breathing faster, but now lower, in the pleasure of his touch—her face at his breast. As his hand moved on the lustrous glory of her hair it rested sharply, and he took it away.

"What is this?" he asked. "You are cut—you bleed."

"'Tis nothing," she whispered—"nothing, my love. I feel nothing."

"What is this, too, that you took for my sake?" he asked, with his former slowness.

"'Tis nothing," she repeated, hiding her face on his breast. "I would suffer ten thousand times so little for your sake. I desire only to have you with me—and you will stay?"

He set her gently aside. "No," he said, "I may not stay, but, indeed, I shall not go to Marlock. I will not have you more generous than I. I will not be outbidden by any woman."

"What?" she asked, in alarm and dismay, not understanding.

He drew her close and kissed her lips. For all her whiteness and her fallen hair she looked more beautiful than ever before.

"Let that guard you, sweetheart," he said. "I will return."

"Whither do you go?" she asked, anxiously.

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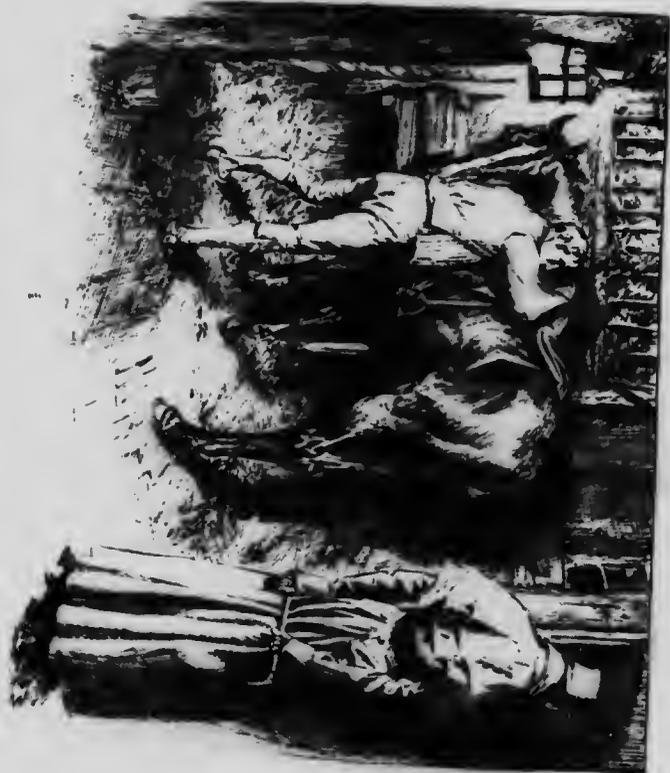
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WARREN HAD A HORSE SADDLED FOR THE JOURNEY





WARBURTON MAKES SURRENDER

said, with determination. "You have given up too much for me, God knows! I will not be outdone by you."

"What!" she cried. "You would intercept the letter, and destroy your only safeguard?"

"You have given up too much for me, God knows!" he repeated. "I never knew you. Nay, I will not suffer it. You shall not have your brother's death upon your conscience. You ask too much of yourself."

"Nay, nay, let it be, let it be," she pleaded, in dismay.

He passed to the door, and, as quickly halting on a new thought, cast back a glance of strange resolution; he had the aspect, so alive to his common habit, of one under the fire and influence of some exalted and unusual emotion. He returned to the girl, and, slipping his hand within a pocket of his coat, brought forth a piece of paper.

"I leave it in your hands," he said, quietly. "Burn it. Destroy it. Let me find it gone when I return. 'Tis Bonaparte's letter." He went again to the door. "I bid you stay, Chloris," he said. "I will presently return, for there is still time to do what I wish," and lifting the latch he went forth.





CHAPTER XVIII

A ROBBERY AND AN ARREST

THERE was wind in the grass when he set foot upon the dunes and turned his face towards Marlock. The justice, Mr. Powis, with whom he had a passing acquaintance, lived, as he was aware, in a joint of two valleys far up under the brow of the moorland; and from what Chloris had let fall he calculated that he could reach the house on horseback from the village ere the foot-messenger could arrive. To carry out this plan it was necessary that he should take a horse in Marlock, and his own was stabled at the "Three Feathers," to which inn he bent his steps. The night was well advanced towards midnight when he entered the village, and, having roused the ostler with difficulty, had the nag saddled for the journey. The man regarded him suspiciously, and, the noise of these preparations going abroad, he thought he saw the frightened countenance of Tremayne flattened against the glass of an upper window in the tavern. But he paid no heed, as, in truth, it would have been well to do; for no sooner was he upon the road, clattering inland out of Marlock, than the door of the inn opened and Tremayne stole forth with the air of conspiracy, and made his way down to a house by the edge of the sea. Out of this presently emerged Nicholas Carmi-



A ROBBERY AND AN ARREST

chael, and now the messenger went through the same business in the stables with another horse; so that by eleven of the clock two horsemen were cantering up the comb in the teeth of the rising wind, both solitary to the dark, and both commoved by warm and exhilarating feelings.

To Warburton the chase of this innocent messenger had come home with the excitement of the hunt; he pushed his horse ahead along the steep and rocky way, fearful lest he should have underestimated the time and should be too late. The animal was upstanding and staunch and fresh, and thus it was that even Nicholas Carmichael, riding furiously, could make no way upon him. Somewhere, far off, the winds of the night brought down to him the sounds of his quarry, but he never drew near enough to set eyes on him under those pale stars. By rough woods and narrow lanes, along bridle tracks and across open spurs of the hills rode Roger Warburton, and behind him, scarce half a mile distant, followed his pursuing fate. The vicinity of Laycross, as Mr. Powis's property was styled, was heavily clad with trees, so that they made thick night about the hamlet. Through this blackness Warburton rode up to the house and rang loudly upon the bell, for he could see a light burning through the lower windows which told him that some one was yet astir. A sleepy-looking fellow answered the door, and to Warburton's direct question returned a negative. No messenger had arrived that night, and no letter had come to his master. Warburton's heart beat high with satisfaction as he rode out of the gates and took up a post in the direct way towards the coast, beneath the evening shadows of the summer trees. For once all thoughts of the Carmichaels had left him, and he was engrossed wholly

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

with his errand, resolved to carry it out to the end.

He had not been in his place very long when there was the noise of a horse's hoofs upon the road, and he saw approaching a rider out of the ascent from Marlock. But this could not be the messenger who went by foot, and he stirred not from his shelter. The horseman pulled in, and stood silent in the middle of the road before Laycross, his long black figure visible in the faint light. Then he set his horse walking slowly forward, and as he faded away out of sight into the neutral night, Warburton was aware of footsteps that drew nigh. A man hopped over a stile and dropped into the road, then walked straight towards him.

"'Tis my man," said Warburton, under his breath, and, moving his horse, hailed him.

The new-comer, who looked in the gloom to be a fine, tall fellow, waited on the edge of the entrance to the park. Away in the night the second horseman reined in again, and turned his ear towards the voice.

"Look you, my good fellow," said Warburton. "You bear a letter to Mr. Powis, do you not?" The man made no reply. "Come, I know you do," pursued Warburton. "'Twas a lady sent you. You see I know all about it, and I am here to tell you that she has changed her mind, and does not desire it shall be delivered."

"What letter do you talk of?" asked the man.

"'Tis useless to pretend with me," said Warburton, impatiently. "You are Mr. Vincehallow, and I am here to obtain the letter from you. 'Tis not to go to Mr. Powis."

The man backed away and answered nothing. "Come, fool," said Warburton, "I speak the truth. I am the lady's friend."

A ROBBERY AND AN ARREST

For reply the man darted swiftly forward, and was through the gate ere Warburton was aware of the trick. With an oath he followed, his horse lumbering over the beds and lawns, which the fugitive had selected as his best way of escape. To pursue a flying runner on horseback among all those shrubs and spaces of darkness was obviously impossible, and he flung himself out of the saddle. But by this time the man had gained the doorway, and the bell pealed out in the court-yard, jangling inharmoniously on the quiet night. Ere Warburton could get to the house the sleepy servant had opened the door, the letter was delivered, and the officious and faithful messenger had slipped into the invisible from which he had come.

Warburton hesitated not, for his obstinate temper was now fully roused. Drawing to the door, he also rang, and, when the servant appeared, stared quickly at his hands, as if he expected to find the letter there.

"Is your master abed?" he asked, suppressing his disappointment. The man thought not, but would see, and Warburton followed on his heels, entering a small and comfortable room—a sort of study, brilliantly lighted—in which a small, middle-aged man of equable face sat before a table, reading.

He looked up in astonishment at the intrusion, and Warburton bowed. "I must ask your pardon, Mr. Powis, for this untimely interruption," said he. "But, indeed, I have some pressing business with you, as you shall see presently."

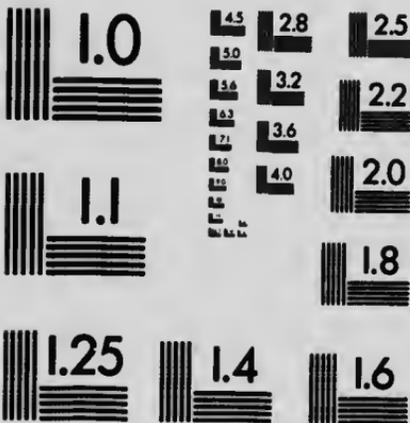
Mr. Powis turned up the lamp by him and examined his visitor anew, but without expression. "I doubt not that what is important to you, Mr. Warburton, will not fail to be important to me," he said, slowly.

Warburton's glance quickly took in the circum-



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

stances of the room, with all its appointments, and came to rest upon a letter which lay by his host's hand, unopened, the superscription uppermost. The man-servant had already withdrawn.

The justice of the peace put down his book. "Will you take a seat, Mr. Warburton?" said he, with a civil gesture.

Warburton did not accept the invitation. "I am come here, sir," he began, slowly and ponderously, "upon business which concerns a correspondent of yours."

"Indeed, sir," said the justice. "Who may that be?"

"'Tis a woman, sir, who has writ what she should not have writ, and that which her friends desire her to withdraw."

The justice's eyes fell, almost as if by accident, upon the letter by his hand. "Does she desire to withdraw?" he asked.

"She knows not what she did," replied Warburton. "She was distraught, being overtaken by a wild spirit, to which no heed should be paid. What she has written should not be for any eyes save her own."

"You refer to this letter which I have before me, I assume," answered Mr. Powis, nodding at the table. He took it in his fingers thoughtfully, and looked towards the young man. "You ask me to give this up to you unread?" he asked.

"Unopened, sir, unbroken," said Warburton, bluntly.

"Do you bear any authority from the writer to that effect?" inquired Mr. Powis, after a pause. "And again, how shall I know if the writer be she whose authority you bear?"

"I carry no authority," said Warburton, curtly; "I ask you to take my word that this should not have been sent you."

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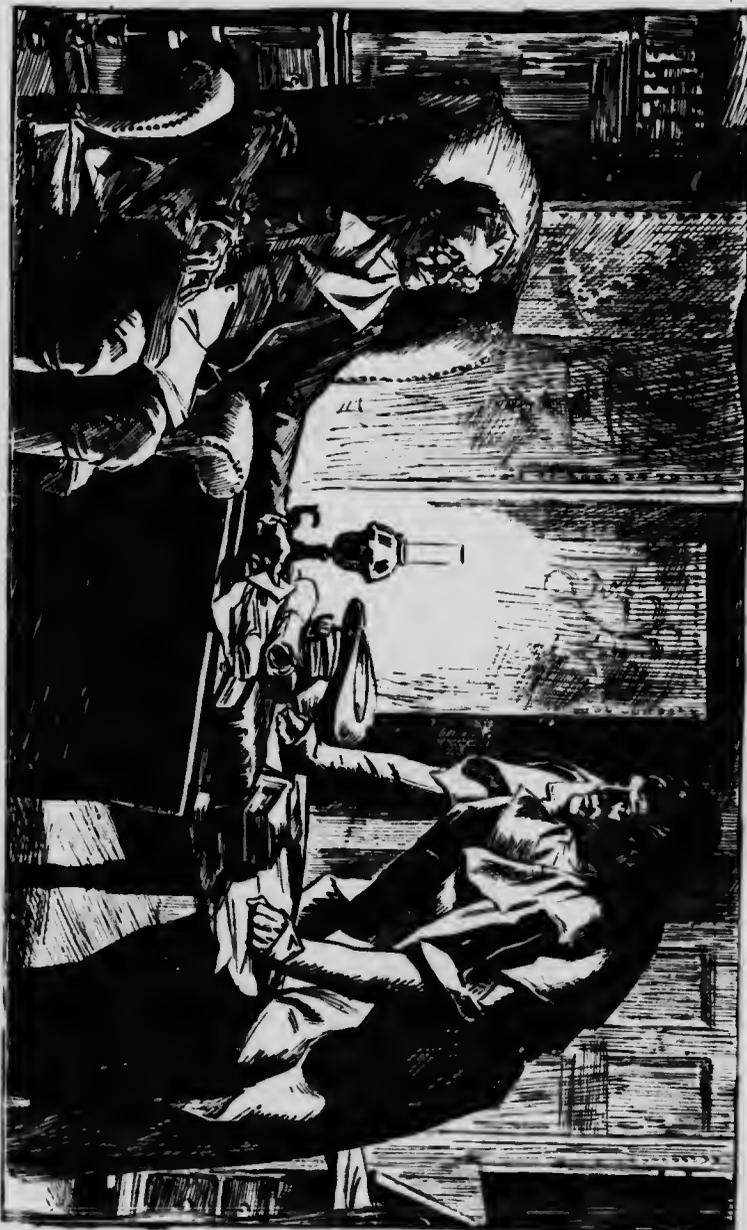
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A ROBBERY AND AN ARREST

"Mr. Warburton, you ask too much," said the other. "Am I to infer that this is addressed to me in my office as a justice of the peace, or as a private man?"

"You may infer what you will," answered Warburton, impatiently. "I give you my word of honor that the letter should not have been written."

"Come," said the justice, with a smile, "this is a queer request. I am no gallant, yet it might be that I had found favor in a woman's eyes, even at my time."

"And such news her friends might desire should not reach you, sir," returned Warburton, promptly.

"I understand that, sir," admitted Mr. Powis, after a pause. "Yet you see I have no proof that this is so. Will you give me your word that it is as you say?"

"Sir, I have said before, you may infer anything you will. 'Tis only of importance that I have the letter," answered the younger man.

Mr. Powis sat back in his chair, still holding the letter. "Mr. Warburton," he said, slowly, "you come of an excellent, a noble family, which has rendered great service to the state. I believe you to be an honorable man, as all that blood is honorable. Yet you puzzle me. I have had to take a course to-day which has been repugnant to me, but was thrust upon me by an urgent information—an affidavit, in fact. Is it on this business you are here?"

"I know nothing of what you speak," said Warburton, staring. "I am only here to get that letter, as I have informed you."

A frown of perplexity disturbed the still features of the justice. He appeared to hesitate. "Perhaps, now that you are here," he went on, "my precautions

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may prove to have been unnecessary. If you have no objection, I should like to have some talk with you."

"Sir, my business is with the letter first; after that I am at your service," said Warburton, bluntly, for it struck him that he was being played with and the matter in hand indefinitely postponed.

"I think you are not one, sir, who, holding some information of interest to the law, would conceal it?" asked Mr. Powis, paying no heed to this piece of impatience.

An access of color charged Warburton's face as the magistrate scrutinized him in the bright light. "I am not fetch-and-carry for the law," he replied.

Mr. Powis straightened himself. "I regret, Mr. Warburton, that your request is impossible to grant," he said, formally. "It is absurd that you should think I could entertain it."

Warburton took a breath deeply, which was one of strenuous resolution; he would not budge, but he did not desire to be forced to arbitrary action.

"Let me put a fact before you, sir," he pleaded. "What I am asking you to do is to save a woman from herself, to preserve her self-respect for her and her peace of mind. If you refuse me, you commit this woman perhaps to a life-long remorse, and to the punishment of her own bitter regret. I do not ask of you anything that in any way affects myself, only a woman who is weak and has suffered through the weakness of her sex."

"The poverty of that sex, sir," responded the magistrate, "is no plea for the alms of justice. I can entertain no such proposal from you. I open this letter, and I shall read here what is written. If there is anything that I should know, you may trust me to

A ROBBERY AND AN ARREST

act; but if there is some mistake, and I am listening to the improper confidences of a headstrong or hysterical girl, you may rest assured that 'twill go no further—the news shall perish with me in this room."

"That is not enough, sir," said Warburton. "I have asked more, and I will be content with no less. I am not here to be beaten down. You force me, sir, upon a course I would rather not take."

Mr. Powis considered him. "You mean that you would use violence to gain your end?" he said. "Well, Mr. Warburton, I am no rustic; I have been a lawyer in London, and I think I can give you a clear notion how the law stands. Let me tell you that you would stand to it in a very dangerous predicament."

"It is unnecessary to waste words, sir," interrupted Warburton. "I have given you warning. Yonder, I see, is a clock, and I will give you two minutes to make up your mind."

The magistrate looked at the clock, and it seemed of a sudden to have jumped into consciousness; the long pendulum swung with a slow and dignified click, and the weights creaked near the floor. Under his hand a stiff sheet of parchment crackled, and he cast his eyes down upon it.

"I would you were come, sir," he said, in his cool voice, as if the last words had not been uttered. "I would you had come on some other business. If it had been for this affidavit you had come, I would have been content. Upon my soul! I believe you should have had it on your bare word."

"I know nothing of any affidavit," said Warburton. "Sir, I would draw your attention to the clock."

Mr. Powis followed his glance, and then, impec-

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eably calm, revisited Warburton's face. On neither countenance was any trace of emotion.

"You are between me and the bell, sir," said the magistrate. "Again, you are a stronger man and younger. I think you must be twice my weight."

"I am taking this advantage of you to-night," was Warburton's answer. "I am, as you will admit, sir, carrying it through as gently and mildly as I may. To-morrow will be another matter. I am at your disposal when and where you will."

"You mistake; not at my disposal, but at the disposal of that force I represent—the law," said Mr. Powis, quietly.

Warburton shrugged his shoulders. "The time is up," he said, and, advancing, put out a hand for the letter which now lay upon the table. The magistrate watched him out of his deep-set eyes, but moved not, and the letter was between Warburton's fingers. He put it in the breast of his coat, and made for the door.

"I shall be at your disposition, sir, after to-night," he repeated.

Mr. Powis answered nothing, merely bowed his head, and continued to regard him softly as he disappeared through the doorway.

Outside the house Warburton mounted his horse and rode from the gates with no elation but with a certain solid satisfaction as of a duty discharged. It was characteristic of him that he cast no backward glance at his own decision and achievement; that he had saved Nicholas Carmichael at his own expense did not trouble him. He never considered it; his nature was too plain and simple, above all, too arrogant and firm. He turned his horses' head towards Marlock, pointing down the valley.

As he passed through the gates the horseman who

A ROBBERY AND AN ARREST

was in waiting beneath the huge elms that bordered the road, struck spurs into his animal and followed after him.

"'Tis as I thought," said Nicholas Carmichael to himself, his temper lashed into a frenzy; "he has spoken at last, and there remains but one thing. By God in heaven! I have two matters against him that spell Death."

Warburton sprang away at a gallop, and his pursuer struck viciously at his horse to sharpen his pace; for there were but a hundred yards between the unconscious rider and his enemy. The road lapsed out of the blind chasm of trees and was visible, a gray thread winding downward into a hollow of darkness. At this point the two were not fifty paces separate, and Warburton, with the noise of another rider in his ears, turned in his saddle. As he did so there came a voice from the pit before him:

"Halt!"

The challenge rang out brisk, sudden, startling on the night, and involuntarily Warburton reined in, the horse staggering and slipping on the descent, until it came to a stop in the centre of a group of men.

"What is this?" demanded Warburton; and then, making out the uniform of a military officer, "Are you gentlemen footpads, that you stop one on the King's highway?" he added.

"Is it Mr. Warburton?" inquired the officer. "Pardon me; the light is damnable. If 'tis you, sir, we are doing nothing but our duty. 'Tis my misfortune to have to arrest you. I am from Edgcombe."

"The devil!" cried Warburton, starting, and was silent awhile.

"What foolish business is this?" he asked next. "There is some mistake committed."

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

"I fear not, Mr. Warburton," answered the officer. "I am acting upon the authority of a warrant issued by Mr. Powis of Laycross."

Warburton laughed harshly. "Damme! I must be pinched to see if I am awake. What charge? I demand your warrant."

"You shall see it, sir," said the officer, civilly, "for by your leave, I will conduct you to Mr. Powis's, who lives by here, I am told. Sergeant, form and forward Mr. Warburton, I hope you will accompany me as a friend might, and not a prisoner."

Warburton was about to give an angry answer and pull at his beast, but a glance at the party round him changed his intention. He was bewildered at this remarkable turn in affairs, and suffered himself to be led back upon the way to Laycross without remonstrance—even without a word. The horseman, who had followed him, had seen the meeting from the patch of darkness in which he sheltered, and, upon the movement of the soldiery, twisted his bridle and galloped hard in the direction of Marlock. Arrived in the village he rattled under the window of the "Three Feathers," where the sign-board swung creaking in the night winds.

"Awake, fool!" he called, and struck on an upper casement with his whip. "Awake, fool! The game is up. The red-coats are out. Get you to the island and warn my father."

The innkeeper's head appeared, crowned with a tasselled nightcap. "Mr. Carmichael, is't you, sir? You scared me. Oh, my God! the soldiers. I cannot do it by myself. Whither go you, sir?"

Nicholas Carmichael held up two fingers under the light, and both were stained with blood. "I have two counts, and both are death," he said. "Get you gone,

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NICHOLAS AROUSED THE INNKEEPER

A ROBBERY AND AN ARREST

as 'bid," with which he vanished again into the night.

Meanwhile the cavalcade conducting Warburton reached Laycross, and, after the usual ceremonies, the captain of the troop with two of his men and Warburton were admitted into the justice's room. Mr. Powis sat where Warburton had left him, reading from the same book, and his face and voice were as quiet as ever.

"Whom have we here, Captain Rash?" he asked. "A prisoner? Not a prisoner, surely, Mr. Warburton? You are of a house that should not suffer this disgrace."

"I have yet to learn, sir, by what right I am arrested, and on what charge," said Warburton, stormily.

Mr. Powis turned to the officer. "Your warrant, sir?" and taking the paper, which was handed to him in silence, perused it carefully. "You are charged herein to take the person of one Roger Warburton, lodging in the "Three Feathers," on the suspicion of participation in a conspiracy against his Gracious Majesty." He folded the paper and returned it to the soldier. "'Tis correct, as it should be, seeing I drew it myself," he said, coolly, and looked his prisoner squarely in the face.

"Conspiracy!" broke out Warburton, in amazement.

"A case of accessory after the fact, at the least, I am told. That is the information sworn to," said Mr. Powis.

Warburton's head went round. Was this a cunning move on the part of the Carmichaels to hold him in bondage until they were ready for him? No; this idea was quite impossible, seeing that only his instant and secret death could help them.

"May I ask, who swore the information?" he inquired, at length.

"That I may not say," said the magistrate. "This

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warrant authorizes your arrest, and—" he paused, "that you be searched."

Warburton turned red-hot and his brow grew black.

"What mean you?" he said, fiercely.

"'Tis necessary," said Mr. Powis. "I am helpless." He made a sign to the captain, who in his turn issued a command to his men with obvious reluctance. Warburton's face for a moment took on a ferocious aspect, but, slowly changing, he addressed the magistrate. "Will you take my word, sir, that all I produce is all that I have on me?" he said, slowly. Mr. Powis met his gaze. "Yes," he answered, after a momentary pause. "We desire to humiliate no one in the exercise of our duty, least of all, one of your position, sir."

Warburton turned out the contents of his pockets, which the magistrate formally examined; then, after a quarter of an hour's silence, he looked up at the prisoner. "Is there nothing else?" he asked. "Have I your word that there is nothing else?"

Warburton uttered a sharp laugh, and withdrawing a letter from his breast, threw it down on the table. "There is only this letter addressed to yourself, sir," he said.

Mr. Powis took it up. "Ah! indeed," he said; "I have to thank you for playing messenger to me." He turned to the officer, "Captain Rash, you are required to hold this gentleman in the village until the examination is complete; there are yet his effects at the inn, and, as you may need my presence, I will ride with you."

Warburton walked to the window and looked out on the garden, where the moon was rising late. He was a prisoner, and Chloris waited by the broken chapel on the desolate dunes.



CHAPTER XIX

WARBURTON SAILS FOR THE ISLAND

WARBURTON waited impatiently in the custody of the soldiers at Marlock until he should be released. As he strode up and down the bare room that was his prison he recognized at last what his arrest had meant, for the examination of his effects could only have been ordered in the hope of finding some compromising evidence. Undoubtedly that was Bonaparte's letter, and whoso had struck at him thus was aware of the existence of the letter. Only by an accident it was not upon his person, for he had given it to Chloris with instructions to destroy it, and no doubt by this time, a little fluttering dust of ashes, it was scattered to the sands. But who had knowledge of his secret? Again he dismissed the idea that the Carmichaels were responsible for his arrest, for they would be mad, indeed, so to endanger their own safety. And now what irritated him more than all was the return of Chloris's letter to the Magistrate. He had completely failed, for the irony of fortune had delivered him into the very hands from which he would have escaped. The reason of Mr. Powis's calmness, as well as of his kindness under the outrage, was apparent now, seeing that his own escape had been impracticable, and that the justice had

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known he was but marching upon his fate. His mission had ended in disaster, and by a strange turn of the wheel he was himself the medium by which the law was to be acquainted with the crimes of the Carmichaels. Yesterday he would have contemplated the fact with equanimity, even with satisfaction, if not with actual triumph; but to-day, fresh from his enterprise, and under the spur of his new and altered emotions, he chafed against the accident which had given Nicholas Carmichael to justice.

In the midst of these meditations the door of his chamber opened and Mr. Powis entered.

"I have great satisfaction in informing you, sir," he said, in an official manner, "that nothing has been found which is in any way prejudicial to you, nothing, in short, such as we were led to believe would be found."

Warburton bowed stiffly. "And now, sir, perhaps you will allow me my liberty," he said, coldly.

"Forgive me, sir, but you forget something, surely," said Mr. Powis. "There was something else between you and me. One score is settled in your favor, I am pleased to say; but what of the other?"

"I understood that that was a private matter between us," replied Warburton, haughtily. "I am no common pickpocket."

Mr. Powis took a pinch of snuff. "If you were to ask me in my capacity as a private gentleman, I should say no, Mr. Warburton, but I am more than that," he said. "What happened touches me in another quality. I am also a justice of the peace."

"Of which I have heard a great deal," retorted Warburton, with a sneer. "You have spoken of your London experiences, sir, but it seems to me you smack rather of a pettifogging country attorney."

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MR. FOWIS PERUSED THE WRITING AGAIN



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"Is that how it strikes you?" asked Powis, imper- turbably. "I had not thought of myself in that light, but rather as one who endeavored to do you a good turn and warn a headstrong young gentleman from his folly."

"You are very good, sir," said Warburton, with icy politeness. "I pray God I may meet men such as you, to take refuge with such ceremony behind the forms of law!"

Mr. Powis considered him without animosity. "Will you tell me this," said he: "why it is you came to rob me of that letter?"

Warburton was silent, feeling too angry to suffer those cross-questions. "I may tell you, Mr. Warburton," went on the magistrate, "that I took the liberty of opening the letter which was addressed to me, and have read the contents. What I should like to know is, why you desired me to give you up that communication unread?"

"If you have read it, sir, you have the answer," said Warburton, bluntly.

Powis shook his head. "I fear not," he said, and he took from his pocket the paper, unfolded it, and perused the writing again. "Unless I am very stupid," he observed, "there is nothing here to call for your interference."

"Good God! man," cried Warburton, impatiently. "Are you mad? You have read it. Can you not see what the girl has done? What! is't nothing to deliver up your own blood, right or wrong? I would have spared her that memory. She was distraught; 'tis a poor, mad child. I would do it again, but it is too late." He glanced at the guards, and the open letter in the magistrate's hands, and then shrugged his shoulders.

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"But, faith! Mr. Warburton, you perplex me," said the other, with a little pleasant laugh. "Know you what is written here? I believe you cannot. This Nicholas Carmichael is no friend to you?"

"He is a bitter foe," said Warburton, gloomily.

"Why, then, you know what is here contained? I beg you read it," and he placed the letter in Warburton's hand. The latter obeyed, and when he was done looked up.

"Well!" said Powis.

"Well!" echoed Warburton. "Nicholas Carmichael is no friend to me, but I know of nothing else. I tell you that she, poor girl, is sick of her senses, being ill. She is crazy upon this. I know no more."

"And yet, sir, you perilled your liberty to get this letter?" suggested Powis, softly.

"I am my own master," said Warburton, with dignity, and turned away.

The magistrate was silent, musing, with his gaze directed upon the averted head of his companion. Presently he spoke.

"Mr. Warburton," said he, "it lies in my authority to have you held here for trial on a serious charge—of robbery. I do not see—I, who know the law—what other face this rash adventure of yours wears. It lies in me, I say, and yet—I speak as a private citizen of this great kingdom—I cannot find it in my heart to do so. I will not prosecute."

"Sir!" said Warburton, in astonishment.

"You are free, sir," said the magistrate.

Warburton was silent, eying him. "If I have said anything that moved you to this—" he began.

Powis waved his hands. "You do not count," he interrupted; "'tis my whim. I cannot be forever a justice."

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"I thank you, sir," said the younger man. He moved with embarrassment, and recalling the paper he had, made a gesture as if to offer it to the justice. "This belongs to you, sir."

"I have taken what is necessary from it," answered Powis, slowly, "and in the ordinary course, I suppose, I should destroy it. Perhaps, Mr. Warburton, you would spare me the trouble."

A light of understanding danced in Warburton's eyes. "You are generous, sir," he said. "I will accept your offer," and he tore the paper into rags and scattered them on the floor. Then he looked at the other as if with a new thought. "You will act on this mad information?" he asked.

Powis looked him full in the face. "You are a stranger on these coasts, sir," said he, "and I think you cannot know how this place is honeycombed with lawlessness. Perhaps you have heard something of a very rank reputation. Those who represent his Majesty can ill afford to throw chances away. Yet I know Sir Stephen Carmichael, and regret my duty, as recently in your own case, Mr. Warburton. I trust that the one expedition may prove as vain and ineffectual as the other."

"I believe it will," said Warburton. "Yet I know not what adversary laid this snare for me."

"Maybe," said the magistrate, snuffing again—"maybe 'twas, as you say is this other matter—a question of the hysteric."

Warburton started. "'Twas a woman?" asked he, but Powis made no reply. "By God!" he said, "'twas Miss Holt, as I'm a living man!" The justice still made no reply, and Warburton laughed. "The she-devil! she's possessed, I believe. What was her purpose?"

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"Mr. Warburton, what was Miss Carmichael's purpose?" asked Powis, suavely.

Warburton frowned. "I am greatly in your debt, sir," he said, "but as 'tis mighty early now, I will not keep you from your bed."

"On the contrary," said Powis, quietly, "I am but beginning my day."

He indicated the window, which had grown a blue-black patch upon the vanishing night. Warburton followed his gesture and saw some tiny lights breaking out in the bay and threading busily about the dark outline of a hull. He saluted and went down into the loosening darkness.

Not twenty paces from the cottage which had been his jail he caught sight of a woman's form, and his name was called softly.

"Chloris!" he cried, in amazement.

"'Tis I—'tis I," she whispered, springing upon him. "I could not wait for you so long. I followed here, and heard you were taken. Oh! why did they take you? 'Tis we that should be lodged in prison."

"You must not be seen here," he said, hastily; "you will be seized otherwise and examined by the justices. I was not able to stop your letter."

"Then indeed I rejoice," she answered, warmly, "and I will stay and answer what questions they will. Now that you are here, and under the protection of the soldiers, you are safe, and I will abide with you."

"Poor child!" he exclaimed, "I am not under protection. I am newly let out of prison, where I was on suspicion."

"Suspicion of what?" she asked.

Warburton grinned. "Suspicion that I was participant in some treason—suspicion of accessory."

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"'Tis that business of Bonaparte's?" she asked, and broke out, "Did you speak the truth?"

"Nay," said Warburton, grimly. "They searched my inn, but there was the letter in your hands, and burned; and, faith! they took nothing."

"'Tis not burned!" she cried, sharply. "And you told nothing?" He shook his head. "You have sacrificed yourself for those that hate you and would destroy you?" she burst forth.

"Damme! no," said Warburton, bluntly, "but for one I love, and I have not sacrificed myself, neither."

She hung on his words greedily, hungrily, and swept her arms about him. "I will not have you peril yourself one hair's-breadth more!" she exclaimed. "Let Nick look to himself. You are worth much more than he."

"I care not a curse for him," said Warburton.

"But the soldiers have been put on his track."

"What care I?" cried Chloris, recklessly. "He has sought your life. 'Twas I informed of him."

"Aye," said Warburton, glancing at her, "and that is why I care, somewhat. They must not take him."

"I will not budge one step to save him!" she cried, angrily.

"But not your father?" he asked.

Her face faltered. "He is my father," she murmured. "I remember how he has carried me in his arms."

Warburton pointed towards the sheet of darkness which was still all that marked the ocean, and the little lights he had formerly observed were moving briskly on the blacker lump.

"'Tis the revenue sloop," he said. "No doubt she has orders, and is for the island. They are at work

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hauling the anchors, and in an hour's time they will lie under Lynsea."

"They know not the caves," she murmured, in dismay and agitation.

"They will seek them out," he replied. "They will make a thorough search, for your father and your brother lie there."

"Nicholas is abroad," she whispered. "He is seeking you."

"He will have his work against those that seek him," sneered Warburton. "Let him go his gait, but Sir Stephen and Philip—"

"I would spare them," she whispered. "Oh, my God! spare them."

"Come," commanded he, "we must get a boat."

"Whither are you bound?" she demanded, in excitement.

"We are for Lynsea," he said.

Chloris Carmichael seized him by the arm. "You would go to warn my father?" she asked, wistfully. "You who are the enemy of our race?"

"Fore God, dear, I am no enemy to you, as you should know!" cried Warburton, with passion in his voice. "If every drop of blood that ran in you was foul and black, by Heaven! I would have you still, and that possession is a shield to any of your name."

Her face, suffused with a dim glory in the dissolving night, shone white, mystical, and lovely upon him—a pearl of such a quality as was visible of its own light; her full, fine eyes, like sparks, glittered and glowed.

"Though you gave nothing and took all, yet would I remember you," she murmured, brokenly. "For you are my life, my house, and my honor. I have given freely, and I repent nothing. I must give

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again a thousandfold, though you denied me as a beggar. You have stolen only that which I have yielded. See, my heart? Here I place my feet, and, behold! I will not move one step to cross this channel and give warning in Lynsea. I have hollowed out my fortune, and there lie I, uncomplaining, at peace—nay, happy beyond the lot of women!"

He drew her close. "You shall come with me, child; we will go to Lynsea."

"What do you go for?" she asked, softly.

"I will spare your house and blood," said he, quietly. "They are in my hands, and I spare them for your sake."

"I do not desire you to sacrifice this for me," she said, pleading. "Do as you will; 'twill be right and meet and just."

"Foolish!" he murmured, tenderly. "Do you not see that what I might with justice bring upon them it is not meet that you should?"

She uttered a little cry. "My father!" she exclaimed, in low tones. "Have I betrayed him? 'Twas only Nick."

"You shall save him," he said, confidently.

"How? He is ill, he is stricken, and he cannot escape," she said, in a melancholy voice.

"Child, child, bear up! Yonder is a boat," he said. "I will slip her moorings if you take the tiller."

She did as he commanded almost mechanically, and stared through the gloom in wonder and distress at the man. Warburton steered the boat off and set her sail, which drew with the faint wind slowly. "'Tis hot," said he; "there will be thunder. Child, keep your eyes upon the water; she falls away."

Chloris started as if from her sleep. "What do you go to do?" she asked, in a whisper.

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He gave a little laugh. "I have been cheated once, but I shall not be so again," he answered.

"'Tis Nicholas's boat," she said, irrelevantly, glancing wide-eyed at the thwarts.

"He is on the mainland, then?" said Warburton.

"He is hunting you," she said, and for a time there was silence. Warburton looked back, and the lights were still moving on the distant sloop. Out of the sea the wind was dropping, and very soon the calm would be here. The dawn was breaking gray, hot, and sultry.

"What will you do?" she asked for the third time.

"We must run for the caves," he answered her. "I will blow them all to powder."

"Blow them to powder!" she echoed, wondering, and then her figure quickly took animation. "Let me set a jib!" she cried. "We must make haste. Oh, sir, you are generous! 'Tis noble in you."

"Pish! child," said Warburton, and looked back again.

Away behind, under the shadowy cliffs of Marlock the lights ran to and fro like flies; they twinkled and moved forward. "She has set her sail—she is off!" he exclaimed. "If she lose not the wind she will beat us."

Chloris uttered a cry, and, standing to her tall, full stature in the stern of the skiff, peered into the misty dawn.





CHAPTER XX

WHAT CAME WITH THE STORM

THE wind, indeed, was falling inch by inch, and the boat made very little progress in the bay. The heavier press of canvas carried on the revenue sloop would tell in the short course they were both pursuing; Warburton remembered that Gellibrand knew not the situation of the caves, nor, it may be, of their existence, and was therefore likely to make his landing in the tiny harbor and search the homestead. That he carried a warrant for his search, and probably Powis in person, Warburton did not doubt. But he was in some dismay at the thought that he would be overtaken, for he was anxious not to be discovered making for the island at that suspicious hour, and so furtively, and, above all, he wished none to know in what company he was voyaging; he would have saved his companion from all risks and perils to her name. If Powis was aboard the *Osprey*, his own hasty expedition would take on more than the color of suspicion, and possibly he would arrest both of them—the one on the charge of conspiracy, the other for the purpose of cross-examination on her hapless letter. With all his uncertainty and anxiety Warburton felt a glow of gratitude in his bosom for the magistrate's generous present of the letter; that, at least, was dead and gone, scattered to the wind like ashes.

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The dawn crept up the east, spreading behind the hills of the moorland. Marlock lay in a deep well of blackness, unvisited as yet by any growing radiance, but beyond the village unfathomable springs of pale light broadened on the horizon. The breeze dropped ever, the nose of the boat, pointing to the distant cliffs of Lynsea, rose and sank in the gentle waters, dipping with a soft guttling sound as her rate grew less. And away on the level track of grayness loomed the pretty figure of the *Osprey*, seeming still and steady, as if she slept upon the water. Warburton contemplated the chances with a frown. Already the light was growing clearer, and those aboard the revenue boat would soon be able to make out the little skiff, if not its occupants. In their minds there must surely rise a wonder as to who those fly-by-nights might be, and what their mission; and that they were bent for Lynsea would throw grave suspicion on them. In truth, Warburton's fears were already gross and swollen with the emotions of that adventure, and presently he put out the oars and began to pull. The wind had sunk into little puffing airs that sent the boat forward in gusts, but these strong arms sufficed to keep the course continuous; and in a little the cliffs of the island were visible beyond the cape. But already the *Osprey* stood nearer, and the wan light of the approaching sun lay on her sails, so that her spars glistened like silver; but overhead and westward the cast of the sky was livid, leaden, and morose. Over the huge shaking mass of the sea the light began to run, and, even like a tide that races down the low sands, the sparkle leaped from wave to wave; and with an incredible swiftness the darkness turned, flying across the face of the water.

The sloop was struck at once into full sight, as by

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a magic-lantern; and from the sloop the boat four hundred yards away was as visible as in broad day. A hail sounded across the intervening space, but Warburton, without pause or answer, plied his arms faster. Chloris kept the tiller straight and the prow for the Skittles, among which the sea tossed and sucked audibly scarcely a quarter of a mile beyond them. But presently Warburton stopped in his work.

"The breeze has failed," he said; "she cannot come another yard; but I'll swear she will have her boats out. Mr. Gellibrand is a vigorous young buck."

"We can beat them," said Chloris. "They know not how to steer among the Skittles; they dare not venture."

"True," said he, coolly; "but, indeed, neither must we venture thither."

"I know every rock and channel," she burst forth. "I will steer blindfold; the waters of this island cannot hurt me."

"'Tis not that, child," answered Warburton. "'Tis from the sloop our danger falls. At present they are not in pursuit of us; 'tis only wonder made them call us. What have they to suspect in us? Yet they will keep an eye open, and I tell you that if we vanish into the Skittles we shall draw them as safely as if we had revealed our plans. They will wonder and explore. We must land elsewhere, as ordinary passengers."

"I did not think of that," she replied, quickly. "You are right—dear, you are always right." And she altered the course, setting the boat's head towards a piece of sand.

Warburton nodded in approval and pulled silently. And now what he had prophesied came true, for a boat shot out from the flank of the sloop and flew off towards them. Warburton's breath came deeper and

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with labor as he increased his efforts, for he knew that their only chance was to reach the land before those who would inevitably suspect them, and, possibly, detain them. The whole stretch of the bay was now alight and shining with silver; and in their wake the course of the boat made a black mark, which opened in a gulf of swirling water and bubbled up into placid light again. Warburton's arms felt as though they were being wrenched from their sockets, but he whipped her along, and when the pursuing boat was barely one hundred paces from them, sighed his relief as the nose ground and snarled over the pebbles of the beach. "Out, Chloris!" he cried, and himself setting the example, left the boat high and dry, and disappeared into the bushes that fringed the shore.

"We must make haste," he whispered; "let 'em pass us somewhere. You must know the island. Where shall we hide?"

She thought for a moment, and then, "I will show you!" cried she, and, stepping lightly to the fore, made off up the slopes of that wooded sea-front.

Chloris led the way into a fastness of the grove, where, among those shadows of early dawn, immitigable darkness reigned behind the bracken and the tall junipers. Every moment now brought an access of fresh light and color to the earth, and the detail of the grasses sprang out instant by instant. But here, within these walls of soft green gloom, nothing was visible, and only the breaking sounds of the surf were audible in the stillness. Far away a ewe bleated shrill, and the challenge, or the entreaty, was taken up and echoed from the herd upon the hills. The east of the sky was streaked and flushed, barred with crimson and gold, with orange and scarlet, but in the zenith

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and elsewhere heaven hung like a great black net, threatening over earth.

"Come," said Warburton, after a time, "they must be gone now, and there is no time to lose. The thunder threatens, and the storm will be here in half an hour."

They left their shelter, and began to climb again across the hill.

"'Tis darker," observed Warburton; "the clock is put back by that. They have no chance to catch us."

Yet as he spoke a voice called out of the void of the wood, hailing them. "Is't you, Cave?" said some one. "Faith! I believe I have mislaid myself. Damme! this island's all woods and hills."

Warburton recognized the voice, and would have struck into the darkness about him but for the immediate appearance of the speaker, who was, moreover, accompanied by several others.

"Who is this?" said Gellibrand, and one thrust a lantern forward. "By God! Mr. Warburton, what do you here at this hour? 'Tis a lucky meeting. And—but, by Heavens! I did not observe— Rip me! a female!"

"Sir!" said Warburton, with dignity, "'tis a lady I am happy to serve. She was benighted in Marlock, and I ventured to offer my services."

"As a gentleman, sir—as a gentleman," said the lieutenant, promptly, "you could do no less. I envy you the privilege, Mr. Warburton—stap me! I do."

"Sir!" said Warburton, angrily, "'tis Miss Carmichael."

The lieutenant started. "Why," said he, "it is, is it? The deuce! Miss Carmichael, I crave your pardon. My tongue wags on, but I have a soft heart. I am here on my duty, God forgive me! Mr. Warburton,

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explain me—damme! I would I had Powis here, who is mightily civil and mighty plausible.”

“There is no need to explain, sir,” answered Warburton, coldly; “no doubt you are here on good reasons, but they have nothing to do with us.”

“That is so,” assented Gellibrand, with relief. “I ask you to remember that, Miss Carmichael. I am here on a good reason. I must do my duty. Lord! ’tis ridiculous, but I must execute orders. Mr. Powis is gone to visit Sir Stephen, madam; he will entertain him, no doubt, with a cock-and-bull tale, and they will laugh together. ’Tis a queer, unfavorable time for a visit, but duty—duty! I hope Sir Stephen will laugh, though he is woke so untimely. Gad! I should laugh myself at such suspicions. But I am mum, Mr. Warburton. Hark ye!” he whispered, aside, “take this precious girl away, and I will tell you something.”

Warburton murmured in Chloris’s ear, and she withdrew; for he was anxious to know exactly how matters stood between the lieutenant and himself.

“Damme! a monstrous fine girl,” commented Gellibrand, under his breath. “She has took my fancy, but I interfere with no one’s play—not I. You are to be congratulated, sir. Yet, perish me! this is an ugly, ridiculous tale. Do you know why I am here? There is some story of smuggling on the island—whence it comes I know not, but this Nicholas Carmichael is involved—a wild fellow. The military are after him. ’Tis all nonsense, I have no doubt, but you see my devilish position. Ugly, is’t not? I would not have that handsome girl know of it, but I feel sure I leave her in safe hands.”

“Whither do you go?” asked Warburton.

“I am on the road for my post,” returned the lieutenant. “There is a flag-staff, so they tell me. I am

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set there, while Powis makes search below. It is supposed there is some hiding-place for the contraband; but 'tis damnable nonsense to urge so black an offence against a gentleman and a baronet."

Warburton agreed, and, having learned what he wanted, turned to take his departure. But he on his part must now be subjected to curiosity, and Gellibrand not unnaturally desired to know whither he was bound.

"Oh," said Warburton, smoothly, "to the house—to Sir Stephen's house. I must fully discharge my mission, the poor child cannot be left."

"Left!" cried Gellibrand. "Faith! I should think not. 'Twould ask a heart of iron to desert her, whether she wanted it or not," he chuckled. "I would desert no woman ever, that is, if she were fair, and I had not tired of her," he added, pensively.

It seemed thus that their roads lay together, and, however reluctant, Warburton dared not refuse the offer of company. Yet he was greatly anxious to shake off this fellow, for time was running on and soon it would be too late for his enterprise. He bade the lieutenant good-bye on the earliest opportunity, indicating a path. "That is your way, I believe, sir, and mine lies here. I go down, you go up. I wish you luck."

With some few courtesies they parted, Gellibrand pausing to stare after Chloris with unaffected admiration. The growing light increased Warburton's anxiety, for he had no intention of descending into the valley, but waited only till the sailors were out of sight before turning back on his course. This, after some time, he deemed it prudent to do, and going quickly under the cover of the hollow and bush, succeeded in gaining with his companion the

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landward entrance to the smuggler's cave. Here he came at last to rest.

"You had better wait here, Chloris," said he.

"No, no; I will help you," she protested, eagerly.

"You are worn; you must be weary to the bone," he urged.

"I feel it not," she answered. "Let me help, and I will rest."

He made no further opposition to her pleading, but entered the rocky gallery, and, traversing it, emerged into the central cavern, with the girl on his heels.

"If I strike a light," he whispered, "can you find the torches?"

She whispered back in the affirmative. "But there will be no one here," she added. "'Tis unlikely, for the schooner was to sail last night."

She groped her way out into the huge vault, and Warburton's light flared brightly on the darkness. Presently two torches were flaming among the rocks, and Warburton had turned his attention to the barrels of gunpowder which lay stored in great numbers at the back of the cave.

"'Tis very easy," he told Chloris. "We are aided by the very contraband itself. In a little there will be no cave nor brandy nor any gunpowder for Boney left." He was hard at work, rolling the kegs into suitable position, broaching them and laying his heavy train, and the better part of an hour was so absorbed. By that time the black snake was creeping into the gallery which communicated with the world above.

"Sit down, child, and rest," said Warburton, as they emerged, breathless and clammy, into the cooler air of the open heaven. Above the light had grown but

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“WARBURTON HURRIED FORWARD”



WHAT CAME WITH THE STORM

little in the last hour, for the sky was charged with black and ominous clouds that lay low on the sea and crept foot by foot upon them. In the distance the thunder muttered sullenly and sparks of fire darted on the horizon. The storm was near at hand. The sweat streamed from Warburton's face, which was black and grimy. Tall and stalwart, with bare arms, he looked like Vulcan newly escaped from the prisons of the underworld. Overhead shot a flame of lightning, and down fell the thunder.

"'Tis here," he said, "and 'tis time to finish what was well begun and is well done."

Again the sky all about them glowed with fire, so that the summits of Lynsea were illuminated lightly and stood up bare and bold in the prospect. Warburton uttered a cry which was drowned in the deafening peal that followed; for what he saw in that moment was the flag-staff on the hill and a body of men moving towards him.

"Up, Chloris, up!" he cried. "The time has come. They are advancing this way, and maybe they have some information." At his word she sprang to her feet, and, seizing upon her, he hurried her from the grove of junipers, along a track that descended the ridge towards the valley of the homestead. The flag-staff lay to the north, but scarce a quarter of a mile distant, and Warburton was aware that if he was to fire the mine at all it must be now, and ere the terrible responsibility of those lives were thrust upon him.

"Whither do you take me? Let me stay—let me stay," moaned Chloris, in her weary bewilderment.

Her eyes were open to the black firmament, unheeding, and she was carried along in his irresistible

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

grasp. The pain of her sheer exhaustion spread in her body, which was lapped about with the solace of his touch. "Let me stay," she pleaded.

He set her down, and started swiftly away to the spot in which the granules of powder were aggregated in a tiny heap — the end of the trail, the fount and butt of that deadly conduit. He took a pistol from his belt and primed it carefully. From this point on the highland of Lynsea the ocean was visible westward, spread like an inky carpet and almost soundless on that still air; the breath of heaven was hot and seething, and the bellies of the heavy clouds drooped in murk towards him. At that moment, as he stood considering his pistol and coolly preparing the last details of his plot, a flight of zigzag flashes gleamed and died above him; the sky around roared as with the salvos of a broadside. His eyes, shooting instinctively in the direction of the flag-staff, fell on the body of men descending the hill; they moved like gnats, infinitely little, but bright under that flash, the blue and gold upon their coats shining to him in the blind dawn as sharp and vivid as if it were broad day and he within six feet. Warburton had judged the distance to be great enough, even allowing for the advance they would make ere the magazine of kegs were reached. He lifted his pistol deliberately to the casks.

Above and abroad and all about him of a sudden flared a white and horrible fire; its passage was so hot and dazzling as to blind his eyes; a sensation of fascination, mingled with unnatural terror, shuddered through him; he reeled under a stroke, and, staggering, cast up his arms as if to ward off a blow from his body—and then in an instant into his ears poured the thunder of a thousand heavens; the earth rocked

WHAT CAME WITH THE STORM

from edge to edge, quivering like a jelly; then he knew that he was upon his back, his dazed eyes staring upward, where the dust was lit with livid fires, and where spume and smoke, as if belched from hell, rose and assailed the stars.





CHAPTER XXI

WHAT MET CHLORIS ON THE THRESHOLD

CHLORIS sat still in her refuge, listening with every sense of her body for news of the mine. The sky rattled about her in thunder, and she bent forward, straining her ears, as if she feared that in these inclement noises she would lose the sound of that imminent explosion. She counted the seconds with her breath with the indrawing and outgoing of her bosom, and with each *halitus* she seemed to herself to anticipate what she expected and hear what she feared. But when next the lightning flamed she was aware simultaneously, as it appeared, of an appalling blow that struck the drums of her ears and sent her reeling in her seat. The earth shook with the concussion, and the whole face of the sky was obscured and darkened. As she clung to the bushes in terror there seemed to return from out the open wilderness of sea echoes of that terrible explosion; noises of falling earth rumbled back upon her, and the prospect was covered with dust and sand. Then followed a grave stillness, in which, recovering her memory of what had happened, she rose with a fresh terror—a growing dread for Warburton's safety.

The heavens suddenly opened and the rain streamed down in a sheet, running in waterfalls down the hillside and gathering in pools within the hollows. Chloris



WHAT MET CHLORIS

ran out of her shelter on fast and trembling feet into this tumultuous rain and the lamentable dawn. About her, seen dimly through the thick curtain of the storm, the strange and grotesque appearance of the hill bewildered her; nature had put on an unfamiliar aspect; buildings of great size were strewn everywhere, and masses of earth rose as it had been from new and deep excavations. The contour of the world was changed. Yet, guided by instinct, she succeeded in reaching the spot by what had been the entrance to the cavern. The light had insensibly quickened as the sun rose higher behind the thunder-storm, and a certain diffuse glow illuminated the rain. Suddenly she saw him, prone on his back, his eyes to the thunder, and, to her confused senses, staring, dead, and glazed. She stooped and pulled him to her, uttering a cry as a woman that is bereft of her child, and Warburton's eyes unclosed.

"'Tis done," said he; "but 'twas not I—'twas the hand of Providence."

Joyfully she assisted him to rise, and helped him to go slowly inland. She was amazed to find him alive—amazed, and amazingly radiant. She cared not a whit for caves or thunder or rain, nor for the officers of the law that were pursuing the vengeance of the law. Yet Warburton recollected them. He was stiff and soaked to the skin, his hands and shoulders were scorched and singed with the gunpowder; but he had escaped all else, and suffered only from the great shock.

"They were approaching fast," he said, almost to himself, and coming to a pause; "when I looked last they were very near. Has the lightning spared them?"

"What care I? What does it matter?" she said, im-

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patiently. "Let us go forward. I must get you away."

He put her aside, moving his face towards the flag-staff; but no sound reached him out of the rain save only the rain. "Maybe they are all dead there," said he, and turned to go upwards in that direction.

"You shall not; I will not suffer it," she said, pulling him back.

Warburton roughly set her aside. "I will, silly creature," he said; "leave me alone. You shall not interfere. Lord, child! do you think that you could control me? I will go and see if those men be dead or dying."

She made no resistance any longer, but followed him. The rain beat like wind upon the hills, and every hollow ran like a river for the angry sea below; the light broadened on the face of the world, disclosing far off the steps of the moorland across the dunes and white sails upon the water in the west. When they reached the summit of the hill the flag-staff was still visible, wet and gaunt, and near by a group of huddled men, cowering as it seemed under the rock from the flail of the storm.

"They are safe," said Warburton.

He stood against the full light of the morning, under the intolerable deluge, and the eyes of the party went up towards the two. Warburton laughed. "'Tis Gellibrand and his sailors. Let 'em take us if they can," said he, and turned to go downward, but was arrested by the appearance of a man in his path.

It was the justice of the peace, soaked to the skin, his black hair streaming from its queue, and his hat a mere piece of pulp on his head, but his manner was the same as when he had parted with Warburton several hours before.

WHAT MET CHLORIS

"'Tis you, then, Mr. Warburton," he said, without emotion or surprise. "Indeed, I thought I had recognized you from the sloop. You are early astir, and in foul weather."

"My business would not wait, sir," answered Warburton, bluntly.

Mr. Powis looked down towards the sailors of the *Osprey*, and then, "Come," said he, "which way do you go? At least let us seek shelter somewhere. You have a lady in your company," and through the rain he bowed and scraped civilly towards Chloris.

"I go not down there," said Warburton, nodding towards the group.

"Well," said Powis, speedily, "I am not impatient to be there. But let us seek some cover for the lady."

Warburton hesitated. He had the thought momentarily to thrust this small man aside and strike when he could, ere Gellibrand and his men might be summoned to the spot. Something sinister in the persistence of the magistrate irritated him, and he was, indeed, in no mood to be gentle. But a secondary consideration bade him pause, for he reflected that if it should come to a struggle with the justice, that ridiculous affair would be more easily achieved out of sight and in some covert place. He made his assent, therefore, and, turning with his companion, took Chloris's hand, and went about for a neighboring piece of wood. Within this retreat they were protected against the assaults of the rain, and enjoyed, moreover, a little quiet in which to talk. This wood was a little patch of stillness in the raining world, outside which the light rose slowly and the thunder of the rain was on the leaves.

The two men faced each other, resolution in the

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bearing of one, and a certain gravity stamped upon the other's countenance.

"I regret, Mr. Warburton, that this lady has been so exposed to such a storm," began Powis. "'Tis most unfortunate."

Warburton acknowledged the civility with a curt bow.

"I thank you, sir," said he, "but the lady stands in need of no sympathy."

"Indeed, is that so?" said the magistrate, slowly, but in a queer voice, as of one who heeds not what he says but speaks in an abstraction. "Well, well, she is the first of her kind, the very first of her kind, my dear sir."

"Sir, pray pardon us if we must leave you now," said the younger man, abruptly.

"You would leave me?" said Powis, thoughtfully.

"You would go down to the house, I suppose? 'Tis to pay a visit to Sir Stephen you are here—you and the lady? That, I regret, was not my mission, which was most distressing. You have heard, maybe, sir, that there is a warrant taken against Mr. Carmichael. It is on that business I am here," and he glanced towards Chloris, who sat veiled in her cloak and shrinking in the shadow.

"I have heard," said Warburton, curtly, for he could not understand to what his companion was coming, and he grew uneasy.

"I came to catch Nicholas Carmichael," went on Mr. Powis, "and I have failed. It seems that he is not here."

Warburton was aware that this studious rehearsal of the position could not be intended for his instruction, and it dawned on him with amazement that it must be aimed at Chloris. What was the magis-

WHAT MET CHLORIS

trate's object? If Chloris had been recognized, why was she not claimed for examination on her letter?

"It would seem ridiculous, sir, that a gentleman of Mr. Carmichael's position should be guilty of breaking the law," he observed, at length.

"It would seem as ridiculous, sir, as if Sir Stephen himself were so charged," replied the justice.

Warburton gazed on him sharply, and there was a movement under Chloris's cloak; but for a time there was silence between them, a silence which remained until Powis himself resumed, equably enough. "It would seem ridiculous, if there were no evidence; but there is much witness to it, I fear."

"What witness is that?" asked Warburton, who would have had him declare himself once and for all time on his intentions.

"Mr. Warburton, you will pardon me," said the justice, "but there are some matters which go beyond the topics of common talk. Yet this I may tell you, that when many are confederates, not all shall hold a discreet silence. Nay, there may even be one who seeks opportunity to reveal his knowledge."

"There is none, sir, who has done this," said Warburton, sharply, and making what was almost a threatening gesture. "You will remember that, sir; have a care!"

Mr. Powis was not discomposed. "I will confess I had my doubts," he said, quietly, "until the last hour."

Warburton was silent, considering, for he now began to doubt if the magistrate's words had been directed at Chloris. "You have had some information?" he inquired, and suddenly remembered the interrupted advance of the sailors towards the cav-

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ern. "Some one gave you information recently," he added, quickly.

"True, Mr. Warburton," said Powis, coolly, and moving as if to break off the conversation, "and very soon I shall know the result. Indeed, I doubt not that the news is already in the hands of Mr. Gellibrand, yonder."

A grim look gathered on Warburton's face. "Then I am honored, sir, by your confidence, because you deemed me to have an interest in this matter?" he asked. Of a truth, he felt very warmly drawn to the magistrate, who had taken these pains, as he now realized, in order to intimate that he could do without Chloris as a witness.

"The interest of one who does us the honor to dwell on our coast for a summer month," rejoined the magistrate, politely.

Warburton's face was grimmer than ever; he could already see Sir Stephen and Nicholas delivered over to justice.

"Faith!" said he, "I doubt if your mission is not too late."

"What is't you mean?" asked the other, curiously.

"Tut, tut!" said Warburton. "Mr. Gellibrand is a laggard. I would I could have warned him. He is anticipated." Mr. Powis's eyes interrogated him. "There has been a storm, sir," he said.

"I observe it," said the magistrate, dryly. "I have been witness of it at this moment."

"Sir, a storm may damage the face of nature," remarked Warburton.

The magistrate considered deeply. "Mr. Warburton, it is possible that in those cliffs by the Skittles there are caves," he said.

"Were, sir, were," remarked the younger man.

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Without changing color or turning of a hair, Powis assented to the emendation. "As you remark, were ; but the change of time, sir, is the achievement of nature, I assume—the convulsion of her forces."

"Damme ! there was lightning enough," said Warburton.

"True, true; but you remind me of my duty. I must examine this phenomena. The cavern is gone, you say; well, but there remains the witness. 'Tis a pity that nature should so significantly conspire to aid the unlawful, but there remains the witness."

"What witness?" demanded Warburton, boldly and defiantly.

The justice's gaze passed over his face. "That is my affair, sir, and none of any one else's. But I fear this lady is weary. She is sodden with the rain, and should be taken forthwith to some house."

"This lady, sir, is under my care and guidance," said Warburton.

Mr. Powis bowed. "I am sure that you will protect and guide her well," he said, courteously, and moved away. But Warburton caught him by the arm.

"Whither do you go, and for what?" he asked.

"To arrest Nicholas Carmichael for an offence against his Majesty and country," returned the justice, in a voice of new sternness and authority.

"And Sir Stephen?" exclaimed Warburton, while the cloak that hid the woman once more stirred and trembled.

For a moment there was a pause, and then came the justice's answer. "There is no suspicion rests on Sir Stephen," he said, in a tone which was oddly soft. "We shall not trouble him."

With these words he left, and went over the hill,

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where the day was come stronger and the rain was now abated. Warburton and Chloris resumed their journey to the homestead.

"They have found some traitor," said he. "There is some one who has told of the cave, and your brother's fate is sealed."

"Let him perish," she said, with animation; "he seeks your life." And turning swiftly on him, "Oh, my love!" she murmured, in agitation, "what am I? I am the sister of assassins. Get you hence!"

Warburton laughed. "No shadow of shame shall touch you. What can they prove against Nicholas? I believe that this family will go scot-free. Did you not hear? They will not trouble Sir Stephen."

She made no answer, for in her agile mind floated suspicions, fears and a shame at his blunt speech. Yet he was unable to follow her thoughts. He had set his will to secure the safety of her house, and nothing but that task was in his thoughts. So they came down together from the heights upon the back of the garden.

The interval which had passed in this descent had changed the appearances of the sky and the sea. The heavy wrack had labored away, and with it the sultry air; a cool breeze started out of the west and blew stronger every moment, carrying in its breath the balm and fragrance of the ocean. Below, the park smiled under the soft sun, and the rain upon the green trees mirrored back the rays in a thousand flashes and sparklings; the garden seemed to be lit up with radiance, and to tremble with the sunshine. Before the house sang the breeze in the tamarisks, and again below them the sea foamed on the pebbles as wine foams in the glass. The doors of the house, even at that early hour, stood open, and the

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windows were wide to the air; it had the look of some hospitable and untenanted pleasure-house that invited the wayfarer with its silent lures. Chloris quickened her feet and ran down the slope, a creature of redundant vitality even after that long, melancholy night. She stood in the gateway, her skirts swaying in the breeze, and the poplars rippling in the sunlight.

"You shall stay here," she said to Warburton, with eager animation. "You have done such a generous service to this house that you are owed a proper welcome, and I will prepare it for you."

She would have thrust him back with her hands, half fondly and part imperiously, but he grinned sardonically.

"Indeed, I am like enough to meet a warm reception, I will admit," he said.

"You are wrong—you are wrong; you are bitter and cruel!" she said, passionately. "I will prepare your way. I am a Carmichael, and they will not dispute me; my father shall recognize the truth."

Warburton shrugged his shoulders, and contemplated her indifferently. He had done his work; Nicholas Carmichael was still at large, and he had Powis's word that Sir Stephen would not be touched. There the matter ended, and he was not at all disposed to enter the house of his enemy as a friend and ally.

"Get you in to your home, child," he said. "I must leave you here."

"Leave me!" she echoed, in dismay; and then, pitifully, "Whither go you? You are not going away?"

"I have myself to take care of," he answered, grimly.

"You *shall* come; you are safe with me!" she ex-

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claimed, angrily, and seized his arm. Warburton smiled and patted her head.

"'Tis a devil!" he said, and indulgently obeyed her. The weariness of the night's work bore him down, and he was wet and hungry; the body answered not to the plucking of the spirit. The two stepped across the threshold of the hall.

"They are awake betimes," said Chloris, and raised the hollow music of the gong. There was no answer but from the cool shadows of the interior ticked forth a slow, invisible clock.

"'Tis strange," said she. "They have been disturbed by the storm, and are all at sixes and sevens. You are hungry, dear heart, and must be fed."

Again she drummed on the gong, and when the dismal echoes had died away a sound was audible breaking across the miserable and empty silence. It was the clicking of a latch, and a man's face looked out from a chamber at the bottom of the hall.

"Sloan!" called the girl, in a tone of authority. "Where is your wit, Sloan, that you answered not before?"

"Is't yourself, mistress?" asked the man, in an Irish brogue, and stole half-way across the hall, eying Warburton anxiously. He was a thin, elderly, naked-faced fellow, with small, darting eyes.

"I want some food, Sloan, for this gentleman," commanded Chloris.

Sloan fidgeted upon his legs. "'Tis the master's enemy," he whispered, hoarsely. "Sure, 'tis he that Mr. Nicholas is for to kill!"

"Do as I bid!" said Chloris, fiercely. "'Tis a gentleman that has done us great service, and honors this house by his presence."

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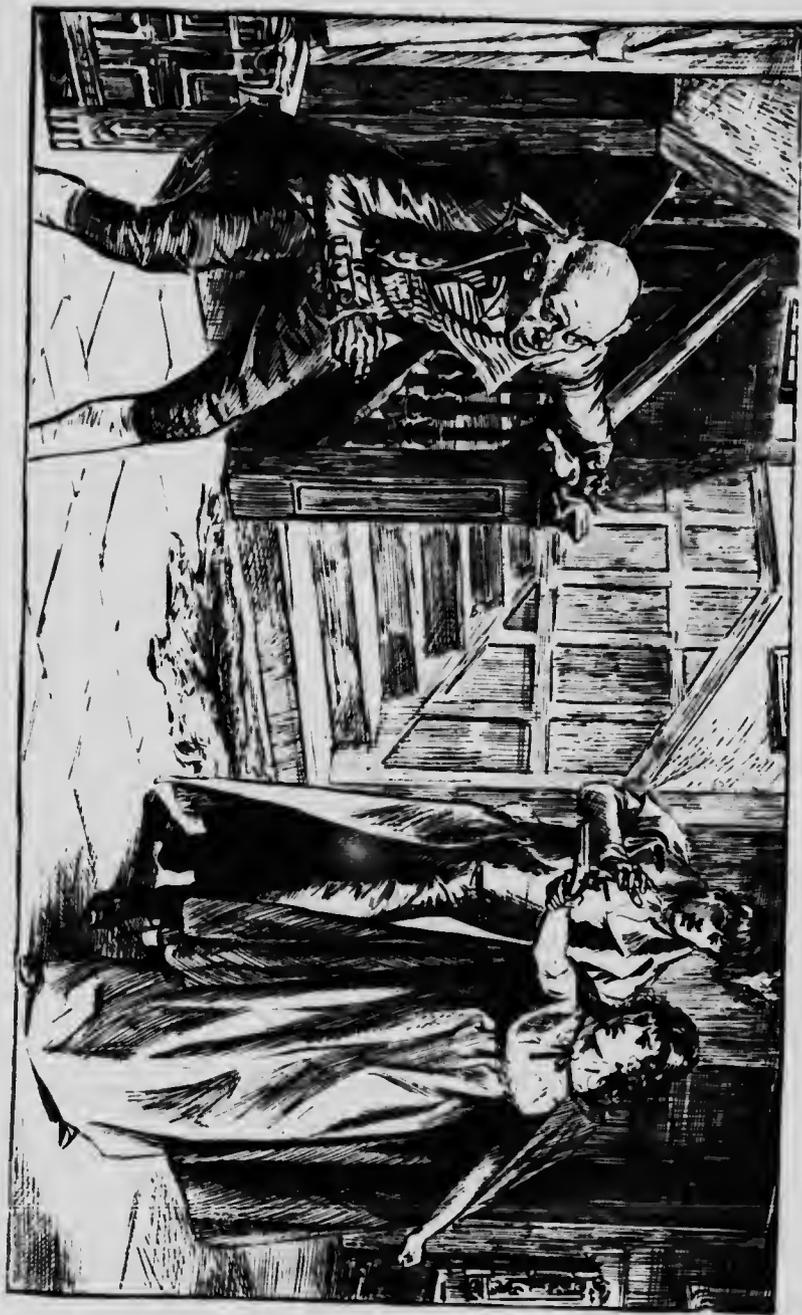
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"CHORIS AIMED THE PISTOL AT THE HEAD OF THE OLD SERVANT."





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The man retreated, with suspicion gleaming out of his rodent face.

"'Tis no easy part to be getting food this morning," he protested, "for the serving-maids is all gone, and there is none about the house but me, Miss Chloris."

"Gone!" said his mistress. "Whither gone, indeed? Is't a small noise and the lights of heaven frightened a houseful?"

"'Twas not that," he replied, and said no more, keeping his glance on Warburton.

"You had a visitor this dawn?" said Chloris, quickly, recalling their encounter with Powis.

"We did that," responded the man-servant. "'Twas a magistrate. He was looking for Mr. Nicholas, but he did not find him, so he went away."

The girl turned on him swiftly, with a sharp fire in her eyes. "Who was it told the magistrate of the caves?" she demanded.

The man made no noise, but turned a greenish white color, stirring helplessly on his feet.

"'Twas you that's the traitor!" she exclaimed, furiously. "'Twas you, Michael Sloan, that betrayed your master's house! Give me a pistol!" and she snatched one in a tempest of passion from Warburton's hands, aiming it at the head of the servant, with every feature in her face eloquent of madness. The man cowered and held up his arm as if to ward the shot from his face.

"I am no traitor," he said, piteously. "'Twas no harm that I did."

Warburton stepped forward, and with a jerk of his hand sent up the barrel of the pistol, and the report rang out through the hall. Chloris stared, and then put her open hands over her face with a sob. "God

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forgive me! 'tis not I that should wreak justice on a traitor—not I—not I."

She turned away, and went towards the door out of which Sloan had issued, but unexpectedly the man darted forward and stood before her.

"Not there, not there; ye shall not go in there, Mistress Chloris," he shivered. "For the love of God, go not there!"

"Stand aside!" said the girl, stamping her foot.

"For love of the Holy Mother!" pleaded Sloan.

"'Tis not for you, honey."

Chloris brushed past him and pushed the door open. The room was the library, in which Sir Stephen Carmichael had been wont to sit; and here he sat for the last time, his face turned to the wall, blind eyes upon vacancy, and every member of his body still and rigid.





CHAPTER XXII

THE VENGEANCE OF NICHOLAS CARMICHAEL

WARBURTON had followed the girl into the room, and now discovered her struck white and trembling on the threshold.

"What is it?" he asked, and perceived the body of the baronet. "By the Lord! here is vengeance; 'tis justice unassisted," he murmured.

Chloris heard nothing, not even the pitiful pleadings of the Irish servant; her eyes were levelled upon her father, whose face was turned aside, as though in shame to meet his daughter. Then with a low moan of desolation, that had in it no reason, but only wild and unmeasured grief, she sprang forward to the couch, and fing'ered the cold brow, weeping in an undertone, as it were some melancholy dirge of her distant ascendants.

Warburton's cool blood stirred faintly and he moved uneasily.

"Come," said he. "You are giving way unjustly and beyond measure. I will not have you do it."

He touched her arm, but she leaped forth on him like a wild and beautiful animal. "You! you!" she cried. "'Tis from you that I am to take my orders! My God! 'tis you that are the cause of this—you and your devilish purpose. I will naught of you; you shall die to-night, and be delivered up to them you have wronged."

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"Yes, madam, to Nick, is it not?" said Warburton, with a sneer. "Tut, you are a fool to turn on me. I am not used to these storms, and, by Heaven! they are wearisome."

"My father lies there!" she gasped.

Warburton followed her hand mechanically, but nothing in the silent corpse appealed to him. "So he does," said he. "He lies as his forefathers have lain. Sure, 'tis well he does, as you must know."

"What do you mean?" she asked, angrily.

"My poor child," he answered, "your wits have gone astray. What could they have done but attach him?"

"The justice said not—he promised not," she murmured.

"He had been here and knew," he replied. "I wondered what was behind his honeyed voice. He knew that none might trouble Sir Stephen on earth any more. He would not trouble him. Oh, no—he might promise that."

Chloris was silent. "I will not weep," she said, after a time, in a weak and pitiful voice. "I will rejoice. 'Tis true what you say. We are and shall be ever accursed. There is a sin in this blood which cannot be washed from it."

Warburton turned to the man Sloan, who had entered after them, and, seeing he was observed, the fellow began to wring his hands, muttering to himself. "How did this happen?" he asked, sternly, pointing to the dead man.

Sloan's agitation visibly swelled. "Sure, 'twas over very sudden," he declared, garrulously. "There was a knock came on the big door, and it roused me by three of the morning. I looked out, your honor, and the sky was black with rain; but at the door was him

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knocking, and standing very still, with a lanthorn in his hand, like as one that is come for to claim his own in the dead of the night. I was afraid of the lanthorn, and he knocked again; and then I put my head right without the window. 'Who is there,' says I, 'that makes so bold a noise?' He looked up, and I saw his face, asthore, like a dead man's—still and white under the lanthorn. 'Open to me,' says he; 'I am come for your master.' 'Devil a bit,' says I, and shut to the window; for, indeed, the master had been long abed, and I thought 'twas true he spoke. But after that he knocked harder than before, and bids me angrily to let him in in the name of the law, and when I heard he was come for to do the law I was more 'feared, but I dursn't disobey him. When he was in he turned sharply on me. 'I hear your master is ill, and I regret that my errand will brook no delay,' he says. 'I must talk with him.' But ere more was said there was a voice on the stair, and we turned about, and the master was standing there with a light in his hand, very pale, and shaking. I cried out, your honor, for 'twas the first time that I see him afoot for these many weeks. But the gentleman that was like the Devil, says he, quietly, 'I am all sorrow to disturb you, Sir Stephen,' bowing while he spoke; 'but there is that in which the law requires me to talk with ye.'

"Then, Mistress Chloris, 'twas all over, alas! for the master; his honor took a step and opened of his lips, but fell down where he stood and lay there and never spoke. Sure, 'twas the Devil and I carried him into the room here and set him like that—peaceful and still."

"And you were informer against your master?" said Warburton, regarding him with contempt.

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"Indeed, your honor," answered the man, in a humble but surly tone, "'twas not for me to gainsay the law, with the master dead, and Mr. Nicholas gone and Mr. Philip away."

"He is no more traitor than the rest of us in this house," broke in Chloris, in a hard voice. "'Tis our trade. I am glad he gave the information, for 'twill end us all." She stepped forward again to the couch on which her father's body lay and bent over it. Warburton respected her action and walked to the open window, looking forth. Then he felt himself touched on the arm, and, stirring, found two eager, shining eyes that burned in a white face.

"You are all that is left me," she said, softly but intensely. "I pray God you do not turn from one of my blood."

"Troth! child, why should I?" he answered, moved in his slow heart. "But you must not tarry here. This is a place which any of your name were best away from—God forgive you! I have set my hand to the plough, and I will not look back. See you here, sweetheart. You have said in your blindness that this is my doing. 'Tis not, and you know it. But what remains is so to achieve things that there shall rest no suspicion on any one on this account, save on this fellow only," he added, with a glance at Sloan.

"What is't you mean?" she asked, forlornly.

"We must not leave our work half done," he replied. "There is one duty accomplished, but another rises. Where is the letter that I left with you?"

She stammered. "'Tis in the cottage in the dunes," she said.

"It must be burned," he said. "As your letter is destroyed, so this must be, and none then may cast a stone at my wife."

THE VENGEANCE OF NICHOLAS

"Wife! wife!" she said, staring at him, and threw herself into his arms. "I have misjudged. I knew you not. I had fears of you. You are a strange and foreign man to me. Why do you hold yourself so cold and aloof? Oh, my God! what is it you say? I care not. Wife! What do I care? I hold you, I have you. I will give up my brothers to any justice for you."

He raised her from where she had fallen, very tenderly. "There is a noise without," he said. "Some one is returning, and maybe Gellibrand. We were better away. I do not desire that you should encounter these people."

"But my father—" she said.

"He is safe; he sleeps sound. No harm will touch him. Come away."

He drew her with him into the hall, and they passed out together, going down to the little bay. One of the boats rocked in the long ripples idly, and the sun shone brightly on the silver strand. Presently they had pushed off, and were standing for the coast, the sails swollen with a rising breeze. The island fell away, and in front the moorland rose up into significance. In the bow Chloris reclined, her face towards him and the rolling blue space behind, but slowly her lids drooped and she passed into the sleep of the weary. Warburton sat and watched her and the horizon alternately.

He woke her as the keel struck on the beach, and with a start she opened her eyes.

"I would I could leave you here, dear," said he, "but I must see you safe in Marlock. There are those who will take you in and befriend you."

"I will stay with you," she said, eagerly, and, refreshed by her little rest, set out with animation to climb the dunes.

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

The sun hung proudly over the moorland when they reached the cottage, and already the heat of the day was begun.

"Where is the paper?" asked Warburton, and she handed it to him, silently watching. He gathered some dried grasses from a corner of the room and put them in the fireplace; upon this he set sticks, and striking a light kindled the flame. The sheet of fire flared up the broken chimney, and Warburton deliberately cast the letter into the heart of it; the paper crackled, was eaten greedily, and fell at last into a thin black and brittle foil. Warburton glanced up at Chloris and smiled faintly.

"'Tis done," said he; and there suddenly, in the open doorway, his dark features working with savage exultation, stood Nicholas Carmichael.

"'Tis not done yet," said he, with a sneer, "but 'twill be all over very quickly, Mr. Warburton," and turned on his sister blazing eyes.

Warburton had drawn himself up and now stood at his great stature, coolly contemplating the intruder. He was bitterly angry, yet held himself quiet, awaiting events. But it now seemed that Nicholas kept a rigid command of himself, for he made no effort to translate into action that ferocious threat of his expression. The two men surveyed each other without words until Carmichael broke the silence.

"I have sought you long, Mr. Warburton; but everything comes to patience, and I find you at last."

"Sir, you are welcome to any satisfaction you may obtain from the fact," responded the other, coldly.

"We have some business to settle together," pursued Nicholas.

"On the contrary, I am not aware of any particu-

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NICHOLAS CERMICHAEL STOOD IN THE OPEN DOORWAY





THE VENGEANCE OF NICHOLAS

lar in which we have a common interest," rejoined Warburton, indifferently.

"You wonder why I talk so quietly," went on Nicholas, paying this no heed. "It is because I am sure of you this time. Other times I have trusted to fools and been deceived; this time I trust myself."

"A very natural confidence," returned Warburton, "if confined to yourself."

Nicholas Carmichael shook with anger and he drew a pistol. "I have the power and the right to shoot you like a dog," he said.

Chloris uttered a cry and moved a step forward, but Warburton held up his hand in warning. "What is your quarrel, sir?" he asked, restraining himself for her sake. "You have savage ways upon this coast, and I confess I do not wholly understand you."

"There is no need to capitulate your offences," said Carmichael. "There is need only to be rid of you."

"Come, come, sir," said Warburton, with a sigh of vexation; "you are at cross-purposes with me. I know your ground of offence, which is that I have given you up to your just punishment of the law. But it is not so; your secret is still in my hands. I have done nothing."

"You lie!" said Nicholas, hastily; "and if it were so, there would be the greater reason for your death."

"I am a man of honor," said Warburton, still patient to outward seeming; "which may not be said of all that lay claim to the name of gentleman, no doubt. Yet I am one, and I assure you of the truth of what I say."

"How is it that there is a warrant against me?" inquired Nicholas, furiously. "The soldiers are after me."

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

Warburton threw up his arm quickly with a stern question of authority as the girl stepped forward, with lips parted, eager to speak; and at that sign she fell back crestfallen.

"There is another who is no friend to you and your house," he said, slowly. "There may be many."

"Who is that?" asked Nicholas.

"I am just come from the island," explained Warburton, "and there is a party of sailors upon it with orders for your arrest."

"Well," said Nicholas, with a sneer, "they shall not take me, and are welcome to what they can find."

"They know of the cavern," said Warburton.

"It does not surprise me," said the other, glaring on him.

"Nay, believe me, sir," said Warburton, with exemplary restraint, "you do me wrong. The informer was of your own household—an Irishman."

"Sloan!" said Nicholas, fiercely, and swore a horrid oath. "What has this to do with the case!" he demanded—"save that it ensures your death the more."

"You speak very confident about my death," answered Warburton, calmly. "You were wiser to consider your own neck and how it is imperilled. Come, Mr. Carmichael, I am in no mood for argument, being very tired. I am much wearied by your family. Let me explain. I have no quarrel with you. I once thought I had, but philosophy proved me foolish. Let the dead bury their dead. I have no wish to mingle in your affairs. Indeed, I have just gone out of the way to help you—or, rather, Sir Stephen, for you are nothing to me. Lieutenant Gellibrand will find nothing in the cave."

"What do you mean?" asked Nicholas, staring.

"Why, there is no cave any longer. It disappeared

THE VENGEANCE OF NICHOLAS

at dawn, thanks to a raging thunder-storm and Bonaparte's gunpowder."

Nicholas Carmichael scowled at him, but was silent, considering.

"You have done very well. I commend your zeal, sir," he said, at length, ironically. "You have done good service to the Carmichaels, and they do not forget. But touching the matter of that letter?"

Warburton pointed to the fire, in which a thread of smoke still rose from the black film of the letter. "'Tis there," said he. "It burned ere your entrance. There is no evidence against any Carmichael in my possession. They are free."

He spoke with some dignity of utterance, as one conferring a favor upon ungrateful ears, or as one that pardons magnanimously a grave offender out of indifference.

"Sure, sir," said Nicholas Carmichael, in a soft and treacherous voice—"sure, sir, we of our house should owe you a deep debt. There is no evidence against us, you say. I am glad to hear it, and that you have done so much in affection for us."

"I would not raise a hand to help you," broke out Warburton, angrily. "'Tis not you that I have done this for—not you, not you, by God!"

Nicholas Carmichael's voice sank hoarse and hollow. "For whom was it done?" he asked. "For whom—for whom?"

"I could not have Sir Stephen, at his age, fall upon such a misfortune," said Warburton, coldly, "and I made bold to join with Miss Carmichael here in an attempt to aid him. For the destruction of this letter, for this heap of ashes, and the sterner payments of the cave, you shall thank her."

Warburton spoke in ignorance of what had hap-

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pened between Nicholas and his sister, and he spoke to shield her and to set right what might carry a dangerous interpretation to one of that hot blood. The grin of malevolent passion that overspread the man's face astounded him.

"Indeed," said Nicholas, "you have redeemed your hostility to us by this humble submission. That is wiped out. I owe you no grudge for your spying on us, nor for your theft of that letter. There is an end of it. But did you think, fool, that I was here merely to take vengeance on you for that? No; you are condemned on many counts, and each one is death. Do you think I know not what has moved you to this act? I was but playing with you, Mr. Warburton. The cause is there; 'tis there, standing with a look of terror on her face," he thundered, pointing a finger at his sister. "That is what I am come for, to exact upon your body the penalty of our shame. You have dared to love her, and by you is she taught to betray her blood. You shall die for that, and God shall judge if she also shall not die."

Warburton moved from his place by the fire. "Hold your peace," he said, with authority in his bearing. "You are beside yourself. You name one that should not be mentioned, who stands too high to be thrust into the quarrel."

"I name one who has shamed my blood, and one that shall die for that shame," said Nicholas, drawing his sword, with his black face alight.

But Chloris sprang forward from the background where she had stayed in response to her lover's commands, and swallowed in a mighty passion like her brother.

"Who are you, Nicholas Carmichael," she cried "to interfere between me and what I will? 'Tis for

THE VENGEANCE OF NICHOLAS

me to avenge myself, if I will, and not for others. Go forth out of that door, and never let me see your face again. I care not if you be taken and rot on the gallows. You are no brother of mine, but a devil. Let me alone. I will not be bounden to you, and you shall do no harm here."

Nicholas struck at her furiously with his hand, but Warburton, with an exclamation of anger, at last, stood between, pushing her aside, and the blow fell on his arm.

"She shall wait; 'tis with you first," said Nicholas, and thrust out his sword.

Warburton was unarmed, for his pistol had been dropped in the hall of Lynsea, and he gave way towards the hall so as to avoid the point. Hastily he cast his eyes about the room, and, perceiving a rude billet of wood in one corner, secured it at a bound, and caught the next thrust of the madman's weapon upon this rough buckle. Ere a third stroke could fall, Chloris, with all her majestic liveness leaped upon her brother like a panther, arresting his sword-arm.

"Curse you!" he said, and uttered a foul name.

"Run, run!" she panted to Warburton, and even in that moment back upon his memory flashed the scene in the cave, and the picture of the girl swaying with her brother once again. Warburton took a step forward, and, seizing Nicholas Carmichael's arm, wrenched away the sword. He was still cool and master of himself, though breathing quickly.

"Let him go, Chloris," he said. "Let him go. He plays but a foolish part; he is mad."

At his words the girl loosened her arms, and her brother threw her off with an oath, so that she staggered against the wall. In a moment he stood glaring

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ing at his antagonist, who now held the long blade in his hand.

"For the sake of your sister, I bid you go," said Warburton, sternly. "I would slay you with your own weapon were it not for her, who shall be my wife. She shall thus be saved from your accursed blood."

"She shall never be your wife," said Nicholas, and flinging forward a pistol which he had taken from his coat, levelled and cocked it.

Chloris uttered a scream, and Warburton raised his sword swiftly, but ere the hammer could fall there came a sound from without of voices, which deranged even the design of that mad assassin. He halted, turned his ear to the door, and, behold! gleaming in the morning light shone the red coats of the soldiery. An ejaculation issued from his lips, and he darted past his sister, flew like a cat at the broken window, and, carrying with him a clod of mortar in his leap, was out of the cottage and running like a hare through the precincts of the ancient ruined chapel.





CHAPTER XXIII

ON THE SANDS BY LYNSEA

THE miraculous speed of this flight took Warburton aback, and amazed the *posse* of soldiers also that stood in the door. The officer in charge, whom Warburton recognized as his own captain, issued instructions on the instant, and his men spread in a fan, in pursuit of the fugitive. He himself offered a greeting to Warburton very civilly, and, his glance lighting on Chloris, started.

"What! a lady?" said he. "I ask your pardon. But I believe we came just in time. A desperate fellow, that, though 'tis a pity for his family."

Warburton motioned him from the room—which silent command he obeyed with a stare—and then took Chloris's hand.

"I will follow," he said, "and see what may be done. He is mad. Rest here."

She shook her head wearily. "I care not what happens," she answered, with a quick flash of spirit.

He joined the soldier outside, and they went together in the direction of the pursuit. Far away a solitary figure was visible mounting a rise.

"'Tis he," said the captain. "They might bring him down but that I am loath to do so. I have no orders."

"He is mad," said Warburton. "Let him escape."

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

The officer looked at him. "I dare not," he said, earnestly.

"Bah! I meant no appeal to you," said Warburton. "I know, my dear sir, that you must do your duty. What I meant was that it was best for all that he should escape rather than be brought to justice and discredit an ancient family."

"True, sir—very true," agreed the soldier. "But I must catch him."

They quickened their pace to a run, and emerged then into the wilderness of grass-grown sand. No one was visible anywhere upon the rolling expanse, and no sound reached them; it was as if they had been launched unexpectedly into a desert of still waters.

"He will get away," said Warburton presently. "He has every chance in his favor, among these wastes."

"'Tis likely," assented his companion, "but he will be caught some day. I shall be glad if it be not I who has the privilege. I have dined with his father."

"Sir Stephen is dead," said Warburton.

The officer opened his eyes. "Then is this Sir Nicholas that we are hunting?" he said, and laughed shortly. "The family has fallen on rough times."

"'Tis doomed," said Warburton, laconically.

"Doomed!" echoed the other, examining him with wonder.

"Sir, you saw that lady yonder?" said Warburton, grimly. "You have dined with Sir Stephen, you say. May I ask if the family was present?"

"There was a very handsome girl," said the captain, displaying some uneasiness; and then he added, awkwardly, "I know what you would ask me. You're right, but, gad! I do not wag my tongue; I can bridle my gossip."

ON THE SANDS BY LYNSEA

"Oh, sir," broke out Warburton, red of face, "I do not ask you that; you mistake me. That lady is to be my wife."

"I congratulate you, sir," said the captain, heartily.

"She has suffered for her family, sir," went on Warburton.

"No doubt, no doubt," assented the other.

"Well, she shall no longer," declared Warburton.

"I am honored by her affection."

"So would any man be," agreed the captain, cordially. "She has been mightily admired. She would cut a figure at court."

"She shall, by God!" said Warburton, with emphasis.

"She will be my lady Crayle, Mr. Warburton?" remarked the soldier, with an accent of delicate interrogation.

"In due course, sir; and she will adorn it—she will adorn the position, sir," said Warburton.

The captain nodded his head. "Gad! she would adorn any position. She is a queen," he said, with enthusiasm.

"I will defy any man to speak a word of her," pursued Warburton, stubbornly, and with meaning. "When she is my wife, that will protect her from any scandal of her name and home."

"It will cover much," agreed the friendly captain.

"It shall cover all," answered Warburton, significantly.

"You are right, sir; gad! it will cover all. No one will remember anything; even if Sir Nicholas be caught."

Warburton, having reached his end in the argument, followed it no further, but turned his mind to the fugitive. The desolate undulations of the wil-

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

derness offered no guidance, nor any promise of success for the pursuit.

"Gad! sir," observed the captain, presently. "It seems to me that we are lost. I know not my way."

Warburton pointed to the left, where a man was to be seen breasting a hill of sand, and to him they directed their steps. When they were near enough he was recognized for one of the soldiers, and explained that he and his companions had separated in order to cover as much ground as possible, but, so far as he was aware, no traces of Nicholas Carmichael had been found.

"He cannot have run so fast as to be clean away," protested the captain. "He must be in these accursed hills."

"Aye," said Warburton, smiling scornfully. "There is a 'needle in a hay-stack,' sir, if you will hunt it through."

Presently, as a pheasant starts out of the ground, there rose upon their left the figure of a man, and fled. The private darted from Warburton's side and raced over the hillocks in pursuit. Then upon the farther side of the fugitive rose cries, and a third figure came into sight, running towards Carmichael. Warburton watched eagerly, the wish strong in his heart that this man should escape. Nicholas Carmichael hesitated in his course, and then, swerving, turned away and ran parallel to the hills of the pursuit. Without a sound of any kind the two men followed, but their captain raised echoes across the dunes, calling upon his scattered band.

"Let be! Let be!" said Warburton, impatiently.

"Sir," said the other, drawing himself up, "I can take no commands from you."

"Oh, be damned!" said Warburton, and began him-

ON THE SANDS BY LYNSEA

self to run in the direction in which the others had vanished. He caught sight of them presently, the quarry and the hounds, and the distance between them remained. Whither was Nicholas Carmichael bent? And was it possible that he could escape if he should outlast the soldiery? Then it dawned swiftly upon him whither the chase was leading; for over the elbow of the dunes he saw the sea gleaming and tumbling in the morning sun. Nicholas Carmichael saw it also, and the prospect appeared to encourage him, for he increased his pace and forged ahead. Warburton saw the three men fading from his sight; the edge of the land swallowed them, and they seemed to roll over a precipice and down upon the rocks below.

A little later, however, he saw what had happened; for the cliffs suddenly sprang out before his feet, and he beheld the shelving land sink towards the bay; beyond that the smuggler leaping down the rocks; and farther still the dancing waters of the Gut and the sunlit peaks of Lynsea.

Warburton slipped down the hill as fast as he might, and by this act was brought nearer to the fugitive, who had taken a sharp angle in his course and was making for the sands. Suddenly Warburton saw his object, for floating upon the tide, upon the distant edge of this tiny bay, was a little boat. It was true that it stood upon the margin of the ravening Gut, yet Nicholas was an expert sailor, knew every foot of water thereabouts, and at all events the chances were better than upon the land, and to be taken upon that capital charge. Once at sea he would be out of his pursuers' reach, and it would be odds if he could be taken on that rugged and unfriendly coast.

Warburton now found himself running towards the

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

sea, down a descent of green grass, while the two soldiers raced near each other in the wake of their prey. They had gained upon him, but he threw a glance over his shoulder and redoubled his exertions, so that the space between them drew out. Then once more it drew in and was fast swallowed up. Warburton heard some one behind him, whom he guessed to be the captain, and he heard next the man's voice screaming breathlessly.

"Shoot! shoot! He will gain the boat! He must be taken!"

At these words one of the soldiers made a furious spurt and came within a dozen yards of Carmichael; he had already raised a hand involuntarily, as if to grasp his prisoner, when the fugitive threw up his arms, staggered, rose again, and staggered once more; and, rolling over, seemed to fight and struggle for an instant; and then, with a horrible cry of terror, was sucked in and vanished in the oozing sand.

The soldier checked himself on the verge of that terrible slough, and stood shaking like a reed. The man behind flung himself upon his face, drawing deep, uncomfortable breaths. Warburton drew up.

"'Tis the quicksand," he said.

"My God!" said the captain of the *posse*, and shuddered.

"The quicksand has him," said Warburton, slowly, and with difficulty, by reason of his breathless state; and to that he added, "I was wrong. 'Twas not his escape that would be for the best. 'Tis this," and he pointed towards the water's edge.

The captain shuddered again, and stared on him with open amazement. "'Tis a devilish fate," he said. "Yet I am glad 'twas not I that arrested him."

Warburton turned his back on the scene without

ON THE SANDS BY LYNSEA

further talk, and slowly retraced his way towards the cottage. He found Chloris lying upon the rude couch of grass, asleep, and for some moments he stood watching her, the expression upon his face changing. She was sunk in the slumber of exhaustion, and to wake her were to bring her back to the hard portion of life and realization. Yet it was advisable that she should be removed elsewhere, and he thought of her brother Philip, who was, as he conjectured, somewhere in the neighborhood of Marlock. He stooped and kissed her forehead lightly, and at the touch she stirred, and sat up with a gasp. Her eyes fell on him, and she smiled affectionately; then she remembered, and some questions rose on her speaking features.

"He is gone," said he; "'tis all over. They have not taken him; his secret dies with him."

Chloris uttered a little trembling sigh, and said nothing. He lifted her to her feet. "If you are rested, sweetheart, it is well that we were going," he said.

"Going! Whither?" she asked, vaguely.

"I will give you in charge to your brother Philip," he replied. "He shall look after you until I claim you."

She answered nothing, and presently they were upon their way. In Marlock the whole village was by this time astir, and news of importance was passing from lip to lip. Warburton walked up the street, and many inquisitive glances followed him and his companion. No doubt they had heard something of what had happened, and wondered. At the head of the street a person of some position in the village passed, and seemed as if he would address the girl, casting a look askance at Warburton; but he put up his hand with an impatient and stern gesture, and

CHLORIS OF THE ISLAND

the communication was never made. These gossips were full of the stuff they loved. Before the "Three Feathers" they unexpectedly encountered another group, which breaking swiftly, out of the thick stepped Sir George and eagerly accosted him.

"Mr. Warburton, there are strange tales about, of Sir Stephen Carmichael and—" he paused as his gaze struck upon Chloris. "How comes this lady here?" he inquired, in astonishment. "Does she not know? Her father is dead."

Warburton regarded him steadfastly. "You can give us no news, Sir George," he answered; and behind her guardian he met the curious eyes of Dorothy Holt, which were fastened on him with what he interpreted as a look of triumph.

"Sir Stephen is dead," said he, "of an ancient enemy. His loss was expected, poor man. I trust his family will bear up against the dreadful fact. But there is a successor; the name still remains."

"Indeed, sir, I understand something very different," began Sir George. "I have heard a curious story. The elder son was—"

"I have said you can give us no news," broke in Warburton, sharply, ere the word was uttered, and again was conscious of Miss Holt's face, now bearing a malevolent simper. "Sir Philip remains," he said, "and," he took Chloris's hand, "I wish to make you an introduction to this lady who has promised to be my wife."

Sir George stared, and over Miss Holt's face passed an angry flare of red. "'Pon my soul! Mr. Warburton, you amaze me," said the former. "Well, well; 'tis well done, I vow. But not so—strange—strange!" and he came awkwardly to a stop. "I must offer you my congratulations, sir," he added.

ON THE SANDS BY LYNSEA

Warburton bowed, and turned to Miss Holt. "I think, madam," he said, slowly, "that I have to thank you for a night in jail."

"What's that?" said Sir George, pricking up his ears.

"Miss Holt, sir, was obliging enough to have me laid by the heels," explained Warburton, while the girl grew scarlet and then white. "For some reason she can best explain, she swore an information against me."

"He is in league with these Carmichaels," burst forth the girl, with hysterical anger, trembling in her fear.

Chloris's eyes shot fire; but Sir George, who was greatly taken aback and thrown into a state of fuss, checked his ward sharply.

"You will be returning soon to town, Mr. Warburton?" he said, in an effort to regain his composure—"you will be seeing your uncle?"

"Maybe," said Warburton, curtly.

"Commend me to my lord," persisted Sir George. "I heard he was far from well—his old complaint."

He glanced at Chloris, as one who would suggest that here stood the future Countess of Crayle.

Warburton bowed again, and, with the soft pressure of Chloris's fingers on his arm, turned towards the inn. The frightened countenance of the landlord met him in the passage and flitted away as if in terror of a phantom, but Warburton passed on. Inside the long room a voice sounded, calling on Tremayne, and, pushing the door open, he entered. There sat Philip Carmichael, his face flushed, his hair awry, and a bottle at his elbow. He laughed noisily at Warburton, and, suddenly checking himself, stared in bewilderment at his sister.

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"What does this mean?" he asked, vacantly.

"It means, sir, that this is no proper time to be drinking," said Warburton, roughly, and knocked over the bottle, spilling the red wine on the floor.

"Damme! sir, what is this piece of insolence?" stut-tered Philip, struggling to his feet. "And what does Sis here?"

"Go outside and you will learn what it means," said Warburton, contemptuously. "Have they not brought the news of your father's death?"

"'Tis true, he is dead, rest him," said Philip, surlily. "But you have broken my bottle," and he rapped loudly for the innkeeper.

Warburton stood regarding him with a glance of disgust, and was conscious that Chloris's hand was stolen gently into his. He turned and found a pitiful face directed on her brother, in which a great horror mingled with tears. He held tight the hand.

"Know you this also," he said, sternly—"that your brother Nicholas is dead?"

The fingers closed convulsively on his, and Philip started.

"What! Nick dead?" he exclaimed, in bewilderment. "How comes he dead? You are lying." Warburton did not answer to this, and he let his eyes drop. "The devil!" he exclaimed, in a lower voice, in which was a thrill. "Then I am Sir Philip."

"My God! you are welcome to it!" cried Warburton, in disgust.

"Sir Philip!" said he, not heeding. "Poor Nick! 'Tis worth another bottle. Poor Nick!"

Warburton turned away abruptly and got out of the room with Chloris, white and failing.

"Cheer up, sweetheart," he whispered. He had

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ON THE SANDS BY LYNSEA

given up forthwith the thought of Philip as his sister's protector.

"We are well gone," she murmured; "the world is well rid of such as we. We have some evil taint."

He put an arm about her without answering and called for the landlord. Tremayne shuffled into the passage from his bar-room.

"Innkeeper," commanded Warburton, his tall form at its highest, "this lady will rest here for a little. See that some food is prepared at once. Within an hour's time have a coach at the doors."

Tremayne stammered, and, dismissed by a look, went forth.

"A coach!" cried Chloris, dreamily. "Whither go you, sir? Is't to London? Are you tired of this place? I wonder not. 'Tis no fit home for such as you. We are barbarians here, and have an evil taint."

"Aye, 'tis for London," he said, with his arm about her.

"Do you go to-day?" she murmured. "I would that you stayed with me a little ere you go; but 'tis no matter. You were well to be gone. There is nothing here meet for you. I will bid you farewell, sir."

Warburton looked down on her with a smile. "'Tis you and I that go, sweetheart," he said. "I go not without you, and when I go you shall go. This is no place for you, but your place is with me and where mine is."

She opened her half-closed eyes, a long-drawn sigh escaped her, and then her lids fell softly, and she hung a dead weight upon him. She had swooned away.

THE END



BY GEORGE DU MAURIER

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