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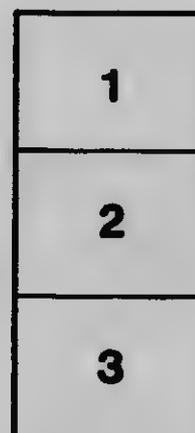
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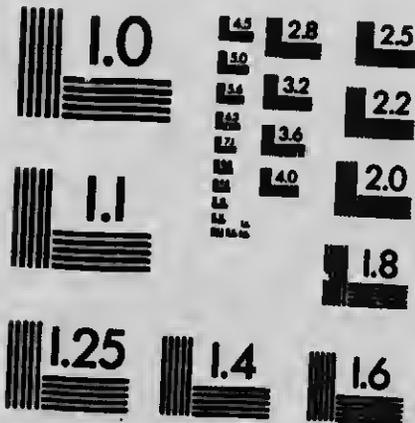
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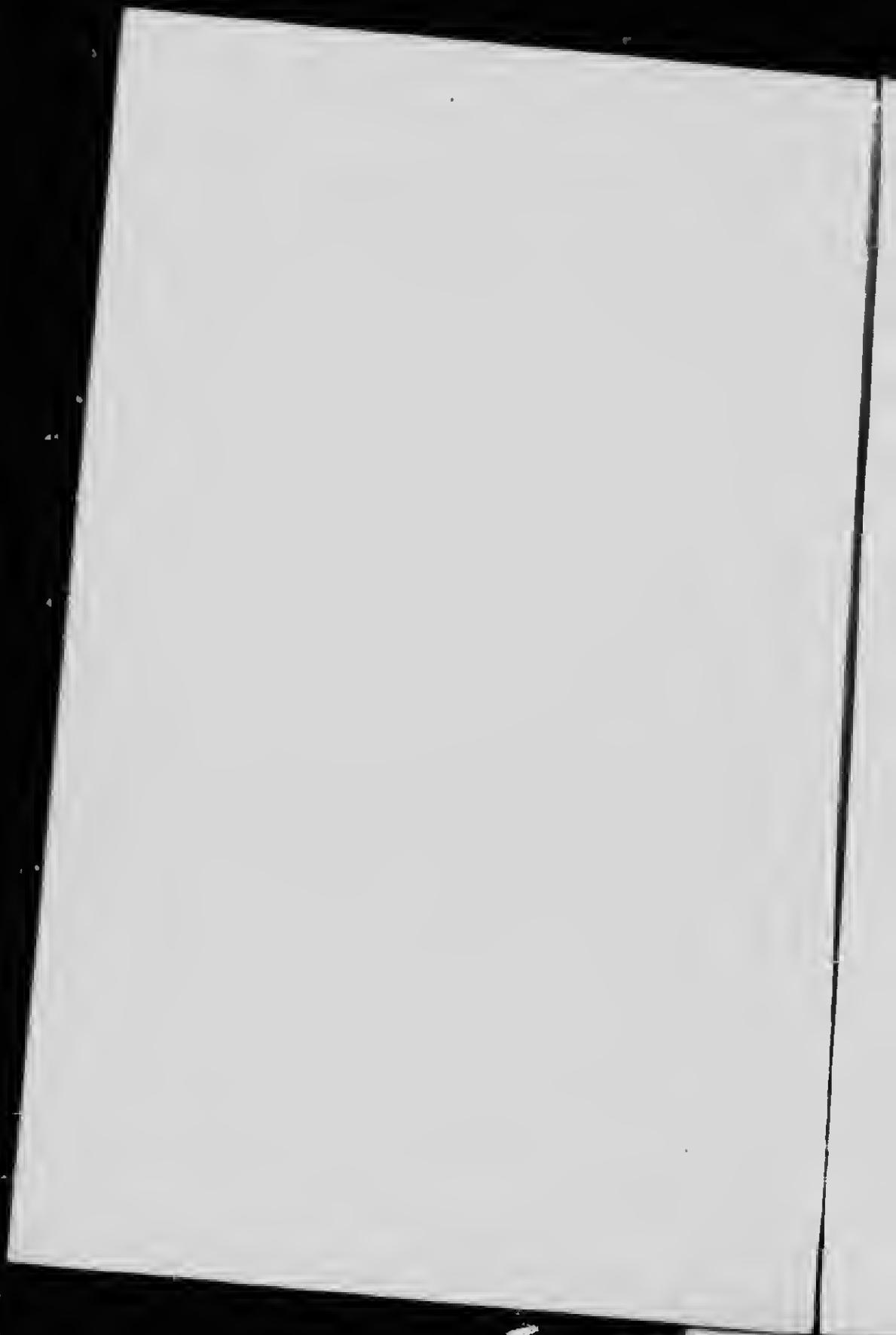
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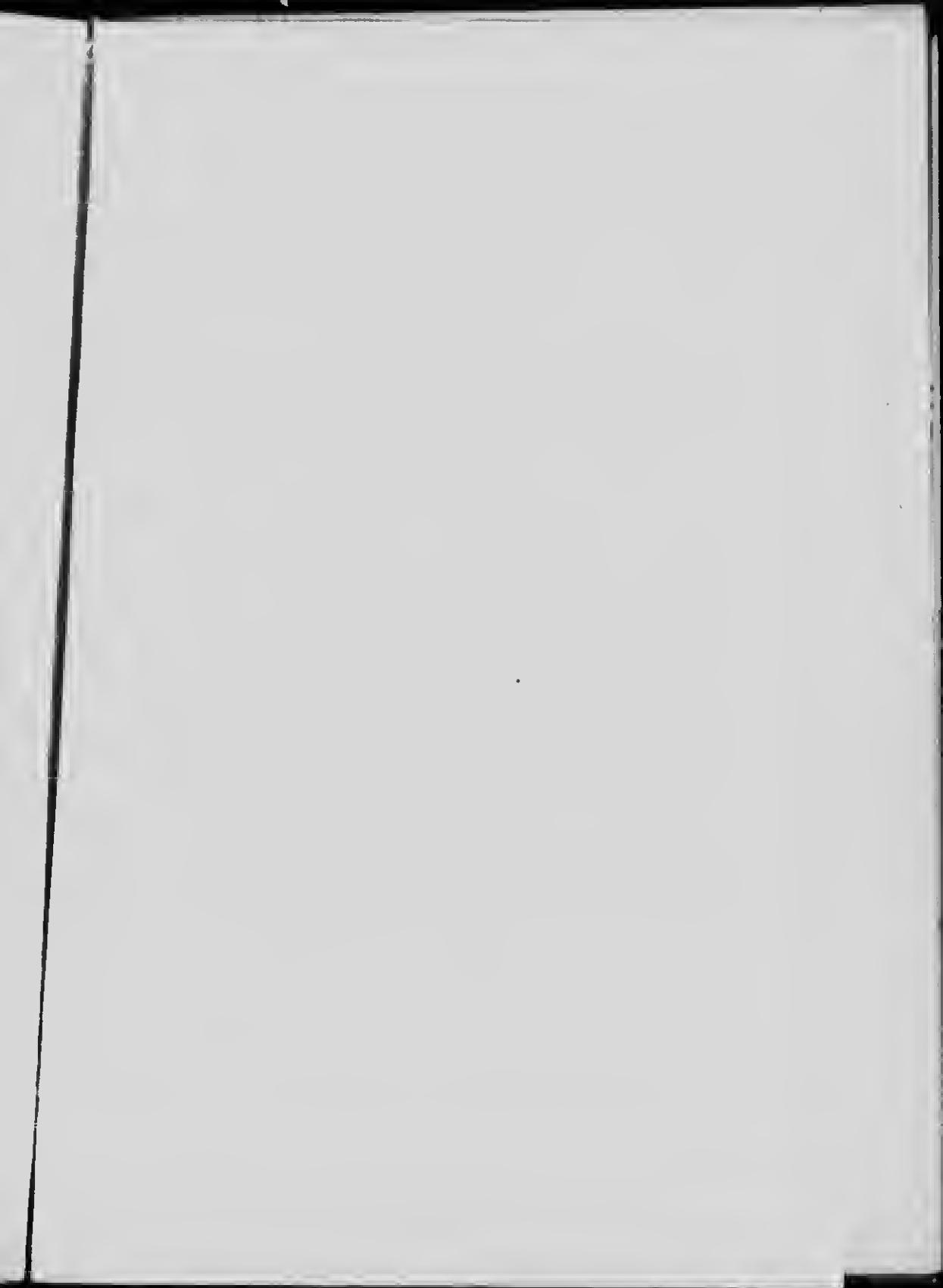
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**BEGGARS OF THE SEA**







THE SWORD OF HONOUR.

*(See page 242.)*

# BEGGARS OF THE SEA

*A Romance of Queen Elizabeth's Time*

BY

L. COPE CORNFORD

AUTHOR OF "CAPTAIN JACOBUS," "THE  
MASTER-BEGGARS," ETC.

*Illustrated by*

J. W. KENNEDY



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# BEGGARS OF THE SEA

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## CHAPTER I

### THE KNAVE OF DIAMONDS

**M**Y father had me home from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, at Midsummer, in the year of our Lord 1574, being the fifteenth year of the glorious reign of our noble sovereign, Queen Elizabeth. I should never make a scholar, said my father; to that he was perfectly resigned; but since (he argued) I had hitherto disdained to pluck the fruits of learning, I must even pack from wisdom's garden, and incontinently set myself about the choosing of a trade.

Now, a boy of seventeen idle Aprils can but look out upon the world, as upon a

vasty champaign wreathed in a bright mist; from the confines of his home, he stares into the shifting vapour; and, faintly discerning phantom cities, deserts, seas, and fields of battle, he hesitates, awaiting a sign. And so looking and waiting, for some two or three weeks I loitered about the streets and closes of the old, narrow city, and wandered the country round, until I began to believe that there was one person born into this pendent world, beyond the number it was planned to contain, — even Master Roger Nettlestone, only son of Stukely Nettlestone, gentleman, of Winchester town, and Margaret his wife.

But presently the expected sign appeared, although, at the time, I knew it not. For, one evening, as I was returning homewards through the town, along the stone-paved causeway that leads between the clear and swift river and the straight row of houses, I perceived a horseman jogging in front of me; his shadow glancing across the wet stones, where the yellow gleam from the

western sky shone in broken reflections, between flying wisps of cloud; for the day had been troubled, with sudden storms of rain. As I drew near, I saw that both man and horse were thickly crusted and bespattered with mire, and wore the look of those who have come fast and far.

"Holla, sir!" cried the cavalier. "Pray, canst direct me to the house of one Master Stukely Nettlestone?"

He was a brown-faced man of some thirty years, as I guessed, with full cheeks, little shifty brown eyes, and a stiletto-beard; wearing a cloak of blue camlet, and a high hat with a draggled green feather.

"Follow the river till you come to the mill," I answered, "then turn to the right, and to the right again, when you will come upon a square, red house which stands in a garden closed in a great yew hedge. But I am going towards that way myself," I added.

"Why, very good, then we will bear each other company, an' it please you," said the

stranger, and we began to walk forward. "Dost know this Master Nettlestone, by chance?" he went on.

"I have seen him," I replied. Indeed, I knew him not; my father was a riddle to me.

"Ay," returned my cavalier, "Mr. Nettlestone is a man to be seen,—a very proper man. So soon as I did behold him: Here is a bulwark of religion, said I,—a very tower,—a strong pillar of the Catholic faith."

"Catholic?" said I. "I have never heard that Mr. Nettlestone was a Papist."

"Protestant, Protestant! said I Catholic?" cried the stranger, with a quick glance at me. "Truly, there are Catholics enow. And yet we are to have another Spanish treaty, it appears,—although, God knows, 'tis better than alliance with the butcherly French, do you not think so?"

I had but the dimmest notion of foreign politics, albeit I was versed in the history of Mary, whilom Queen of Scotland, and

I begged this talkative gentleman to explain his words.

"Why," he went on, in a very good-humoured manner, "I have but now ridden from London city; and there 'tis credibly bruited abroad that the Queen and the Lords in Council have accepted the proffered friendship of King Philip. Our noble Queen, look you, keeps all Europe skipping, as a juggler spinneth plates. The Prince of Orange would have helped her to free the Netherlands from the Spaniard; the King of France likewise courteth England, to set a check on the bridle of Spain, and because he hopes to marry his ugly brother, the pocky Duke Alençon, to our peerless Elizabeth, so that his posterity may rule England and also Scotland; while Spain would have England to help conquer the Netherlands, and to set bounds to the ambition of jealous France. So the Queen is gracious to King Philip, — that she may keep the Spanish trade, belike; and as for the rest, she says neither ay nor nay,

and lets them dance attendance on her Majesty."

"And what of Queen Mary?" I asked, when I had digested this information.

"The succession will be vested in her, will it not?" answered the stranger. "Parliament will surely settle the succession upon her."

"There should be a time of peace a coming, then," said I. "The Catholics should be satisfied with the succession, and there will be no more traffic with the Guises."

"Faith, I should think not, indeed," said the stranger. "But as for the Guises, what have they done, with their practice of treason? Nothing, by God's will. I would not venture a cracked three-farthings on the Guises."

By this time we had reached the mill, a mossy bulk of weather-boarding which stands amid shivering willows, where the road turns away from the river. My cavalier drew rein, and gazed upon the prospect,

shading his eyes with his gloved hand. The sun, a spot of diffused brightness, stared from the lifting edge of a vast curtain of cloud, illumining, with a magical radiance, the plain of delicate water-meadows, and flashing here and there upon the crystal river.

"Slight," said the stranger, "this place putteth me in mind of the Low Countries; there are just such fair green pastures, and water, and feeding cattle, and a great light sky, — a fine rich country. But I had rather be at home, reaping the fruits of husbandry, like good Mr. Nettlestone here, a thousand times. But the world prevents me, sir, setting a hedge of steel points against me. The world," said my cavalier, resting his hand on his hip, and regarding me, "is a villainous, unjust, and wicked world, as you will find by the time you wear hair. The world will force a man to fighting; and if he win, all the people cry Hail! and if he lose, they think it sport to see him take a leap from Tyburn Tree."

He tightened his rein, and we walked forward.

"Hast thou a father, camarado?" my cavalier went on.

"Yes," said I, "I have a father."

"And doth he behave himself well towards thee?"

"Why, reasonable well, — since you ask me," said I.

"You may thank God," returned my companion. "A good father is a rare commodity, let me tell you. My father, sir, was an old scoundrel chuff as ever went to church with deluded woman. He ruined my fortunes ere ever I was breeched. I hate but one man in the world, even my father. And so I say you are lucky, camarado, in your parentage."

I mistrusted a man who would talk thus loosely to a stranger; and looking at him, I thought that, despite his fine bold air, and open, good-humoured manner, my gallant disengaged an impression of unsureness. This it was, perhaps, which had

influenced me to be secret with him at first.

"Well, sir, I am very sorry for you," said I. "But if you would find Mr. Nettlestone's house, follow this lane until you come to a pair of iron gates of scroll-work, with a peacock cut in yew on either side."

He thanked me, and turned away. Going a little farther, I entered the garden by the postern door in the wall, came into the house by a side entrance, and went straightway to my chamber, where I sat down to meditate upon my meeting with the stranger gentleman, who was doubtless even now closeted with my father. I marvelled what should bring this swaggering cavalier to Mr. Nettlestone, himself the very type of starched, respectable, moderate Protestantism. And yet, as I have said, my father was somewhat of a mystery to me; for, since I was a little, tiny boy, I had been away at school and college, save for the holidays, and often during these vacations my father had been absent abroad. So it

came to pass, that of my father's shadowy image I had made to myself an heroic father, stuffed with wisdom and every perfect virtue,—humorous, kindly, chivalric. And in such converse as we had together, beholding him, as I did, in a magical crystal of my own fashioning, I ever found my father to fulfil the measure of his stature which I worshipped in my heart.

Nevertheless, I knew not what was his business in life, although 'twas certain that he had an avocation, which continually called him overseas; and by which (it appeared) he would now gain great sums, and again become near penniless. And, moreover, at a time when every Jack upon the highway was ready to play at swords with every Tom in the hedge for the truth of his creed, I had scarce ever known Mr. Nettlestone to deliver a downright opinion upon either politics or religion. Yet, I had faith in my father as I had faith in the being of God. The coming of this stranger, with his jaunty talk of politics and his curious

parental blasphemies, made but a new tinge in the cloud of righteous mystery, in which my admirable parent elected to clothe himself.

As I reviewed these things in my mind, I heard the sound of footsteps and voices beneath my window, which overlooked the stable yard; and looking out, I perceived my father in company with the stranger.

"Come, sir," said Mr. Nettlestone, "y' had better stay the night."

"I thank you," the other returned, "but, truly, Sir Harry waits for me."

"I will make your excuses to Sir Harry Wynter," said my father. He stood in a clear shadow, so that I could see his face; and I perceived him to wear a formidable expression, with which I was not unacquainted,—a frown and smile commingled.

"Indeed, Mr. Nettlestone, I would gladly stop with you, but I am straitly bound to Sir Harry," said the stranger again; and he turned away, and entered the stable, where

I heard him admonishing his horse. My father looked after him with a darkling countenance. In a few moments the cavalier came out of the stable, leading his nag; and the strong red light of the low sun struck full upon him where he stood, with a hand upon the horse's bridle and his cloak over his arm, a figure of vivid colours, defined with streaks and blots of black shadow.

"I give you warning, Mr. Chidiok Marston," my father broke out, with so passionate an accent that I tingled to hear him, "I give you warning, I say, that I know what you would be about in that house. I will not suffer it, sir. As I live by bread, Sir Harry Wynter shall know it also."

Mr. Chidiok Marston raised his head with a little start when my father began to speak, and looked at him for a moment from under the shadow of his hat brim. Then he turned away, as though there were but an angry child talking, put his blue cloak about his

shoulders, and got into the saddle. His horse began to walk towards the gateway. My father made a step forward, so that the ruddy sunlight illumined his great head and shoulders, glistening upon his brindled hair.

“You shall not profane the houses of my friends with your scurrilous manners, be sure of that, you—you dissolute ruffian. Recollect yourself, I have warned you,” cried Mr. Nettlestone.

Still Mr. Chidiok Marston appeared to take no heed; but, as he turned out of the gateway, looking around, he fung out his hand, holding up three fingers.

“’Tis three days to the thirtieth of August,” said Mr. Chidiok Marston. He shut his hand, his thumb appearing between his fingers; and, with this insulting gesture, he was gone.

I saw my father glance swiftly over his shoulder at the words; and, fearful lest he should look up and perceive me, I jumped back from the casement. Here was matter

for marvel. What should this Mr. Chidiock Marston be designing at the house of Sir Harry Wynter, which should put my father into so hot an indignation? Sir Harry was an old friend of my father, dwelling at Itchen Abbas, a village some three miles distant from Winchester, with his daughter Elizabeth, for whom my father had stood sponsor. Mistress Elizabeth was some two years older than I, who professed to myself a certain reverential admiration for her. What had this latten gallant, Chidiock Marston, to do with so noble a lady? And what, I asked, should happen upon the thirtieth of August, three days hence? And why did the mention of that date so sharply affect Mr. Nettlestone?

These sudden questions quite drove from my thoughts the remembrance of my own perplexity; so that I sat down to supper that night, under my father's iron regard, with less diffidence than I had known of late. For, wandering upon that difficult lee-shore of life, betwixt the safe sea upon

which he hath voyaged hitherto, and the high cliffs upon whose rocky face he must discover a path, or perish, a lad finds himself at a miserable disadvantage; and, moreover, he is apt to read reproach in the parental glance, both dispiriting and unmerited.

I hoped my father would let fall some observation upon the visit of Mr. Chidiok Marston; but he ate and drank in a dark silence, hearkening to my mother reciting little, witty, household histories,—a lively art which she practised to perfection. So I resolved to adventure a remark.

“This afternoon I came across a muddy gentleman on horseback, by the Soke Bridge, who asked me to direct him to you, sir. Did he come?”

My father lifted his head from his plate, glooming upon me, and I perceived that I had overstepped the line of discretion.

“A certain Mr. Marston came upon a message to me,” said my father, after a

pause designed to impress me with a sense of my impertinence.

I said no more; and, a few minutes later, glancing covertly at my mother, I noted the slight, wistful contraction about her lips and eyes which warned me that trouble would come of meddling in matters too high for me.

The next day, as events fell out, there came another rider about business with my father. Loitering moodily in the garden, I saw him ride up to the door; with his frieze cloak above his blue jerkin, he had the look of a serving-man. He stayed but a little while within, and I saw him ride away. And, that evening, Mr. Nettlestone told us that business would once more take him from home, so soon as he could complete his preparations.

During the next two days I was much with my father; he showed himself the kindest and pleasantest comrade in the world; and I was heartily sorry that he was about to depart.

Upon the morning of the second day, being the thirtieth of August (of which Mr. Chidiok Marston had spoken in that singular manner), I rode with my father to the house of Sir Harry Wynter, at Itchen Abbas. The while Mr. Nettlestone was closeted with Sir Harry, I sat in the garden, beneath the trees, with Mistress Elizabeth. Truly she was a creature of a sumptuous beauty, most delicately formed, ruddy as a peach, with saintly blue eyes. But to-day, the spring of adoration welling within me was dashed with bitterness.

"Do you know a certain Mr. Chidiok Marston?" said I, after awhile.

"Why, yes," said Elizabeth, "Mr. Marston but left us yesterday."

I could not refrain myself.

"Do you like him?" I asked.

"Why not?" said she. "Do you dislike him?"

"Marry, I know him not," said I. "How came he here at first?"

"Why, he simply came," quoth Elizabeth.

"My father met him at the mill upon his Forest estate. Mr. Marston's old nurse, as he told us, had married the miller; and kind Mr. Marston was about visiting her, when my father met him. Then he came here, — why not? — and so he came again."

"Oh, did he so!" I said; and at that, Mistress Eliza so looked at me, that I made haste to talk of other things.

But all at once I hated the man Marston. He was no stranger to Elizabeth, it seemed; here was new mystery, mixt with a bitter, jealous ingredient; and I was sadly troubled and a little angry. If this man menaced aught of evil towards Elizabeth, I vowed he should reckon with me. Moreover, as I was consoled to remember, my formidable sire was armed against him.

Returning homewards to dine, the thought of parting from my father lay heavy upon me; and I rode sorrowfully enough by his side.

"Before I return, young Roger," said my

father, "you will have had full opportunity to make choice of your calling in life; and we will make a new start in it."

He spoke truly. In the afterclap, I had reason to recall his words. I remember, with a perfect clearness, the kind look upon his face, and the scene about us, — the white road, rising and falling with the dun wolds; and beyond, the long roof and square tower of the Cathedral with the huddled bulk of houses, coloured darkly upon a space of dim gold, that gleamed below the canopy of cloud.

After dinner, Mr. Nettlestone rode forth once more; but he would be sure, he said, to sup at home. That morning, he had made arrangements to start upon his journey early on the morrow. My mother busied herself about preparing a little farewell feast for him; but, when the time came, and supper was ready, my father had not returned. We waited long; until at last we were fain to fall to without him. We made but a cheerless meal of it. The piping wind

died in the twilight, and presently a thick rain began to fall. We sat waiting; still, Mr. Nettlestone did not come; and my mother grew fearful lest some evil should have befallen him. At midnight I persuaded my mother to bed; and awhile after, seeing no use in keeping vigil, I retired thither myself, and presently drowsed into a troubled sleep. All night, the rain fell heavily through the windless air; and all night, I heard in my sleep the high, dolorous note of the swallows plaining beneath the eaves.

Towards morning, I fell into a deep slumber, from which I was suddenly awakened by the clatter of hoofs upon the stones beneath my window. I sprang instantly to the open casement, and beheld my father dismounting from his horse. I cried out to him; whereupon he glanced up with a face so old and pale, that I was stricken to the heart. He nodded, called to me to look to the horse, and strode into the house.

I shuffled some clothes about me, and went out into the cold rain. The nag was sweating and blowing heavily; I unsaddled him, rubbed him down, and gave him provender.

Crossing the courtyard from the stable to the house, I perceived a scrap of something white lying on the wet pavement; and picking it up, I found it to be a card, scribbled over with ciphers and figures in my father's hand. The figures seemed to have been cast, for there was a line drawn, and beneath it, the sum total written, *1350 Cr.* I turned the card over; it was the knave of diamonds; and something in the Jack's swaggering countenance, with its stiletto-beard, reminded me of Mr. Chidiok Marston. I slipped the villainous thing into the pocket of my hose, and went indoors. The elemental earth quivered beneath my feet as I walked, and the familiar walls about me looked strangely.

My father was gazing forth of the window when I entered the dining-room; he turned

about to greet me, so that I saw him dark against the light sky and the dripping trees without.

"Give you good-den, sir," said I. "I picked this up in the courtyard,—had you dropped it?"

Mr. Nettlestone took the knave of diamonds from me, turning towards the light. He scrutinised the pasteboard with his scowling smile; looked at the back; and looked up at me, the frown quite gone, and his face alight with simple kindness.

"I thank you, boy," said my father. "Now I remember me, I scribbled some memoranda on the card."

If there lurked any doubts within me, begotten by that knavish card, whispering treason, my father's glance and manner of speaking smote them to silence. And, in the release from the fears of the night, a sudden gladness wholly possessed me.

Mr. Nettlestone slowly tore the knave of diamonds across and across, and scattered

the fragments upon the empty hearth. The next moment my mother entered the room, her jolly countenance pale, and marred with weeping.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST ELIZABETH, CAP. I

A SORT of sour darkness clung about the house that morning, which was wholly, as I thought, the shadow of my father's imminent departure. But, before he could go, it seemed that Mr. Nettlestone had unexpected affairs to transact; and after breakfast, when he had read a piece of Scripture and spoken a short formal prayer before the household, according to his custom, my father and I went into the town. The rain was over and gone, and we walked in a moist, bright heat of sunshine along the river, into the shadowy and sparkling streets; where I left Mr. Nettlestone at a scrivener's in Jewry Street, and sauntered up the High Street. A party

of horse issuing from the dark arch of the West-Gate (which, adjoining the Castle, spans the street at the top), drew my attention; as I approached, the people about me began running in the same direction; and a crowd speedily gathered about the troop, which was halted outside the Castle gates. There were some twenty men-arms, in jack and morion, with the boar's head (couped sable, holding in the mouth a walnut vert) of Sir Francis Walsyngham stitched upon their sleeves; and in their midst were four or five gentlemen whose feet were tied with ropes beneath their horses, and their hands bound behind their backs. There had been something of a fight, it appeared; for one prisoner had his head bound about with a linen shirt, the ruffles of lace at the wrists dangling over his ear. He sat hunched upon his horse, his chin upon his breast, his red hair falling about a waxen face. The prisoners, so far as I could see their countenances for the shifting crowd, wore a look of fatigued indifference.

A murmur ran through the multitude; scraps of talk were flung to and fro; and I speedily gathered that these bedraggled gentlemen had been taken fresh in the attempt to assassinate the Queen, who was then upon a visit to Basing House, which lies some thirty miles distant from Winchester. The murmur swelled ominously, and the people were swaying and pressing together (for there was a plenty loyal zealous Protestants in the town); when the gates were opened, the cavalcade jingled into the Castle courtyard, and the gates clanged to upon the townsfolk. A hugeous purple cloud towering above the battlements of the West-Gate veiled the sun; and, in the sudden grayness, I saw clearly the faces of the multitude, vivid for a passing instant with the light of a single emotion, that presently faded and was slowly extinguished.

Returning homewards, my thoughts ran back to Mr. Chidiok Marston and his visit; it came upon me, in a flash, that yesterday had been the thirtieth of August.

But, upon leisurely reviewing the late course of incidents, the light of that recollection, so far as I could see, illuminated nothing.

That evening, Mr. Nettlestone buckled his mails upon his horse's crupper, bade us farewell, and departed into the night. Now that he was gone, I could but turn me again to my old employment, and scan the misty world for a gleam that should beckon me to my destiny. For the voices of my heart talked nothing but confusion, and scarce two days upon the same tune. Now, my heart would lust for the pleasures of a fighting life; for march and leaguer, assault and duello; or would cry to go a-roving the broad and narrow seas with the privateers; and again, my soul would crave the celestial spheres of learning, asking only to dwell in a pastoral tranquillity, while reading all the books of the world, so that I should become a great clerk, or even a poet. All these things I should like to perform. Upon this alone was I resolved, that I would never take to

any trade which would coffin me within doors all the days long.

Upon the second night after my father had gone, I dreamed a disturbing dream. I thought that he and I had a bout at quarter-staff. He was clad in armour head to foot, while I was naked; again and again he struck me heavily, fleeing at me; until I broke into a flame of anger, and drove at my father to slay him. My strokes rang echoing loud; and as I struck, his mailed figure swelled and towered; and yet methought my father shrank and died the while within his shell of steel, like the kernel of a nut; and suddenly I saw his soul, in the shape of a red rat, wriggle through the vizor-bars, and run upon the floor. In the horror of that sight, I awakened with a drumming heart, to hear a great hollow noise of blows resounding through the dark house.

Coming to myself, I gathered a sheet about me, went to the window giving upon the porch and looked out, my mother and

the maid-servants pressing behind me. In the dusky light of a clouded moon, I beheld the steel caps of five or six horsemen, and cried out to them; whereupon the blows upon the door ceased, and one reined back his horse upon the grass.

"In the Queen's name!" he cried. "Mr. Nettlestone—is Mr. Stukely Nettlestone there? Open the door, in the Queen's name!"

I inquired of this importunate person, who he was.

"I bear a message from Sir Francis Walsingham to Mr. Stukely Nettlestone," he returned. "Is Mr. Nettlestone within?"

I answered that the person he sought was abroad, but that if he would wait a few moments, I would speak with him.

My mother followed me to my room, and stood there while I dressed. "What can this be, Roger?" says she; and then, "I always feared it."

I thought of her with wonder, mixt with a little anger. Had no such alarum befallen,

and had she come to me with the burden of a formless doubt, I could have hearkened to her; and received, perhaps, a share of her trouble. But, with the enemy battering the gates, this were no time to entertain traitors in the citadel; and I bade her send a wench quickly to get a light.

"I will go," she answered; and when I ran down the stairs, my mother was standing in the hall, holding a taper in her hand; she had put on a great furred cloak, with the hood drawn over her head.

I opened the door, and a gentleman in a jerkin of murrey sarcenet, booted and spurred, came jingling into the hall, and bowed to my mother. He was a well-made fellow, with a brown face and an alert eye.

"Madam," said he, "I pray you pardon me for breaking in upon you so rudely,—but my errand is her Majesty the Queen's. Is not Mr. Nettlestone within?"

"Pray, sir, what is your business?" said I. He faced round upon me. "Are you,

sir, the son of Mr. Nettlestone? Will you give me the favour of two words aside with you?"

I led him into the dining-room, but my mother followed. The stranger glanced from one to the other of us.

"I am sorry," said he, "but time wastes. I bear a warrant for the arrest of Mr. Stukely Nettlestone, upon a charge of High Treason." He paused.

I glanced at my mother. She had a look of pale distress, but stood composed. For myself, I had a feeling that the fibres of my being had gone slack at a twist, like the strings of a viol.

"Where is Mr. Nettlestone?" repeated the stranger.

"My husband is abroad," said my mother. "I do not know where he is."

The stranger bowed, and fixed his bright eyes upon her with a look of expectancy.

"Indeed, sir, I cannot tell you," said my mother. "Mr. Nettlestone left us yesterday for the Netherlands."

"Madam, credit me, I do not doubt your word; but in the proper discharge of my business, I pray you give me leave to search your house."

He drew a folded parchment from the leathern purse at his girdle, and gave it to me. "Under First Elizabeth, Cap. 1," said he. I looked within it, but the words blurred together, and I deciphered nothing save the broad flowing signature at the foot of the warrant, *Francis Walsyngham*. The officer walked out of the room, opened the entrance door, and called two of his men; and followed by my mother and myself, the three pried throughout the house, looking into every cupboard, sounding every wall, the men-at-arms thrusting their half-lances up the chimneys.

When they had done, the officer sent his men forward, and bade my mother farewell in the silken manner of courtesy he had used throughout his visit. He mounted his horse; and, in a cruel heat of anger, I walked by his side to the gate, where he reined up.

"This is a bitter night's business," said he. "Truly, Master Nettlestone, I am sorry for you."

"Are you?" said I. "Then put your rapier under your arm, I pray you, and come with me upon the bowling-green."

At this rude speech of an angry boy, my gentleman considered me for a moment.

"Your pardon, sir," said he. "You must readily conceive that I cannot accept of a challenge while I am about the Queen's business."

Had he ridiculed me, I suppose I should have tried to drag him from his saddle.

"I like this employment no better than yourself, Mr. Nettlestone," says he. "We poor gentlemen in service can but obey orders."

The man disarmed me, and I stood silent and sulky.

"Where was your father, sir," he pursued, "on the night of the thirtieth of August?—there is no need to answer me, Mr. Nettlestone. Was he at home? Why, doubtless

he was at home, and therein a mistake had been made. See now, how easily this may blow over, and nobody a whit the worse. At the trial, justice will be done. But your father—I take the liberty to speak as a friend, Mr. Nettlestone—your father must appear at the Assizes, upon the fifth October; for, if he comes not, the penalty is outlawry, and deprivation of estate. You will see it all writ in the warrant. Now give you good night, Mr. Nettlestone.”

He went out of the gate; I heard the shog of his horse's hoofs in the mire grow fainter and die away; and returned into the house, looking upon three pictures which were painted upon the darkness. I saw Mr. Chidiok Marston, with his insolent fice, and his *thirtieth of August*; I saw the face of my father raised to mine in the cold dawning; and I beheld the knot of dishevelled prisoners in the shadow of the West-Gate, the man with the bloody clout tied upon his red elf-locks in their midst.

Groping in a maze of thorns, I feared a precipice that waited to engulf me, I knew not where; nor had my mother any clue to give me.

## CHAPTER III

### A PATRIOT OF THE NARROW SEAS

**W**INDING between the dark hedges, I ride swiftly along the dim road that runs ever before me, vanishing into changing gulfs of shadow. Overhead, shines and flashes and beckons the pageant of the dawn; all the landscape is drily illumined with faint gold; long shadows fall across the pearly meadows, and the far hills change upon the lucent sky to hills of pearl. No sound breaks the stillness, save the bugling of chanticleer, mingled with the tiny music of the birds and the hollow, rhythmic beat of hoofs. Here, in this primal hour of serenity, the riddle, which was to lead me through forthrights and meanders upon such a dance, before I read

it clear, begins to dog me; hovering before my eyes as I ride, like a cloud of insects, writing itself in hieroglyphic upon the flitting hedges, the dusky hillsides; and, again, as I look, effacing itself.

'Tis scarce five hours since the officers of my lord Walsyngham have ransacked the house, and I have started in pursuit of my father, hoping to find him tarrying at Southampton; but prepared, if need were, with forty crowns in my pocket, a change of clothing, a sword, and a pair of pistols, to follow Mr. Nettlestone to his journey's end, and to hale him back before the fifth October. Soon or late, his business would take Mr. Nettlestone to the town of Leyden in Holland; this was the sum of my mother's information.

There was no time to ride by Itchen Abbas; but, in that hour, I beheld the window (wreathed in late roses) beyond whose curtains lay Elizabeth; imagination, entering not the dim chamber of holy sleep, rested upon the sill, as a bird alights and

rests; and so I bade my little friend a mute farewell, commending her to God. Surely the Eternal would bring the impudent face of Chidioc Marston to utter confusion.

The sun ascends; the shadows darken and diminish; a jolly wind, awaking, blows in a tang of the sea, and marshals a regiment of clouds upon the deepening azure; the birds fall silent, the little noises of life begin to sound on every side; and as I top the rise above Southampton town, and behold the blue, alluring water, earth and sky are bathed once more in familiar daylight. I hear the distant tuck of drums. My day has begun.

Entering Southampton, I perceived, riding a little way in front of me, the party of Mr. Walsyngham's men. Doubtless they were about searching the taverns and the ships; and, since I could not prevent them, I saw no reason why they should not do my errand for me. And having marked them halt at *The Sign of the Black Goats*, I

repaired swiftly to the house my father was accustomed to use, *The Golden Key*; but, upon the night he left home, he had not visited the place, it appeared. Here I left my horse and mails, and set forth on foot.

All that day, in a blistering sun, I dogged Walsyngham's police from ship to ship along the quays, and saw them back to their inn, empty-handed. Then I returned to *The Golden Key*; writ a letter to my mother; ordered it to be sent to Winchester with my horse; took my bag, and came again to the water's edge, considering what I should do.

The quays were lined with merchant brigantines, with here and there the bark of a Channel privateer, which carried long brass culverins on poop and forecastle. My haunting riddle tangled itself in the web of masts and ropes, and slid out upon a track of sunset light that wavered red across the water. Clearly I must take to the sea. I must find a ship, and work my

passage to Holland. The way and means  
I could but leave to destiny.

And in awhile I came to a low-browed  
ale-house, whose windows glowed red upon  
the inhospitable twilight. From within, came  
the sound of a song chanted in parts to the  
crying of a fiddle; the voices dwelling upon  
the words with a melodious uncton, that put  
me a little in mind of a dog that bays the  
moon in a comfortable melancholy. I stood  
and hearkened to a stave.

Heh nonny no!

Men are fools that wish to die!

Is't not fine to dance and sing

When the bells of death do ring?

And turn upon the toe

And sing hey nonny no,

When the winds blow and the seas flow?

Hey nonny no!

The song came to an end in a dying fall,  
the bass lingering lovingly upon a beautiful  
deep note. In the silence that followed I  
entered the tavern.

The little wooden room was crowded with

a company of seafaring men, taking their ease on settles against the walls, with pots of liquor before them on the tables, which were illumined with wax candles set in massy silver candlesticks. Their eyes looked strangely light in their faces as they glanced upon me, so sweetly tanned were they. I took note of one who might be their captain, since he sat in an elbow-chair at the head of the table. He leaned back with a leg dangling over the chair-arm, smoking a cigarro, and regarding me with a pleasant look out of puckered blue eyes. His forehead was bald as an egg, and ran backward in a line with his long curved nose, and he wore a pointed beard. Next him sat a huge, ruddy young man with long moustachios; he had the fighting face,—the straight nose and forehead, and the chin rounding upon the prominent lips. Behind him, leaning against the wall, was a lean and long youth, with high features, lank black hair, and a bright black eye, who was plainly crowder to the company, for

he held a fiddle. The man whom I took to be captain greeted me in the civilest manner, and the great young man made me room to sit beside him. I called for a pot of ale, and we presently fell into conversation.

“Why, now,” said the captain, for such he was, “how pleasant this is! I am very glad you came in, sir. We poor sea-dogs — you take my meaning — we poor sea-dogs can so rarely enjoy a spell ashore, that to converse with the rest of the world — with a person such as yourself — you take my meaning, sir? — is a singular pleasure.”

Had he lately sailed from far? I asked him.

“Coasting in the Narrow Seas,” said the captain, “merely coasting. You take my meaning. I am Protestant to the bone; I have letters of marque; and I do business with the Spaniard in the great waters. Are you Catholic, sir? Well, though you were a Papist, we would never quarrel; we would talk of something else.”

"We would talk," said the great young man, who had a most dulcet voice, and a manner at once engaging and jovial, "of Sir John Hawkins, captain, good Sir John; of the voyage of the *Jesus*; we would tell of Afric, of gold and slaves, and the Spanish Main. Would we not, captain?"

The captain's face wrinkled delightedly, but he held a discreet silence.

Hereupon I took the opportunity to ask him whether he knew aught of the posture of affairs in the Netherlands; and in reply the easy captain told me much of the war. Since April, three months since, when all his troops had been slain at the battle of Mook Heath, the Prince of Orange, it appeared, had been without an army; and, meanwhile, the town of Leyden had been straitly besieged by the Spanish general, Don Francisco de Valdez, with a great force. Rumour went abroad that all the city was starving, yet it held out still. And since the Prince had no

army to march against the leaguer, he vowed he would sail his fleet of roving privateers, the unconquered Beggars of the Sea, across the land to the succour of Leyden; and, at the beginning of August, but three weeks ago, this great captain had burst the dikes, and opened the sluices of the coast towns; so that the whole country was flooded so far as the first great inland dike, the Land-Scheiding, which formed an inner ring of defence for the scattered villages surrounding Leyden. In these villages lay the main body of the Spanish army.

All this the captain told me, garnishing the history with much patient explanation; for he had a disconcerting habit of leaping from point to point of his narration, crying airily that doubtless I took his meaning: and, since it was highly necessary that I should possess a complete knowledge of matters, I must compel my good-natured historian to stay upon his course to bridge these abysses. By the time he had made

an end, the rest of the company were talking busily together, so that we were in a manner retired from observation. And so plainly open, simple, and kindly was this mariner, that I took a great liking for him, and straightway determined to ask his counsel upon my private affairs.

"Can one enter or leave Leyden?" I asked.

"None save the carrier-pigeons and the Jumpers," he added. "You know what I mean, — the men who make a trade of carrying messages to and from the town; a very perilous business."

When I set forth, I had not known that Leyden was beleaguered; yet my father must have known it; and since he had said he was going to that town, I believed that, if entrance were by any means possible, Mr. Nettlestone would be found inside, — though what he could be doing there was fast hidden in the counsels of heaven.

So I informed the captain that I had an errand to discharge to a gentleman in

Leyden, and inquired of him how I was to get thither. He manifested no surprise, for there were many Englishmen in the Low Countries, both in the Spaniard's and the Hollander's service. We fell to discussing the matter; and the end of it was, my captain undertook to set me on the Hook of Holland for the price of five nobles, and my labour during the passage.

"But, Mr. Nettlestone," said Captain Haggai Porte, with a surprising transition from the familiar gossip to the shrewd sea-captain, "but, sir, I would have you plainly to understand, at the outset, this is no dainty employment you will be set about. There is no distinction of birth aboard the *Golden Rose*. You will be rated ship's boy, sir, — to do scullion's work for John Cook, maybe, and skip at the bidding of a foremast hand. Will that content you, Mr. Nettlestone?"

It appeared to me — then — that there was nothing more delightful in the world; and the bargain was struck accordingly. Captain Porte made me known to the burly

young man beside me, who was his chief officer, Mr. David Rice by name; and we drank amiably together.

"To our swift meeting aboard a fat gal-  
leon out of Antwerp," fluted Mr. David Rice.  
"May she be deep laden with all the riches  
of Flanders! See you these candlesticks,  
shipmate?" he went on. "Once they graced  
the cabin of the *San Rafael*, of Coruña;  
now, you see, they light poor British seamen  
to their liquor. Which thing, comrade, is  
an allegory."

A curious doubt, which had been over-  
borne by the necessities of the moment,  
arose within me, and I gave it speech.

"Think me not pragmatistical," I began, and  
stumbled.

"No, no," said the captain, leaning forward  
with attention.

"I would but ask you to resolve me a  
question," I continued.

"Go on, Nettlestone, go on," said Captain  
Porte, gazing downwards with his head on  
one side, as though fearful of losing a single

syllable of my discourse. "Well, sir," said I, "in a word, how is it that your doings on the Narrow Seas are not piracy? How is it that the Channel privateers harry merchant bottoms, and are guiltless of piracy?"

Had I been a penitent requiring consolation, and my shipmaster a clergyman, the captain could not have manifested a sympathy more instant.

"When I shipped with Mr. John Hawkins aboard the *Jesus*, ten years ago," replied Captain Haggai Porte, with a hand upon my knee, and his face approaching mine, in his fervour, "I came to ask myself a like question, dear sir. You know whither we were bound—to Rio Grande—to get negroes, which we sold to the Spaniards in Burboroata and other places—you remember? Well, Nettlestone, there was fighting—there were some sad scenes to one who loves to see mankind peaceably happy—you take my meaning? And as I was saying, I demanded of myself whether such

an enterprise were lawful and right. Our noble Queen was at peace with King Philip, — yet did we not sail in a ship of the Queen's to defy the laws of the King of Spain? You take my meaning? Was it a sin, then, to smuggle our negroes under the Spoiler's nose, and land them, under the awe of our cannon, on the shores of his colonies? 'Twas a lawful act in time of war, but piracy in time of peace. Ay, but the Queen did countenance it, though not openly; because overt war would mean the disruption of the world. You apprehend me, sir? 'Twas war and peace at once 'twixt Spain and England. We might do what we would, as saith Saint Paul, and we sinned not. 'Tis the very same to-day, Nettlestone, the very same to-day." The captain leaned back in his chair, as one who has completed an irrefragable statement.

"And how pleasant it is, Nettlestone," he went on, with a most benignant air, "how very pleasant it is! I never fight, look you.

I detest fighting. Of course there are times — you take my meaning — when they force pike and shot upon you; but with proper management, it rarely happens,—rarely happens! And there you have a fine, clean, salt life, and a good trade, together with the inestimable privilege of doing service to the holy Protestant religion.”

The captain rose, for the seamen had begun by this time to leave the tavern, going out two and three together, chanting snatches of song, as they marched away, to scraps of tunes upon the long youth's fiddle; and I followed Mr. Porte out upon the quay, with Mr. David Rice alongside. The lieutenant had hearkened to the talk in silence, drinking steadily the while. As we emerged into the salt air and the velvet darkness sparkling with stars, spangled here and there with ships' riding lights, and alive with the coiling black water, Mr. Rice put his hand on my shoulder.

“'Tis all as true as the blessed Evangel,” said Mr. David Rice, in my ear. “But we

are pirates all, none the less for that, brother buccaneer,—pirates all;” and, with a chuckle, he strode forward into the darkness, as Captain Porte halted for us.

“Nettlestone,” said the captain, walking very close to me, and speaking as though he were disclosing a most delicate confidence, “I know not what your religious practice may be; I do not try to force the conscience of my crew; but, for myself, I make it a rule to receive the Blessed Sacrament in the morning before I sail upon a voyage. Wilt accompany me to church to-morrow?”

I know not how it was, but I felt as though I moved in a dream; and as in a dream, I assented. A few minutes of walk brought us to a tall, shadowy schooner, the *Golden Rose*, moored against the quay; the misty rays of a lanthorn, which was fastened in the rigging, revealing fantastical webs and blots of shadow, lighted me to the forecastle. There, I slept upon an oaken berth, the water lapping, lapping,

close to my head, babbling in my dreams of the mystery I must solve.

The next morning, in a glory of early sunlight, my duties began. In bestowing cargo, victuals, and munitions, for more than two hours we were kept upon the dance, under the alert gray eye of the captain, who was changed once more from boon-fellow to peremptory commander. But presently Captain Porte bade me to put on doublet and jerkin, and to follow him ashore; and walking beside him along the busy quays, I found he had left the commander on shipboard. Mingled with the clank of capstans and the crying of the sailors, came the faint jangle of a bell, which ceased as we turned a corner and came upon a church, wedged in with houses, with a great octagonal buttress projecting upon the road. Over the moulded stonework of the doorway was an empty niche with a broken pedestal. We entered, stepping down three steps into a high, empty building, suffused with a cold

light from the plain west window; and kneeling at the chancel rail, we found that the pair of us made the whole congregation. The blunt-faced, middle-aged parson had already begun to speak the holy office to God and himself. Be sure I thought of my father in that hour! I beheld him standing cloaked upon the deck of a flying vessel, with his face towards a country dim to my vision; a land of misty fields and shadowy cities, alive with a glint of spears and a flash of broidered standards, with rolling smoke of artillery, and a glimmer of scarlet. So I made my petition with a whole heart, and glanced aside at my companion.

His head was tilted back, his eyes were closed, his lips moving silently; with his long, sloping forehead and curved nose, Captain Haggai Porte, performing his orisons, looked like some sort of sacred bird.

When we got back to the ship, the smoke from the galley fire was streaming in a

plume, across the glistening water, upon a sky of white brightness, and a comfortable odour of cooking hailed us.

After our excursion into the mystical regions of religion, we had come back to our proper life of wholesome toil, of eating and drinking and music under the sunny heavens; to the every-day face of friends, and the far, irresistible call to adventure. Often had I marvelled at the singular, irreconcilable disparity between the two estates; but never had the difference struck so startling, as at that moment.

"I am glad indeed you came with me this morning, my dear Nettlestone," said Captain Porte, at my elbow. "You know, I think, as a matter of punctilio—you take my meaning?—were it only a matter of punctilio, one should always—eh? As a ceremonial of respect."

The boatswain's whistle sounded, and we stepped aboard to breakfast; and so soon as the meal was ended, the *Golden Rose* was loosed from her moorings, and the sails

were set. With the morning tide, we ran down Southampton Water, the lady at the prow, of opulent bosom and rust-red, blown hair, pressing swiftly outwards to the Narrow Seas.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GUNNER OF THE BARK *'S GRAVEN HAGE*

**B**Y the next morning we were out in mid-channel; and, although still qualmish, I had recovered from the worst of my sickness. The wind had fallen to fitful airs, and wreaths of mist curled upon the blue, heaving waters, now rolled together and dispersed, revealing a far immensity of sparkling sea beneath a sky of living blue; and again, closing about the ship, so that we sailed warily in a wide ring of vapour.

I was standing in the waist, beside Master Christopher Selewraith, the musician to the ship's company, whom I had first seen in the ale-house with his fiddle, when, upon

the fog parting asunder once more, Selewraith pointed to the clear segment of horizon, upon which appeared the tiny figure of a ship in full sail, like a fairy carving in opal. We had passed other vessels, near and far, before, with a salute; but now, it appeared, there was a chance of grateful excitement. For the captain cried an order, the boatswain's whistle shrilled, the *Golden Rose* veered her course as the great boom swung over, until the eager siren at the prow was straining her gaze, with all the crew, towards the bark.

"A Dutchman or a Spaniard, by God," remarked Mr. Selewraith, his solemn, high-featured countenance lighting suddenly.

Captain Haggai Porte, appearing against the sky at the rail of the poop, began to shout a string of commands, and in a moment every man was stirring swiftly about his particular business. The tarpaulin jackets were whipped off the brass culverins on poop and forecastle, and Sele-

wraith and I were set to fetching powder and round shot from the hold. For a man who detested fighting, I thought, as I hurried to and fro, that Captain Porte displayed a remarkable zest in these preparations.

The Queen's flag streamed at the peak, every sail was set and drawing; all of us, stripped to our shirts, standing to our quarters, when the mist blew together once more.

For long the *Golden Rose* held on her course; then the sky cleared again, and we saw, scarce half a mile distant, a bluff two-masted merchant brig sailing steadily with a cant to leeward. At the same moment the *Golden Rose* heeled over to a puff of wind, which freshened suddenly, so that we were ordered sharply to the weather bulwarks. Clinging to the ratlines, while the schooner rushed through the hissing water, which now and again lipped over the lee gunwale, I saw the stranger vessel grow momentarily larger to the eye: the details of her rigging



"I MARKED A SUDDEN COMMOTION UPON THE  
'S GRAVEN HAGE."



and the sweeping lines of her build enlarged; presently I could read her Dutch name painted in gold upon the quarter, '*S Graven Hage*, and I marvelled what we Protestant privateers had to do with a Hollander. The next moment Captain Porte, that man of peace, hailed the strange vessel through his speaking-trumpet, in the Dutch language. There was no reply. By this time there was scarce a flight shot between the vessels; I could perceive, lit redly by the sun, the faces of the two steersmen, who were braced against the tiller; and I marked a sudden commotion upon the '*S Graven Hage*, and a bustle upon the forecastle, men hauling upon the great square sails. Coming a little into the wind, she sailed upon an even keel. As Captain Porte bellowed a summons once more, I saw the sudden flare of a lighted match held by a tall man dressed in black, who stood bareheaded beside a long gun on the forecastle. The sun shone upon his brindled hair as he stooped forward, the

flame of the match struck his face into a vivid prominence; and I cried aloud as there came a flash, a thundering explosion, and the scream of a round shot, for the face of that gunner was the face of my father. The next moment there was the sound and vibration of a heavy blow, a rending and riving; I saw a monstrous bulk of sail and rigging bending towards me; and, with a mighty crash, we were smothered in the wreck of the foremast, while the ship staggered and swung into the wind.

We struggled free; there was no one gravely hurt, and the tangle was swiftly cleared away. Half the mast was left standing, and, by labouring hard all the day, we got a foresail rigged. But the *'S Graven Hage* was gone, and my father aboard her.

I waited until Master Selewraith had done his attendance upon the captain that night (for Captain Porte had music to his meals, as though he were an admiral), and, finding myself apart with him, I asked

my gossip Christopher, why, in God's name, we had been about to lay aboard a Dutch vessel.

"Wait until you see us taking soundings, with a Hollander skipper for the lead," Selewraith answered, relishingly. "The last one, we dropped him into eighteen fathoms, fourteen times, as I counted. He came up limp and white, like a salted cod, at last. And then, you see, he handed over the doubloons," said Selewraith.

"Well, why do not the fools make peace with King Philip of Spain, then?" he went on. "His terms are good enough, I should think. Do what they like, so long as they hear the Mass. What harm doth a Mass to any man? 'Tis nothing in the world but the Dutchman's damned obstinacy."

"And so we are to pouch their guilders?" said I, enlightened.

"If we did not, the Spanish would. And that would never do. Would it?" returned Selewraith, peering through the lank hair which was ever falling into his eyes.

Meanwhile, we were short of a foremast; so that we did not sight the Hook of Holland until the dawning of the second day after encountering the bark '*S Graven Hage*.

Beyond a dark field of sea and the long bulwark of the dikes, a slash of orange, merging into scarlet striped with gray, gleamed below a cloudy curtain; far spires blackened upon the reddening effulgence; and farther yet, in the very heart of the mystical fires of dawning, where lay the beleaguered city, a single spark glimmered for a moment, and was gone.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BEGGARS OF THE SEA

**I**NSTEAD of landing me upon the desolate Hook, where the sunrise was burning behind a colony of mean huts, the captain held on his course (unwilling, as I supposed, to relinquish the pursuit of the '*S Graven Hage*'), and ran up the broad river Maas, before a brisk, shrewd wind redolent of marsh and sward. On the left hand, beyond the broken dikes, the broadening daylight discovered a waste of water stretching eastwards towards Leyden, with here and there a black windmill, and lines of stooping trees. Soon we fell in with vessels sailing up or running down: some were merchant bottoms, some were hoys and flyboats, but the most were privateers,

carrying foremast and mizzen, with great square sails, banks of ten to eighteen oars, and ten to twenty pieces of cannon mounting at the port-holes. For the whole armada of the Netherlands was assembling to sail over the drowned country to the succour of Leyden; and a few days since, the renowned Admiral Boisot had come from out the coasts of Zealand at the head of a fleet manned by eight hundred stark wild Zealanders, the Beggars of the Sea.

Past steepled towns and distant villages, veiled in driving rain, we followed the river's course to Rotterdam, whose buildings loomed through a thick mist. We cast anchor in the midst of a mass of shipping; and since I must now pursue my quest alone, I bade reluctant farewell to my shipmates, and got into the boat which was to convey the captain ashore. But I might have spared the pains of parting, as fortune guided matters. For, as we were threading in and out the tall

ships, with the strange hairy faces of the foreign sailor-men looking down upon us, we came beneath a great galliasse painted in red and gold, and the captain cried out to us to hold our oars, saying that here was the ship of his old acquaintance, Admiral Boisot. The next moment Captain Porte had climbed aboard, where he stayed a good while; and, upon coming again into the boat, he rounded me in the ear, with his most secret air of friendly confidence, telling me he had somewhat to say to me, if I would come again upon ship-board. So we immediately returned to the *Golden Rose*; and Captain Haggai Porte, standing at the carven railing of the poop with Mr. David Rice by his side, used this speech to the ship's company gathered together in the waist.

"I have a proposition to lay before you," began the captain, with much gravity, "which was committed to me but now by the Admiral Boisot, of the High Dutch fleet, in the midst of which we are. For,"

said the captain, leaning forward and resting his arms upon the rail, and becoming suddenly confidential, "for, sirs, when I sailed in the *Jesus* under good Sir John Hawkins, that admirable commander used to say it was but just that a free company, before being required to undertake an enterprise of moment, should have the whole matter clearly discussed unto them—you take my meaning?" The captain stood upright. "Now," he went on, resuming his formal tones as suddenly as he had exchanged them, "the admiral tells me that one Master Philip D'Orchimont, a certain wealthy Hollander who fled from out his country's turmoils, and who now dwells at Lavenham in Suffolk County—that this Master D'Orchimont, I say, hath put into the admiral's hand a sum of five hundred crowns, desiring Admiral Boisot to commission with this sum an English ship, which should take service under the admiral in his present enterprise of the relief of Leyden city, now closely shut up

by the Spanish army under Don Francisco de Valdez. And, moreover, if the Spanish be driven from the leaguer, there is a like sum to be bestowed in bounty. Master D'Orchimont doth further stipulate that the money shall be shared in due proportion by captain, officers, and crew. How say you, sirs? For myself, I would willingly embrace this offer, which the admiral hath strongly pressed upon me."

And the captain went on to discourse of the posture of affairs, weighing the chances of success and failure with so scrupulous a nicety, that there presently appeared no choice of likelihood either way; and bidding us to bring him an answer within the hour, he went into his cabin. We fell into a lively discussion; but, before long, I saw with joy the adventurers of the *Golden Rose* settle into agreement to accept the bounty of this excellent patriot, Master Philip D'Orchimont. And the same afternoon we sailed up the green waters of a canal through Rotterdam, between the long al-

leys of trees planted before the tall red houses, and stony streets all shining in the rain, where market-women, in their winged linen caps curiously decked with coils of gilt wire, clattered in wooden shoes beside little carts laden with household provant, and drawn by sturdy dogs; through swing-bridges, and out upon the wind-lashed plain of waters.

Far and near, under the vast canopy of sky, where the gray wrack drove swiftly down upon the beleaguered city, lying remote, invisible, beyond the film of mist and rain, were vessels gliding eastwards before the gale; winding in and out the scattered black windmills spinning deliberately at different speeds, the lines of trees tortured by the wind, and the deserted farm-houses, isled in the flood. But, towards evening, we discerned a long, low margin to the troubled waters, beyond which lay the dusky face of earth, shadowy villages, and dim steeples. Here and there a gleam of fire shone red through the gathering

dusk; for we were come within sight of the great dike of the Land-Scheiding, upon which the Spanish outposts were encamped. Quartered in the villages and forts which lay between the dike and Leyden, ringing about the city, was the Spanish army of ten thousand men, under Señor Don Francisco de Valdez. We had, then, to break through the Land-Scheiding dike, loosing the sea, to ride upon the flood against the Spaniards to scatter them, until we came to the very walls of Leyden, where was hidden the heart of my secret. So I beheld myself, with my comrades of the *Golden Rose*, a soldier of fortune; of common cause with the brave High Dutch, unmitigable foe to the Spaniards, and I gazed across the gulf that lay between ourselves and the destroying army, with an eager, curious, fearful sense of expectation.

We dropped anchor that night a mile or so from the Land-Scheiding; and here we lay until the whole armada had come together, taking pleasure to observe the

foreign ships and their barbarous mariners. These roving bottoms bore the scars and tokens of long service; their black paint was rusty, their sails were patched with divers colours, and some were fringed with green weed along the water-line. As for the Zealand crews, the Beggars of the Sea, they were savage in aspect as wolves: attired in short jerkins with great silver buttons, short loose breeches, marvellous wide at the hips, and scarlet caps, in which were fastened the silver crescent of the heathen Turk. They wore their locks and beard extraordinary long, and many were maimed and halt of old wounds, or stricken blind of an eye.

Mr. Christopher Selewraith, having contemplated the Sea Beggars in a grave silence for a day or two, made a piece of music upon them, very wild, intermingled with notes of slaughter; and when he played to Captain Haggai, the while the captain took his meals, we would see the uncouth sailors of the ship near at

hand break suddenly into antic dancing on the forecastle. And day by day, the west wind sang in the rigging, and drove the waves upon the low ridge of grassy sand-bank, dotted with the huts of the Spanish outposts; and still we hung anchor, using what patience we might, while the eagles flocked to the carcase; staring across the space of separation into the ominous distance, where invisible death hung in the air, until we seemed to have lodged in that place for uncounted years, and all the past shrank and darkened in the memory.

At last, upon the tenth September, when the Beggars of the Sea had gathered a fleet of two hundred sail, Admiral Boisot sent orders from ship to ship for an attack upon the Land-Scheiding. Instantly, the burthen of suspense departed from us, and every man's heart was lightened; and that night, in a hell-darkness, we launched two boats from the *Golden Rose*, as gay as though we went to a festival. A small gale was blowing, with a thick rain and a great noise



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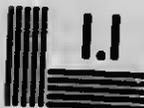
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of waters, as we crossed the perilous gulf of parting, rowing with muffled oars, and at first we could perceive nothing; but in a while (looking over my shoulder), I saw the red glimmer of the Spanish fires, like rubies gemming black velvet. The prow drove into the sand-bank, and, to my huge vexation, the captain bade me to remain where I was. He sprang ashore with the crew, and they vanished into the dark. For a time, I could not tell how long, there was no sound save the loud and melancholy voice of wind and waves; then I heard a sudden trampling and stir; the next moment there broke forth a savage crying and shouting, and dark figures, violently agitated, leaped into the circles of dim radiance about the fires. The sea-wolves had fallen on their prey; and a new sound mingled in the chorus, the scream of wounded men. The cries grew and filled the night; then sank in volume, and scattered far and near. In a few minutes I heard the voice of Captain Porte, calling me by name, and as I an-

swered, the men of the *Golden Rose* drew near, talking loudly, with catches of laughter. I hearkened to them with a great envy; for while I had been waiting supine in the boat the Land-Scheiding was won.

But since the Spaniards would surely attempt to recapture the dike, we must keep vigil there till morning; and accordingly some were set to watch, while the rest lay down to sleep, wrapt in their cloaks, under the lee of the wherries. For long I remained wakeful; thinking, with tremors of exultation, of the enterprise begun so gallantly; and looking forward, with vague, heart-stirring imaginings, to the fight of the morrow, and the loosing of the hungry sea upon the adversary. Pictures of battle flitted red upon the darkness; and then, with a singular revulsion, the mind refused to credit that so great things should come to pass so immediately.

Scarce had I drowsed asleep, when I was awakened by the stir about me of the men kindling a fire. Along the dike, on either

hand, were crowded the Sea Beggars. The smoke of their fires streamed in long plumes across the plain which stretched away some thirty feet beneath us, and sullied the brightness of the eastern sky, where the clouds were cleft and overflowed with melting gold. We fell to breakfast; and before we had done, the trumpets were calling and the drums rattling.

Looking eastwards upon the plain, where the light grew clearer every moment, I saw a movement, as of ants, about the outskirts of a distant village; and a flat monster, glistening with points of light, began to unroll itself with a sinuous movement along a yellow riband of road. About a second village, lying yet further from us, the same portent was evident; the two battalions converged upon each other and commingled, advancing swiftly towards the dike where we lay prone upon the sand, with muskets charged and lighted matches. The Zealanders, ranged on either side of the ship's company, were crying to each other in their

barbarous tongue, with an eager, craving sound, like dogs straining in leash. The Spaniards approached until we could distinguish the long matchlocks they carried, when the front ranks suddenly opened out on either side, the musketeers swung their rests forward, puffs of smoke broke forth with running explosions, and a shower of bullets sung in the wind. At the same moment, the Beggars fired with one accord, and the whole prospect was blotted out in wreathing smoke. As I discharged my piece over the shoulder of the man before me (the muzzle so close to his cheek that he turned a furious scarlet face upon me, with a roaring oath), a chorus of war-cries broke out in the plain below, mingled with the noise of firing and the shouting of the Zealanders. Then I was aware of a mighty sound of running footsteps, and all sprang to their feet. We were ranged in five ranks; I was stationed in the hindmost; and peering between the steel caps in front of me, I saw a grave countenance framed in a

helmet, with pointed yellow beard and blue eyes, break suddenly through the smoke, and as suddenly vanish, in a flash of steel, as Mr. David Rice struck downwards with a half-pike. The next moment, there was a glitter of harness and the multitudinous lightening and clatter of weapons; the ranks swayed back and forth, and the pike in my hand seemed to spring into a living creature, quivering to strike. For long I waited my opportunity, singly absorbed in the violent motions of the combatants in front, until a seaman turned and broke through the press with his hands clasping his head, which was covered with blood, staggered, and fell all his length behind me. Instantly the ranks closed up, and I found myself in the second row. By this time we were pressing steadily forward, thrusting the Spaniards down the sandy slope. I stumbled and trod upon the bodies of fallen men, with a momentary shudder, and struck now and again, as chance visited me, into the mellay. At first

the shearing of steel through bone and sinew sickened me to the core; then I grew hot with the lust of battle, and wrought in a kind of ecstasy, until, the men giving way in front of us, we began to run down-hill. Suddenly there were no more steel-clad figures in front; the captain cried out; and halting, we gazed about us.

The air was full of the sour reek of blood, and I was aware of my comrades grouped about me, darkly flushed, bedewed with sweat, and blowing. I looked not at them, but at the field of conflict. The tide of battle had swept a little aside, so that our company stood apart. Between us and the mass of the Sea Beggars, the slope of sand and the flat ground were stained with blood and bestrewn with dead and wounded men, lying still or feebly moving, in a horrible confusion. Away to the right, knots of men were running across the ragged green pasture; nearer hand, the Zealanders, crowded together, were plundering the slain.

So much I perceived at a glance; and, even as I looked, a glint of sunshine struck from a rift in the hurrying clouds, and, travelling swiftly across the drear landscape, lit into a vivid prominence the figure of a Zealander in a scarlet cap, who was kneeling beside the corpse of a musketeer. Using a furious, swift action, the Sea Beggar slashed the body with a great knife, cast aside the bandolier, and seemed to pluck forth something, to set his teeth in it, and to fling it from him with a cry. At the sight of that horrible, barbarous outrage I was stricken with a sudden sickness, so that the polluted ground swung to and fro beneath my feet, and I swooned outright.

When I came to myself, we were in the boat, rowing back to the ship. I shook and shuddered, for the exhalation of blood and carnage had entered into the very fibres of my being. They helped me to my berth, and gave me a cup of Hollands, upon which I presently fell asleep.

It was night when I awoke, somewhat refreshed, though weak and aching; and going upon deck, I found the *Golden Rose* was anchored within a musket-shot of the Land-Scheiding. On either side, the scattered yellow lights, burning aboard the galleys of the Sea Beggars, were reflected in coiling disks upon the lapping waves. Beyond the great dike, instead of shaggy fields, I beheld the sullen gleam of water; for so soon as the Beggars had finished with their adversaries, they had set to digging like fiends out of hell (so Selewraith told me), and the sand-bank was already cleft.

'Twas my spell of watching; and I leaned upon the bulwarks, gazing into the mysterious void which was charged with such momentous issues, and marvelled at my indifference. For I could think of nothing save of trifling snatches of talk with Selewraith or my shipmates which floated into my mind, and of the witty catches I might have used, but did not. Now and again I recollected myself of the

morrow: when the enfranchised sea should carry us to the starving city, — to unimaginable scenes, — to that undecipherable meeting with my father; but all was vain. Sensation, surfeited, lay inert within me.

## CHAPTER VI

### BEFORE LEYDEN

**W**HILE the English privateersmen damned the Beggars for a filthy crew of heathen barbarians, they espoused their quarrel with a whole heart. They were paid to fight, and they went to fighting with a good will, and none with a better will than I. For I had a peculiar urgency of my own pricking me forward. The enigma of my privy enterprise mingled with the burning incertitude that shrouded the destiny of the beleaguered city; the endless song of the wind had this burden; and from the foreign aspect of the waste of waters, broken with deserted houses staring hollow-eyed, wind-lashed trees, and turning mills, and the black ships of the

Sea Beggars, looked forth the hieroglyphs of the puzzle, and the troubled character of suspense. And tributary to this main stream of life ran the current of daily circumstance,—the round of tasks, the tales of the mariners, the seasoned jests of the forecastle, and the music of Mr. Christopher Selewraith, ship's crowder.

All the day following the capture of the Land-Scheiding, the Zealanders were gathered in busy companies upon the dike, digging it down, while we stayed on ship-board, until the fighting should begin. As we went about affairs, we saw breach after breach cut through the sand-bank, until, at nightfall, naught remained of the dike save a row of islets, like the teeth of some vast old jaw-bone, long submerged.

The next day, the whole fleet sailed through the gaps before the steady north-west gale. All about the ships the bodies of slain Spaniards tumbled helpless in the surge, sometimes singly, sometimes in horrible companionships. Now and again a

black-bearded corse would roll blindly from the side of the moving ship, or we would see a distorted form plunging amid foam-streaks in the water, as though it would pursue us; and would behold it heave astern until it became a dot, bobbing on the waves, and vanished.

Voyaging thus among the dead, we were all afire with expectation; for we thought to sail end-long past the Spanish forts, directly into Leyden. But scarce were we abreast of the two villages whence the Spaniards had marched to recapture the dike, when, for a second time, we discerned a long, low margin to the waters, set with huts, and a twinkle of colour where the Spanish ensign flew; and, beyond, the rough, dry face of earth.

The word ran from ship to ship that we were come to the Green-way Dike, and the fleet anchored just without musket-range. How it was that Admiral Boisot knew naught of the country across which he was to carry an armada, I cannot tell,—

but so it was. He possessed neither maps nor information, but relied upon chance intelligence; and every fresh obstacle presented a fresh surprise. And so we found ourselves gazing once more into the ominous distance, fraught with unknown perils, where were a little space of restless, craving waters, a barrier of sand and Spaniards, and, beyond, we knew not what of fortresses and ambuscadoes.

The fleet had but time to drop anchor before the signal to attack was flying at the admiral's masthead; a wild noise of singing arose, and boats put off from every ship. From the *Golden Rose*, Mr. David Rice took six men in the wherry; and the rest of us watched the assault of the Greenway Dike from the fore-castle, at the latter end of a rainy afternoon.

The red caps of the crews jerked swiftly back and forth, as the black boats drew near to the dike in a long irregular line; tongues of flame amid puffs of smoke broke from the sand-bank with crackling ex-

plosions, and bullets skipped upon the waves. In a boat near at hand, I saw a red-cap fling up his arms and fall prone across his oar; but his comrades stayed not for an instant. The boats struck upon the bank; in a moment they were empty; the next, a mass of figures swayed together with a confused noise and a lightening of steel, moved forward, stopped, moved forward again, swept up the dike, across it, and vanished over the brink, while the savage screeching swelled louder. The Green-way was taken, inside of ten minutes.

As the dark began to gather, Mr. David Rice appeared over the ship's side. His face was flushed and dark, and his whole great figure was quick with fierce emotion, as of a man checked midway in mortal strife.

"Tom Arnaught is sped, poor soul," said he, and turned aside to speak with the captain.

So the invisible sword, suspended in the

threatening abyss, had fallen upon one of our company; slaying this old, grizzled seaman with the little blue eyes, like slivers of glass, set in a network of wrinkles; with his good-humoured talk, all made up of by-words and homely proverbs.

“Marry, I go to sup with the devil,” quoth he, that afternoon, tapping his half-pike. “To sup with Lord Satan, bullies. See my long spoon?”

Captain Porte ordered the five men who had returned unharmed from the Green-way to take mattocks and shovels, and bade me to come with him; and we rowed to the dike, with a great ship’s lanthorn riding in the prow, which struck yellow beams into the gathering darkness.

Poor Tom Arnaught lay in a place by himself, the wind fluttering his garments. His limbs were composed, and a blue chequered handkerchief was laid over his face. We buried him where he was; and as we were digging, the Beggars of the Sea gathered about us; the rays of the lanthorn,

which was set on the ground, revealing, with a misty illumination, the ring of glinting eyes in the sombre, hairy visages. At first, the Beggars talked among themselves in their barbarous dialect; but when we had lowered the dead mariner into his narrow house, and Captain Porte began to read aloud the service in the Book of Common Prayer, they fell silent, some uncovering their heads.

I hearkened not to the prayers; for random, trifling memories of the old seaman were running in my mind, — the roll of his burly figure as he trod the deck, the perilous manner in which he would cut his rations on the palm of his hand, his quaint, inapposite talk, — and I marvelled idly if ever he had dwelt upon his end. I regarded, with a throb of pity, his long and toilsome life, tossed to and fro, in battle and storm and broil; unambitious, acquiescent as a dog; until, out of the dark, a blow strikes him, and all is done.

Beyond the ranks of Sea Beggars, some

one I could not see was holding a torch, which flared and smoked in a red circle of wavering light, merging into the black hollow of the heavens, whence came the sound and stir of the great wind. And as I looked, I beheld, as it were, a figure of Death, armed with a burning spear, waiting in the void without the little, lighted circle wherein we talk and strive and make merry. Already I had seen men stricken in the heat of conflict, and their abandoned corpses, like drowned cattle, floating broadcast on the yeasty flood; and I had contemplated the spectacle with no peculiar emotion. But that night, a shrouded guest entered into the city of my imagination, to remain with me always.

The next morning broke in sunlight; the sombre veil of driving cloud was quite gone from the great vault of sky; so that I beheld, for the first time, the country in its vast simplicity of boundless space, bathed in noble floods of light.

The immense pastures spread away like a great green plate, rounding a dark margin upon the crystal clarity of the horizon, broken with scattered clumps of wood and black steeples, and cleft by a wide canal, which ran between emerald fields from the Green-way Dike into the fairy distance. Far away, no bigger than a toy, a black bridge spanned the shining water; nearer hand, a multitude of Sea Beggars were delving upon the Green-way Dike.

All that day, the insatiable water, pouring through the breaches, devoured the pastures with silver lips; and towards evening, beneath black clouds dropping sudden pailfuls of rain, and sweeping onwards to the waiting city, between bursts of level sunlight, the armada sailed through the dike. But that night, the wind, shifting to the east, pressed the flood backward; and, when morning came, the whole fleet must hold at anchor, for fear of running aground. For the inunda-

tion, having spread over so great a surface, was become so shallow that the ships could barely swim.

In this dilemma, Captain Porte went aboard the admiral, the *Seventeen Provinces*; and returning, the captain ordered the bloody flag to be run to the peak; for the *Seventeen Provinces* was to sail up the canal, with the *Golden Rose* in her wake. The black sails and red hull of the *Seventeen Provinces* gliding before us, we returned across the Green-way Dike, and steered through the broken sluice-gate into the gleaming road which led straight into the mysterious, perilous distance. The chant of the rowers went up in time to the groan and splash of the oar-banks; for the square rig of the Dutchman was unhandy in comparison with the fore-and-aft equipment of the *Golden Rose*, so that he must take to rowing when the wind was contrary. Going to and fro with shot and powder for the culverins, I saw, about half a league in front, dark bodies

of the enemy mustering on both sides of the canal, beyond the irregular margin of the flood. Behind us, the Sea Beggars were landing from boats, and following us along the high banks of the canal. Above me, as I stood upon the fore-castle, towered the poop of the *Seventeen Provinces*, where stood Admiral Boisot, a gallant figure of a man, in orange-tawny slouched hat, breastplate inlaid with silver, scarlet cloak, and great yellow boots, all vivid to behold upon the great dusky main-sail bellying in front of him.

I glanced from the admiral to Captain Porte, standing beside his steersman, in dark blue doublet and hose, and black sea-boots, his benign and tranquil bearing a little touched with a certain grave expectation; at Selewraith, hurrying up and down; at Mr. David Rice, giving orders among the men who held muskets in the waist,—and upon all their faces I beheld the same look of eagerness and controlled disquietude.

The two ships, gliding steadily through a wide landscape sparkling in the hard brightness of sunlight which ever accompanies the barren easterly wind, drew near to the limit of the flood. The Spaniards were forming in open order on either side of the canal, while ranks of musketeers lined the bank. Suddenly, there came a great explosion of musketry, and bullets hummed in the air, ripping through the sails and striking the woodwork. I saw the admiral standing above me, hand on hip; I heard a great crying of birds beyond the wreathing smoke; and the voice of Isaac Sun, the gunner, stung my ears.

"Let me see thee shrink at shot once more, master, and I'll break thy coward's costard for thee," quoth Isaac.

As he spoke, a rattle of musketry broke out on board both ships, and the war-cries of the Sea Beggars arose as they met the Spaniards on the banks. Once more the bullets droned and sang about me, and this

time I stiffened my neck. The curling smoke blew into my eyes; I heard a man lamentably cry out from the waist; looking astern, I beheld Captain Porte through a rift in the smoke, standing steady and tranquil, sign with his hand.

“Ready with the match,” cried Isaac, who was stooping over his gun, staring ahead; and at that moment the admiral’s ship drew a little aside. Scarce a musket-shot in front, the bridge spanned the shining stream, built high with earthen fortifications, which were pierced with serried embrasures stuck with cannon, as an orange with cloves. As I looked, sheets of flame burst forth with thundering detonations; I caught a glimpse of something dark hurling directly towards me, and for a single freezing moment I stood face to face with imminent destruction. But the ball fled shrieking above my head—and Isaac Sun caught the burning match from me and fired his culverin. The next moment the vessel began to turn; the black sails of the

admiral's ship loomed through the smoke alongside, his figure still standing immobile ; and looking aft, I perceived Captain Porte training the stern culverin upon the bridge. Again the air was rent with crashing explosions, again the iron balls rushed shrieking by, and still the musketry rang from out the banks of smoke.

We were beaten back ; and the *Seventeen Provinces*, with the *Golden Rose* at her heels, drove swiftly before the treacherous wind, out of cannon-shot, away from Leyden. And all that day, and the two following days, the fleet lay idly aground between the broken dike and the dry land, the waters decreasing. No man knew what should next be attempted, — there was naught to do but to wait on fortune. Carrier-pigeons brought news from Leyden ; where the food was out, so that the inhabitants ate vermin and the leaves of trees ; and where the pestilence slew hand in hand with famine. And hour by hour the arid east wind blew out of the hard, bright sky,

out of the blue haze that veiled the landscape, carrying, now and again, the faint, boding notes of a bell tolling in the desolate city.

Aboard the *Golden Rose* a sour heat of ill-humour hung in the air. Four of the crew had been wounded, and their groaning sounded continually in our ears,—we had been forced to run from the Spaniard at the Dutchman's tail,—and now we were constrained to sit still. Quarrels were smouldering. For myself, when one spoke to me, I could have gladly struck him dead. Mr. Christopher Selewraith alone appeared unmoved, retaining his accustomed dreamy composure.

"Keep you from ill-temper," says he. "This is not at all the spirit proper to warfare. Here is a shameful waste of good anger going on."

I bade him carry his apothegms to the devil.

"I'll tell you what is your misfortune, Nettleson," retorted Selewraith. "'Tis

that no one seems to care a cracked three-farthings whether you be ill-humoured or no."

At length, early upon the third day after the assault upon the bridge, upon the eighteenth September, instead of the easterly rasp, a strong odorous gale from the northwest saluted me as I came upon deck. All that day and night the face of the waters grew, and the next day the armada set sail towards the southeast, leaving the canal with its fortified bridge on the port quarter; for some peasants from the village of Zoetermeer had come to guide the admiral. The brooding discontent of the *Golden Rose* vanished in a twinkling; and that night the fleet anchored over against the low dike which joined the villages of Zoetermeer and Benthuyzen. As we neared the place, we discovered scattered bodies of Spanish troops emerging from the villages, and retreating across the plain until they vanished into the distance.

Early upon the next morning, a red speck appeared upon the waters, and drew nearer, with a beating sound. Presently, we made out the form of a great bark, driven by a wheel of turning paddles, with high iron bulwarks, pierced for shot, and wholly painted scarlet, which was the famous *Ark of Delft*. As she passed within a pistol-shot of the *Golden Rose*, I beheld, amid the row of strange faces peering over the bulwarks, the peaked beard and little eyes of Mr. Chidiack Marston.

I had no time to marvel at the unexpected apparition of this mysterious gentleman, for I had to pull an oar in the wherry. On every side, the Zealanders were putting off in cockboats and rowing towards the dike, where they landed and dispersed into the villages. Five or six of us, with Mr. David Rice, followed them, to plunge instantly into an incredible confusion. Crying out in their harsh tongue, the Zealanders ran in and out of the houses whence the inhabitants were swiftly bringing their house-

hold goods into the street, tying them into bundles, and piling them upon long hooded wains.

Mingling in the press, I was presently separated from my fellows; and, turning aside from the main street, I came upon a cottage standing in a piece of garden, beneath a grove of rustling poplars. In front of the garden gate a little white horse, old and shaggy, stood yoked to a cart, which was filled with household furnishings.

A buxom young peasant-woman, with a staid little child looking gravely beside her, was striving to lift an oaken chest into the cart. I spoke to her in English, and heaved up the chest, whereupon she broke into voluble speech in Dutch. There she stood, in her winged linen cap set with gold and silver coins glancing sunlight, talking eagerly, with a flash of white teeth and a question in her pleasant gray eyes; and never a word could I comprehend, nor could I decipher her gestures. But pres-

ently I heard an engaging voice beside me, and Mr. David Rice, coming up, answered my *Dulcinea* in her own tongue. She instantly addressed herself to him, and they talked together for a little.

"She asks if we are going to sail our ship into Leyden, and I answer that we are certainly about to do so immediately, and that the *Golden Rose* will be the first ship inside," said Mr. David Rice, turning to me. "Moreover, she says that her name is Adriana Catherina Laterveer, that her husband was slain at the first siege of Leyden, that her father is now shut up in the city, and to him she ardently desires to send a message. And she has been asking you for the love of God to charge yourself with the said message."

"She wants me to do so? Are you sure she meant me?" I asked, in surprise.

"Certainly," said Mr. Rice. To this day, I do not know if he spoke the truth in referring the request to me rather than to himself. It may be that I owe a sin-

gular train of experiences to the passing indolence of my officer. "What do you say, Nettlestone?" he went on. "'Tis but a little thing to do, to make a poor woman happy."

"Well, I will carry the business as I can, of course," I said.

Mr. David Rice explained my reply to Adriana Catherina, whereupon she caught my hand and kissed 'it. Then she plucked her headdress from her shining hair, and would have stripped some coins from it, had not David Rice prevented her.

"The old man must needs be dead," he said to me, "but if he be alive, we can replenish him."

Talking all the while, Adriana Catherina took from her neck a little crucifix of black wood and ivory, which she was wearing upon a cord about her neck, and gave it to me.

"She says," continued the interpreter, "that her father's name is Willem Koot, that he lives at the corner of the market-

place, with a black and white crucifix like to this one hanging beside the door, and that you are to give him this as a token, — saying that Adriana Catherina, his daughter, hath gone to Delft for safety, where she will await his coming.”

Mr. David Rice helped Adriana to her seat in the cart, set the child beside her, and went to the horse's head, with a nod to me. My buxom widow crying farewells, Mr. Rice began to lead the horse down the lane, past the talking poplars, towards the open country. Glancing over my shoulder as I turned the corner, I saw them, black upon the sunshine, still receding; and that was my last look at Adriana Catherina Laterveer, of Zoetermeer. I should like her to have known the consequences of her little errand. As for Mr. David Rice, 'twas midnight when he returned to the *Golden Rose*, wading knee-high through the flood.

I had it urgent in my mind to visit Mr. Chidiok Marston aboard the *Ark of Delft*.

But the next day, the favouring gale continuing, the fleet sailed through the broken dike, and away towards North Aa, the smoke of the blazing villages, which were fired by the Sea Beggars, rolling in the wake. At North Aa, the Spanish soldiers still fled before us, towards Leyden; and here we anchored without the Kirk-way Dike, the last barrier betwixt the fleet and the beleaguered city. But, upon the day following, being the twenty-third September, the wind veered back into the east, blowing the waters backward, so that the flood diminished its depth to nine inches. The whole armada lay becalmed, — and there were now but ten days to the fifth October, when my father must stand his trial in Winchester city. Day after day, the cruel wind contended against the armies of the sea; and bringing odours of pestilence from the tainted city, struck them in our faces. And, meanwhile, the Beggars toiled upon the Kirk-way Dike, digging it down. Upon the third day after the coming of the fleet

to North Aa, when all men's courage was slackening under the burden of hope deferred, a galley hove in sight from out the west, where the water met the sky in a misty brightness, and drew near with a chant of oarsmen. She was painted in stripes of blue and white and orange, a pennon of the same colours twinkled at the masthead, and a great embroidered banner fluttered at the stern. For here was the Prince of Orange come from Delft to visit his fleet: and all day long, as his galley plied from ship to ship, the cheering of the Beggars mingled with the thunder of their cannon, and the smoke drifted through the wilderness of flags, far across the glittering waters. The *Golden Rose* alone ran up the cross of Saint George. When the prince came aboard, he stood for a few moments upon the poop, talking with Captain Porte. The great commander had a sturdy figure of a good stature, habited in a plain dark suit and a ruff; with brown, close-cropped hair, and eyebrows arching over long gray eyes.

His worn, high-featured face, narrowing to the close-trimmed beard, wore a look of endurance,—a look at once patient and indomitable.

When the prince had come and gone, the wind still blew out of the east, the waters still dwindled; and yet, his presence had so lightened the hearts of his men, that the admiral incontinently despatched a carrier-pigeon bearing a letter into Leyden, to assure the city of its instant succour. A chiming of bells came faintly down the wind in answer; and still, for three days longer, the armada stuck fast where it lay.

## CHAPTER VII

### A BIRD OF ILL OMEN

**D**URING this time, I had visited Mr. Chidiock Marston upon the *Ark of Delft*.

"Did you find Mr. Nettlestone in Winchester?" I said, in greeting him.

He regarded me with a doubtful glance, which changed to a look of recognition.

"Why, thanks to your civility, sir, I did find Mr. Nettlestone," Marston answered. "But 'tis an odd circumstance, that, now I meet you by hazard once more, I am again hunting for that slippery gentleman. Perhaps you can again direct me?" he added.

"I am sorry I cannot help you," I said. "Did you then expect to find a sober

citizen of Winchester aboard the Dutch Armada?"

"One never knows," retorted Marston, airily. "When last we met, caballero, I did not think to find *you* here, for example."

"Nor I you, dear sir."

"All's one for that, then. But this is a dry meeting. Let us drink to our better acquaintance."

"With all my heart," I said.

"And to what name shall I have the pleasure of drinking, camarado?" asked Chidiok, when we each held a cup of ale.

"Tom Arnaught," I answered, using the first name which came to me.

"A pretty name, sir!" cried Marston.

"And yours, sir?"

"I call myself Fenner, — plain Dick Fenner, — at your service, camarado."

So we pledged each other in an exchange of falsehoods. I marvelled why Mr. Marston chose to disguise himself.

"Well," said he, presently, "I am sorry you cannot help me to worthy Mr. Nettlestone. I have news for him." Marston peered into his cup as he spoke, as though the news were at the bottom. "If you should chance to meet with Mr. Nettlestone, prithee tell him that Dick Fenner hath some news it much importeth him to know," he added.

"But why do you think Mr. Nettlestone to be in the Low Countries?" I asked.

"I heard he was in Leyden," Marston replied, staring at me. "'Twas one of Sir Francis Walsyngham's people did impart so much to me!"

I sat confounded. Did Marston know who I was, I marvelled? Was he friend or unfriend to my father? I remembered the singular parting between them in the stable yard at home. And I remembered Elizabeth Wynter.

"Wert ever acquainted with Sir Harry Wynter, of Itchen Abbas, by chance?" Marston went on after a little silence.

I answered that I knew him well.

Mr. Marston pursed up his lips, and considered me with a serious countenance.

"By God, sir, the circumstance was most tragically unexpected, I give you my honour," said he.

As he spoke, a shocking notion took me, on a sudden, that Sir Harry was dead.

"Do you see a rope about my neck?" Marston continued. "There is one. Sir Harry died at my feet, camarado, and passed with never a word. You behold me hustling from Hue-and-Cry; and yet, as God lives, I had no hand in his death. 'Twas Mr. Nettlestone's fault," says he, looking at me sidelong.

"I wish you would tell me the history, Mr. Fenner."

"And so I will," he cried, "and I care not who knows it."

Here Mr. Marston stopped in his confession and eyed me lazily.

"You know Mistress Eliza Wynter?" he went on. "A pretty piece for a pretty

man to join fortunes with, you would say? Well, and I thought so, too. But Sir Harry might have other considerations. What?"

He paused again, and sipped his beer. I began to grow mighty angry.

"Well, well," pursued Mr. Marston, "and if a man fills the eye of a wench, as one may say, she lets slip all the world for pure joy. I had but to beckon with a finger, and she would have come like a bird to the lure, Mary bless her. And then, so please you, Stukely Nettlestone must come me sneaking in, distilling poison into the long ears of old Sir Harry, so that the fiery graybeard affronts me on the very threshold of his house. He was purple in the face, and blustered mightily. I marked him not; but there may have been a word or two dropped between us,—when of a sudden old Sir Harry claps his hands to his ruff, and tumbles on his face in a fit. Well, a man must die some day or night, camarado; and there is no need

for you to look at me with that expression of countenance."

"Did you draw upon him?" I asked.

"There was iron in my hand when the butler came out, and raised an alarm. Why should I deny it? But I touched not Sir Harry, although he would have glutted his Toledo in my bowels. And there was blood on the stones, for he cut his forehead when God smote him. They would have taken me—but did not. I left them, and took ship; and here I am, camarado."

"Were these the news which you said so much imported Mr. Nettlestone to know?"

"Part of them, brother, part of them. The rest must I deliver to friend Stukely face to face."

I got up to go, for I could suffer this man no longer without open breach. "If the rest bear the same complexion, Mr. Nettlestone will be glad indeed to meet with you," I said; and with that, I returned to the *Golden Rose*.

I was something of a fool for my pains; for I could not but perceive that Marston guessed who I was, having most likely heard from one of Walsyngham's party that I had come to seek Mr. Nettlestone. Moreover, Marston had of purpose displayed to me his knowledge. As to the history of his doings with Sir Harry, I supposed it was but designed to impress upon my imagination the greatness of Mr. Marston's character; for the man was a notable loose talker.

I believed no word of his talk about Elizabeth; and yet, I was mightily perturbed. And the thought of the secret news he had, and the mysterious information he appeared to have, stirred me to a huge uneasiness, which mingled with the sorrow I had for the grief of Mistress Elizabeth Wynter, and my own sadness for the loss of my friend Sir Harry. And, for aught I knew, Marston might be a spy of Sir Francis Walsyngham's. Meanwhile, the days were slipping by towards

the fifth October; and the devilish east wind still kept the armada chained fast to a mud-bank.

I meditated long and painfully upon these things; and came at length to a foolhardy resolve. The next night, being the last of September, I stole from the ship in the darkness, waded to the shore, and set out on foot for Leyden.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WITHIN THE CITY

**M**UNITIONED with sword and pistols, a bottle of brandy slung to one side of my belt, a packet of bread and beef to the other, and wearing a great cloak, I waded to the Kirk-way Dike, halting at every step for fear of discovery. The night was fallen black and windy, and low in the eastern sky, over Leyden, there glowed a misty and wavering illumination. Towards this I set my face, with no deeper design than to find my father. From the Kirk-way Dike I passed through the sleeping village of North Aa, and out upon the open road. Had I taken a boat and rowed up a canal, the Spanish outposts must certainly have discovered and fired upon me; but by going on foot I hoped to avoid these

perils. After walking a mile or two, I saw the glimmer of watch-fires in front of me, and turned aside across the pastures. Presently, the dull gleam of water detached itself from the gloom, and I drew near to a canal. Since all the bridges would be strictly guarded, there was nothing to do but to swim across. I had already taken off my cloak, when I made out a figure advancing along the bank. Dropping on hands and knees, I crawled into the darkness and lay still, while the sentinel drew near. The steel cap and musket of a Spanish man-at-arms were darkly shadowed upon the lighter surface of water, as the soldier passed me and went on. Instantly wrapping my pistols, powder, and victuals in my cloak, I bound it on my head, slipped into the water as quiet as a water-rat, and swam across. I landed, and began to run, and ran forward until again the fires gleamed in front, and again I must turn aside; but always verging nearer to the dull, uncertain glow that shone above the beleaguered city.

Travelling thus for a long time, in a great stress of fear and hurry, I crossed two more canals in the same manner; and at length, coming from behind a grove of trees, I saw, in the first faint lightening of the dawn, the walls and steeples of Leyden rising in front of me. Lit from within by that strange radiance, the city glimmered upon the abyss of night, as a long rampart set with motionless black windmills, beyond which vast wavering shadows bestrode the huddled houses and the towering bulk of the two churches, and climbed about the base of the great fortification which rose in the midst of the town, and whose top was lost in darkness. I stood for a moment, beaten upon by the rushing wind, which carried an aromatic waft of burning wood, looking upon the city; and again, as at the old mariner's burying, I beheld the torch of Death burning in the night.

As I drew nearer, the huge, dim forms and shadows sank from view, and I could see nothing save the wide moat, and the

wall of the rampart with its windmills. Above the fiery glow, the darkness impended like a ceiling. For awhile I skirted the moat, spying for some foothold upon the other side; and I must have almost completed the circuit of the city when I heard a knocking sound, exceeding faint, yet measured, like the ticking of a clock. I hearkened closely, but could not tell from whence it came. The light was broadening, and in a little while I should be shot, like a stray woodcock, by the first sentinel who happened to perceive me sieging Leyden all alone. So I took up my carriage again, like the man in Holy Writ, and swam across, scanning the walls with a desperate eye. That singular knocking grew loud as I approached, and, by the time I had my fingers on a ledge of the masonry, the sound appeared to come from beneath me. Looking to right and left upon the surface of the wall, I espied iron stanchions projecting one above another, making a ladder which reached from the water to the parapet.

Climbing up, I found that the parapet did but make a ledge to the base of a tall house which stood directly upon the rampart. Opposite to my face, as I rested with my chin upon the ledge, was a little narrow door, stoutly barricaded with a griddle of iron bars and a great lock. I stood for a few moments to consider what should be done. Methought there was but one thing to do; and so, hanging by my hands from the ledge of the parapet, I advanced sideways towards the corner of the house. Here the wall set back in a recess, and immediately above me were piled fascines, — fagots built up with earth to resist cannon-shot. I clutched hold upon the withes, and so drew myself up, and climbed upon the top. Between the fascines and the wall of the house was a little space; and, in the twilight of the dawn, I made out the dark shape of a window. Through that I must go, or else back into the moat; so I descended the fascines, pushed a pane of mica with my foot until it broke inwards, thrust

in my hand and unhasped the window. Pausing to listen, I could hear nothing save the moaning of the wind and the continued faint sound of knocking; and I climbed into a dark room, and began to grope my way. Suddenly a naked figure glimmered in the darkness, making towards me with uncouth and horrible sounds. It waved its arms and would have clutched me, but I struck at it, and the spectre tumbled howling at my feet. I got from that dreadful house as one struggles to break from a dream. Feeling around the walls, I came upon a door and tore it open, leaped down a dark flight of stairs, and falling, rolled to the bottom, saw a crack of yellow light in the blackness, and wrestled with the fastenings of the outer door. I thought the creature up-stairs would pursue me, and its crying pierced my ears. The last bolt shot back, and I precipitated myself into a lighted street as though hurled from the mouth of a cannon. A little way off, a great fire burned in the middle of the roadway, with a fine resinous odour; the

street was utterly deserted; and so profound was the stillness, that I thought my rude entrance must have wakened the whole town. I stole upon tiptoe to the fire, and entrenched myself upon the other side of the flames from that where stood my house of horror. A round black window in the gable, like a blind eye, stared into the solitary street; and on either side of the window, a gargoyle thrust forward a lean neck and gaping mouth. Here I encamped for awhile, stripping off my wet garments and drying them at the blaze. Wrapt in my cloak, I ate and drank, and was refreshed; while the dawn showed gray above the housetops, and the flames of the fire waned garish in the daylight.

Presently, looking up, I perceived the sky all bright; and a tall spire, blackening upon the radiance, was crowned with a golden flying vane which flashed in sunlight; and lo! the vane pointed due northwest. The wind had shifted in the night: and it held, the armada would in a few hours be afloat

again. I dressed swiftly, hid my face in my cloak and drew my hat over my eyes, and set out through the streets, intent to reach the Burg, the fortified mound which rose in the centre of the town, whence I might look far abroad. No living thing was stirring; no sound save the crackling and whispering of the fires, which burned in every street, and the crying of the wind upon the housetops, broke the extraordinary stillness. The heated air was redolent of spices and resins, and now and again the restless wind would swoop adown, laden with a deadly waft of corruption.

Beneath avenues of shivering trees, beside canals where little waves ran before the wind, and green scum huddled against the lee side of the barges, across the bridges, in and out the sleeping houses, — still as I went I saw no sign of life, until I came to the summit of the Burg, where sentries were pacing the circular rampart. Lean and brown, they looked at me out of hollow eyes as I mounted the steps. One addressed

himself to me in Dutch, but, as I answered not, he turned away.

Looking out, westward, across the plain I had traversed in the night, I saw the clouds marching swiftly, in great battalions, from out the gray obscurity, where the fleet lay at anchor; saw the dull green pastures, the gleaming roads of water, here and there the brown roofs of villages clustered among trees; and nearer hand, not a mile from the city wall, the star-shaped fort of Lammen, with tiny soldiers moving upon the bastions with a faint shimmer of steel.

Presently a great bell began to ring in the town below. Curious to know what it meant, and with the thought of my father hot in my mind, I returned into the streets. The inhabitants were coming from their houses, and thronging in one direction, towards the Stadhuis, from whence the bell was calling. Moving feebly and in silence along the sombre streets, between the fires, they collected in a silent crowd about the

double flight of steps, rising parallel with the street, which led up to the Stadhuis entrance. Within, the tiny ration of daily victuals was doled to the starving citizens; and having received it, they descended the steps, still in silence, retreated, and were lost in the smoke and shadow. Gentle and simple were there, the burgess in furred cloak and the craftsman in homespun; and mingled with them, here and there, pitiable beings with white clouts wrapped about their necks, the sign of the plague, tottering upon sticks. But among all that silent multitude, from whose gray faces, each and all, looked forth the invincible Flemish obstinacy, I pried in vain for my father. Weary hours went by, while the tedious procession of stricken wretches rolled over the steps, until the last dark figure receded into the shadows, and the street was once more utterly deserted.

Meanwhile, the crying and whistling of the gale overhead had grown more vehement; the sky was dark with hurrying

clouds; and mingled with the wind's diapason, came a distant, roaring noise of waters. All that day, until the dusk began to gather, I roamed the city in search of my father. Now and again a wild rush of rain would sweep the streets, and the fires would hiss and splutter, and a pillar of smoke would rise, to be instantly torn to fragments and vanish with the flying skirts of cloud. Alone in this frightful city of silence and fire and smoke, I was visited with horrible misgivings that my father was already dead, and flung into some great pit, buried among heaps of plague-struck, nameless Dutchmen.

At nightfall I returned to the Burg. A great crowd was gathered together upon the stone stairway which led up to the citadel, and upon the ramparts. All were gazing to the westward, the tempest blowing in their faces with so great a sound and fury that none could speak to the other, unless he holloed, mouth to ear. I crouched beside an embrasure, beneath a cannon; ate and drank of my victuals,

cloaked by the darkness; and presently drowsed asleep. All through the night, I would wake for a few minutes, peer through the embrasure, and insensibly fall asleep again. Once and again, during these moments, I perceived red flashes of fire, and heard the thunder of cannon—the baying of the dogs of war—striking through the enormous tumult of wind and water. For the Beggars of the Sea were unchained at last.

The gray dawn, coming, shewed a vast and seething plain of waters, rolling to the very walls. Far and near were the black ships of the Beggars, some rocking at anchor amid half-drowned trees and farm-houses, some spouting fire, or locked in a grapple with the Spanish galleys. Farther yet, bodies of men swarmed like ants upon the ridge of a long dike which shewed above the waters, and receded into the flying mist.

The Beggars were coming indeed! But, between the armada and the city, lay the

innermost chain of Spanish forts. Directly beneath my embrasure was the fort of Lammen, islanded upon the flood; and to reach the city, the ships must pass beneath its guns. Even now, the town might fall into the Spaniards' bloody clutches, — and where was Mr. Stukely Nettlestone? I got up and looked about me. Here was the whole of Leyden gathered together, gaunt and dumb, gazing with a frightful eagerness towards the black ships of succour. Perched upon my cannon, I scanned the crowd of shining eyes; and, in the very midst of the throng, I saw for a moment the face of my father. Crying out, I waved an arm, slipped to the ground, and clove my way through the press. So enfeebled were the multitude that they gave way before me like children, and without ever turning their fixed gaze. But my father had vanished. In and out I sought. I went down into the solitary streets once more, where the fires were extinguished by the tempest, and the ashes

scattered abroad, and roamed the town from end to end, but without avail. As I went, I was haunted by a doubt, which had come to me so soon as I had entered Leyden, a suspicion that I had forgotten something I had taken in hand to do; but what it was, I could in no wise remember. In the afternoon, I was still wandering up and down, beneath the wind-tortured trees and beside the yeasty canals, peering in at the dark windows, hearkening for a footstep, when it came upon me that some one was following me. I could have sworn I heard a footfall dogging mine; but when I stopped, the sound ceased; and if I turned, the street was empty. In that city of shadows and sombre nooks and dark archways, one accustomed to the office might track a man for days; and in order to resolve the mystery, I entered the great church of Saint Pancras by the western door. There were other doors to north and south, leading into narrow alleys between the houses which clustered about

the lower walls of the church; and since one person could not watch all three entrances at the same time, my spy (if such there were) must needs follow me into the building. I sat down behind a column and waited.

The church was dimly illumined by oil lamps suspended by chains from the roof; a good number of people were kneeling; while, standing upon the altar steps, a black-robed figure with a gray beard cast forth his hands and prayed aloud. Presently the door by which I had entered opened quietly, and a tall man muffled in a cloak came softly in. He removed his broad hat, and I beheld the sloping brow and little eyes of Mr. Chidiok Marston. "Of course . . ." I said; and sat watching him from behind my pillar.

He stood still, his head bent as if in devotion, but moving stealthily from side to side, as his glance travelled about the church. After remaining thus for several minutes, his gaze became fixed, his head

craned a little forward, and he began to walk up the aisle on tiptoe. As he did so, I followed the direction of his look, and perceived a man, who was kneeling in the body of the church, to turn his head towards Marston. The yellow rays of the lamp above illumined for one moment the face of my father; the next, my father was swiftly making his way through the kneeling throng towards the side door. As he vanished, Marston turned back and passed swiftly out of the church by the door through which he had entered. I followed him instantly, trusting by that means to come up with my father sooner than if I had to pass through the congregation towards the other door. But when I got outside, there was nothing to be seen in the twilight. A network of narrow streets diverged from the Pancraskerke, and I knew not which to follow. In a torment of indecision, I drew my poniard and tossed it in the air; and snatching it up, I began to run down the street to the left hand,

towards which the steel had pointed. The street presently turned to the left and right, — I ran to the left; it turned again, — and I ran to the right; still there was no one to be seen. At the next corner, I turned to the left once more; and, as I did so, a man shot from an archway into the road with such velocity that he had near dashed himself against the opposite house before he could turn; and, running ahead of me, he plunged a key into a door, vanished, and clapped to the door with a sounding echo. 'Twas my father. I had run him to earth at last! I stood in the roadway, panting, and stared at the house. Looking up, my glance fell upon a circular window in the gable of the house next on the right hand, with a demon's head spouting water on either side. 'Twas the house through which I had entered Leyden.

I was still staring and wondering, when I was aware of running footsteps, and a second figure came charging out of the darkness. But drawing nearer, it suddenly

slackened its pace; and Mr. Chidiok Marston, with his hat tilted over his eyes, walked slowly past me, as though he saw me not, and turned the corner of the street.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MESSAGE

I HAMMERED upon the door with the butt of a pistol, until the solitary street echoed to my knockings, paused to listen, then hammered again. Had not all the inhabitants been gathered together in the churches or upon the Burg, I must have brought a crowd about me. It was not until the fourth or fifth assault that the shutter of a wicket, opening in the upper part of the door, slid aside, and Mr. Nettlestone looked through the bars. A light of amazement passed upon his face, and was gone, leaving it sombre.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" he said; and in all my anticipations of the meeting which had now come to pass, I had never imagined accents so remarkably indifferent.

The bolts were drawn, I entered a bare, dark room, my father locked the door again. "Well, sir," said he, giving me his cheek to salute, "I had never thought to see you here. What means this visit?"

His tones were a little kinder, but I was sadly abashed. "I came to find you, sir," I faltered; and began to untie the meat and the bottle of brandy, of which I had saved so much as I was able. But my father scarce looked at the victuals.

"Hath aught befallen at home?" he asked.

"When you had gone, sir, one came for you. He said he had a warrant —"

"Well?" said Mr. Nettlestone, as I halted; "a warrant? What for?"

"For High Treason."

My father kept silence for a few moments. The darkness had so increased that I could not see his face. "Come, sir," he said, presently, with a suppressed impatience, "what is all this, what is all this? Tell me the history in order, if you please."

But I stood dumb before him, in the

darkness, trembling like a terrier. It is to be remembered that for two nights I had hardly slept, that I had endured some strenuous perils and toils, and that I had eaten but meagrely. Moreover, this meeting differed so strangely from dear expectation, that I was chilled to the heart.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Nettlesome. He came nearer, and put his hand on my shoulder, but I could not answer him a word. "Why, my dear lad, hast been starving thyself for my sake, hast thou not?" he went on, with a sudden change in his mobile voice to a tenderness so extraordinary, that I broke unawares into childish tears. He made me to sit down, while he fetched a light, and there-with a bottle of rare wine, some bread, and a cold fowl. I marvelled how Mr. Nettlesome contrived to get such victuals in a famine-stricken city. He sat watching me in silence while I ate and drank; and when I had done, in silence he hearkened to my tale. Face to face once more with this

great and sombre personage, I felt my nameless doubts of him dwindle with shame.

"Well, my son," quoth Mr. Nettlestone, "I need scarce tell you, I think, that your father was not with that band of murderers, on the night of the thirtieth of August."

I believed him, as of course; and, at the same time, I began to feel a certainty, though I knew not why, that my father had been abroad about some errand of secret goodness upon that memorable night; and I recalled his open, pleasant look when he took from my hands the knave of diamonds, with the legend *1350 Cr.* on the back. But then, with a prick of doubt, I remembered my mother's face of sadness. And the recollection of the knave of diamonds brought Mr. Chidiok Marston to my mind, and the amazing spectacle of Mr. Stukely Nettlestone fleeing from him as from the devil; and thereupon I told my father of my encounter with that gentleman.

"Ay, ay," said Mr. Nettlestone, "Marston

is a bad man, — Marston is an impostor. Beware of his company. I saw him but now as I was coming to my house, and went even to the pains of avoiding him, — there are reasons why I wish to keep myself private at this time. And as for these same news he prates of, belike they are the same as your own."

Again I was answered; and yet again, I beheld, with a doubt, the respectable Mr. Nettlestone running like a madman. Pains! Here were pains to avoid the man Marston indeed; they seemed to me excessive; and I wondered what my father did in Leyden, with his privy manœuvres, and his wine, and his capons.

"Well, sir," said my father, rising, "you and I had best get back to England in this ship of yours, I think. This poor city will be out of her travail, one way or another, by to-morrow. And now, Roger," says Mr. Nettlestone, with a sudden return to his old imperious manner, "now, sir, I desire you to take a message for me. Do you

know the Spanish tongue? I think not. No? Very well. Then you must learn the message by the sound. Attend, if you please. *La luna saldrá á media noche.* That is the message. Again. *La luna saldrá á media noche.* Repeat it after me."

I hid my astonishment, and imitated the sounds of this cryptic despatch until I had them perfect.

"Now," continued Mr. Nettlestone, "you will go to Colonel Borgia, who commands the Spanish garrison in the fort of Lammen yonder, win access to him, and say those words. If he gives you a letter in reply, return to me with it. If not, go back to your ship, where I will come to you."

I turned hot and cold, and the joints of my knees were loosened. Could this thing be, that my father was intriguing with the Papistical Spaniards?

"But —" I began.

"Well?" said Mr. Nettlestone, with a formidable accent.

"I am in the service of the Prince of Orange," I said.

"Boy," said my father, with a kind of ominous patience, "before you make pretence to serve in any service, you must learn to obey. Life is all a series of lessons, as I have so often, often told you. Here is the first: obedience. And I might point out to you another,—faith in your father, sir. Do you doubt me? Do you think I would set you about an unworthy business?"

Faith and unfaith struggled within me; but the reënforcement of my father's great presence was there.

"I will go, since you tell me," I said.

"Then come instantly," cried Mr. Nettlestone, sharply. "Here is enough time wasted indeed. Leave your cloak and pistols, and take your sword."

Bearing the candle in his hand, he went up the stairs before me. I followed him into a long attic, with a square window at one end, shuttered on the inside. Mr.

Nettlestone unclosed the shutter, unlocked and flung back the iron griddle which opened above the ladder of stanchions by which I had climbed up.

"Down you go, and God be with you," said my father. "The password is, *Pavía y Carlos Quinto*. Do you hear? *Pavía y Carlos Quinto*. I must lock the window again, but if you return, you may enter the next house as you did before. 'Tis empty, — the madman you saw therein is dead, and the cart came for him last night."

I climbed out to the cool darkness and the stars; and before I was half-way down the face of the wall, I heard the click of the lock above me, which shut me out to go alone upon this sinister errand. I paused for a moment, hanging some twenty feet above the glimmering water, to gather my disordered thoughts; and once more there came to me the vague remembrance of something I had to do, which I had not done. Then I suddenly remembered pretty Adriana Catherina Laterveer, the widow of

Zoetermeer, and her charge to me. Lo, I had never gone to find her father, Willem Koot, dwelling in the house at the corner of the market-place, with the black and white crucifix beside the door, whose fellow in little I carried forgotten in the pocket of my hose. It was not too late, even now; nor could I be sure of ever returning to Leyden,—indeed, I thought it sadly unlikely that I should come out of this business alive. There was scant time for consideration, and I began to climb up the ladder once more. Perhaps I was not unwilling to defer going about my father's errand.

I was progressing hand over hand along the parapet, when the same low knocking sound I had before heard fell upon my ears. This time, I might have guessed its purport; but you are to remember the hurry and inevitable confusion of my intellects; and I did but note the sound as another item of the mystery in which I was entangled. The broken window was open as I had left it; I descended the

empty and dark house, and gained the street. Against the wall of the opposite house I perceived the indistinct figure of a man with his hat over his eyes. Mr. Chidiok Marston, it could be no other; and, passing within a few feet of him, I perceived that it was. Doubtless, Mr. Marston was waiting for my father, for reasons of his own, since he quite disregarded my own appearance; but I had no time to meddle with that affair.

I thought that I had known my way about Leyden by this time, since I had searched it so thoroughly; yet I very soon lost myself in the unlighted streets, which were totally dark save for a shimmer of stars, and wandered for a long time; until at length I heard the uneven jangle of a bell, and, turning a corner, I came upon the open space of the market-square, where I heard also a rumble of wheels, and espied a couple of moving lanthorns. That singular premonition which is apt to seize the mind at such moments came

upon me; and, with a certainty of conviction, I came to a corner house with a dim Figure carven upon the angle, as the dead-cart stopped before the door. The two hooded figures, one carrying a lanthorn, entered the house. I followed them, but they heeded me not. The misty rays shewed a still form, shrouded beneath a blanket, and stretched upon a low bed. The two figures lifted it, and carried it out; returning at once, they climbed the narrow stair to the room above; still following them, I saw the poor bare chamber to be vacant of occupancy; and, together, we left the house in silence. The dead-cart went its way between its dull lights, with its boding knell; and I went mine, towards the ramparts. Adriana Catherina would wait in vain at Delft for Willem Koot, who was gone beyond the care of daughters.

The great wind was lulled at last; and as I ascended to the ramparts, at a place within sight of the Tower of Burgundy, I

heard the chiming of the Stadhuis clock ringing the quarters, followed by the profound reverberation of the hour. I paused to count the strokes, — twelve, midnight. I thought of my father's wrath were he to know that his message was yet undelivered. But a man must keep his word to a maid, despite all the fathers in the world.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DESERTED FORTRESS

**M**AKING my way along the ramparts, past the drowsing sentries, towards the Tower of Burgundy, beyond which, midway between that monument and the Cow-Gate, was my father's house, I descried a distant twinkle of light in the direction of my destination, the Fort of Lammen. Presently appeared another and yet another; and a long serpent of yellow dots began to unroll itself and slowly to recede, undulating, across the dusky face of the waters. It lengthened and still lengthened, until the head of it was lost to sight. I was staring in amazement at this portent, when a great flash of fire blinded me, and a thundering explosion flung me on my

face. The ground quivered, and there came the roar and splash of toppling masonry.

When I looked up, the Tower of Burgundy was gone; in its room, and beyond, was but a gulf of ruin, where a chaos of black fragments encroached upon the waters. Scattered cries and screams pierced the darkness, and there rose the sound of running footsteps, growing momentarily louder. At first, I had but one thought in my mind, that my father was slain in the disaster. Then, as I began to run towards the gulf with the eager crowd, I thought, confusedly, that the Spaniards had undermined and blown up the city wall, making a breach, and that the lights I had seen must have been the lanthorns of the attacking army. But my message was yet undelivered. By my delay, for aught I knew, the city was lost; but the least I could do was to go immediately upon my errand; and with a bitter pang, since I must leave all hope of

learning the fate of my father, I began to clamber down towards the water. 'Twas a difficult and a perilous business; there is blood of mine upon the broken stones of that infernal city; but at last I gained the shallow water beyond the moat, and began to wade towards Lammen. From where I was, I could no longer descry the line of moving lights. After some half hour's most laborious toiling, I saw the great flag blotting out a little space of stars, and the black bulk of the fortress towered above me. I began warily to make a circuit of the walls; and by the time I had gone three-quarters of the circle, I came upon a broad causeway, which led from the gate of the fort away across the country, and which stood high and dry above the waters. Not a sound broke the stillness save the flapping of the standard, high upon the mast rising from the citadel. It was borne in upon me, then, that the fortress of Lammen was abandoned and utterly deserted.

Stealing along the causeway, I came to the drawbridge, and paused, listening with a fearful attention; crept on, crossed the drawbridge, passed under the portcullis, under the broad black arch, and came out into the open court within the ramparts. In the centre rose the square citadel, with the corner turret upon which the flagstaff was planted. As I began to walk across the courtyard, I perceived the twinkle of a light in a window of the turret. *Pavía y Carlos Quinto*. Armed with the magical word, I would march into the citadel and attempt that lighted chamber. Perhaps Colonel Borgia sat there alone, awaiting news of the fall of Leyden,—then would I come to him, and tell him, *La luna saldrá á media noche*.

My footsteps rang unearthly loud on the beaten ground as I drew near to the citadel. The door of the guard-room yawned, a black square, upon the lighter surface of the wall; so did a door at the foot of the turret, a little beyond.

Entering this, and mounting a circular flight of stairs, I turned about and about in the dark, which echoed to my clamorous footfalls, until I came to a lighted doorway, and paused upon the threshold. Within, a brass lamp burned upon a table, which was littered with papers; beneath an alcove stood a great bed, hung with embroidered curtains; and about the floor was strewn a confusion of clothes and books. If there were any one lying upon the bed behind the curtains, he must be dead, for there was no sound of breathing. With a mighty effort of courage, I drew the curtain aside; but there was nothing there; the purple coverlet worked with a golden dragon was unruffled.

Whosoever had occupied this chamber, whether Colonel Borgia or another, had gone,—and gone in so great a hurry that he could not even stay to pack his shirts. Whither, then, had the Spaniards gone with their lanthorns? To take Leyden, marching through the breach? Or back to Spain?

And what was I to do? Bewildered, wet, and weary to the marrow of my bones, I held the Fort of Lammen alone, burdened with a fateful message of which I could not be delivered. What was I to do with an empty fortress and an incomprehensible sentence?

Considering these riddles, I perceived a tall bottle of red wine glinting upon the table beside a goblet. Without a thought, I filled and drank. The liquor was a noble essence indeed; I drank it to the dregs, and lay down upon that voluptuous bed.

The day's goings-on ran in a wheel of bright and troubled pictures before my eyes; and presently, to cool my head, I rose, went out of the room and up the stair, and came out upon the roof. The great flag drooped motionless above my head, for the night was very still. A circle of white flames flickered low down upon the clear ring of the horizon; I had not known (I thought) that the Northern Lights might

be descried in this country. The dome of sky was filled with a pearly radiance; the vast plain of waters, shimmering like a pearl, was speckled far and near with the black ships of the armada; and I saw the islanded city rise, black as coal, upon the solemn light. Far towards that flaming ring, I descried the pale sparks of the Spanish lanthorns, retreating in a sinuous line, until they vanished into the crevice beneath the dancing fires. I was filled with exultation; and, at the same time, I marvelled what should have driven them forth. But I looked towards Leyden, and beheld the battlements moving with people, thick as a swarm of flies, and I wondered what ailed them. Then I saw a figure wading breast-high through the flood, away from the city, towards my fortress. At the same moment, I was seized with a horrible and nameless terror; and I understood that all the city was gathered together to see that figure go forth. What it was I knew not; but I knew that, like a witch, it carried a

power and an unspeakable horror of pestilence and death. I saw the water ripple about its limbs as the creature came towards the fort, and I thought it must be drawn by the light in the turret window. The lamp must be extinguished, the portcullis let down, the doors barred, — but how could I, alone, do all these things in time? I cried out with a great ringing cry; a voice answered like an echo; and old Tom Arnaught, the mariner, appeared in the doorway leading from the stair-head to the roof. I had supposed him dead; but I had no time to inquire into his resurrection. He carried his long boarding pike, and I marvelled how he could have brought it up that strait stairway. Together we began to descend; but at every turn the weapon caught in the stonework, or was jammed across the way. Through a loophole I saw the dread figure drawing swiftly nearer. Old Arnaught gabbled and jested according to his wont; while a frenzy of haste possessed me, so that I

caught the pike from his hands, snapped it in twain, and dropped it; and together we stood in the empty courtyard. I turned to Arnaught, but in his place stood buxom Mistress Adriana Catherina Laterveer.

She looked at me with bright eyes, smiling, and uttered some words in Dutch. Methought she was mighty taking to the eye; then, as the image of Elizabeth slid into my remembrance, I glanced about, and saw the advancing figure loom upon the silver space framed in the entrance arch. Together we fled up the stairway; but when I reached the door of the room where the lamp was burning low, with a reek of oil, she was no longer beside me. A footfall sounded on the steps, soft and heavy; with a freezing pang, I turned to face the terror; and awoke—to behold, in the pallid light of dawn, my father towering over me, and to hear his wrathful voice ringing in my ears.

I got to my feet and stood in front of

him, still dazed and trembling, but filled with joy to see him yet alive. The lamp had burned to a red spark, and an oily stench filled the chamber. To this day, the smell of a douted wick brings me instantly back that deadly awakening in the deserted fortress.

"Awake, you wretched sot, and hearken! When did you deliver me your message?" says Mr. Nettlestone, between clenched teeth.

"The place was stark empty. How could I deliver it?"

"Answer me, liar. What was the time when you came here?"

"Between twelve and one of the clock," I said, dismayed at the tempest raging within my formidable parent.

Mr. Nettlestone's agitation was so extreme, that he could not speak, but must needs pace up and down the chamber, trampling garments, books, papers, and everything with his wet boots.

"And what did you, pray, between the

time I despatched you, at ten of the clock, and the time you came here?" he said, turning suddenly upon me.

I told him, I went of an errand I had forgot.

Mr. Nettlestone looked at me, a consuming pillar of wrath.

"Do you know, sir," said he with a straining quietude more terrifying to me than the violence of a madman, "do you know that you have lost your father five thousand crowns by your incredible folly? Do you know that your mother will have to beg in the streets, for all I can do to save her? It may be a little thing in your eyes,—but I cannot now even return to England to clear my name of the monstrous charge of which you tell me."

My knees shook, my inwards turned to water, at these dreadful words. My father and I faced each other for a few deadly moments. A shocking change passed upon his face. It was as if the blood beneath

the swarthy skin were suddenly tintured with black, while the features sharpened. His great brindled head was uncovered, and I saw his hair rise from his forehead. As I live by bread, I saw his locks bristle like the hair on the back of a furious dog; and I do not desire to see the like again. There was a hiss and gleam of steel, and I flung myself aside, as my father made a furious thrust at me, lunging on his knee. Before he could recover, I had slipped past him and was running up the stairway to the roof, with a blind impulse, which arose perhaps from my dream.

A little door stood open at the top; clapping it to, I set two heavy wooden bars into their staples. Whether I were asleep or awake, in the body or out of it, I scarce knew; the shock of the terrible scene with my father was heavy upon me, while the fumes of the wine I had drunk confused my brain. But, coming presently a little to myself, I looked around. Above me the Spanish flag ruffled in the



"MY FATHER MADE A FURIOUS THRUST AT ME."



chill breeze; yonder was the dusky pile of Leyden; far and near, on the gray waters, lay the black ships of the Beggars; and as for the Spaniards, all were clean gone and fled away.

It came upon me, with a sudden vehement force, that the whole Spanish army had fled in panic, — that none knew this of a surety save Mr. Nettlestone and I, who together held the impregnable fortress of Lammen, — and that the way into the beleaguered city lay open at last.

In that moment, I forgot my father's usage of me, as a man forgets a hurt received in stress of battle; and I leaped upon the flagstaff and climbed to the top, with a poniard in my teeth. The great red and white banner fluttered down as I cut the halliards; and as I waved my scarlet sailor's cap, there went up from the watching Beggars of the Sea such a noise of cheering as I shall never live to hear again.

I set my cap on the masthead, and I had

scarce descended to the citadel roof, when the sails were unfurling, the long oars shooting forth, and the whole armada was moving swiftly towards Leyden.

## CHAPTER XI

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

**L**EANING on the battlement of my tower, I watched the *Golden Rose* press forward in the van of the fleet, with the bloody flag streaming at the mast-head, until she ran aground hard by the causeway leading from the fort, and thereupon strake sail. A couple of boats, lowered in a mighty hurry, put forth and steered in and out the craft, great and small, which were racing towards the breach in the city wall, where a great crowd stood awaiting them. The multitude of ships, pinnaces, and wherries converged swiftly upon the same point, some running foul of others, some sticking fast, and the rest drawing close together, until I could scarce distinguish

the boats of the *Golden Rose*; yet I was almost certain they were the first to touch the shore. The mariners were immediately swallowed up by the crowd, amid a great noise of shouting. At the same moment, I heard a voice calling to me by name; and looking down, I beheld my father standing in the courtyard. He beckoned to me. Filled with the gloomiest misgivings, I went down to him.

Mr. Nettlestone bore a square bundle beneath his arm, wrapped in a piece of purple stuff embroidered with gold, which I perceived to be the coverlet of Colonel Borgia's couch. As I drew near to my father, his dark face lighted with a kind look, and he held out his hand.

"Shake hands," says he. "You must forget what I said, Roger, and be friends. I lost control of my anger, I confess it. But you are to remember that I was overworn with long care and watching and heavy labour, and that I saw the fruit thereof flung away and wasted in a

moment. But you never meant it, I know that."

I was glad enough to clasp my father's thick hand, and to mutter my acknowledgments.

"Why, that's well, and we'll say no more," cried Mr. Nettlestone, cheerfully. "See, the good sun rising yonder over the city, rising upon the just and the unjust, a sign to all of us. And now, my son, let us go to this ship of yours, that I may arrange with the captain to take us home again so soon as may be."

Pleased, and yet confounded, I walked beside Mr. Nettlestone along the causeway, down the path upon which I had seen the Spanish lanthorns retreating, it seemed a hundred hours since. The Spaniards, beholding the waters rising about them, and the Beggars of the Sea flocking to pick their bones, had been smitten (so historiographers tell) with a sudden stroke of panic. And doubtless this is the explanation of their incontinent flight.

"Let me carry your burthen, sir," I said.

"No, no," said Mr. Nettlestone, "'tis light enough, and doubtless you are weary. This fatiguing business of warfaring is new to you; whereas I have toiled and starved at it or ever you were born into the world."

We waded out to the *Golden Rose*, and climbed aboard. Mr. Nettlestone greeted the watch on deck as though the ship belonged to him, and while he explained his errand, I got victuals from the cook. We were sitting at meat in a place by ourselves on the poop, when I remembered that I had yet to tell my father of the untimely death of Sir Harry Wynter. Willing to spare Mr. Nettlestone at the time, so much as I was able, I had of purpose omitted these dismal tidings in my former recital in his house at Leyden.

Mr. Nettlestone heard me in silence, and never moving his eyes from my face. When I had made an end, he rose from

his place and leaned against the rail, with his back towards me. Presently he returned, and sat down; but he neither ate nor drank any more.

"We have rigged a new foremast, you see," I said, after awhile, hoping to divert his melancholy by reminding him of his feat of gunnery aboard the '*S Graven Hage*, when the *Golden Rose* pursued her on the outward voyage; and Mr. Nettlestone looked up with a dreary smile.

"You have long eyesight," said he. "I saw you not when I fired the shot from the '*S Graven Hage*. I could do no less. And that brings me to something I should like to say to you. There should be confidence betwixt father and son," quoth Mr. Nettlestone, sternly regarding me. "Well, and I cannot but feel there is a doubt in your mind concerning me. Nay, it is natural—I do not blame you. Now, as to this affair of High Treason, 'tis naught, as I told you. I can tell you no more, because one holding a position such as I

bears such relations to certain great personages that his lips are sealed—and he must perforce endure the odium of many an unjust suspicion. But, doubtless, you marvel what I was doing in Leyden. I will tell you freely, only you must keep it secret. I was there to compass the fall of the city.”

My father stopped, and looked at me with a lively challenge in his face; but I answered nothing.

“Had the Spaniards entered Leyden last night,” he went on, “I should have received five thousand crowns from the Spanish Government. But God willed it should not be; and that was what I meant when I said last night we were ruined. I was too strongly commoved. It matters not. We will go home, you and I, and do the best we may. 'Tis a sad world; but a godly man may yet make bread out of it. There, sir, I can tell you no more than that. Is there anything in your mind to ask me? If so, speak out.”

My father leaned back and eyed me with such a look of modest, yet uneasy, deprecation, as of one who had done violence to his proper dignity of reserve in so disclosing himself, that I think my countenance must have shone with faith rekindling.

"But the Spaniards are bitter Papists," I said, hopefully exhibiting this difficulty in order to see it demolished.

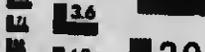
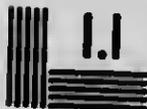
"What have I to do with that? These Netherlanders are in revolt against their lawful sovereign, King Philip of Spain. Let them render his own unto Cæsar, then. I sell the sword of the flesh to Cæsar, but I wield the spiritual weapon for his subjects. I prayed daily for their salvation beneath that great roof,"—he pointed to the distant Pancraskærke, a tall wedge of gold in the light of sunrise,— "and yet, with a whole conscience, I dug by night a mine beneath the ram-parts."

If my difficulty were not now removed,



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it never could be. I dismissed its consideration.

“So that was the sound I heard,” said I.

“You might have heard it hour after hour, for many long nights, for I did the work entirely alone. And the message I gave you, sir, was to tell Colonel Borgia that *the moon should rise at midnight*,—in other words, that the mine should be fired. Had you but obeyed orders—” and Mr. Nettlestone bestowed upon me the frown and smile menacingly commingled, which I knew so well.

“You talk of Papists,” he went on, with severity. “Do you think that because a man is a Protestant, he may, therefore, rebel against authority? Here I find you taking service with picaroons; and I own I am surprised at the doings of your Captain Porte, in taking service under this Prince of Orange, who is nothing but an arch-traitor, when all is said. And as for his Sea Beggars, they are thieves and murderers all.”

"I only wanted to find you, sir," I said.

"I know," said Mr. Nettlestone, "I know. I cannot find it in my heart to blame you. I think you were right to come. And yet, at the same time, I think you distrusted your father."

I was sorry; I was confounded; and I looked helplessly about the deck, and out across the moving waters, crowded with argosies, towards the walled city; for the sour, dark atmosphere of the strait house at home had suddenly closed about me. The answer to the riddle, which I had come so far to seek, and for which I had sought so strenuously, lay (as I thought) open before me; and now, methought, I cut a somewhat ridiculous figure. Sea, and sky, and armed ships, and beleaguered city, heretofore the features of an alluring world, wherein I followed a mighty important quest, suddenly changed their aspect; so that I found myself abroad in a strange province, in which I had no place nor proper

occupation, — in which, as at home, I was nothing but a superfluity.

While we were talking, a great, confused noise came to our ears from Leyden. The clashing of bells, the joyful crying of a multitude, drew me strongly towards the city; and, despite my dejection, I longed to be within the walls. To my surprise, the same attraction began to work upon Mr. Nettlestone. He paced restlessly to and fro, leaned upon the bulwarks, paced to and fro again.

“Shall we take the cockboat, and go to the town?” said he, at last.

“Is it safe?” I said, dubiously, remembering my father’s late employment in the city.

“Is anything safe in this world?” says he. “Are you coming? I will go alone if you like.”

We got into the cockboat, and pulled towards the breach in the ramparts.

The street beyond the ruins was thronged with a moving crowd, singing, laughing,

crying, and gesticulating. As we stepped from the street, a single figure, emerging from the press, came towards us, walking lightly across the broken masonry. 'Twas Mr. Chidiok Marston.

"Give you good morning, Mr. Nettlestone," says he, with his hat in his hand. "Save you, Mr. Arnaught," and he nodded to me.

Mr. Nettlestone stood facing the speaker, without responding to his salutation.

"I have sought you high and low, Mr. Nettlestone," Marston continued, unabashed, "for that I had some news for your private ear, — as perhaps our common friend, Mr. Arnaught, hath told you —"

"And what are they?" asked my father, looking very black. Instead of replying, Mr. Marston jerked his head slightly in my direction.

"You may say what you have to say, Mr. Marston, before my son," quoth Mr. Nettlestone.

"Oh, I crave a thousand pardons, sir,"

says Marston, cocking his eye at me. "I mistook you for another gentleman, one Arnaught."

"I knew the man you mean," said I, "but he is dead. He used to be acquainted with one Dick Fenner, who is a friend of yours, I think, sir."

"Fenner's dead, also," said Marston, looking at me with one eyebrow atilt and the other frowning.

"Mr. Chidiok Marston," my father broke in upon this trifling, "if you have anything you desire to tell me, do so, and be quick."

"I would have wished to break with you gently, Mr. Nettlestone, for the sake of ancient friendship, and suchlike, but since you force me to be so downright, why — I am come to tell you there is a price set upon your head, Mr. Nettlestone. Queen Eliza will give — so much — for Mr. Stukely Nettlestone, dead or alive," said Marston.

"I thank you," said my father, with un-

moved composure. "And in return, I may tell you that I am about going to England, to answer to a certain charge."

Mr. Marston was evidently astonished at this intelligence.

"Oh," said he, "you are going to England? Come, is this entirely wise, comarado? I speak in pure friendship. Come now, brother, cast your mind back, and try to recollect yourself, in what manner you passed the night of—ay," said Mr. Chidiok Marston, with his finger laid against his nose, "the night of the thirtieth August."

His dark face darkening, my father steadfastly regarded the other in silence; until Mr. Marston's jauntiness began to fade upon him, his eye wandered, he became visibly discomposed, and stepped back a pace or two.

"Have you done with your fooling, Chidiok Marston?" began my father, in a voice of contained anger. "You have done? Well! Then hearken to me, if

you please. I call you to account to me for the death of my dear friend, Sir Harry Wynter."

"'Tis for me to call *you* to account, I think," cried Marston. "You lied to him — you slandered me, till the poor old gentleman could not suffer to behold my face without falling into a fit. As God lives, 'twas you who killed Sir Harry Wynter. I touched him not."

"I hear you say so," returned my father. "Dismount your weapon, Chidiok Marston!" and my fiery parent unsheathed his own sword, for the second time that day.

But Mr. Marston turned swiftly about, and sprang across a chasm in the ruins.

"Not I," said he. "I do not cross swords with a bloody Spanish spy. Be not a hot fool, Nettlestone. I have but to raise my voice and that raving crowd—" He jerked his thumb over his shoulder at the Dutch folk, who, frenzied with food and wine and freedom, capered and shouted like lunatics scarce twenty paces behind him.

But Mr. Nettlestone, sword in hand, began to step from stone to stone. Marston retreated before him.

"Stop!" cried Marston. "Stop! Go back, sot!" and he cursed him in a screaming voice.

Mr. Nettlestone, gaining a securer foothold, ran forward; and Marston, slipping into the crowd, instantly uplifted his voice in the Dutch tongue. At this, my father turned about, crying out to me to hasten back to the boat; and at the same moment he stumbled and fell.

Striving to rise, he fell again, with a groan, and I had scarce time to bestride my father's body with naked sword before we were ringed about with a howling mob. Chidiok Marston, striking to right and left, leaped from the press and set his back to mine.

"This way, *Golden Rose!*" Marston shouted. "This way, *Golden Rose!*" I took up the cry, and together our voices rang above the clamour.

The mob was unarmed, and feeble from starvation; and smiting at their faces, we kept them at sword's point; but presently some began to hurl fragments of stone and brick, so that my father was like to have been battered to death with the ruins he himself had made. Smitten and bruised, the blood running into my eyes, I still plied sword with an aching arm; and still, now and again, one of us fetched breath enough to shout with a hoarse and broken cry. But I thought we were surely sped, when loud and clear voices answered suddenly, and the mob was cloven in twain by a wedge of men and flashing steel.

"Why, what cheer, bully rook?" cried Selewraith's voice.

I felt his arm about me, and swooned away.

When I came to myself, I was lying propped against his knee, in the bottom of the wherry, which was moving swiftly to the creak and splash of oars.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE GENESIS OF CHIDIOCK MARSTON

UPON the morning of the next day, being the fourth October, I leaned upon the bulwarks, watching the low and misty shores of Holland flit past, and the clouds folding in and out before the gale, which, though it blew never so favourably, could not bring us to Southampton in less than fifty hours,—a day too late. With this thought heavy upon me, I hearkened with divided attention to Selewraith's history of the rescue, by the men of the *Golden Rose*, of Mr. Stukely Nettlestone, Chidiock Marston, and myself.

“ . . . The Dutchmen were no better than so many skeletons gone crazy; they tumbled down as they ran away, and fell in

heaps upon each other; and we carried you three gladiators aboard. Whereupon your father charters the ship as though he were the Grand Commander; the captain goes straightway to Admiral Boisot, and gets the bounty of excellent Master Philip D'Orchimont,—the wind goes about upon the very instant, as by the finger of God; and before midnight we are sailing for England,—and there you have it, my jolly picaroon. But what said Captain Porte to you? For by rights you should be adorning the yard-arm as a deserter.”

“He said that doubtless I took his meaning, when he said that the less he said the better, and so he would only say it was but just I should take no share in the bounty,—and that as his passenger, he was my very good friend to serve me.”

(I thought, when the captain talked thus, that, had he known all, I had perhaps a better title to a part of the bounty than most; but I held my peace.) “And what

is Chidiok Marston doing?" I inquired of Selewraith.

"Berthed as mariner in the room of poor Tom Arnaught, deceased," answered Selewraith. "See, here he comes." And Marston, coming smoothly up, inquired concerning the welfare of Mr. Nettlestone and myself. My father lay disabled in his cabin with a wrenched ankle; but I myself was little the worse of my bruises; and so I told Mr. Marston. He nodded with a civil word or two, and went about his business. But awhile after, when I was alone, he sauntered up to me once more.

"If the wind holds, we shall yet see Southampton lights before to-morrow's midnight," observed Mr. Marston; and the reminder that we were a day late, for all we could do, coming from him, awoke my indignation. Indeed, any sundry word of Chidiok Marston would kindle anger in me.

"Look you, Mr. Marston," said I, "I

know not whether to challenge you for cowardly setting the mob on us, or to give you thanks for helping to save my father afterwards."

"Do both," suggested Marston.

"And so I will," I retorted, waxing hot.

"I shall be proud to have a bout with you, when time and place shall serve," says he. "But are you not a trifle hasty with me, Mr. Roger? A little inconsiderately harsh?"

"I am tired of you, Mr. Marston."

"I am sorry for that," he answered. "I cherished a hope we might have been friends."

"Did you indeed, sir?"

"Ay," says he. "Why, we have been so much linked together in a common misfortune, Mr. Roger."

"Have we? I did not know it."

"Why, imprimis, camarado, are we not both of us curst with a sad rogue in the place of a good father?"

I turned my back broad upon him.

"Oh, I crave pardon," cried Marston. "I thought you knew it, or I would never have spoken," and with that he strolled away.

We are prone to believe the thing we wish, and faith runs ever coupled with desire. Long since, I had set up a perfect image, and called it Stukely Nettlestone; but now, cleave to it as I might, the traits of that idol had suffered a sinister alteration. Betwixt old faith and new fear, I dubbed Chidiock Marston a scoundrel; but when he boarded me again, glistening with the imperturbable delight in himself and his talk which was his principal feature, I hearkened to him.

"I am not a good man, camarado," says he. "I was never called for a saint, and I know it. But I would not have you think worse of me than I deserve."

"You are not much in my thoughts, Mr. Marston," I said, which was untrue.

"All's one for that," he rejoined. "But do me this little justice, Mr. Roger, to believe that I declined your father's chal-

lenge, because I did not choose to fight him on such an issue. 'Twas not by reason of Sir Harry's death he desired to run me through, but for another-guess dependence; nor did I choose to risk my skin in that quarrel. Your father would like to see me snugly sepulchred, camarado, — but I do not choose to gratify his whim. And bethink you, he had time to escape the mob, had he not slipped down."

"Why should Mr. Nettlesome wish you dead?" I inquired.

"A highly pertinent question, Mr. Roger," says Marston, looking at me with his eyebrow atilt. "Believe me, camarado, I appreciate your situation. But at your age, dear sir, my own state was far more desperate. Did you never hear of Sir John the Priest, of Hursley village?"

The parish of Hursley lying but a few miles from Winchester, I had heard the priest spoken of; and, judging it best to let Mr. Marston run on as he listed, I said so.

“ Well, Sir John Marston is my father, no less,” Chidiok went on. “ While I was yet a tiny boy at school, my mother could bear her sorrows no longer, so she lay down and died; whereupon, Sir John must needs marry his cook, a whey-faced shrew, who brought him a parcel of snirps of children. Then Sir John trafficked with Archbishop Parker for benefices; and so soon as his boys were breeched, he inducted each of them into a cure of souls, and pouched the revenues, This wicked priest would have simonised with me, also, but I would have none of it, whereupon Sir John flung me out-of-doors, to breathe or burst just as it chanced. Never a groat of my rightful heritage have I handled,—’tis all consumed by my Lady Dishclout and her brood. Sir John is a gamester also, and winneth great sums; he is rich as an Ebrew Jew; but never a silver penny comes into the pocket of his lawful heir. I may scratch out a living with my sword, or lie down in the road and exhale. All’s one to good Sir John. Fathers

make but a villainous tribe all the world over, / say."

Christopher Selewraith had come near while Marston was talking, and stood surveying him curiously, as though he were some foreign animal. Marston glanced twice or thrice at the lean brown visage with the lank black hair, the bright black eyes, the open mouth of wonder undisguised; his glib speech halted somewhat, and he presently made an excuse to leave us.

"I do not like that fellow," said Selewraith.

The lively ship fled before the gale, until the Dutchman's long, low mud-banks lay far on the port quarter, and dwindled to a film of gray, and vanished. We were out upon the wilderness of dancing seas, where the gulls were rocking on the surges, or circling high in air beneath the vast and moving sky, when Mr. Nettlestone came upon deck, hobbling on a stick. I do not know how it was; but so soon as that

sombre presence stood beside me, the face of sea and sky, the very fashion of the sea-birds' morrice, suffered a change. The shadow of Mr. Nettlestone's God, with whom he walked, darkened the air; the formidable God who held the waters in the hollow of his hand, and loosed the winds at his will, and numbered the fowls of the air; who controlled the universe, which was but his engine working irresistibly to perform his terrible schemes of vengeance. Behind the sight and sense of all pleasant things, the soul of Stukely Nettlestone, looking out of his eyes, beheld the menace of his God; and when I stood beside him I saw with his vision, and believed it true, since he was true. And although this evidence of things unseen were sadly dispiriting, who was Roger Nettlestone, to complain of that? But there, upon the deck of the *Golden Rose*, was the last time I ever beheld, as in a dark mirror, that tremendous image of the crowned Despot; who held, in one hand, the over-

flowing horn of plenty, and, in the other, grasped a bloody sword. For the glass in which I read the vision was presently to be shattered in pieces.

“You and I are mercifully escaped from the jaws of death, Roger,” said my father, “while my ancient friend Sir Harry has gone from us, cut off in his own house. There is no such thing as danger, see you. You shall pass unscathed through battle and fire, until God’s finger single you out to the Destroyer. Sir Harry Wynter did me much kindness; and yet, I can think of him without remorse. I was able to do him a service before he died,—a disagreeable task; but I thought it my duty towards him, and so carried it through in my own despite. Chidiock Marston yonder had certain designs upon Elizabeth; he boasted of them in his cups; and I warned Sir Harry against his wickedness. Of all sins, this is one I will not countenance. The man who deals unrighteously with women shall get no mercy from me.”

"But would Elizabeth have aught to say to such a person?" I asked.

"Roger," said my father, "you know little of life. Women are weak and unstable. Weak they have ever been, weak they ever will be. 'Tis the constant duty of a good man to save them from themselves."

Methinks his words were just, and yet they stuck in my throat. And in this moral strain Mr. Nettlestone talked for a long time, to a very sullen auditor. But he never spoke of his impending trial, nor was he visibly affected by the inevitable delay in our arrival, with all its possible consequences. And when, upon the morning of the next day, the fifth of October, when we should have been in Winchester, there fell a dead calm which lasted until sunset, my father manifested no emotion whatsoever, but jested with the shipmen, and gossiped with Captain Porte about the sea, as though he had been bred to it, until I could not but admire him.

It was not until the evening of the third day since our departure that we fetched up at Southampton quay, in a stormy light of sunset. My father and I were to go on to Winchester the same night; but before we started, Captain Porte would have us to sup together at the tavern where I had first lighted upon him.

My father's hurt was almost recovered, so that he could walk with tolerable ease. A couple of mariners carried his baggage between them, the packet, which he had brought from the fort of Lammen, being wrapped in canvas and tied with rope; and we were presently seated about the long table lit with the candles stuck in the sconces of Spanish silver. 'Twas little more than a month since the same company was assembled together in this place; but it seemed that I had known them for a year.

Captain Porte sat at the head of the table, with my father upon his right hand, and Mr. David Rice on his left; Selewraith

and I faced one another; and below sat those of the mariners who were not engaged on shipboard.

We had eaten our way but half through a fine regale, when Mr. Nettlestone beckoned me to him.

"Where is Chidiok, Marston?" he whispered.

I looked up and down the lines of mariners, and, seeing not Marston among them, I answered that I supposed he was yet on board. Mr. Nettlestone's face changed and darkened, but he said no more.

I went back to my place; and, observing my father as he talked and laughed, I noted that the darkness remained upon his countenance, like a cloud, covering a watchful look, as though he listened for something that should come.

We had settled to drinking, and one had struck up a song, when there came a sudden thunderous knocking on the door, which was fastened against casual intrud-

ers; and, in the silence which followed, there rang a voice:

“In the Queen’s name, open! Open, in the Queen’s name!”

## CHAPTER XIII

THIRTEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY  
CROWNS

EVERY eye was turned upon the closed door, some of the company rising from their seats; and upon more than one, methought, a certain dismay was written. Captain Porte cried an order sharply, a sailor went to the door, and unbarred, and threw it back; when there entered a tall gentleman, wearing a peaked beard and a cuirass, five or six halberdiers crowding behind him. Through the open doorway I saw a torch, flaring in the windy dark and dropping fire, held by some one who was hidden from me by the press; and, in a flash of recollection, I beheld, once again, the figure of Death standing cloaked on the dike in Holland, and the midnight

fires of the beleaguered city. It came and was gone in a moment of time . . . and the gentleman in the peaked beard was speaking.

"Mr. Stukely Nettlestone, it is my duty, as her Majesty's Justice of the Peace, to arrest you. I have received certain information, and I have no choice."

My father stood upright in his place, a black frown and a little twisted smile upon his countenance.

"I have an appointment to keep with her Majesty's judges in Winchester to-morrow, I would have you to know, Sir Ralph," said he.

"I am well assured of it," returned Sir Ralph. "And I am here to lend you a horse and a guard for the road. Shall we ride, sir?"

My father limped from his place, unhooked his rapier from its hangers, detached his poniard, and gave them to Sir Ralph Conyers. Sticking close by his side, I did the same.

"My son may go with me, I trust?" said Mr. Nettlestone.

"Surely," replied Sir Ralph, who, I thought, had the air of misliking his business. "What is all this, Nettlestone?" he said low, as we went on.

"A vain alarm," answered my father, in the same tone. "I fear you will have naught for your pains, Sir Ralph. I know the knave who set you on. There he is."

As he spoke, the man holding the torch thrust it forward, so that the light struck full upon Mr. Nettlestone's bronzed countenance.

"What, Judas, are you there?" quoth my father, to Chidiok Marston; for it was he.

"Even so, Señor Don Incorruptibile," returned Marston, as the halberdiers closed about us.

A couple of horses were waiting in readiness; Sir Ralph mounted one, Mr. Nettlestone mounted the other. Two of

the men brought my father's mail, and tied it on the crupper of his nag.

"Doth the gentleman carry shirts of mail, for a change of linen?" I heard one say, as he fell back.

"Or the lead for his coffin, belike," rejoined the other jester; and I wondered what they meant, and then forgot their words.

A crowd was gathering thick about us, and the footsteps of persons running nearer pattered on the stones beyond the circle of torchlight. In that wavering, uncertain illumination, I saw the faces of Captain Porte and of Mr. David Rice, looking from the doorway of the tavern; and nearer hand, the familiar features of my shipmates sprang to my vision out of the dark and the ring of strange eyes. The next moment Sir Ralph Conyers cried an order, the torch was pitched over the quay-side, hissing as the waters quenched it; the darkness shut down like a curtain; and we began to walk forward. I heard Captain Porte shout a

lusty farewell, and the voices of the crew followed his. We answered, my father and I; and so the men of the *Golden Rose* were left behind. The crowd marched with us, filling the street from side to side; until, upon reaching the outskirts of the town, the halberdiers faced about and drove them back. We had gone about a mile on the country road, when I was suddenly conscious of a new step at my side; and peering through the darkness, I made out the long figure and high nose of Mr. Christopher Selewraith. He greeted me in low tones.

“How now, bully rook?”

I was wonderfully glad to see him, and I said so, and asked him how he came to be there.

“Oh, I had a curiosity to see this affair of yours to the end,” he answered. “Sir Ralph is my very good friend, for I am native to his countryside, and there you have it. Uptails all! We shall yet behold Jerusalem.”

The presence of this odd friend of mine cheered me like wine, and I tramped along the miry way, in the face of a black incertitude, with a better heart. For some three hours we marched up hill and down, to the hoarse music of the wind in the tossing trees, creak of saddle-leather, and jingle of bit; and all the time, I kept making pictures in my mind, parts of the puzzle which would never make one, adjust them as I might.

From every picture there started forth the inscrutable lineaments of my father. I saw again his face upraised to mine, white as the sky, in the cold dawning which broke upon the night of August thirtieth; again I met his kind and open look as I gave into his hand that villainous knave of diamonds with the ciphers on the back; and then I saw my mother's weeping countenance; again I beheld the flash of recognition, that conveyed no gladness of greeting, pass upon his shadowy countenance behind the bars of the wicket in the house in Leyden;

and I recalled, with a new terror, the man transfigured by overmastering fury in the deserted fortress; and again, sombre and tranquil, talking my doubts away on the deck of the *Golden Rose*: until all these images ran together in a wheel, and turned dizzily before my eyes, while the talk of Chidiok Marston, and his innuendoes, kept echoing in my remembrance.

The villages upon the road, as we passed through them, were dead asleep, and silent save for the barking of dogs; but when we came to Hursley, the ale-house windows were glowing, and the riotous notes of a song sounded from within. Sir John Marston, sire of the nefarious Chidiok, permitted late revellings in his parish, it seemed, for the time must have been hard on midnight.

Halting at the door, Sir Ralph cried to us that we would drink a cup of ale before going further; and dismounting, he entered with my father, closely followed by Sele-wraith and myself.

About the long table, which was set with tallow candles that flared in the wind from the open door, sat four gentlemen. A fifth lolled in his chair at the head of the table, facing us as we entered. He was apparently the singer whose voice we had heard, though his song had stopped at our entrance; for the others held cards in their hands, and cards were littered between them on the table, among bottles and tankards. As one of the players bent over his hand, in the moment before he looked up at us, with red hair falling about a pallid countenance, I had an odd sense of having formerly seen him elsewhere. It was gone in the same moment, as salutations passed between the gentlemen and Sir Ralph Conyers. The landlord entering from a side door, Sir Ralph gave his orders, and called in the men from outside. They had scarce come in, when the man sitting at the end of the table leaped to his feet, oversetting his chair with a crash, and crying out.

He stood staring for a moment, leaning forward, his hand on the table; a handsome, bearded fellow of about thirty years of age, with white teeth and a dancing, light blue eye.

"What, Stukely Nettlestone!" he cried. "And Marston, too, as God lives! Take the door!" he added, sharply; and two of the card-players sprang to the door, clapped it to, and set their backs against it, steel shining in their hands.

There was a moment's silence; the landlord reappearing on the threshold of the inner door with a tray of liquor, standing with open mouth and eyes that shone like jewels as they moved in his nut-brown visage.

"What mean you by this, sirs?" said Sir Ralph, loudly.

"I pray you take no offence," returned the bearded gentleman. "We do but desire to talk a little with our two friends here."

"I would have you to know that I am

Sir Ralph Conyers, Justice of the Peace, and that Mr. Stukely Nettlestone is my prisoner," returned Sir Ralph. "Ye may say what ye please, sirs,—but I will have the door free while I am here."

"Slight, a prisoner, is he?" said the bearded gentleman; and considered the company with his lips puckered as though he were whistling. "Give me your word," said he, "that none shall leave the chamber while you and I have a talk, sir, and I will take my men from the door. Grant me but the favour of a word apart, Sir Ralph,—I promise you, 'tis worth your while."

"I know nothing of you, sir. I will talk in no corners," Sir Ralph answered, roughly. "Men, close around the prisoner," he cried, turning about. "Mr. Marston, stand you next to Mr. Nettlestone, and you, Mr. Selewraith, and you, sir" (to me). "Now, gentlemen," he looked at the two by the door, "I pray you give place."

They glanced at the bearded gentleman, and, at a sign from him, moved a little aside; but remained, one on either side of the door, their naked points held down. Sir Ralph stepped to the end of the table nearest to him, and stood facing the bearded gentleman.

"And pray, sir, what is all this ado?" said he.

"Why, I will tell you," said the bearded gentleman. "*Imprimis*, we all, as we stand here, are but newly released from gaol by the Queen's clemency, — whom God reward for that righteous act."

"Item?" said Sir Ralph.

"Item," the other responded. "Here are Stukely Nettlestone and Chidiock Marston, who should have shared with us a most discomfortable captivity, but did not. And we desire to know why they did not."

"Ay," put in the man with the white face and the red hair, "that and more also, by the bones of God."

There came upon me, then, a surmise, which was to be speedily verified. Here, methought, was the prisoner whom I had seen carried into Winchester Castle, with his shirt bound about his head, upon the morning of the thirty-first August, and these were his fellows.

"Oh," said Sir Ralph, with the utmost truculence, "are you the Basing House company?"

"John Cleisby, at your service," returned the bearded gentleman, staring arrogantly upon him.

"I pray God I may sooner be buried in the earth than converse with such traitors," said Sir Ralph, returning the other's glance with an equal insolence. "But it sorts with my duty to ask you, how you come to be free men?"

"Oh," cried the man with the waxen face, "we did burst the Castle doors, and leaped from the ramparts, and swam the moat, and so God save Queen Mary."

"Sir Ralph," quoth Cleisby, "you are not

so civil that I should answer you; and yet I will, since we must needs have to do with you in this affair, which is of more importance, just now, than a quarrel with you, sir. Sir Francis Walsyngham did take too much upon himself in apprehending us, as his custom is; and your wary sovereign, Eliza, unwilling to cast suspicion upon her sister, Queen Mary, — whose servants we are, I care not who knows it, — did stay the prosecution, sending privy orders to release us. Are you content, sir? Have we your leave to question your prisoner?"

"Ye are dogs and murderers all, it seems, by your own confession. Fight it out among ye; but be brief."

Sir Ralph sat down on a seat beneath the window, after flinging these bitter words in the face of the conspirators, who looked at him blackly enough; but he was desirous, I thought, to salve his dignity while satisfying his curiosity. Perhaps Mr. Cleisby thought so too; for, after glowering at Sir

Ralph a moment, with his hand to his beard, as though he were about to speak, he appeared to think better of it, and turned to us, where we stood silently in face of him at the foot of the table, like prisoners at the bar.

I felt, in that moment, a presage of imminent calamity and shame. The candles seemed to burn with a double lustre; I saw the faces about me with an extraordinary clearness of vision; and the voices rang as though we stood in a chamber of brass.

"I am sorry to see you thus, Nettlestone," began Cleisby.

"Did you not know there is a price set on my head? . . . But Mr. Marston knew it," said my father.

Mr. Cleisby set his chin in his hands and looked from Marston to my father, and back again.

"For the old affair?" said he.

"The same, for aught I know," said Mr. Nettlestone.

"You see the rest of us here, free and merry," quoth Cleisby. "I will wager you double the sum, Chidiok, you will never touch your blood-money."

There was a menace in his tone and in his look; and a menace in the glance the two men beside Cleisby turned upon Marston. But Marston remained still and silent. Cleisby got to his feet, drawing his poniard, which he stuck upright in the board in front of him.

"Sirs," said he, "you doubtless remember the rules of our little society; and what is therein provided as due to one who should be found unfaithful, after strict and just inquiry?"

"Sirs," returned my father, instantly, "ask me what you will, I shall answer,—handle me as hardly as you list. Begin!"

"Why, very well, sir," said Cleisby. "Will you tell us, then, calling God to witness to your words, where you were, and what you did, on the night of the thirtieth August?"

I looked at my father. His face was tranquil as a mask of bronze.

"Before God and the Mother of God, I speak truly," said he. "I passed the evening with a clergyman, a good friend of mine; and in the early morning I came home, as my son can bear witness." He laid his hand on my shoulder for a moment. His touch burnt me.

"And who was this clergyman of whom you speak?" asked the man with the waxen face.

"Sir John Marston, of this parish," answered Mr. Nettlestone.

"Fetch him hither to bear witness, Cleisby," said a man who had not yet spoken.

"Go to the parsonage house, and bid Sir John come instantly hither," cried Cleisby to the two standing beside the door.

"Tell him his ministrations are required for one who is about to die," added the man with the waxen face; and I thought

his glance passed from my father to Chidiok Marston. The two quitted the house, and Mr. Cleisby continued his examination.

"And why, Mr. Nettlestone, were you not with us that night?"

"I have no traffic with France, as I told you from the first," returned my father. "I stand not with the Duke of Guise."

A voice like an echo rang in my ears, "I would not venture a cracked three-farthings for the Guises!" the words which Chidiok Marston said to me, when I met him by the Soke Bridge, as related in the first chapter of this history.

"The answer is scarce to the point," said Cleisby. "I pray you answer to the parts as they fall out."

But Mr. Nettlestone stood silent.

"Come, come," cried the man with the waxen face. "Never be feared of Sir Ralph, man. Sir Ralph Conyers is an honourable man. Sir Ralph Conyers would never tell the Queen how that Stukely Nettlestone

was the servant of King Philip of Spain, the hireling of Señor Don Antonio de Guaras, the Spoiler's agent."

My father made a step forward, and smote upon the table with his fist, so that the bottles leaped and tottered.

"I stand not here to be baited by you, Martyn!" he cried.

The man Martyn set his chin upon his hand, and smiled at Mr. Nettlestone in the red shadow of the hair which fell about his face. Sir Ralph, sitting quietly in the window, held up his glass between his eye and the light, and looked from the wine to Mr. Nettlestone, who drew back.

"Be easy, Nettlestone, the tooth is out," said Cleisby. "Let us try once more. Had you then orders from De Guaras to withdraw?"

"I had news," said my father, in a strange, thick voice, "that Señor Don Bernardino de Mendoza, the King's Master of Horse, was about crossing the Channel with certain

overtures of friendship, from the King of Spain to Queen Elizabeth."

As he spoke, I saw in my mind, as in a mirror, the image of the serving-man in the frieze cloak and the blue jerkin, who had ridden up to the door of my father's house, the day after Chidiock Marston's departure, and two days before the fatal thirtieth of August.

"You found it expedient to withdraw yourself from the scheme; we understand that," said Cleisby. "Spain or France, 'tis a matter of taste, and God save Queen Mary! But pray tell us, Mr. Nettlestone, why you did not then advertise us of these same news?"

Again my father remained silent; and this time it was the third man who replied for him.

"Stukely Nettlestone loves a lie dearly, and a piece of duplicity charms him like a song, and there you are answered, Cleisby," quoth he.

"Let us come to the root of the matter

without more ado," said Cleisby. "There is a Judas here. One did betray the place of tryst to Sir Thomas Walsyngham. Stukely Nettlestone and Chidiock Marston, it lies between you two. The seven of us did meet together upon the evening of August thirtieth, and having appointed the place of meeting, did part at six of the clock. Five of us met again at the place appointed, and ye two were not there. Where went ye?"

The speaker paused. Mr. Nettlestone folded his arms and leaned his head back, eyeing his judges with that old, dark look and smile. Chidiock Marston I could not see. There fell a sound from without of approaching footsteps.

"Stukely Nettlestone and Chidiock Marston," Cleisby went on, falling more and more, I thought, as he went on, into a judicial manner, which was reminiscent, perhaps, of some painful experiences of his own, "Stukely Nettlestone and Chidiock Marston, we bear you no grudge.

Clear yourselves of treachery, in God's name, if ye may."

The door opened behind us, footsteps clattered on the flags, and there came into the circle of candle-light a short, square clergyman in cassock and flat cap. Sir John the Priest had a bright eye, and a hard, red bloom covered his cheeks and sharp nose. The men seated at the table rose and saluted him. Sir John looked about him, then said somewhat in so low a voice that none caught his words; whereupon Cleisby cried out for silence.

"I say, where is the dying man ye spoke to me of?" muttered Sir John. He spoke like a man the strings of whose voice were worn to threads, and very deliberately.

"We will shew him to you in a little while, master parson," said the white-faced Martyn.

"What, daddy parson, art thou there?" cried the ribald voice of Chidioc. "How

goes it with thee, my coney-catching evangelist? How fares Madam and her surplised litter? Ware hallum and gordum, my holy gamester! Shalt handle high men and low too often yet!"

The men about broke into rude laughter, but the clergyman never stirred a hair. Cleisby cried out once more, and, in the silence which followed, the parson's tiny voice was heard again.

"What is this, Mr. Nettlestone? What is the matter? What do you here?"

"Marry, Sir John, I would I knew. Ask Mr. Cleisby yonder," said my father.

"We crave your pardon, Sir John, for bringing you hither," Cleisby interposed. "Mr. Nettlestone and I have a piece of business toward. Pray you answer but one question I shall put to you, Sir John, and you shall do us both a great service. Nay, Mr. Nettlestone shall put the question himself, if he please."

Sir John's bright glance travelled slowly upon the faces about him.

"I will answer nothing in the dark," said he. "Is this by your free will, Nettlestone?"

"Sir John," said my father, his sonorous voice resounding upon the other's husky murmur, "you behold a bench of mock judges, a mock trial, an innocent prisoner, even myself; and yet, you will do me a momentous service, if you will join the brawls, and bear testimony."

"Certainly, I will do so," said Sir John.

"Ask him your question, Nettlestone," said Cleisby.

"Not I," answered my father. In the stress of the moment I thought of nothing save what was passing before my eyes; but, afterwards, I gave Mr. Nettlestone credit for refusing to interrogate the man whose answer must incriminate his own son.

"Then I will," said Cleisby. "Can you tell me, Sir John, whether or no Mr. Stukely Nettlestone visited you upon the evening of the thirtieth August?"

Sir John regarded his questioner in silence for a moment; then he put his hand into his breast, drew forth a little book, and turned over the leaves.

"Ay, tell us how much the poor gentlemen did lose to you," cried Chidiok, and again there was a laugh.

"I find here," whispered Sir John, after waiting with the book open in his hand, until there was silence, "a memorandum of a sum of money gained by me at cards from Mr. Stukely Nettlestone on the night of the thirtieth August last." He handed the book to Cleisby. "We supped at seven of the clock, and recreated ourselves with the cards until midnight," added the clergyman.

"Nettlestone," said Cleisby, looking up suddenly, with the book in his hand, "dost remember the exact amount you did lose?"

There was a breathing silence. I saw Mr. Nettlestone turn a dusky white colour; and instantly there swam into the glass of

memory another image, the picture of a knave of diamonds glinting on wet stones, and having ciphers written on the back; and before Mr. Nettlestone opened his lips, I knew what he would say, — and his answer fell pat like an echo:

“Thirteen hundred and fifty crowns.”

The words were scarce out of his mouth when I was flung aside, thrown down, and trampled on, as Chidiock Marston burst through the ring of men to the door. There was a glitter of steel, — a confused momentary swaying to and fro and shouting, the scream of a man hurt, — and I was upon my feet again, the wet wind from the open door blowing upon my face. Cleisby's poniard stuck quivering in the panel; he and his men were out of the room; and there came from without a sound of galloping hoofs, and cries of pursuit. Sir Ralph's halberdiers, again closing about us, had stood fast at his word of command.

Sir Ralph broke into laughter.

“The play is done,” said he. “Will you drink, Sir John? To her most excellent Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, and all her enemies may God confound!”

## CHAPTER XIV

### DESOLATION

A FEW minutes later, we were trudging again through the dark and the mire. Chidiock Marston having galloped away upon Mr. Nettlestone's horse, which had been tethered to a post outside the ale-house door, my father was compelled to limp afoot. I could not but remark, that whereas Sir Ralph Conyers had ridden beside Mr. Nettlestone hitherto, he now fell behind the troop; and methought that even the men-at-arms avoided us, as though we were infected of a pestilence. With the extraordinary scene which had just closed swimming dizzily before my eyes; with the new and dreadful knowledge that it was not my father, whom I had known, who

walked beside me, but a black creature inhabiting his shape, whom I knew not; I strove to unwind and to set in order before me the intricate coil of circumstances in which we were entangled. Whether I succeeded in so doing, then, or did not clearly apprehend the posture of affairs until afterwards, I cannot tell. But, at that time or another, I perceived that Mr. Nettlestone, false Protestant, adherent of Queen Mary, mercenary of Spain, had been art and part in the plot to assassinate his lawful sovereign at Basing House; that, in accordance with the shifting policy of King Philip, he had received orders to withdraw himself from the intrigue of his fellow conspirators, who, it appeared, were the agents of the Duke of Guise; that Mr. Nettlestone was an inveterate gamester, who, having lost all his estate, and more, belike, to Sir John, the foul priest, had gone to sell the wretched Hollanders into the bloody hands of King Philip the Spoiler, to repair his shameful losses with the price of their destruction.

But destiny, using me as her instrument, had brought his schemes to naught; and I saw the reason of my father's rage when he drew sword upon his own flesh and blood in the vacant fortress.

I saw, also, how that Chidiock Marston had turned Queen's evidence, — unless, indeed, he had been a paid spy of Walsingham's from the first; and how, Mr. Nettlestone having spoilt his designs upon the Wynters, and having robbed him thus, perhaps, of a rich marriage, Marston sought both how to avenge himself and to make a profit out of his vengeance; and so he had hunted Mr. Nettlestone to the Low Countries and back again, and finally delivered him up to justice. I know not if he guessed that Mr. Nettlestone (who doubtless felt sure that his Spanish influence would save him) was about to deliver himself up; but if so, I suppose that Marston was quick to forestall him, in order to gain the blood-money. I think that, when he dogged Mr. Nettlestone in Leyden (how he obtained entrance

into the city I know not to this day), he was intent upon extorting blackmail from him; and that, when the one handle broke, he made haste to take hold upon the other. But the Queen's sudden privy mandate to let fall the prosecution (a contingency which might have been foreseen, in the light of experience, by an understanding less shallow than Mr. Marston's), and the chance meeting with his betrayed comrades, had knocked the bottom out of his elaborate scheming.

As we marched along in silence, footsteps met and passed us in the darkness two or three times; for aught I know they were the feet of the baffled conspirators returning, unavenged, from the pursuit of Mr. Chidiack Marston, the traitor.

Selewraith walked on one side of me, Mr. Nettlestone on the other; and after awhile my father touched me on the arm.

"Son, do you know that we are ruined?" said he, low, and in a curious, tired voice.

"I know that, indeed," I said.

"Perhaps we are thinking of different things," went on my father, in the same weary manner. "I do not remember to have told you that I found the privy treasure-chest of Colonel Borgia, which he left behind in his headlong flight in the fortress of Lammen, and I carried it away with me. That was the packet which was bound upon the horse, which Chidiok Marston hath stolen. What with rough jewels and a few ducatoons, there was a pretty little small fortune."

My heart rose, then dropped within me like a stone into a well.

"Do you see now, my son? When I did lose those monies to Sir John, I borrowed the sum of an usurer to pay him, upon the security of house and lands. The gripe holds a bond, by which all mine estate is forfeited by the fifteenth day of this month, unless he is repaid with his usury."

In that moment, with my mind still debating upon the past, I remembered the

packet wrapped in the silken coverlet, and I understood Mr. Nettlestone's sudden, unaccountable willingness to accompany me on shipboard; but I said nothing. Truly, I had nothing to say. The fabric of my life was already fallen in pieces about me; and if I thought, in that hour, how that the avenging hand of God was displayed in this final catastrophe, it was but the working in me of my father's own doctrine.

Presently, I thought I heard a little laugh beside me; startled, I turned to Selewraith; but his dim figure was no longer to be discerned. I spoke his name, but there was no answer. He had gone away then. Even Selewraith would have no more to do with this tainted house. Truly, I could not blame him; and yet, I thought, I would not have served my friend so. The night blackened about me; and I set to cursing the tears which burned under my eyelids; so we tramped and stumbled through the mire.

“Why did you not challenge Marston in Leyden, when he pursued you?” I broke out, once.

My father did not reply for some moments.

“I had no mind to set your mother’s future—and your own—upon the hazard of such an encounter,” he said, at length. He spoke as quietly as before, but I detected the old covert arrogance in his tones; and such a fire of indignation kindled within me, that I could have stabbed Stukely Nettlestone where he was, and trodden over his dark face. And then, with that flow of contradiction which ever ran athwart the current of my thoughts, I remembered how, so soon as Mr. Nettlestone had got his treasure on shipboard, he had gone to seek the spy in Leyden.

The dawn began to steal abroad, wan as the dead, as we descended the hill upon the sleeping city, huddled four-square within its walls, the leviathan back of the Cathedral

rising in the midst of dim red roofs and brown.

Sir Ralph led us to the tavern in the West Street, *The Three Cranes*, roused the house, and put Mr. Nettlestone with a couple of halberdiers in a bedchamber opening into the one he was himself to occupy. I could not stay within doors; and so, none preventing me, I wandered forth.

A bloody and a tortured frame of mind I was in, I suppose; and I sat down on a stone tomb beneath the Cathedral, to gnaw my misery like a bone. The serene and bright image of Elizabeth rose before me, unspeakably alluring. I looked upon the son of Stukely Nettlestone, and beheld him with abhorrence. For the blood of Stukely Nettlestone was mixed with the very springs of my being; and no medication save death could assoil me. I was like a man tied to a corpse. Sitting there, I thought upon the demoniac in Holy Writ, who dwelt among the tombs, crying and

cutting himself with stones; and I marvelled if his torment were more bitter than mine own.

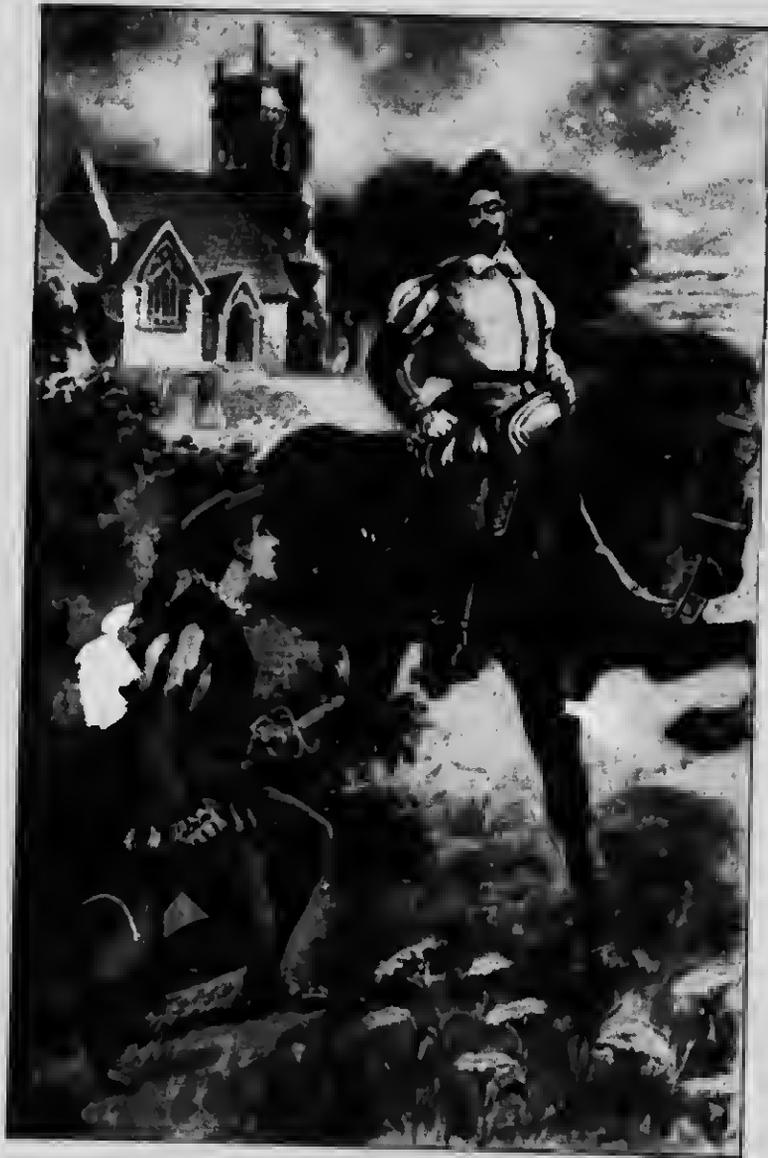
The dim light brightened slowly, the pinnacles and tracery-work of the Cathedral grew plain to see, and its vast bulk blackened upon a conflagration of sunrise, rolling crimson waves to the very zenith. The air was very still; the birds awoke in the gardens, piping and calling; about the square tower the rooks croaked and sailed. Men and women were all asleep in their close houses; only I, the outcast, sat gazing at the silent pageant of the sun. Something out of the stillness spoke to me without words; and presentiy, my sorrows stood away from me.

I beheld, as in a scroll of pictures, a great multitude of men, of every sort and condition, all desperately employed: sailing the perilous seas, marching in armies, sacking towns and cities, setting all they had upon the hazard of a painted card, toiling with spade and plough, huckstering in mar-

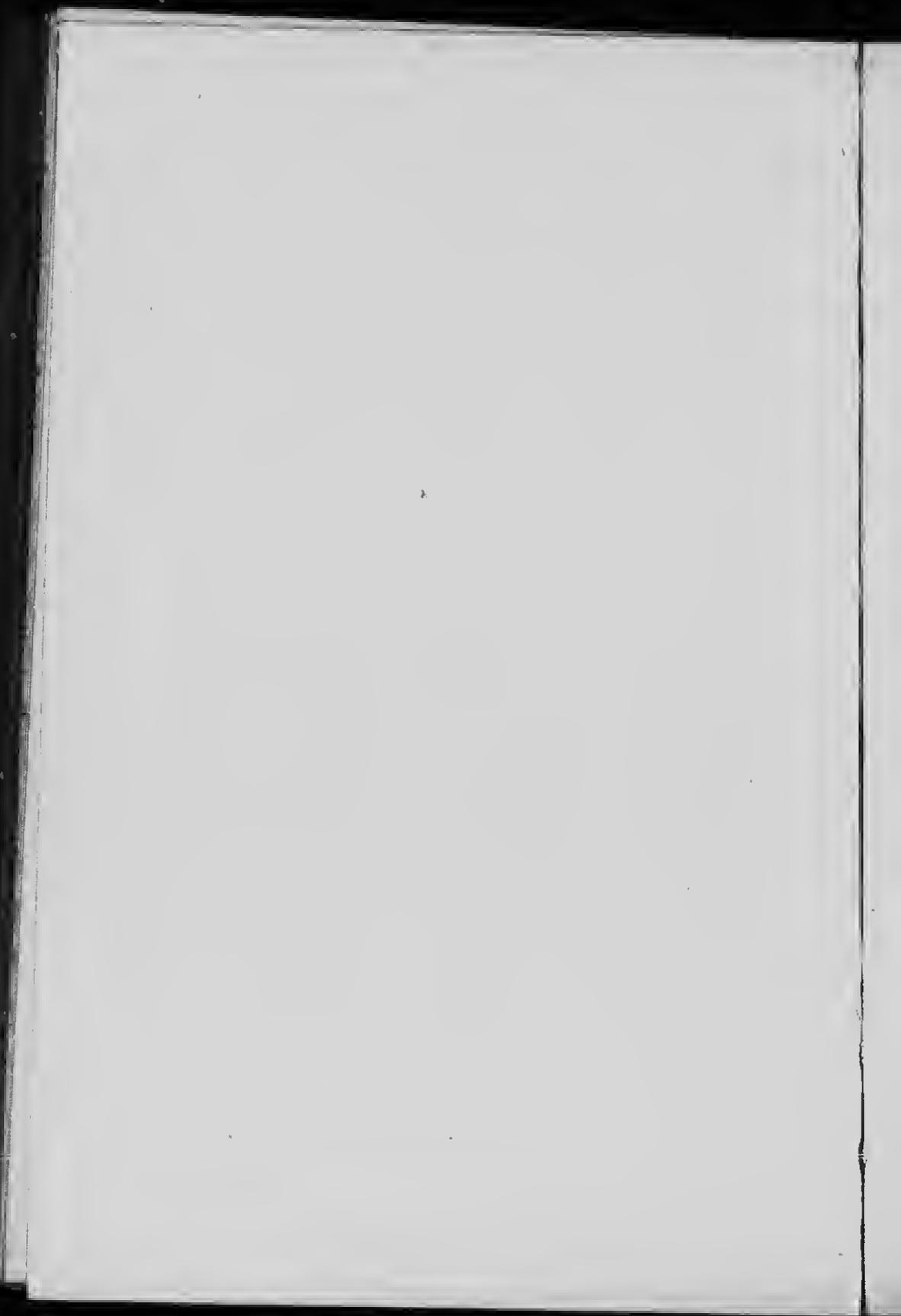
kets,—every one of them sweating blood to get gold, and immediately sinking into the earth, leaving impotent riches. Then I saw that in the labour and fight and travail, the sailing and riding, pains and perils, they nevertheless received a subtle reward. Methought I read this legend in the burning east; where, as in a crucible, men's airy doings shone daily purged and transfigured.

How long I dreamed thus I know not; but of a sudden a voice rang in my ears, and I awoke to see Sir Ralph Conyers sitting his horse close beside me, the sun's level rays lighting upon him.

"Art awake, Master Nettlestone? Your father is released from custody by her Majesty's clemency; and you will doubtless find him already at home;" and with a slight salutation, Sir Ralph passed on his way. I began to walk stupidly forward; and so I got home at last, quite wearied out.



"I AWOKE TO SEE SIR RALPH CONVERS SITTING HIS  
HORSE CLOSE BESIDE ME."



## CHAPTER XV

### THE SWORD OF HONOUR

AS I entered the dewy garden, the tranquil aspect of the shaven turf, the bright and waning flowers, the carven birds in the yew hedges, greeted me like a friend; and, in the doorway, I saw my mother waiting. I was miserably discomposed; for, how could I tell her the true history of my adventures? But I need not have disquieted myself so soon; for my mother, perceiving my wretched state, forbade me to talk, constraining me to eat and drink. My father (said she) had come home an hour or so before me, and, being much broken with fatigue, had gone immediately to bed.

Looking at her placid, merry countenance, and hearkening to the familiar tones

of her voice, I saw that she still dwelt with those comfortable illusions of the past, which had become to me no better than sorrowful dreams. A poisoned shadow lowered upon the house, but she beheld it not; and how happy in this hour (I thought) we might have been.

Fearful lest my mother should remark my silence, in the pauses of her pleasant talk, I inquired of her how Mistress Elizabeth Wynter did.

"Why, very well," said she. "Sir Harry will be glad indeed to see your father once more."

Astonished, I told how we had received tidings that he was dead.

"Truly, they all thought he was gone, for awhile. He was taken one day with a kind of falling sickness; they said 'twas his brain; and the apothecary bled him to his heart's content. But I think 'twas not his brain was in fault, so much as a less reputable organ," said my mother. "At any rate, he revived."

So Chidiok Marston had lied, or had been himself deceived, and Mr. Nettlestone's interposition to save the daughter of his friend, had not, after all, resulted in disaster; albeit I considered Mr. Nettlestone's code of morality with stupefaction. But my little friend Elizabeth had escaped sorrow; here was a gleam of consolation.

So soon as I had finished eating, my mother sent me to my chamber to sleep. It was late in the afternoon when I awoke, as free from care as a child; but immediately the burden loomed in my remembrance, and returned upon me.

Upon coming down-stairs, I found that Mistress Nettlestone had gone out to make some purchases in the town, and that my father was still in his room. I went into the garden, and paced up and down the flagged walk in the front of the house; not actively meditating, but waiting until my heavy intellects should rouse themselves to their task; and pausing, now and again, to watch the torn cloud-wrack gliding across

the misty face of the sinking sun. Of a sudden, it came upon me (as though a spirit called out of the silence) that I would go to see Elizabeth Wynter; and without another thought, I went straightway to saddle my horse. I marvelled why I had not started before; the road to Itchen Abbas was all too long, and the sere and coloured woodlands flitting past me ran all of a piece with my hurrying thoughts. And yet, when Sir Harry's gray roof and twisted chimneys shewed amid the trees, I slackened the horse's pace to a walk; and I should have passed the gateway, had I not seen Elizabeth. She was walking down the privy road which led from the highway along the garden wall to the gate, and, hearing the noise of hoofs, she turned about to greet me.

The sound of her voice, like a strain of music, sounded newly to me, as something I had hearkened and waited for, long and long. I drew rein beside her, looking down upon her. I pray God the picture

of Elizabeth remaining with me from that hour may never fade, nor dislimn from remembrance, until I am buried in the kind earth her feet have trodden.

Sweet was her face as the rose of dawn to weary eyes; the dying sunset radiance touched the hood she wore, caressing her; beyond her, the quiet lawn gleamed faintly, and the house and its embosoming trees gloomed upon the fiery heavens. There came across me the recollection of Chidiok Marston's lewd talk, and Mr. Nettlestone's scurrilous observation,—“I had but to beckon with a finger, and she would have come like a bird to the lure” . . . “women are weak and unstable,”—and in the clear and steadfast glance that held mine own, I saw that both these treacherous men talked like men born blind, who should babble of the sovran operation of the sun.

“And where have you been all this long while?” said Elizabeth. “Come quick and tell me the news. Why, what ails the child?”

You look half-starved,—are you starving indeed?"

"Not that," I said; and heard my own voice as though another were talking.

"What, then?—Marry, why do you not dismount?"

"Shall I?" I said, foolishly.

"Shall you, quotha? What ails you, Roger? Have you ill news?" Her kind tones came near to wrecking my fortitude. What should I tell her? And what right had my father's son even to talk with her? The glass of youth is often a distorting mirror, imaging the world as spinning very crookedly; and how shall green youth always preserve his equipoise?

I said I was well, that affairs were as well as might be,—that I was glad indeed to see her.

"And all with a face of pure misery!" cried Elizabeth. "Get down, for the love of Mary, and come within doors, and tell me all your history. Here is Jacob; he will take the horse."

"And mighty glad to see your honour safe at home again," says the square-faced, quick-eyed serving-man, coming up with a salute.

I followed Elizabeth into the familiar hall, where all was dark with flickering shadows, and glowing red with the fire-light.

"My father is abroad upon county business, but he will come home to supper," said Elizabeth. "Now tell me so much or so little as you list, Roger."

There and then I began to tell her the story of my quest. Elizabeth was seated on the deerskin in front of the fire, now looking up into my face, and now staring into the embers. For me, as I travelled back upon the weary leagues of sea, the perils and sieges, I could not satisfy my eyes with gazing upon her. When I told her of Chidiok Maston, she laughed.

"He is but an impudent liar," said she. "For two days he did amuse me, and on the third, I could not away with him. I

know not what Mr. Nettlestone said to my father, but, whatever it was, he fell into a great rage. He said naught to me, but he vowed I know not what against Mr. Marston, and I daresay there would have been blood shed, had he not fallen in a swoon. My father had thought Mr. Marston a very pretty man, until then."

At these words a part of my burden was rolled from my shoulders; and, with a better heart, I went on with my tale, extenuating nothing.

"And so," I said, when I had come to the end, "I have no business beneath the roof of any honest man."

Elizabeth got to her feet, and I knew that she was regarding me steadfastly, though I would not meet her glance.

"Look at me, Roger," said she.

I obeyed; and, as I gazed upon that beautiful and strong countenance, I received a mysterious impress of something unknown, which I had never before seen. In a moment, it had fled. What was it?

Elizabeth spoke to me, two or three words. I shall not write them here. I am no unbuttoned poetaster, to broider my heart upon my sleeve. But her delicate kindness so wrought upon me, that all unawares I broke into childish weeping. As I write, I am a boy no longer; my locks are gray; and I can view indulgently, as he were a son, the lad weeping there, leaning his arms upon the carven mantel, and hiding his face for shame. Elizabeth stood beside me, sorry for my sorrow, but serene as the morning withal.

"You are starved and tired, and you behold things all awry," said she. "See now, you are returned safe and whole, and so is your father. The prosecution is dropped, and all will think Mr. Nettlestone's complicity to be no more than a false bruit. None knows the true history save those who are not like to speak of it. Moreover, Mr. Nettlestone had a perfect right to take service with Spain, if he listed. And as to the money, — there

is a plenty money in the world, even though you catch not Mr. Marston with his spoils."

"And . . . honour?" I said.

Elizabeth took up my sword, which I had laid aside with hat and cloak upon a chair. She unsheathed the weapon, took the hilt in both her hands, and, with a sudden blow, drove the sword into the oaken floor, where it stood upright, the steel lightening in the firelight.

"Honour! There is honour! . . . Live by it!" quoth Elizabeth, with a shining look.

I took the sword, and, I vow and swear, the spirit of the steel ran into my bones. Without a word I girt on the sword-belt, and went out into the garden. Between the dark trees, a dim rift opened upon mysterious infinity, beneath a glittering star; and out of the silence, the shadow, and the odour of the night, a voice spoke to me without clear signification. Again, what was it?

I stood rapt and musing, as silly youth will muse, when there came the measured tramp of hoofs; I heard old Sir Harry's portentous voice resounding in the stable court, and presently he came through the door in the wall.

"What, Master Roger!" says Sir Harry, with a broad smile, pausing between each syllable, as his manner was. "Master Roger, returned from the wars, whole and sound, to God be thanks! Come in and sup, boy; you shall not go home this night."

I was glad enough to 'scape from meeting my mother again, so long as might be, — glad enough, altogether, to stay where I was. Over the mulled sack, I related to Sir Harry so much as I thought good of my adventures. With his solemn red face, patterned all over in blue veins, turned towards me, and his little eyes on mine, Sir Harry hearkened without asking many questions. I thought then, as I think now, that this burly and secretive old gentleman had been embroiled in more than one

doubtful conspiracy in his life; and that, as to Mr. Nettlestone, he had his own reasons for understanding all.

It was with a heart strangely lightened, and glad with an unquiet and ignorant gladness, that I lay down to sleep at night. And the next day I lingered still at the Manor House; glad to rest, and fain to stay in Elizabeth's tranquil and sweet presence. And whereas I was unwilling to return and meet my mother's questions, I prized every moment that kept me from Mr. Nettlestone. So the first day and the second passed, two days of the clear and glistening stillness that broods upon the fields in autumn, and found me still constant as her shadow to Elizabeth's side, debating to and fro in my mind a wavering hope whose brightness inly dazzled me. On the third morning, I arose, fixed in my course as the eternal sun himself, and came into the garden, which was all attired in its morning garb of pearl and silver, as though especially to attend upon my meditations. I walked

there for an hour, in a fervent tumult of mind, waiting for Elizabeth. Until she came, I was tormented indeed, but totally unmoved. She came to me at last, through the silver sparkle and gleam and the pearly dew, and her coming was like a piece of melody most sweetly played. The sunlight touched her lovingly, the radiant blue heavens bent towards her, and her blue eyes shone with a light better than the light of the sky. Her glance met mine; and in that moment I received again the mysterious message, one with the unknown voice that came to me out of the night shadows, from the vigilant stars. Now would I read that secret. Directly and positively, I told Elizabeth what (as I think now) she must have known already. I forget the words I used; but, and I remembered them, it would not be to set them here.

A shadow troubled that beautiful serenity. "I cannot answer you," said Elizabeth. "Must I answer you? . . . Are you so

hot and hasty of a sudden, after all these friendly years?"

I do not know what it was I had expected; but, at these words, I felt the infection of cold fear.

"Oh, God forbid that I should pester you!—do but prove me—that you do not cast me away, is all I ask you now."

"Truly?" said Elizabeth. "Well, I will not send you away, Roger,—not now, at all events. But since we could not marry, child, though I was to fall straightway into your arms, should we not let these things be?"

Here was not the language of impetuous love, and I grew yet more afraid. But in her troubled eyes I read a little hope.

"As to that," I said, "as to that,—is love always to wait in the cold while the house is a-building?"

"Well . . . we might kindle him a fire, perhaps, poor naked little boy," said Elizabeth,—and at the same moment Sir Harry's great voice bellowed to us from the house to come to breakfast, else the beer should

cool. I cursed him to Tophet as we went into the house.

I had shot my bolt, and though I was somewhat amazed at the result, I was strangely uplifted, also.

After breakfast, I went a-walking alone through the golden country, to consider the situation. I marvelled to remember my jealousy of Chidiok Marston; but hang him, thief! Had we the treasure-chest, Mr. Nettlestone should have imparted to me my just share, and all would have been accommodated. As it was, I must take to the sea again, and go a-picarooning; and truly, if I must be torn from Elizabeth, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea was the only way for me! And, dowered with luck on the Spanish Main, the mariner might yet gain his wedlock within a year, if she would have him. Surely she would have him.

And so, of hopes and doubts and fears, giddy youth went on building a castle as fine as a rainbow, and as perdurable.

But presently it came upon me, that Sir Harry might choose to try and marry his daughter the while I sailed the salt seas. At that, I resolved I would tell him that she was destined to marry me, and beg his favour.

Here was a rash and heady resolution; but youth is slow to learn how others differ from his foolish self; and the same afternoon, after dinner, when Elizabeth had gone from the room, I drank a cup of Oporto wine, and prepared to board Sir Harry.

But the old gentleman was already sailing large upon one of his interminable stories, which had neither beginning nor ending, nor any excuse to offer for its portentous existence.

“When I was a young man like to you, sonny, I sailed the salt seas also. Salt they were, and salt I was, as the saying goes, — and else, as the Scripture saith, wherewith should we be salted? We cut sail for the Main, to make our bread upon the waters,

but Newfoundland cod-fishers was all we took until we came to the Azores, and there I went ashore at Santa Cruz. And as it happened, boy, the ship sailed without me,—left me behind alone among the bloody Spaniards and the soft brown women-folk, and all because of the foolishness of simple youth. Be wise, Master Roger, and take a good wife while thou'rt young, which is wisdom better than rubies, and cleave to her all the days of your life long, so shall you escape repentance on a lee shore."

"'Tis what I would do," I said. "Will you give me Elizabeth in marriage, Sir Harry?"

The old picaroon's thick brows came down over his little eyes, and he turned his ear towards me, as though he had not heard me clearly.

"What?" said he. "Give you my daughter Bessy to wedlock? That would be a pretty play, would it not?"

"I am not jesting, Sir Harry."

"Sheart, nor I, then," says he, with a formidable accent, and setting his great square thumb on the table. "Hast forgotten thine age and station, I think, to talk so to thy father's old friend?"

"Sir Harry," I said, with a commendable effort to sustain courtesy, "I do but ask your leave to address your daughter so soon as I have money in my purse, and the time be ripe."

"And I, sir, refuse it." The square old man menaced me, pressing his thumb upon the table as though he had it on my throat. I had a passing thought, as I looked at him, that, in his picarooning days, a man would have small chance who felt that thumb upon his windpipe.

I asked him, why?

"Why?" says he. "Why? Ask yourself, Mr. Roger, the reason why. Do you wear a beard? Have you a groat in your purse? Have you earned so much as a piece of eight in all your life? Life? Ay, what do you know of life? Mr. Roger, I

would sooner set my daughter adrift in a cockboat on the Atlantic seas, than trust her to a beardless, simple innocent. I would so, by God's bones! Are these no reasons?"

I sat silent, and looking, I doubt not, like a fool.

"Are you answered, Mr. Roger?" said Sir Harry, getting up from his chair. "*No* is a good round answer, I think."

"And is that your last word?" I said, getting up also.

"Go hence and be wise, young man; I'll not have my daughter's life troubled by you. Do you love her? I doubt not, you do think you do. Then, as you are an honourable man, see her no more. Remember, boy, I forbid you to see her. Go hence and be wise. Resist the devil and he will flee from thee, Roger."

At this, I forgot civility. "The devil?" I said; "I came not here to prate of the devil! You talk too much, Sir Harry. I came to entreat you courteously, and you answer upon me like a slaver captain! Do

you think you can turn me from my will, old buccaneer? Then try and see!"

Sir Harry burst into strange oaths, as I passed him going towards the door, and yet, I thought, he was careful, in the midst of his anger, not to make overmuch noise withal. I went straightway to the stables, and saddled my horse, and rode out of the stable yard. As I went out of the main gate into the highroad, I met my father, who was about to enter. He looked at me very darkly as I saluted him.

"Why have you not been at home, sir?" said he, in tones of coldest displeasure.

"I have been here," I answered.

"Go directly home, and let me find you there when I return," said Mr. Nettlestone, and went on.

When I reached home, my mother met me at the door.

"Oh, Roger," said she, "where have you been all this while?"

I went in and sat down with her, and still I knew not what to say to her.

I looked about the familiar room, and then into her dear and familiar countenance, and I own that my heart smote me.

"Are you not a foolish boy?" said my mother. "Did you think I knew not there was trouble afoot? Did you think I would question you?"

"Why, yes," I said.

"But it is your father who is in trouble; and to whom, then, should I go, but to him? Well, you will know better one day," said she.

Still (I remember) I sat looking silently at my mother.

"Tell me, my son, what is your private sadness," she said, after awhile, to my surprise; and I told her of Elizabeth. I see her now, seated beside the window, in the dying light, attired in her black dress and pure white lace, hearkening to me with a quick, intent look, a sort of sober, smiling gravity, such as I have never seen upon any face save hers.

My mother sat silent for awhile when I had done.

"Well, well," said she, at last. "There is more trouble to come, my poor son. And though it pains you, much of it is but seeming only. When you are as old as I, you will look back upon your life's journey, and remember the roaring floods you passed scathless, and the noisome and deep waters that left never a stain behind them, ere they were lost in the sand. And as for the old picaroon, trust me, the little naked boy with the bird-bolts shall laugh in the old man's beard before all's done!"

And she went on to tell me that the very next day I was to ride to Southampton, there to await the sailing of *The Virgin God Save Her*, a bark which was bound to the East Indies; and in which, with her private money (upon a favourable opportunity occurring of late), my mother had bought me a share as gentleman-adventurer.

Upon the top of our conversation my father entered, wearing a very black countenance.

"What insolent folly is this, sir, that Sir Harry Wynter tells me of?" demanded Mr. Nettlestone.

"Roger hath told me all," answered my mother for me, composed as ever.

Mr. Nettlestone, with his frowning smile, looked from one to the other.

"Why, very well," said he. "I have no such appetite for the stuff that I want the story twice. But mark me, young Roger, you go to-morrow, as your mother hath arranged; and I will have no more truck with Mistress Elizabeth, do you hear me?"

"I shall go bid her good-bye," said I.

"But I tell you, you shall not!" said Mr. Nettlestone.

"Let him go," said my mother.

"Not I!" said my father.

"I shall go," said I.

The old hawk stared at the young one;

but the young one fairly stared him down. Mr. Nettlestone turned his great back broad upon us, and left the chamber.

“Marry, what creatures are men!” quoth my mother.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A JOURNEY BY CROSS-ROADS

AND the next morning, behold me taking the road once more; but this journey was to lead to issues very diverse from the other. My mother packed my scanty mails, and bade me farewell with woeful eyes shining from a face of courage; Mr. Nettlestone, standing at the door, waved his hand to me and went in; and I rode through the serene and pure autumn weather directly to Itchen Abbas. Coming beside the house, I found Jacob, the serving-man, busied about trimming the hedge, where Sir Harry's estate marched upon the highroad. I had passed him with a nod, when he called after me, beckoning, and I went back to him.

"Was you about going to the house, Master Roger?" says he.

I said, yes.

"I wouldn't, not if I was you, sir," returned Jacob, looking dubiously upon me. "I thought I might so well tell you, if you understand me, Mr. Roger."

"But I understand you not at all."

"And that is a pity, sir," said Jacob, steadily slicing at his hedge with a sickle.

I took out a crown, and spun it in the air. "Here is no time for riddles," I said. "Tell me your meaning instantly."

Jacob ceased his work and looked at me fairly. "We'n orders to put you out, so be you comes to house," said he.

"Then will there be some one hurt," I said, and began to walk forward. But again Jacob called after me, and again I turned back.

"What now?"

"Master Roger, there be no use in

it. Mistress Elizabeth, sir, she is gone away."

"Gone? Gone where? When did she go?"

"As to when, Master Roger," returned Jacob, still gazing at me with an open visage, "'twas yesternight. As to where, Master Roger, I know not,—so I cannot answer you that, sir. Can I so?"

"Yes," I said, "you can, — for a crown;" and I showed him the coin.

"I tell you, sir, I know not." His gaze was fastened on the bit of gold, and I put another beside it. But Jacob returned to his hedge.

"'Tis of no use, King Solomon couldn't bribe me to't," says he; and I began to lose patience.

"Lie not to me, Jacob. You do know the place, deny it not."

"And if I did know it," he returned, still obstinately slicing, "which, sir, I do not so, — but an' if I *did* so, — and if I was to tell, Sir Harry, he would go near to kill me, and

after he would fling me a beggarman naked upon the road."

At these words I got off my horse. That the knave was acquainted with the secret, I could see.

"You may choose betwixt Sir Harry and me, friend Jacob," I said. "Come! For the last time, wilt tell me where is Mistress Elizabeth?"

"Not for the black devil," said Jacob, pulling a stake from the hedge, and facing about like the old fighting-man he was. "'Sheart," says he, "touch me, and I'll mark thy beauty for thee, Master Roger."

I looked about, and plucked a stake from the hedge likewise, and the sticks clattered together. I was ill to deal with that morning; and in five minutes my pert knave was beaten to a bloody clout. I flung him on his face, and set my knee upon him.

"Hast thy bellyful, Jacob?" I said.

"Ay," says he, lifting a bloody face all

clotted with earth and dead leaves. "But y'are hell-hard on a poor man that strove to be your friend, Master Roger."

"And who are you, you curst slave, to treat your mistress as though she were jailed in Bridewell, with you for jailer? Come, discuss, or I'll pound the flesh from off your bones."

Jacob sat up. "All's one for that, Master Roger, so you pay for the plaister," said he, unruffled.

"Two crowns, and another for the 'pothecary."

"Follow Alresford road for six miles, then to the cross-roads beside *The Bull's Head* ale-house, turn west'ard into the forest, and follow the track past water-mill and the five fish-ponds to the Hunting Lodge." Such were Jacob's directions, though he used many more words than I have set down.

"Swear it," I said.

"Tis the way to lovers' meetings, I swear by the good God who made 'em," said Jacob,

catching the coins I tossed him. "And Mary send you luck, Master Roger," he cried after me, as I headed for the Alresford road.

*The Bull's Head* ale-house was a long, low inn, standing back from the highroad beyond a piece of green. The early sun shone warm upon it, and upon the figure of a man seated at the rude table before the door, with a pot of ale in front of him. Methought I had seen his like before. I rode up to the doorway, and lo! there was the red-haired Martyn, the released conspirator.

"What, is it you, young cock-o'-the-game?" quoth Martyn. "And how is plotter Stukely, your good father, sir? There is a friend of yours lying sick up-stairs," he added, jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

"Who is it?"

"The young longshanks that came with you from shipboard. He cannot tell me his name, and I cannot guess it," answered Martyn.

"What, Christopher Selewraith? And what doth he here?"

"'Tis a long story," said Martyn. "I would ask you to drink with me hand to fist the while I tell you, but I would not put you to the pains of a refusal."

"All's one for that," I said. I called to the house for a pot of ale, told the hostler to take my horse, and sat down face to face with Martyn. "'Prithee tell me how my friend came to fall sick in this place; and as for the rest of the past, we may forget it."

"Here's to the Queen we love best," cried Martyn, and winked at me as he drank. "To begin," he went on, "the cozening knave, Chidiock Marston, is no friend of yours, I think, Mr. Nettlestone?"

"Not he," I said. "I would I knew where to find him; you should soon see the bounds of our friendship! I have affairs to settle with Chidiock Marston."

"Marry, and I also!" said Martyn. "And Mr. — what is his name? — ay, Selewraith,

is another creditor of his, I think, if all were known. Hearken now, Mr. Nettlestone, since you are the boy's friend. Hast seen him since he parted from you the other night?"

I told him, no, and that I knew not what to make of his sudden evanishing into the dark. For I doubted now the conclusion I had come to at the time, that out of shame he had cut himself loose from our company.

"Well," said Martyn, "as you may guess, we were all scattered hotfoot that night on the track of Chidiok Marston. Marry, though he put a girdle around the earth, hanged shall he be in the end of it. The triple tree is the gateway into *his* paradiso. Well, sir, as I was saying, we were returning through the dark and the mire, all empty-handed, when your long-legged friend did join himself to us, saying he knew the countryside like the palm of his hand, so that, so soon as it was daylight, he could greatly help and shorten our pursuit.

Meanwhile, we were to press forward along the next turning to the left-hand, which (said he) must bring us to this very tavern of *The Bull's Head*, where the roads divide. From hence, we could take our several ways when the sun rose. All very good and wise,—but, when we came to the tavern, there was no Mr. Selewraith with us. We were enforced to start lacking his guidance; and, towards noon, myself and another found him lying mute and helpless in a chalk-pit not very far from here. His head was wounded, so he must have fallen over in the dark, and he babbled in his talk. We brought him here, and on the way he came to his senses for a moment. ‘I found him,’ says he, and incontinently swoons again into a trance. We fetched a surgeon to him; and here we abide, watching by his bedside, turn about, in the hope he may come to his senses and tell us what he knoweth.”

“But,” I said, “while you are here, Mars-ton may be out of England.”



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“We have other-guess business than to scour the world for Chidiock Marston,” returned Martyn. “Here is a quiet spot, where we are well served, — cakes and ale, sir, good stout beef and fair capons, and plenty of sack, — so that we can make amends for the times of scarceness endured in wrongful prison. We shall wait but a few days longer. Marston is in hiding, or else he is gone away; and if he be gone, — the world is a ball of little girth, when all is said; and be it soon or be it late, God will bring Chidiock Marston to be hanged at last.”

Here was strange matter for meditation. Why should Christopher Selewraith of a sudden throw in his lot with this party of Queen Mary’s disciples? But, wherever Marston was, there was the stolen treasure also.

So it came to pass, that my lot was to be mixed once more with the lot of these damned conspirators. They might hang the man so much as they pleased, for me;

but not, I trusted, before I had taken the ducats from him. Meanwhile, here was I that had to go to sea, and so myself must leave this enterprise..

"I have told you all the story, my good Mr. Nettlestone," said Martyn, after I had been considering his news a little while in silence, "not only because the sick young gentleman is your friend, but in order that you may send us word if you come to hear news of Mr. Marston. Will you do so?"

"I am about going to sea," I said. "But I can send a billet from her to Mr. Nettlestone, who hath a privy grudge of his own against the man Marston."

"Why, very well," said Martyn, "that can do no harm, neither. Will you come within and write it? House! Pens and paper and wax for this gentleman."

"I should like to see Mr. Selewraith first," said I, not without a wild hope that he might return to his senses even as I

came in to him; and Mr. Martyn led me above stairs.

As I entered the chamber where Selewraith was lying, the high, even tones of his voice rose upon the stillness of the quiet house and the golden weather.

“Shut the sluice—shut the sluice and stop the wheel, the wheel, the wheel—*hush!* Little as a goad, now tall as a mountain—shut the sluice, shut the sluice, and stop the wheel, the wheel. . . .” Over and over again the high, thin voice rang on like a tune. Selewraith lay upon a great bed with carven pillars, his head, which was bound about with linen, rolling continually from side to side. His eyes were bright as a bird’s, his lean face burned red amid the white napery. Beside the narrow lattice window stood one of the two men who had kept the door in the tavern at Hursley the other night.

“No change, nor sign of change,” said he, in answer to Martyn.

I took Selewraith’s dry, hot hand in mine,

and held it, and spoke to him. But the high, thin voice rang on without pause: "Shut the sluice—the sluice above, stop the wheel, the wheel . . . *hush!* The tiny wheel that widens and whirls against the sky . . . shut the sluice. . . ."

There was naught to be done for him, it seemed, save to acquaint my father with his sickness, and pray him to bring medicines; for he had much knowledge of the apothecary's art. This I did in my letter to him, which I immediately despatched by a messenger from the inn. Mr. Nettlestone would doubtless marvel what I did so far from Southampton; but I cared little for that.

Turning westwards at the cross-roads beside *The Bull's Head*, I rode end-long down a grassy track, into the radiant forest.

The world, saith the preacher, is set in man's heart. *My* world within raged in tumult; and although the noble tranquillity of the world about me could in nowise

assuage the tempest, mine eyes dwelt with admiration upon the innumerable army of strong trees that closed me in, bravely hoisting their tattered ensigns against the hard blue heavens, that should presently rain destruction upon all their host. Lights and shadows glanced in the dim recesses; in a belt of pine-wood, narrow openings gleamed like painted windows; once and again the voice of a bird cried from unseen depths. Here great and small were going down to the recurrent death God prepares for his creatures, according to the immutable revolution of the seasons; here was dissolution entered upon with a grave gladness, with the magnificence of a king's festival.

I thought upon the image of Death with his burning torch that I first beheld upon the windy dike in Holland; and now, methought I saw the veiled figure clothed in a woodland vesture; and methought the hidden countenance wore the look of a friend.

With this vision haunting me, I came to a place where the green track clove in two. Jacob had not warned me of this; and I tossed my poniard naked in the air, and let it drop on the ground, as I had done outside the Pancraskerke in Leyden city. The steel pointed to the left hand, adown a long straight alley,—the road of safety, had I but known it. To the right, the path turned out of sight. Dismounting to pick up the dagger, I went to look around this corner, to try if I might descry the water-mill or the first of the five fish-ponds by which I must pass to the Hunting Lodge. My footsteps sinking in the wet grass, I came to the corner, and suddenly beheld the figure of a man walking away from me, scarce a bow's shoot down the alley. Surely, I knew that jaunty gait,—that tall green hat with the draggled feather,—surely, 'twas Mr. Chidiok Marston; and I slipped behind a bush of holly, and watched him betwixt the leaves and the scarlet berries, until he turned out

of sight. Then I took my horse a little way into the wood, tied him to a tree, and set out to follow my gentleman home.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FIGURE OF DEATH

**I**T was now my turn to dog Mr. Chidiok Marston. Moving softly through the covert, I kept him in sight for near upon a mile, and coming to a place where the road dropped swiftly and curved about, a noise of falling waters rose upon the woodland stillness; and I perceived a great stone mill standing in a gloomy hollow, over against a wide pond, with a great beam projecting from its forehead, like a horn. Marston entered the mill; and I called to mind what Elizabeth had once told me, that Marston's old nurse had married the miller upon Sir Harry's estate. Marston, then, had taken sanctuary in this deep seclusion from the vengeful con-

spirators. Did he know, I marvelled, that Elizabeth was lodged so near to him? and I reflected, that although he did not, he must surely find her out very soon. At the same moment, the words of Selewraith's monotonous raving came to me,—“Shut the sluice, stop the wheel, the wheel.” The water-wheel, turning somewhere out of sight with its swift and measured throb, repeated the words over and over to me as I sat down behind a bush to consider the matter. Should I go swashbuckling into the mill, and hale Chidiok Marston forth to take up the challenge I had thrown him on shipboard? But, were he to kill me, that were a sorry end for Roger Nettlestone; and what, moreover, should then befall Elizabeth? And were I to slay Marston, how should the treasure be discovered? I could not go to tell Mr. Nettlestone or the conspirators at *The Bull's Head* that Marston was found; for that would leave Elizabeth defenceless to this parlous cock-o'-the-game! Plainly, then, I must stop

to play the spy upon him, though my ship should cut sail without me. In the meantime, perhaps Selewraith would come to his right mind, and would incontinently bring the whole wasps' nest about Marston's ears.

So I fetched a compass about in the woods, skirted the shining chain of fish-ponds, and came presently upon a square stone house set in a garden sloping towards the water, planted about with trees that stood graceful as virgins, communing with the changing light of the western heavens.

The main track ran between the low garden wall at the foot of the bowling-green, and the fish-pond; and a road branched at right angles, running beside the garden wall, past the wrought-iron gate, to the postern-door; so that the two roads formed two sides of a square about the garden and the house. I stood at the corner, hidden among the trees, carefully observing this disposition. A single spiral of smoke

lightly besmirched the golden west; but there was no face behind the lattices, and the garden was deserted. Beyond, on the left hand, the quiet pool mirrored the waning leaves and bare branches that closed about the water; farther yet, the grassy shoulder of the hill heaved upon the blue, and took the dying sunlight. In the side of the hill there gaped a chalk-pit, like the burrow of some huge beast; as I learned afterwards, this was the pit into which Selewraith had fallen. The serene and fragrant stillness enfolded all. I heartily wished that here were my journey's end. For here was hidden the jewel of my heart, the end of my desire; and yet I must not stay. But I would bid her farewell, at least; and I went to the postern-door and knocked upon the panel. None came; I knocked again, and yet again; choler sprang within me, and I was about to break down the door, when I heard slow steps approaching. The wicket was unshuttered, and the face of

an old woman looked from behind the bars.

"What is't you want?" says she.

I told her, I would have speech with Mistress Elizabeth Wynter.

"Go your ways," quoth Cerberus; "there is none such here. Go your ways, young man."

I told the portress, that unless she brought me instantly to Elizabeth, I would break the door in pieces.

"Who be you, then?" says she, piping a little shriller.

"Go you and tell Mistress Eliza that Roger Nettlestone would speak with her," I said, and I slipped a piece of money betwixt the bars of the wicket, which was snatched instantly.

"Bide you there," said the wrinkled face, and vanished.

In awhile the steps returned, and the crone, again appearing, thrust a billet through the wicket.

"A dear bargain at a crown, I should

reckon it," said the old woman behind the door, as I turned my back upon her to read the letter.

I did promise my father that I would not for a tyme see you, neither receive any letters from you. Forgive me, deare Roger, I could not honourably do any other thinge at this tyme. Let me not to keepe my pledge. God speede your fortunes and hold you ever in his mightie keepynge.

E.

I walked forward and into the woods with the letter in my hand, and sat down in a quiet place to consider what it meant. The words pierced me like a flight of arrows, and this defeat of my hopes struck me most cruelly.

I kept the scroll; it lies before me as I write; four lines of handwriting, like a brown cobweb, upon a little square of faded paper, that were once a spell to turn the sky black above me. How came it that Elizabeth was enforced in honour to plight her word? Methought I beheld Mr. Nettlestone's hand in this; for I knew too well Elizabeth's serene and strong nature

to suppose that she would yield an hair's breadth to old Sir Harry's windy violence. But as I read the lines again, hope looked out from the dolorous words; and I rose up with a resolve, like iron, to get Elizabeth. Soon or late, though I should lose all else in the world, I would gain the end of my desire.

I went back to the place where I had left my horse, and led him without the wood to a farmhouse, where I told the good wife that he had fallen lame. After I had seen the nag stabled and fed, the farmer came in to his dinner, and would have me to dine with him. When the meal was done, I went again to the stable to see how my horse did; and, unseen by my host, I borrowed a halter and put it under my cloak; and, telling these kind people that I had business at the mill, and that I would return in the morning, I set out once more for the Hunting Lodge. Coming again to my point of wood, which commanded the house and garden, I sat down to keep watch for Chidiocck Marston. That he would come,

I was assured; else would I have watched the mill where he was. On my left hand, the main track through the forest ran from behind me straight forward, between the fish-pond and the dwarf wall of the garden; in front of me, from left to right, ran the side road leading to the postern-door. I watched the light change and fade, and the trees darken together, and saw the evening star lighted in the sky above the dim shoulder of the hill; still I watched, until all the dark heavens glittered with stars, and Orion the Hunter strode belt-high above the woods, and a lamp gleamed faintly in a window of the house, from behind red curtains. As the mariner, sailing warily towards his haven, stares at the beacon which lights him to the shore, so I stared through the dark at the red gleam shining from the chamber where Elizabeth sat alone.

And after a long while, I heard the soft treading of footsteps, which seemed to come from behind me; and I rose up with the halter loose in my hand, ready to catch

the night-thief, Chidiock Marston. I saw a great figure stride out of the dark; and since I could not see the face in the hazy star-shine, I must cast my line at a venture. So I made but a step of it as the man came abreast of me, flung the running noose over his head, and drew upon the rope with all my force. The next moment, the rope was wrenched out of my hands, I beheld all the stars of heaven swoop from their courses into my eyes, and I was lying on my back with a great pain in my head.

“What now!” said the wrathful voice of my father, Stukely Nettlestone; “what make you, rascal?”

I might have known my father would track me; but I had forgot him. He set his great knee on my chest, and took my neck in his gripe, as though he would have strangled me.

“Let be,” I said, as he loosened his grasp a little. “’Tis I,—I took you for Marston.”

My father put his face close to mine,

so that I could see his little and fierce eyes, then slowly took his weight from me.

“Marston? What of Marston? Get up,— get up, I say! Will you speak?”

Shaken and dazed as I was, I was more angry.

“By Jesu, you shall use courteous terms, or I will never speak a word with you more,” I said; “and we stood facing each other in silence, while a man might count twenty. Expecting naught less than a furious onslaught, I was strung like a bow, ready to flee. But Mr. Nettlestone spoke to me quietly.

“Here is no time for childish trifling,” said he. “Tell me if you know aught of Chidiok Marston in plain words.”

I had begun to speak, when my father clapped his hand upon my mouth, and drew me into the bushes. A faint, sucking footfall, as of a man who walks in wet ground, broke the silence, and drew nearer.

"Take and hold him on this side, while I take the other," Mr. Nettlestone whispered; and as the dim figure of a man came abreast of us, we leaped out and seized him. He cried out with oaths, as he desperately struggled, and we knew by his voice that we had caught Chidiok at last. Marston would have had but a scant chance contending against my father alone, and the pair of us soon brought him to his knees, when we bound his arms to his sides with my halter.

"And now, Mr. Marston, I would ask you to restore to me my monies with my horse, which you stole," said my father.

"Stole!" said Marston, panting like a dog. "Stole, said you? That is no word to be used betwixt gentlemen, Mr. Nettlestone. I did borrow your horse, sir,—would you grudge a horse to a man in flight for his life, and that wrongfully? You shall have him again, or I will buy him, as you will. As to monies, I know not of what you speak. Monies! What monies, indeed?"

"Come a little this way," said Mr. Nettlesome; and we drew the prisoner out of the shadow of the trees to the edge of the glimmering water, and placed him against the wall of the garden. Within the wall was a low hedge of sweetbriar, whose sweet scent rose upon the air.

"Mr. Marston," my father went on, "I will have those monies and jewels which you stole, to-night. You shall swear to take us to the place where the treasure is hid, or I will fling you bound into this water, to drown like a rat in front of your light-skirts' windows."

"Do you think to frighten me, Señor Don Stukely? You will get marvellous little by that," said Marston. "I think you shall find it profit you more to use me as a gentleman," says he.

"Dilly-dally, dilly-dally, and you shall come to be hanged, dear sir," said my father. "Will you tell me you have not the luggage that was tied upon my horse?"

"Not I," returned Marston, with a great appearance of candour. "Truly, I remember me of such a packet, but I cut it loose as I rode, to be rid of the weight. Methought the packet was but a parcel of clean shirts,—if there was monies in it, I am truly sorry, sir. But I was in a piece of a hurry at the time, by God I was."

Mr. Nettlestone began to pace to and fro, two or three steps, with his hand to his chin; and by that omen I forboded imminent tempest. Whether Marston were lying or telling the truth, it was likely that my father was equally enraged with him.

"You are a cozening knave, and I believe that you lie," said Mr. Nettlestone, stopping in front of his prisoner.

"And you, Don Judas Iscariot, you cogging, scurvy night-thief, who would strangle an honest soldier going peaceably about his affairs,—I challenge you to fight me here and now, and in the dark, Mr. Stukely Nettlestone."

"I take up no such challenge," returned my father, with a towering dignity.

"Marry, I never thought you would do so. You are but a bragging coward," quoth Marston. "A fico on you! I spit in your face!"—and faith! as I heard him spit, I knew that his hour had come.

"Roger," said my father, with sudden bursting fury, "hie to the house and get a candle,—I'll fight no man in the dark,—fetch me a candle, boy, and you shall see this whoreson insolence beaten to a mess of carrion!"

"They will not let me in," I said. "Will you go, sir? and I'll stay with Mr. Marston."

"Take your rapier and stab me him through if he should run," quoth Mr. Nettlestone, and, vaulting the garden wall, he vanished into the dark.

The dim red light still gleamed in the upper window. After a moment's silence, the wood and water rang with the blows of Mr. Nettlestone's sword-hilt upon the

door. I saw the red curtains withdrawn from the lighted window, and a woman's head looked forth, the light shining in a halo about her hair; and Elizabeth's voice cried out, asking who it was.

My father answered that it was himself, and begged her to bring him a light; Elizabeth withdrew, and presently the light disappeared from the window.

"Dost remember thy cartel on shipboard, Master Roger?" said Marston, at this point. "I have not forgotten it, I. And I fight you first, young man, by all the laws of the game."

I told him I would engage him with all my heart; but inly I sore misdoubted the issue, for my broken head so grieved me that I turned dizzy now and again, scarce knowing what I did. In this condition I totally forgot that, if Marston were slain, we lost all hope of recovering the Spanish chest. As for Mr. Nettlestone, when his wrath possessed him, he ever ran clean out of his wits.

The house door opened, and Elizabeth stood in the doorway, holding in each hand a lighted candle stuck in a silver candlestick. Mr. Nettlestone took them from my dear, and talked with her for a few moments; then the door was shut, and my father, carrying the lights, came alone down the garden. Methought I was in a dream from which I should presently awake, as my father came stepping towards me out of the dark, with the streaming tapers in his hand; and then methought it was not his figure that I beheld, but the figure of Death, once again emerging from the night. The candles were set down upon the sun-dial that stood at the upper end of the bowling-green; and so still was the night, that the flames scarce flickered, but burned steady as in a chamber. And the next remembrance I recall to mind is the finding myself face to face with Chid-iock Marston on the soft grass, and shining in my eyes the twinkle of steel crossing and recrossing, and sounding in my ears the rustle and clink of the meeting blades.



FACE TO FACE WITH CHIDIOCK MARSTON.



Sick and hot, and still in a dream, I wrought as I might to keep the point from my throat; every moment I thought I was sped; when the blades were stricken up, and I was flung aside.

"Here is enough of fooling," cried my father's voice, as I stumbled and fell down. "The boy is sick. On guard, sir!"

The steel clattered and rang, and I lay upon the grass and watched the fight go on, in the hazy candle-shine, betwixt those two redoubtable swordsmen, Stukely Nettlestone and Chidiock Marston. My father's weight and size had given him something of an advantage, were his foot perfectly recovered from the hurt it had received in Leyden, when, sword in hand, he pursued Marston in the breach. But once and again I saw him slip; and once and again, as by a miracle, he parried Marston's thrusts with the dagger held in his left hand. In the dim light, I could scarce take count of the strokes; but very soon I perceived the

red trickle of blood upon Marston's left sleeve, and methought he used his poniard less deftly.

A little after, my father pierced his leg above the knee; at the same moment, Mr. Nettlestone's foot turned beneath him, and I saw six inches of red steel flash out between his shoulder-blades, as he tumbled on his side, with a horrible groaning shriek. An answering cry rang from behind me, and Elizabeth came running out, and together we kneeled beside my father, doing what we might for him. Chidiocck Marston, the blood soaking and oozing in his clothes, and dripping from his fingers, stood beside us; and presently he helped us to carry my father within, and to lay him in bed in an upper chamber. Then he went away without a word; and, being busy about the wounded man, I never so much as saw him go.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### TWO JOURNEYS END

**B**EFORE sunrise, Mr. Nettlestone passed without speech. Throughout the dead waste of the night, I sat and watched my father dying; and Elizabeth and the old crone who had parleyed with me through the wicket watched with me. I did but wait for the first light of day to ride for a surgeon, though the nearest were fifteen miles distant, and I had no hope to save my father; but, by the time the blind white eye of the dawn peered in at the lattice, Stukely Nettlestone had gone to his long home. All night, as I sat beside the still figure with the changed, waxen face, hearkening to its fitful breathing, I thought no more of the Stukely

Nettlestone I had come to know; that hated image swam clean out of mind; and I remembered again the kindly brown face of the father who used to bid me welcome when I came from school,—the great and noble person who was real to me, and whom I had worshipped. Many fire-bright, dear memories came upon me; I thought how that he had thrust into the fight to save my own life; and I looked upon what had come to be, and wept.

When all was done, it was Elizabeth who led me out of the chamber of death, and who made me to eat and drink in the room below stairs, which was strangely illumined by the radiant sunrise that flung red banners athwart the morning sky.

All about the silent house, a choir of birds was singing clear and high. As I think upon that morning, I see again the flooding light of the sunrise, I hear the birds' tiny barbarian music, and I behold Elizabeth's compassionate and grave countenance raised to mine. All this time we

had scarce exchanged a word; I would not seek to draw her into talk; but, as we parted, I drew a certain courage from her look.

I set forth to fetch my horse from the farm, with intent to carry the ill news directly to my mother; thinking no more of Chidiok Marston at the moment, though I took the road which ran past the mill, as the nearest way. It was a bitter task I had before me; not only must I tell my mother that her husband was slain with a sword-wound, but I must tell her all the history of his doings in Leyden, and of the after-clap that brought him to his death; for nothing less would content her. But, since it must be done, it was presently accomplished; and I could but marvel at the courage of women. My mother changed into the likeness of eld before my eyes, but she made little ado, and asked few questions; all her desire was to come to my father, and within two hours from my arrival, I was again upon the road, riding a fresh horse,

with my mother seated on a pillion behind me.

While she was making ready to come with me, I had despatched a messenger with a letter to Sir Harry Wynter; and when we came to the Hunting Lodge, in the golden mid-afternoon, Sir Harry was there before us.

He received my mother with solemn punctilio, and led her within doors, while I took the horse to the stable. When I had done my business there, I loitered down the road that led to the mill, glad to be alone for awhile, that I might consider the posture of affairs. I marvelled in what manner my mother's life and my own should now be ordered; and I called to mind that, upon the third day hence, the usurer from whom my father had borrowed monies to pay his gambling-debts must come, for aught I could see, to take all we had. That reflection brought Sele-wraith to my mind, and the lost treasure. I had passed *The Bull's Head* ale-house

twice that day, and had seen neither him nor his fellows; nor had I chosen to stop there to speak with them, since I had no desire that they should come at Marston before me,—if he were still at the mill, which I thought highly uncertain, although he was wounded. I stopped in my walk, and considered whether I would not even now go down to the mill and deal as I might with Marston, were he there.

I was still considering, when the drum of horse-hoofs broke the stillness, and grew swiftly louder; the next moment, a horse came rushing down the road towards me, with his rider bending low on his neck. I had scarce time to leap into the bushes to save myself from being ridden down; the cavalier went by, spurring like a madman, and was gone like a whirlwind; but not before I recognised Mr. Chidiok Marston, all swaddled with bloody clouts, with a desperate white face. The drum of hoofs still resounded,

and a party of four or five horsemen came bursting down the track. The hunt was up, then! Selewraith had come to his senses at last, and put the hunters on the track. Here was Martyn the red-haired, leading by a neck,—here was Cleisby, riding knee to knee with the man whom I had found watching in Selewraith's chamber, with the other two, who had kept the door in Hursley tavern, following hard after them.

Martyn cried out and waved an arm to me as he thundered past, and I set to running after the party so fast as I could lay foot to the ground. But before I could reach the Lodge, hunters and hunted had turned off to the left, along the margin of the pond, and were out of sight. I halted for a moment to gain breath; and, looking up at the bare shoulder of hill that hove above the trees, all ruddy with the sunset light, I beheld Chidiock Marston (I knew him by his swaddlings) break from the covert and go straining up the slope

on his great roan (which had been my father's). He was half-way up the hill, when one of his pursuers—who, so far as I could discern, was Martyn—came out from the trees, and began slowly to gain upon him.

I stood still and watched the chase go on upon the lighted hillside. As the rest of the hunters straggled forth of the wood, Martyn had come so close upon Chidiok Marston that his horse's nose was level with Marston's crupper. They were running close beside the chalk pit which had entrapped Selewraith, when Martyn's horse stumbled and fell, casting his rider forward on the grass, and I thought that Chidiok was saved. But Martyn leaped to his feet with the swiftness of a mountebank, and ran like a hound after his quarry. For some ten yards methought that neither gained nor lost; but the rider was nearing the ridge of the hill, and, once on the further side, no man living could hope to come near the great

roan steed. Then the horse stumbled as his pursuer had done, and fell on his knees; and although Marston had him on his feet again, he had lost ground; and the next moment I saw the running figure come alongside Marston,—saw the flash of steel,—saw the horse, hamstrung, tumble in a struggling heap together with his rider and Martyn.

The rest of the party coming up, I saw the flash of steel again as they cut the throat of the wretched nag; saw them all gather together; and, after awhile, saw the cavalcade returning down the hill, with Chidiok Marston, tied and bound, riding a led horse. Seeing them strike slantwise towards the mill, I returned along the road in the like direction; and, coming within sight and sound of the mill, I beheld one lying in a horse-litter, the horse being tethered beside the door; and, drawing nearer, I saw the white face and great eyes of Selewraith. I ran towards him, crying out his name.

"What, bully rook, is it thou? Praise God for that!" cried Selewraith, faintly. "But prithee tell me quickly, what has befallen?"

I told him Marston was taken, and that they were bringing him there.

"Away with you, Roger," said Selewraith, vehemently; "let them not see you, — return when they are gone, for I have news for you. Hark! Get you gone."

There sounded the trampling of hoofs; and, obedient to Selewraith's urgency, I ran into the woods, then crept back through the covert until I could lie in hiding within sight of the mill.

Presently the whole party came, with Marston, towards whom I began to feel some pity, bound and bleeding in their midst. They gathered in front of the mill door; one went in and brought out an old, fat, dusty miller, with a worn old woman, his wife and Chidiock's ancient nurse. They forced the miller, at sword's point, to fetch a couple of ropes, sent his

wife, crying and weeping, within, and shut the door upon her. It was short shrift and a long rope for Chidiock Marston, poor cully. One of them — 'twas Martyn — crawled out of a door in the gable of the mill, climbed up and sat astride the beam which I had at first noted, sticking like a horn upon the forehead of the building. A wheel was fixed upon the beam, doubtless for hauling up the miller's sacks. Martyn rove a rope over the wheel, and fastened a second rope to the beam itself, leaving one end loose with some twenty feet of slack line. Below, they seemed to be tying the first rope about Marston's body; and Marston's voice arose in a single lamentable cry.

"Will you murder me, gentles — will you hang me like a dog — will you hang me?"

"Right so," said Martyn, bending from his high perch like some evil bird, with his red hair falling about his face. "Right so, by Mary! Haul away, brothers!"

The rope running over the wheel grew suddenly taut, and Chidiock Marston, slung with a loop beneath his shoulders, rose into the air. They hauled him right up to the beam, and kept him suspended while Martyn put a noose tied in the end of the second rope about his neck. I would I could blot from remembrance the look on the face of the poor beaten traitor. Martyn the hangman drew his girdle-knife, and cut the sustaining rope; and Chidiock Marston dropped twenty feet, and swung to and fro in the air.

These bloody executioners stood beneath their gallows for awhile, talking low and looking one upon another. All this time Selewraith lay quiet in his litter, beside the door. Presently they went into the mill, and I could hear their hasty footsteps pounding all over the house, and their loud voices calling out. Doubtless they were searching for Marston's goods and papers; and I marvelled if they had come to know aught of the stolen chest. I

thought it clearly impossible; nevertheless, I was glad enough to see the whole five emerge into the twilight, and mount their horses once more. Each man, I noted, as he came out, made a little circuit to avoid walking beneath the drooping feet of the hanged man. They rode past my hiding-place, so that I was fain to cover my eyes, lest they should remark their shining amid the withered fern and brushwood; and I saw the conspirators no more.

So soon as the noise of hoofs had fallen silent, I rose up and went to Selewraith. He was propped upon his elbow, his wide eyes bright as a lighted match in his white face, his great nose sharpened like a bird's beak, and his whole man trembling with a violent agitation.

"*Shut the sluice, shut the sluice, and stop the wheel,*" he cried, so soon as I came near, and methought he was raving again. "God's blood, man, what art drumbling at? Shut the sluice, I say!"

"In good time," I said. "Give me your hand first;" and I took his wrist in my fingers. The pulse beat swift as the heart of a frightened bird, but Selewraith regarded me with a sober and steadfast eye.

"Oh, you think I have the fever again," says he. "Not I, brother. I am whole as yourself, save for weakness, — your good father did heal me, I heard them say. Are you done with playing the 'pothecary? See to my pistol, then, for Jesu's sake, and shut the sluice. If those gay buccaneers come back, good-bye to your fortunes, Roger. Marry, be quick, slow-belly, be quick. Wilt do as I bid thee, now?"

Though I doubted still if his mind were perfectly recovered, his vehemence infected me, and, with a sudden trembling of hope, I went briskly to charging the great horse-pistol afresh; then to the sluice wheels which stood opposite the mill door, across the road, and which shut or loosed the water upon the great wheel. Scarce had I begun to turn, when the miller stood

beside me. His face was mottled like porridge, and his purple lips were fallen apart and shaking.

"What do you here?" quoth he. "Leave my wheels alone. Marry, here be pretty doings!"

"Miller ahoy!" cried Selewraith's weak, high voice; and the man turned his head to behold the black muzzle of the pistol mouthing at him.

"Stand aside, miller, stand aside," said Selewraith, and the fat man skipped like a ram and stood a little way off.

The sluice shut down, the water roared over the weir; I heard the great wheel slacken its beat and fall silent.

"Fetch me pick and shovel, miller," cried Selewraith. "Roger, out with your tuck and go after him."

I walked behind the miller with naked blade, and, when he would have stopped, pricked him in the leg; he cursed me, but went on, and presently brought the tools from a cabin in his garden.

"Bring them on," quoth Selewraith, pistol in hand. "Lead me round to the wheel, Roger."

I led his horse around to the back of the mill, where the great wheel, full thirty feet in diameter, stood silent, depending from its axle into a narrow, stone-lined ditch or canal, some three fathoms deep, whence the waters ran from the paddles of the wheel to join the back-water.

"Down with you," said Selewraith, "and dig beneath the wheel, as you love life. Heart up, miller, all shall be well, an' you do as y'are bid, and as all good millers should."

So I climbed down the slippery wheel, which was too heavy by far to stir with my weight, and stood ankle-deep in water among the stones at the bottom of the ditch. Above, very far away, I saw two-three stars shine out of the darkening sky, as the miller handed me down the tools. And delving beneath the water I struck upon a canvas

packet tied with rope, and heaved it forth. The astonished miller came running with a rope, and in good time we hauled up the treasure-chest of Colonel Borgia of Lammen fortress.

"Here is a little matter of gear bequeathed to my shipmate and me by the unfortunate Mr. Chidiok Marston," quoth Selewraith to the miller. "God be with you, miller, for we must go. Give honest master miller a piece of money, Roger, and let us be gone."

And having dismissed the man with a gift, I bestowed the chest in the litter beside Mr. Christopher Selewraith, and incontinently we set forth towards the Hunting Lodge. Behind us, the helpless thing that once was Chidiok Marston dangled betwixt the kindly earth and the bestarred, inscrutable heavens, a darker blot upon the darkening landscape. But I thought no more of that poor carrion; I thought of my comrade Selewraith imperilling his neck for me, the while I was doubting of his friendship. Never had I

considered that he might have overheard my father's talk in the dark of his ruined fortunes, and that, without a word, he might have gone to do what he could to restore them.

He had tracked Marston to his hiding-place, and watched him bury the chest; and, starting hotfoot with the news, had tumbled into the pit whence Martyn had picked him. I was glad to think how it was my father's hand had cured my friend; and how those two (with the help of the Guiseian plotters) had come to build again the fallen house of Nettlestone. For my father, as I discovered later, had given Selewraith the draught which set him to sleep and so saved him. And knowing, doubtless, that the sick man would sleep till morning, Mr. Nettlestone, I must suppose, had come forth to spy if Marston were lying hid, by good hap, in his old lair; and also, perchance, to spy if his son were loitering about the forbidden gates of Eden.

## CHAPTER XIX

### LOVERS' MEETING

**T**HOUGH I went from a laden gallows-tree to a house of mourning, I bore a light heart in that hour, for all my thoughts clung and hovered about the image of Elizabeth. We went in silence, for Selewraith seemed to have fallen suddenly asleep in his weariness. I knew Elizabeth would come to me; and yet, when her figure came lightly towards me through the shadows, and she walked beside me, I marvelled at her coming.

I told her that I had come upon my comrade Selewraith, that he was sick, and that I would beg of Sir Harry to take him in. Then I asked Elizabeth why she had given her promise to her father.

"Do you marvel that I am come to you?" said she. "I have taken back my pledge for to-night. 'Twas for your father's sake, poor gentleman, and not for mine own, that I pledged my word at first. Did you not know the reason?"

Then she told me, how that when my father had come to Itchen Abbas, upon the day when Sir Harry had refused his suit, he had come with intent to borrow monies to pay his gripe of a Jew. There were old affairs, it appeared, betwixt Mr. Nettlestone and Sir Harry, which (in a word) had left Sir Harry straitly bound to my father. Nevertheless, Sir Harry bluffed and swore, making oath that he would never part with so much as a groat unless Mr. Nettlestone pledged his honour that I, Roger Nettlestone, should totally resign Elizabeth. This my father did willingly; whereupon Sir Harry, to make all sure, called Elizabeth, and told her the whole matter, and required her pledge also. What could she do but give her promise?

"We will see as to that," I said. "Wilt come in with me to Sir Harry, so soon as Kit Selewraith is safely bestowed?"

"You must wait in patience, Roger," Elizabeth answered. "This is no time for the broils you so love to provoke."

"There shall be no broil, and I will not wait," I answered. "Prithee, sweetheart, come with me."

And so soon as Selewraith was hapt in bed, with my mother tending him, I took the chest beneath my arm, and Elizabeth came in with me to Sir Harry. The old buccaneer was seated beside the fire, with a stoup of sack at his elbow. His thick brows drew together as we entered upon him, but he greeted me courteously, inviting me to stay myself with a cup of sack until supper-time.

"Sir Harry," said I, "I have but now learned with what great kindness you came to my father's succour." I stopped, and the old man stared fixedly upon me. Since I said no more, Sir Harry was enforced to speak.

"Boy," said he, in his most unctuous and deliberate accents, "say no more. What I have done—I have done. My poor friend, Stukely Nettlestone, hath gone beyond the help of man, which is but a worm, and his riches is a dung-heap. Mr. Roger, when I tell you I am glad I did for your poor father what I might, I do so for your instruction, who are younger than I. Lo you now, though I lose all, I should the more rejoice, though I be no better than other men of ripe years and experience."

"Good Sir Harry," I said, "be not angry that I would repay you every farthing, so soon as ever we may come at a goldsmith."

The old man looked at me with a swelling visage, and his jaw loosening. Elizabeth stood watching us.

"What do you say?" cried Sir Harry.

I cut the cords that bound the packet, and drew the covering away. Sir Harry fastened his gaze upon the little iron chest.

"Here are jewels and monies, lawfully mine own, save what is yours, Sir Harry," I said. "The key is at home, and so soon as we get there, you and I will go together to a goldsmith's."

"Bones of God, *had* he ducats then!" cried Sir Harry; then, recollecting himself, he changed his face in a twinkling. "This is a sad and solemn time," said he; "no fitting time to discuss such affairs, Mr. Roger, no fitting time. We will discuss anon. Till then, Mr. Roger, it will be wise of you to leave the chest in my keeping."

"You will pardon me, dear sir," I said. "'Tis an odd sentiment,— but I am loth to part with the little box. When you come to learn the history of it, you shall understand the whim."

"Enough said, Mr. Roger. Take a cup of sack, boy, and be done. And what make you here, wench?" said he, turning, not unkindly, upon Elizabeth.

"I am come to take back my word, dear sir," quoth Elizabeth.

"Ay, ay," rumbled the old buccaneer, "I did expect it. Go to! What! Are ye not ashamed?"

"We will discuss anon, sir," said Elizabeth, and, with a deep curtsey, she withdrew.

But the shadow and the fear of parting were fled away from between us.

## CHAPTER XX

### ENVOY

**S**TUKELY NETTLESTONE slept with his fathers in the shadow of Winchester Cathedral; and all unkind remembrance was buried with his bones. His debts were paid out of the Spanish plunder; and the residue of the prize sufficed to maintain my mother, and to make the beginnings of fortune both for Christopher Selewraith and myself. *The Virgin God Save Her* was enforced to cut sail without her gentleman-adventurer, Roger Nettlestone; nevertheless, his share in the venture brought me a good profit. And, in due time, Elizabeth entered with me into that new life which is called marriage. And Kit Selewraith, whole and

sound once more, played at the wedding  
the air which he made on shipboard, and  
of which he was most inordinately proud,  
the Morrice-dance of the Beggars of the  
Sea.

Now the mighty hand of old Time, who  
brings all things to all; who takes all  
things away; who ministers healing and  
subtle consolation, purifying remembrance,  
concludes, together with the vast and  
momentous concerns of the great world,  
my tiny, individual enterprise. My tale  
is done. Farewell.

THE END.

