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"Yet once more came her cry."—Page 96.

The Tower
Of Wye
A Romance

By
WILLIAM HENRY BABCOCK



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1901

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TO
MR. JOHN TILGHMAN
OF QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
MY OLD FRIEND
WHO WILL VERY WELL REMEMBER OUR HUNT YEARS AGO
FOR THE VANISHED
TOWER OF WYE

(RECAP)

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PREFACE.

ONCE upon a time a newspaper item told me of certain discoveries made long before on Wye island, a fertile broken-off piece of Queen Anne's County, Maryland, which has been known also as Chew's, Paca's or Bordley's island after successive owners. When occasion offered, I drove down there with a friend, who had previously taken me on a similar trip to Kent Fort Manor where Claiborne planted his colony. The exact site of the Wye tower could not be identified, but we found in the river bank a hollow where a tunnel had issued, and, over on the mainland a few miles away, one of the excavators, who "minded" very well the digging, if not quite "the bigging o't." He described it as "brick-lined and big enough to roll a hogshead through," ending inland among the foundation piles and pillars of some building which had passed away. He did not recall a second passage running to the other shore, and I am not sure of his testimony as to the wall across the island; but we came upon remnants of the latter, as we thought.

These forgotten fortifications were conjecturally explained as the work of smugglers or pirates, or some early eccentric proprietor; defences against Indians,

(v)

or a stronghold of Claiborne and his men during the wars with Lord Baltimore. The last of these fancies appealed most to me, and was chosen as the germ and kernel of my story. Of course I had to bring my people there and arrange for many things which had no direct reference to the Tower of Wye, but they are all in some sense because of it, and this seems to give a peculiar fitness and justification to the name.

I think, by the way, a very brief mention of a ship *Tiger*, bearing a cargo of young women for planters' wives, and its trying experience with pirates before reaching Jamestown, will be found among the papers published in a bulky volume with Captain John Smith's narrative some years ago. This part of my romance has already appeared in print in another form.

Claiborne, Cloberry and Warren, Richard Smith and Leonard Calvert, Henry Fleete and Amos Broadnax, with some half dozen names beside, were real people, though I cannot guarantee my notion of them as doing perfect justice in every case. That is not always true of the man one meets in business or of one's next neighbor; and these people, even more certainly than excellent Uncle Ned, "lived long, long ago,—long ago." Happily there is no risk as to the feminine personages, for their names have not come down through any other channel; except Virginia Dare, of whom we know only that she was born and disappeared.

I tried instinctively to give the haze of marvel and magic through which our good, credulous predeces-

sors regarded the new world about them, and this effect has been a little heightened by after touches, though not unduly, as I hope more disinterested critics than myself will be able to say.

W. H. B.

ROCK HAVEN, March, 1901.

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THE TOWER OF WYE.

CHAPTER I.

WE MEET A MAN WHO LIES.

NOW these, to say the truth, are drowsy times indeed, wherein even a grass-grown hulk of a man such as I, long stranded and disused, may well find himself awearry. There is but a poor makeshift, profiting little, in the ramble of brain and pen through years ago, whatsoever of surprise and wonder befallerh them—ghostly as all else abiding in memory. Yet he who hath seen many things must verily tell many, or approve himself no better than a miser to his kind. Moreover, tale-telling with the breath of life in it is no bad wasting of the Lord's good time for one whose best book is ever within. Better than staring over dull water, where St. Mary's men find "piracies" no longer, to yon far, fair isle whereon I set that Tower of Wye which was our strength, or the flat land, whence even the Indians are melting away! Better than conning wise doctrine, and dreary, sermon

on sermon ; which will chart all hereafter for you,— and wrangle worse than Sathanas over the way ! These be things whereof I deem living man will not often certainly know. Nevertheless, mayhap I, too, Richard Smith, gentleman, a sober man and known for some discretion, have been in my time within whiff of hell-fire and within echo of heaven. I write myself as they wrote me, who passed the kindly sentence of death.

But let us hark back to when I was simple rather than gentle, a Kentish lad of old England, bony and freckly of countenance, broad across the brow, long from head to heel, filling out very slowly for a yeoman of substance among the hops and gavelkind. Keen of wit for a yokel, some said ; but it was not so beyond mere good sense in devising. As for strength of arm, that was well known. Yet if it failed me in any hazard, I might count undoubtedly on Ratcliffe Warren to my recruit.

In sheer love and gratefulness to the handsome, rash boy, I would gladly have gone round the world with him—as, indeed, I may almost say I did. A paragon of comrades and inciters was he, up and away in spirit after all the marvel of the great, rolling earth ; a soul of no foreboding and no hanging back ! Fortune's playfellow, bright wing flashing in the sunshine—it makes me more than sad to think so much life could be blown quite out and away !

He had ever something new wherewith to set me astrir. Now a mariner with an arm awry and a tongueful of tales, who came wandering down the river ; now

beaver-skins and miracles, in equal quantity, come by consignment unto the London house of Cloberry and Company, where he had an uncle in some station of repute. At the last he went thither also in lesser employ ; and I after.

A life little profiting in money, yet of mighty and varied interest. The strange furs, oily and many-tinted, with all the wildness or fierceness that had been in them—a hunt going to every one, or some art of trapping at the least, and to this or that a man's death, it might be ! The spices, novel to us, bearing the fire and the incense of that far East where folk lie in wait and strangle, and worship fantasies, and build up things that bristle and taper most like the figures of some dream ! The odd, savage things, too, in quills and copper, the twisted little idols that men have bowed before, ugly though they be, and most of all the bruit and rumor of daring that still were with us, however they might vary, the mirroring of many golden visions away beyond reach !

Proud men who had seen the outer world went and came ; this with an old scar and the story of it, that with a prize all his own, a third with some dancing of hope that was very nearly beyond our believing. Great breeders of these marish-lights were they, laying violent and fertile hands on the fancy. Of a certainty there be ways of trade that would not have pleased Ratcliffe Warren nor even me ; but I marvel not at all that we were well contented in exchanging our fields and slow waters for all this inrush of pictures and vehement tempting abroad.

One day I was in a tavern which we frequented in our hungry hours, not minded to eat alone but in no good temper by reason of Warren's delay, when the door came open and he swiftly toward me, with so much in his dark eyes that they grew brighter under gaze. But knowing his transports of old, quoth I, "What now? Another sailor off a kraken's back? A tomahawk of jacynth and mother of pearl from the halls of Norumbega? Meanwhile here is somewhat will be cold awaiting."

"Out on the growling old bear at dinner!" he cried, though seating himself in high good humor. "Hear the savage eating man! Gorge, gorge, in the name of Moloch, that prime devourer of small babies! Naught say I!"

So his friend ate well content; also knowing that the new wonder would not long stay under lock and seal.

"Ah, well, you were not so far afield in that last," quoth Warren presently.

I held my peace with valiant eating.

He smiled, his eyes went down again and he made strenuous copy of my action; but it would not do.

"Dick," cried he of a sudden, "I know very well you are aching to hear——"

"O, that's it," said I.

"Yes,—and so"—but his eyes and ears were drawn to the doorway. "Here is the man himself," he cried. Then in an eager undertone, "Captain Henry Fleete. Shall I ask him to join us? You never heard such wonders!"

I raised my brow over this, for I thought it hardly possible to hear more than had come to me through him already, but was not hungry enough to be ungracious any longer. "As you will," said I. "Or, rather, by all means."

Captain Fleete made one of us willingly, with a face of great peace and quietude. Seated thus, he had a taller look than when standing, for his legs were brief to have gotten over such a vastness of ground; but his body was long, and his head, too—long every way. He wore the dress of the time, but there were hints of sea-life and wood-life about it; an anchor tattooed, a binding of unknown fur, a tobacco pouch worked in quills of parti-color, a small pink shell, a hunting knife with deerskin sheath and a tuft of human hair dangling. That gave me a bit of a chill. He did not notice, dallying with his beer and solid food as though his thoughts were away.

"You hardly eat, Captain," protested Warren, very willing to draw him out.

Fleete raised his face with the quiet beginning of a smile. "One gets out of the habit," answered he.

This was ever his fashion, even in the more surpassing flights; no braggart work, but a seal and asseveration of veracity—a philosopher who had turned adventurer, merchant, sailor and man-at-arms, patiently ready with his narration, believe it or no. Moreover, his beard was ample, well tended and weighty.

"God forbid!" quoth I. "Surely hunger is not a habit to be cured in any wise, excepting by food only."

“You would say not so, had they used you as they did me—those outland savages,” the Captain made answer. “This was the way it fell out. Here”—drawing map-wise with his finger—“is Jamestown. Here runs up the great bay of the Chesapeake from the Virginian sea. Here the river Potowmack comes down through the waste golden mountains and the countries of the man-eaters, running whitely by the towns of the Nacostines in a mad race. Here they spear their fish between the rocks, but in fear and trembling for those dreadful neighbors above them and the Emperor of the Piscataways not far below—a friendly power to Christian folk, save when worked on by the howling children of the Devil. A race they are half-man, half-fiend, of no tribe, yet ranging through all for evil; beastly in hide and feature as the retinue of Comus in the old plays; the offspring I doubt not of those horrid unions before the flood. He had warned us, but we thought ourselves wiser; and being with the Nacostines went even after them in their strong place amid the bark-houses and palisades and scaffoldings. Then all at once, having us in a trap, a very horriſſic uproar began, and all who fought or fled were slain very quickly. I alone, seeing no hope at all, stayed foot and hand; so that they took me unbroken, and with mirth and triumphing set me apart for the future.

“Now, on the second day there came down the river a boatful of men, lusty and standing high, with one for leader whom I knew at the first as of the fiend begotten. His face hated and thirsted. Under

his right eye was a blue scar like a fish's tail. His cheek and forehead were lined with black, snaky lines, having red spots hung thereon, bright like fire-coals. Me he greeted as one looked for, and bought me out of hand. I went with him and his by land and water, having no power to gainsay.

“Time would fail to tell of all that I saw among these outland folk. Rich furs they had in great store, so that any child or pauper might lie under that which the wealthiest of England could not compass. Every priest at will went robed in down or in plumes of purple hue. When they wrought necromantic figures on the floor of their temple, these were in golden sand. All rites and mysteries were free to me without veiling; for they looked that I should in little time be absorbed into the body of the priesthood,—by way of mouth.

“That thought agreed ill with my own craving; but they minded not some falling away of flesh at the outset. Nay, rather commended it, as holding me scarce pure enough bodily to suit their daintiness. In furtherance whereof they yet stinted me even when I grew a-hungered, pressing on me in the stead of my food a vile and sulphurous water that spouted from underground, for the disturbing of the inner man as it had disturbed already the inner earth. With all urbanity of ceremony they proffered it me, draught on draught. I was loth and coy, believe me; yet when I gazed on that fish-tail scar, and the black-strung beads of fire that writhed in my warder's cheeks, and the eyes with all hell kept back in them,

I durst not for my life put it by, but drank all my qualms down together. Now this was my religious purifying among them.

“After a space they deemed me as a vessel empty and holy, and every way meet unto fattening. Then they turned about with a will, and cloyed me with wild food beyond my telling. One week I lived in a surfeit of honey and the rank flesh of the opossum. But as their zeal grew, the burden of it waxed also. Every levite and neophyte had his fancy of what would best flavor me, and was given liberal scope for trial. I have dined and supped and breakfasted on wild garlic; on bitter acorns that swine will not eat when they can do better; on green fruits, hight persimmon among them, that gather one’s mouth like a purse; on hideous grubs, fat and oily; on hairy caterpillars; on rattlesnakes. Do you wonder that my appetite is not eager since then?”

’Twas time for me to draw a long breath. “Well,—did they eat you finally?” quoth I, not knowing how far he might go.

He shook his head, smiling and rising. “The tale,” said he, “must await another time and mood; being of strange things not easy to credit. Yet certainly I think to see you again.”

Therewith, but not very suddenly, he left us.

“What think you of him?” said Warren, un-
easily.

“Tell me where the mist ends and the rain begins,” quoth I. “So of his truth and his falsehood; he cannot speak the one without the other. And again,

he is either the wonder of wonders for experience or a liar to strike palsy into Christendom."

Now it may be that my faith went farther than I would own, but I am sure that I said only the mere fact of him in every word.

Not long after this meeting with Captain Fleete, Mr. Cloberry sent for us—a kind of Jupiter on Olympus to our house; and we went wondering. We found him with a waiting face, not patient, for he valued greatly his time in hours of traffic. Yet, as we drew near, he brought down over it a genial smile for our encouraging, whereby I knew that there was somewhat astir. His heavy finger tapped the wood before him, while he spoke; or it moved sidewise uncertainly.

"Well, my lads," quoth he, "I do learn of Mr. Warren,"—who was that uncle of Ratcliffe's of whom I have spoken—"that ye have a fancy to go a-rambling in wild lands. What then, boys, I commend ye. Are we not all adventurers together in the outward trading of these days—one of life and limb, another of estate? All my fortune hath been often in daily jeopardy, and may well be so even now. Yet are there prizes going as well as perils. What if I were minded to set ye forthright in the midst of both, where this new western world is opening?"

I saw Ratcliffe's eyes a-dance, while he made thank offering for both: and the keen, large man grew even more gracious over us.

"Already it is known to you," said he, "what store our trade brings in from that wild Virginia and

the regions northward. Yet is there more to be had passing computation, as I learn from the relation of many—Captain Henry Fleete for one, whom ye have met.”

I put forth timorously, “May his word be taken, sir, undoubting?”

It was no new thought to him. He eyed me not unkindly. “Hardly that,” said he; “yet I think we may trust him thus far. There be that have more need of our watching. Now therein I look to you, knowing you staunch and true. For look you I have taken a partner in venture, whom I need sore, yet misdoubt me greatly. One William Claiborne, whilom of Westmoreland, Secretary and Treasurer, now, of Virginia; a man of weight and family, of parts and discernment and daring, a man by no means to be forgotten nor forgiven, since very certainly he will do neither. He hath been long at variance with this new Lord Baltimore, now up, now down, with the swaying of fortune, since either hath the ear of some about His Majesty. Thereby notable grants are ours and privilege,—and great uncertainty. For all—and me with it—may this Claiborne, if evil minded, at once undo. I send you to him as of stout heart and hand; be also keen of eye.”

“I misdoubt we could scarce earn our wages that way,” said I sadly; and Ratcliffe added, “Would not that be spying, sir? By no means, nor for any man!”

Thereon a darkness came about Mr. Cloberry’s brow, and he began, “O the nicety of these days!”—

But at once by will was gracious again. "Why, boy," said he, "I would but have had you to guard your employer. Let pass, let pass! Report the blowing of the wind and the fall of the rain. But I would fain know whither to send your wages now and then, with any slight advising."

We both grew shamefaced, feeling his tone. "Haply I spoke without considering duly," said Ratcliffe.

"Young men never do *that*," answered Mr. Cloberry, drily. "No, not even unto damsels.—And, by the way, they will be the cargo to go with you over sea, if go you do."

"Not young women, surely?" said I.

"Even so," he made answer. "Old ones would not do. Comely, too, and some away beyond that word. Moreover, in birth and training and repute all that goes to the making a young gentlewoman, or with some a very little lower. It has ever been the pride of our house to furnish the topmost article, beyond all cavil."

"You call young gentlewomen—articles?" inquired I, struggling with my countenance.

He raised his brow, saying, "I mean them no disparage at all. His Majesty wills that the planters, who cannot come to do their own choosing, yet should have wives to their homes like other people; and pay for them as in reason, seeing the trouble taken. Thereon the aspects of commerce apply: Two score maids are they, well picked as I have said, and with or without angels among them; but after all quite free to

say 'No' if that they find not a man to their liking. I greatly do fear they will suffer by the way from waves unruly and speech unceasing."

"O, as for me," cried Warren, "I will go." The same said I.

The old man looked at the clock as if time wasted. "It is well," said he. "The ship is the *Tiger*, Henry Fleete, master; the time one fortnight yet. Be ready. And let me hear all that may concern me, in so far as your consciences will suffer it."

There was a bit of sneer at the last, and he went back to his work in weariness of us, or the insistency of business. We passed out, caring little, so present with us was the romance and the mystery to be. In spirit we were driving already before breeze and gale over unknown seas, with a throng of mirth and beauty, to a land of magic and of wonder passing all our dreams.

CHAPTER II.

SAILING INTO LOVE.

NOT many days later we went down the Thames with the company thus foreshown ; also one other of whom Master Cloberry had not spoken, but I understood now very well why he had no fear of spark and tinder on that shipboard. Mistress Mary Broome was her name, the dragon of all, a hard widow though civil, rounding middle-age, but not old enough to forget the outbreaks of youth, and with eyes everywhere. The array of planter husbands to be, if they had been there, could not have stood guard over their interest more sternly, repressing all lightmindedness of word and eye.

That array was matter of sorry mirth to us. We pictured them drawn up in ranks along the strand or hurrying thereto, tattered and buttonless, waving their samples of tobacco aloft, vociferating their bids across the breakers, frantic for any wife. As to the young women, we wasted a deal of vexation and pity on them, not all unselfish. True it may be that few among women look not forth to the married estate before one is chosen to share it, and that in every land worldly condition and prospects will ever have somewhat to do with the choice ; yet among us of England these matters have commonly been gar-

mented and not set out thus nakedly. Here were damsels by the dozen, all or nearly all discreet in their daily walk so far as we could see, and some even to excess of demureness, yet rushing with the drive of wind and will to strange Western shores and the waiting arms embattled—with not so much as a guess at the names they were to own. Even yet, though grown so common, I can scarce think of it without grinning; though why it should seem greatly more unreasonable than much else of this crazy life I will not pretend to say. For in practice, to be just, it is not so far amiss. Many a planter hath bought virtue and good housewifery and a bountiful affection, all for so many pounds of tobacco paid at a venture. Many a matron is happy with all honor in the home she entered as an article of traffic. But the thought, as I say, was new, and we disliked it.

We could not see much of the maids, lines being drawn and ways ordered with such good will to sever us. At meals we were seated apart; often also happening to be left uncalled until they were nearly done. At night we could hear a little music, or now and then a break of laughter or a speaking voice; but there was a good part of the ship-length between. It was only on deck and by day that we came to know somewhat of their differing favor and their several ways of fronting the fate they had chosen.

All were young, though with degrees, and more or less comely to the eye,—though only a few would be accounted beautiful,—so that Ratcliffe had, in fancy, a new charmer every day. He found her even among

those unconquerable daughters of industry who sat about by twos and threes over their sewing work, talking quietly among themselves, as knowing that their simple arts would be in equal request wherever they might go, and with no sign of feeling all afloat, in every way, on a vast sea. Likewise, and more often, he discerned her among the lively gatherings that drew courage for what awaited them from numbers and the contagion of mirth, as indeed they had a good right to do. Beside these, and partly of them in some moods, were the consciously demure, with eyes astray now and then toward us, and the openly daring—not many—who were under bond to proclaim by port and eye that they feared not any man nor his misdoing.

There were two whom we noticed more than all; one a bright, laughter loving little girl, with eyes like great black beads, and merriment for all her mates, a tongue that moved quickly, but seldom with any apparent knowledge of our being near; the other a tall maiden with fine flowing hair, richest in the sunset, a swaying form that the wind set free, a face very gently aquiline but lovely in its bloom, not blowed by all the stinging of the sea-breezes, and growing more wistful as time went by. She was mostly, as by choice, alone; yet a word would call her back to social kindness, her answers to all about her being ever gracious, or seeming so to me. Even before any certain knowledge, I held her as of a higher order than the rest.

Captain Fleete was at that time our envy—and some little solace. Of necessity, he had free access with

welcome where we durst not go. We could see even the redoubtable Mistress Broome hang on his words as though he were some ambassador from a new planet. As for her flock, they crowded eagerly round him whenever he came near, querying and giggling, or putting questions with wide, serious eyes, or glancing furtively one at another, according to their personal temper and the tone and quality of his narration, but all alike making him the hero of the hour. Being excluded, a wicked mirth would sometimes awaken in me over the fantastic stir that was a-going in their dreamland. Yet I think he believed partly in his prodigies, for much may be imputed to habit and a quiet inborn pleasure in astonishing. Under all their flutter and hover he kept a modest bearing, suited to the brave adventurer that he really was. Moreover, to shorten the long way for us also, he brought us tidings of them, doled out with discretion, but welcome.

We had been held back along the Kent shore by one errand and another, after leaving the river, before breasting the rough channel and the ocean beyond. Even yet a contrary wind kept us.

"They are growing weary," said Fleete, with a turn of the head toward the taffrail, where a score of sweet faces were looking landward, all manner of loose trimming making pennons behind them. "Yes, they are growing weary, and some would gladly cry off their bargain, but that may hardly be."

"Is *she* one of these—the tall maiden?" said Warren, with something of pity in his tone, but more of reverence, indicating her of whom I have written.

Fleete took on a slow smile. "I thought you knew," said he. "That is Mistress Alice Claiborne, and a right gracious and favorable lady; but such random wooing would scarce be to her fancy; and she hath a brother who assuredly would noway abide it were tobacco all turned gold and planters raising it doubly."

"Mistress Alice! Can it be Mistress Alice Claiborne?" cried Ratcliffe, raising himself for a better look.

"Easily!" quoth Fleete. "But I marvel that ye heard not from the first there was one aboard so standing to him. For true it is that your house will have a western partner—or more—in William Claiborne. A keen man, lads, in trade, passing even me; yet with the pride of his northern lineage, and mostly in this, that he will stick and stick again on any article of his right as he deems it, howsoever trivial, even to the undoing of all profit."

"And this sister, is she proud, too?" said Ratcliffe, harking back.

"Truly is she," he answered, "but of a different pride in part. Man and woman will not be like while the world lasts. Many there are who follow him and abide by him, for he hath been prospered greatly over there; but they will follow her for other reason.

"Yet," said I, "she seems not to have any near friend among them all, unless it be the black-eyed damsel yonder." The truth being that I was longing to hear somewhat of the latter.

By the glint in his eye I guessed that he understood; but he said only,

“That is their rector’s daughter, one of a great family—for number. Yet she goes not wholly on venture, like the most, having free offer of home with her friend. But I warrant she will choose to rule her own, for it is a mighty independent damsel, fit to make play against care on behalf of any man, and with bright weapons.”

“What is her name?” said I.

“Why should I tell you?” he made answer, bantering, but slowly. “She is for some rich planter. By the time your fortune is made—but it matters little. Marjorie it is—a fair sounding name; Mistress Marjorie Hilton—and I shall be express in telling her of the young gallant who makes ado over her black eyes from afar.”

I think he was as good as his word, for not long thereafter they shone on me more than once, to my great discomposure, as though at last aware of my presence and questioning what I did there, and then away again with a twinkle, not scorning, yet as if upon view she found me but a slight person and of no greatly commending favor.

Whereupon I was of two minds directly, one in very good courage, and eager to speak this fair craft that lay on and off so near me—if I may borrow seamen’s talk,—the other greatly aware of my unreasonable awkwardness of person, feeling my legs grow longer under me, my joints more ungainly at knee and elbow, my freckles more plentiful and painful than a hammer-cast of sparks from a forge.

Ratcliffe, seeing my state, with some laughter tried

to hearten me ; saying indeed that I was not the worst looking lad abroad on the great seas ; that if the wind held as now and the sun shone, the fairest of them might display no less liberal bedotting ; that my eyes matched very well with the sky and the deep water ; that strength is ever what women most care for, and those shoulders of mine would make nothing of carrying the little lady ashore through a good mile of heavy wading ; with other wise and friendly utterance. Yet he left a heathenish figure of myself in mind, amiable in meaning but laidly, and not all unlike the giant of Mount Saint Michael with whom Jack contended.

Now a real good fortune befell us, for the wind veering, and we hurrying straight out before it into the chopping seas, Mistress Broome fell sea-sick, and thus continued for three days, whereas her flock, though thinned in numbers, were abroad again after the first qualms, not without some riotousness of liberty. In the pitching of the vessel and their very great need for guiding and staying, beyond all that Captain Fleete and his mate could render, we could not choose but be thrown together and fall acquainted, often very literally. Our good Captain, seeing opportunity, was greatly aiding thereunto ; and made presentments in form very fearlessly, the grey dragon not being by to exert any grimness of repression. So sure as I came upon him and Mistress Marjorie together, with the deck atilt, some pressing duty at once would ever call him elsewhere, leaving me to render my best aid. She took it not amiss, but I could see her eyes wander

now and again toward Ratcliffe, who had less favor in her particular at the Captain's hands. Nor durst Fleete undertake to help him too apparently with Mistress Claiborne; though these two walked and talked in company when the waves would permit,—and some other face did not lead him briefly away, Marjorie Hilton's most of all. The fair lady passed lightly over his inconstancy, well knowing that she was not the only one there in need of hand and arm, and indeed caring little at that time where he took his handsome face.

He talked less with me then, and I knew not how matters went with him. But for myself, I was in the outset well nigh overdone by this kind of service, being weakened strangely and often painfully astir within by reason of the ungainly lurching of the craft below my feet, so that but for shame I had surely betaken myself to my berth like Mistress Broome, set devotion adrift, and left my charmer and her peers to navigate or come to anchor in their own way. But at last the fighting this misery helped me get the better of my first fear and shrinking, nor indeed could that well continue toward one who might cling at any moment, and must have now and again quick seizure by arm or waist or as might be, to prevent some woful tumble. After a little I had grown better used to the turbulent state of things; and thereafter, one way and another, Ratcliffe and I came to inhabit regularly and with welcome in those parts of the ship which before had been mainly given up to the fair alone. This in especial of the early night when the air grew crude

and raw above, and we tired of gazing at the stars, the foam lifting and breaking, the vague looming lines of cloud and wave.

We played light games in the cabin, draft and chess and cards, with romping forfeits that take you more afoot ; read a little, but there were not many cheering books aboard nor readers with fair delivery ; likewise essayed a dance or two, breaking down with great mirth, for that the motion below us would never long allow ; and chatted of many things as the whim might take us. Tale-telling went on, of course, pale spectres and boding second sight enforcing the more fearful maidens to huddle together or neighbor someone of stronger mold, merry misadventures bringing laughter out of its hiding-place ; and Captain Henry Fleete, well pleased, looking in on us often, with his quiet, wonderful narrations of divers lands and men.

So fast were we with these that even Mistress Broome, when again she came in view, could not avail to unsettle us. Rather than that, I think there would have been a mutiny among the smiles and tresses. Beside, she had no longer her full measure of vigilance and vigor, being as a lioness ocean-enfeebled. For all that, we had scarce been spared an onslaught, but that Captain Fleete, leading her timely aside, took our part very plausibly. I know not what he may have said of origin, person or prospects, but I could see directly that she had conceived a great opinion of us ; and indeed held little to the contrary, beyond our sex. This, as we could not help it, and because he was himself in the same category, our champion made

resolve should be no prejudice. Wherefore he set himself a marvel-spinning with much industry, and the dread lady, after her long seclusion, well nigh forgot all else in hearkening.

CHAPTER III.

THE LADY OF A VISION AND A LADY OF LIFE.

I KNOW little of navigating nor of latitude and longitude, though in navy command once to some purpose, as you shall see; but am given to understand that we were somewhere a very long way off Barbary, having taken a southerly or sou-westerly course.

Captain Fleete was in flow of speech, and words of a tempting sort reached me now and then where I tried to maintain converse with Marjorie. But her answers would still wander, for her ears were quicker than mine; and presently she rose, bearing me with her to the group about him.

“And now, Captain,” demanded she determinedly, “is there such a golden city for sure and true,—and where may it be?”

“And which golden city is it your pleasure to seek, young maid?” quoth he mightily drily, yet with indulgent smile.

“Any!” cried she. “Any where a ‘young maid’ may become a great princess and lead the glory of the world.”

Sheer firework talk I knew right well, and not from the depth of her, yet I could wish it unsaid. There was laughter from some and light clapping of hands

from more ; but Mistress Broome spoke severely. "Out on you, child ! Such dreaming leads to ill."

Nevertheless her gracious friend Alice pleaded with a smile, "Forget not me, Madge, when prospering in your kingdom."

And Fleete said gravely, "Such things have been and may be again. Truly there are tales afloat of the white queen of Norembega, and that lost Welsh kingdom which Prince Madoc discovered, numbering beauteous ladies, in the heart of this great new world. Moreover, I myself have seen one of English blood, who fitteth from tribe to tribe like a spirit, with the power that raiseth the dead and blasteth the living, rarely met to the face by those of her own people, very lovely and dread."

A thrill went around among us, and one asked, "Who may she be ?"

"I know not certainly," he answered. "But the tale runs that she is of Sir Walter Raleigh's plantation—before your time, ladies—on the isle of Roanoke."

"I mind it well," declared Mistress Broome stoutly, not being the woman to deny her years. "I mind it, as yesterday. And how we all drew breath when we heard that it had vanished in air—scores of men with ample munition and all things needful, and the sweet young mother and the girl child new born—they called her Virginia in honor of Her Majesty, Virginia Dare—all gone as by magic—and no man knoweth what went with them to this day."

I thought her not so much a lioness and dragon

now, as she stilled her voice, a-tremble in the half-hush, half-murmur.

"No man knoweth," repeated the Captain solemnly, "nor ever shall know. For magic it was that took them, the evil magic of the ghastly priesthood of Satan, whose rites have I seen to my shuddering, and in whose very hands have I been. She came before my eyes in time to save them, else had all been black to me now for that seeing, or I unbodied wandering I know not where. I love not to think of it."

"And others have seen her likewise?" queried I.

"Few save the savages," he made answer, "and their tongues wag little of her through fear. But there are who have seen her passing, between field and forest, between dark and light, by water mainly, but by land as well, at points many score miles apart, sometimes alone, sometimes with a wizard crew, on errands not to be thought of by any Christian soul."

"They have reared the unchristened babe to be a sorceress and child of Hell!" cried Mistress Broome with a voice like a groan, which indeed went echoing around.

"That is not the sort of princess I would wish to be," averred Marjorie mighty gravely.

"What like was she?" queried Ratcliffe, his voice eager yet very pitiful. The women all looked at him.

"To me, in her coming, like earth's last loveliness," quoth the Captain; "in her going like a spirit. I but looked aside, and she was not there. What may I tell but that the shade of the forest was on her, and the stir of the waters was in her, and all wild-

ness met in her face and garb, yet a wildness of enthroned and surpassing beauty. Nor yet evil beauty, as it seemed to me, but very sad, as of one blameless yet cast out and foregone. The rout most hideous that passed with her were moved more by love, I thought, than by fear. Howsoever this may be, she has great power over them, undoubted; and I have never known it used for ill."

Ratcliffe gave a deep sigh. Marjorie set close eyes on him; Alice watched also, less intently.

"But of the golden city?" said she, in gentle reminder.

Fleete drew a great breath, like one passing from the darker page. "As to that," said he, "I know only that I have seen those who have trod, by their profession, the pavements which sound dull and heavy for the rich gleaming metal in them, and fingered the great store of precious gems which no man may carry away. I believe this the rather, having seen some dim reflection and ensample thereof in the silver white towns by the border of the great south sea, where navies come and go with precious merchandise, but looking strange aloft, and slow like those of Ophir and Ind. Aye even in the warlike and venturesome people along the mountains that we call golden, who do indeed deck their princesses and notable ladies with strung pearls, and their most notorious warriors with bracelets and anklets of unwrought gold, for they lack skill of craft therein. And moreover any one is free to view their several great paintings on the naked rock all besprinkled with the rich dust that

shines afar, and their lesser work on scrolls of bark. I myself have seen them doing even so. And small wonder, for when the mountain side lets slip under pressure and mining of the rain, behold the bare slope is sown as thick with gold as a field of corn with grain when the sower has lately passed over it. But whether there be more golden cities than one, or whether they draw their treasure from these towns and tribes and wealthy ranges—that indeed I know not.”

I saw Marjorie failing in patience under the burden of bullion and precious things laid audibly on us, and made question of her by eye to such effect as sent us upward and outward; that mellow easy voice trailing behind us, quite shameless. I heard it say something of “that gem of gems and right royal adornment, the carunca,” whereat the door went to and we were in stillness and starlight.

Marjorie walked by me, silent for a space, but drawing at times long free breaths in that lifting air. I thought she seemed better pleased with me than common, and I made play with my feet only, fearing lest some awkwardness of tongue should break the spell.

“How can a man lie so?” she cried at length with foot-tap of lost patience. “But, Sir Richard, I give credit where credit is due. You were not set a cloud-roving after goddesses of the ‘wild,’ on the word of a miracle-monger.”

I liked this little, taken anywise, and made answer gravely. “It was a witching tale, and, I deem, not all untrue.—And Ratcliffe Warren is gallant and noble—also my friend.”

She eyed me, with light arm-pressure, and made hearty answer. "Well said, stanch and true!—Yet will I ever hold my opinion. 'Gallant and noble!'—but this 'friend' of ours should be the Grand Turk for hope of constancy; or King Solomon more like, since he had spirits of air at his bidding no less than mortal dames. Nothing will serve our falcon for a sweetheart now, I fear me, but a will o' the wisp, a cloud-maiden, a morning dream."

"Why 'fear?'" I said in mimicry, for the word was bitter of savor. "Were he ever so constant, Ratcliffe Warren, a poor trading clerk with ne'er a penny, would be sure no rival to a wealthy planter, or a gold-powdered sovereign of the savages. Could he make you 'princess,' think you?"

She looked at me hotly. "You make too much by far of my light words," she said in a straitened voice. "Do you wonder that I lent awhile my ear and my aid to the tale of riches, in a world where they fill with all so great a space in need and longing?"

"No, that do I not," I answered justly; then added laughing, "Did not I listen, too? No, no, Mistress Marjorie, I would not do you a wrong even in thought."

She laughed a little, but made reply, "Then think not of me as one standing ready for purchase without love. I like not that any one should deem thus of me, howsoever I speak."

I felt ill at ease, for I could not down the thought she might have chosen other fashion of going abroad.

"I read you very plainly, sir," she said. "But

may I not show you how a stirring girl must feel when she finds herself more and more, week by week, a drainer of a needy and crowded home? They tried to stay me; but I said I will go, to wed if heart leads hand—otherwise to work for self only. Find you cause in that for shame and mouth-muffling?" And her eyes challenged me.

"No," I asseverated, and added more and warmer, but she checked me there.

"Peace, good soul!" quoth she, merry again. "Put no painted window to my frankness." Then more soberly, "I spoke as a friend who would not be misjudged—that only."

With this I had to be content; and it made sound basis for much kind talk between us of many things.

But Ratcliffe, as she had prophesied, was now given less to talking than dreaming, and when he did speak there was much out of dreamland about the piteous lot of that eerie wanderer, and what a Christian man might do to find her and set her free. He worried woefully the invention of Captain Fleete for new assurance and particulars of her flitting beauty; her woful plight, the terrors of her guard and way. He wearied even me. He drew nicknames from the maidens—"Knight of the Afflicted," "Champion of Moonshine," and the like, veiling their chagrin at his new insensibility. And whereas he was formerly a kind of magnet, they now after a manner drew away as he neared them. Marjorie indeed treated him not amiss, though sometimes with a wicked little sparkle when he would vouchsafe a few words, turning of a

surety, soon or late to that theme. Only Mistress Alice Claiborne seemed to like him the better for his new born zeal. "An I were man," said she, "I too would surely strive to find that living miracle, and bring her out of evil enchantment into human life."

Such speeches as these made me think shame of my own doubting and smiling. Indeed I still find something higher and finer in the delusion which awakens unselfish zeal than in any grin, however clear-sighted, over the nakedness of truth.

CHAPTER IV.

A PIRATE CHASES US.

MATTERS being in this posture, with nothing more exciting to think on than our own little by-play of feeling and fancy or doubtful tales of terror far away, or that new-world future which was quite as shadowy and distant through the likeness of one sea-faring day to another—there came a very surprising change.

Early one morning, after a habit I had lately taken, I came on deck while that handsome room-mate of mine was still wrangling with his eyelids and elbows. Only the crew and their captain were there before me; and I think none of these even saw me, having their eyes set eastward. The first mate was at the masthead staring through a spyglass at the new risen sun, as though he had turned astronomer and that most devoutly. Seeing so many admiring, my own vision traveled after theirs, and in the light sea haze beheld a ship painted on that yellow disk; her bow set aslant, as if making to cross our track. There was a slight change of outline as I looked; the last sail had been run up before my eyes.

“Crowding, eh!” I heard Fleete mutter, and I guessed by his brow that he was in grave trouble of mind.

"What make you of her?" he howled aloft, in something very different from his story-telling voice.

After a few moments more, the answer came slowly, "English built; not English manned—unless by Englishmen out of bedlam. No colors a-flying."

"I could tell as much as that from here," murmured the Captain; then calling again, "What more?"

"Why, nothing, Captain," came down from the main-top, "except I can just make out the oddest kind of rig on some o' them lubbers."

"French, Flemish, picaroon—what?"

"I can't rightly say. Not many alike. Some got up for Turks, may be. Too far to make sure. As for the yards——"

Then some lingo in terms of trade, which, as ever, I spare landsmen like myself, partly because I remember them ill and make little sense of them, however wise they may be in sea-faring ears. Beside, I am not writing a sea tale except in passing.

Presently Captain Fleete sent a word to the man at the wheel, and the ship's head veered around, till our stern was square at the sail we doubted. But with that same motion she too swung bow on, even as though a great tow-line ran from ship to ship; so that one could scarce make out her narrow white front, through the dazzle of sunlight falling endlong about her.

I heard a sound of ill omen among the men. Fleete was breathing through his teeth.

"The worst of it is," he said, only half to me, "that

yon trailer keeps lifting, keeps lifting. We can't sink her by keeping straight away; we can't give her the slip on this open sea. The weather may help us," and he looked toward the southwest, where the sky was thickening. "But I greatly fear me it's like to prove a grievous business."

He spoke in his measured way, for all the grim burden of his boding; and haply his words went home to me the more disquietingly. For it was not in man to suspect him now of enlarging, with those set faces and low curses all about us; and what was but a customary manner, allowed for duly, took new complexion and efficacy from the prevailing expectation and menace. I gave him a word or two, in boy-pride, to show that there was one toward at the least who meant not to lose head governance under trial; then turned aside to pace and consider.

Not that my considering was of any avail, or indeed could be, for if yon sea-bloodhound gained,—why gain she would, and it lay only in time and sea and storm to save us alive out of that maw; or perchance in steel and hard blows, if not too woefully outnumbered. Even as to her type and nature, and the sort of treatment thereby in store for us if taken—until she chose to make advertisement, what might I add where wits of experience were too plainly all abroad?

Anon I came so to see it, and betook myself to better employment. By then one or two of the maidens were showing themselves above board, and perceiving no good to come of their knowing as yet, it seemed my proper task to speak unto them very

cheerfully, and lead their minds astray. But I have discovered that it is not well to think of women as without wit and perspicuity of vision. For whether it were their own exceeding aptness in that regard, or whether, as I would not think, my own play-acting fell somewhat short of the occasion, very certainly the more solicitous I grew to keep them ignorant and light hearted, the more perversely they lapsed into a kind of distressful wonderment. At last, when a bit of a groan slipped out of me under breath, in the midst of some sugary love verses which I was making shift to quote with much disorder of sense and rhyme from the sonnets of the ingenious Mr. Shakespeare—it was then, I say, that Marjorie, eyeing me compassionately, put forth her hand. With small choice, I took it on arm, and fell to walking with her, not chapfallen, I think, but with a sense of being set free, yet still in a nightmare of perturbation. I could see her face with no least girl-sauciness in it any longer, but under strain and with something of fury coming.

“And which do you deem it?” she said.

Her query was so pat to my thought that I could but admire at it. Under all my antic and diverting, my soul had been at shuttlecock very dismally between “Turk” and “pirate,” “picaroon” and “Turk” again. Nor knew I which to hold least endurable in vision. Great heaven, all this bevy of fair young women, scarce out of childhood some of them, so friendly grown, so helpless! If sails and arms should fail, what hideous doom awaited them? Better our

own,—the droning galley oars of Tetuan or the tilting of the plank! I made answer, though simply enough, as my judgment of the moment bade me.

“Some sea-thief,” said I.

She looked at me gathering more than the words, and nodded apprehendingly; then gazed long astern.

“No nearer,” said she. “At least it doth seem so,” turning as one who seeks encouragement.

But I had put by assuming. “At most the gain is little,” said I.

“But there *is* gain?”

“So, truly, I fear. Hearken to Captain Fleete.” For we were within ear-range of where he was discoursing right smoothly to Ratcliffe Warren, albeit with an eye to the sheets and cordage and another to the slowly overhauling sail, afar in our wake. But we heard nothing of moment, until rung below for breakfast. As we turned, in passing down, for another view, even Marjorie made surrender of all questions between speed and speed, as her eye showed well.

Presently, for lack of another, she was taking Mistress Broome roundly to task. “See now,” quoth she, her face afire and her eyes darting, “see now what a brave pass have ye brought us to! Yes, my ladies, you who liked fine words and fair showing of things to be, a market have we unmaidenly set forth for,—and a rare market shall we find when yon foul floating hell overcomes us.”

Her words needed no gloss, for the news was there before us. Half those about her were weeping or exclaiming brokenly. Her friend Alice came forward to

quiet her, as did Mistress Broome in duty, looking very hushed and overborne ; but neither was of avail, being badly shaken. Marjorie only exclaimed on them all the more fiercely, and the ill-order grew apace.

The sight made me ache, though I knew well that it was not she a-speaking, but only passionate despair and the tumult of sudden peril. Thereby, or somehow, I got courage to put my hand to her hair very gently, her head just then being bowed. She glanced up hotly, but presently softened and leaned against me, weeping, as if she had no other friend. Thereon, being mightily perturbed, I kissed her—no harm telling *now*, Marjorie—and for a space forgot Turks and sea-ranging rascals of every sort. Even the dragon said me not nay, being quite mazed and dazed, I think. But Alice touched my arm anon, and I went out, leaving Marjorie with her for soothing.

By and by Mistress Broome, with one or two of her steadier charges, came also on deck, and after observing again went back to report that they might at least eat once more before changing passage for Barbary. This resolve was right welcome to us whose hunger would not wholly away and had been left overlong unappeased already. Mistress Alice Claiborne seemed also well inclined thereunto, but I noted that the lines of her face were drawn, and she ate more mincingly than her wont. Marjorie came later ; silent, with lowered eyes and very apparent grace of shame over her late downfall. After a bit she rallied, and I caught her eye, half defiant, half frightened and wistful, as who should say, "Think what you will, I care not ;

for oh, my friend, there is a horror of great darkness racing after us all." But I am bound to say that thereafter she held herself in all conjunctures right womanfully.

Of course we were all saying such heartening words to them as each best could think of; Captain Fleete, in particular, now made ample amends for any slight disorder at the first by spinning off indifferently a long string of running actions round about the world, in all of which the chase, though much more nearly neighbored than we, got clear away at the last. He protested in sequel, quoting the old saw, that no sailor worth the name was ever in disquiet over a stern chase; and for his part, saving the ladies' presence and their passing annoy, he would very willingly let yonder fellows creep a good bit nearer, that he might try the merit of his pet swivel on them.

Ratcliffe applauded this to the echo; wherein I joined with yet others, though not very well knowing how far it might be precisely true. Beyond doubt every one of us would have been fair in love with any reasonable opening to strike back for the worry they were giving us; but the uncertain odds of men and metal, their very eager and confident following, and the grim, merciless repute of sea rovers, whether paynim or Christian—save the mark!—might well hold back a sane mind from making the hazard any greater.

Ne'ertheless the hint was answerable to its end; for the array of damsels fell foul of it with surprise and vehemence, not being willing for a moment to

hear of such temerity. The which did them good, as no doubt he had foreseen, wakening hope and valor in their pulses, with some halfway conviction that they might even bear a nearer vision of the tiger teeth, yet slip away unharmed.

This goodly frame of mind he furthered, moreover, by setting every one presently at some task having to do with the munitions, the side arms, and such matters; at which the fair volunteered with the right good will and zeal proper to those who would rather be doing than thinking. It presently appeared that their experience in housewifery was of real virtue about the cutler work. So that our cabin soon had much the look of a disordered armory, whereinto a set of petticoated steel-polishers, if such there be, had made irruption, all working away for dear life.

The truculent grim tools whereon they wrought soft-handed gave them a wild look truly, and one that somehow made a wakening of pity, for all their diligence and newly rippling mirth. Here a pair of blue eyes doubled themselves in the mirror of a cutlass blade held upright for better inspection; there, the brown hair came showering in masses over some obdurate pike point or pistol barrel, then flung impatiently back and away. The air bristled fifty ways above and below their girl-face blossoming; for in armament, as in much else, our world ransacking ship-owners had used very freely the product of every clime. Some things indeed must have been designed for exhibition and curious interest rather than hostility. Belike they came partly from Captain

Fleete's own store, for he had a wide and varied taste in such things, as in all that may surprise, with equal opportunity ; and no doubt threw in many things that would advance the diversion. This they did abundantly, the pretty artificers marvelling and comparing, even while their white fingers worked away in most vehement assiduity and good faith.

They jested over the sickle-form contrivings, the Mexique staff inset with glassy obsidian, the double-edged dirks and spring-blade knives of Italy, the curtle axes nearly out of date, and the awkward tridents that never had any but among myths and savages. One by one the men drew away to other employ, even Warren yearning beyond control for another view of the foe ; but I watched on with pretence of aid, since there was little else to do. It was desperate earnest to the maids and their good dragon, now recovered from her first overthrow and in full authority. She assailed even me with scarce indirect rebuking for the leisureliness of my rubbing an old matchlock that could never fire, until I was fairly constrained into leave-taking amid general disfavor. That sorry retreat was brightened a little by an understanding glance from Marjorie ; and Alice showed me a smile wise and kind in the depth of her eye, looking up from the rusty scimeter whereon she was dutifully wasting much labor of excellent example. But for the rest, the mirth of satire grew active behind me. One jocund spinster began trilling the lilt of a glee, but ceased with a cry, for her bare arm had come across a forgotten edge and the blood ran. Very moving looked she in that

sudden wakening of pain—the bluest-eyed and sunniest and softest of them all—what with the dripping of red, and the round, frightened face, and the treacherous unwonted bit of steel thrown down. Knowing her plight for graver peril better than she knew it, I carried that picture out with me as an omen.

On the stairs I met Ratcliffe, in high good pleasure, eager to convince me that we were indeed slipping away. “Go below,” I cried, testily. “Tell *them!* Tell *them!*” He went with a wondering look, and as I gained free air I could just hear below the explosion of good news which must have been medicinal. At any rate, the wounded one was shortly abroad again, with a bit of plaister on the round of her arm, bringing out the whiteness more plainly. I had some chat with her on deck, where they all came in a few minutes, either the tidings or the misadventure, or both, having made them of one mind, that there were better and fitter things to do.

They hovered around each one of us know-nothings for opinions of the lightest; got vexingly in the way of the sailor men, and worried Captain Fleete for a view through his sea-glass, by their own account revealing prodigies; or for exhibition and tale-telling of his glossy ordnance, there being three pieces, all small, at bow and stern and amidships; whereby he was kept moving about very actively.

I marvelled at his forbearing so with them; but that was his way more than another, and he was very wise just then not to dash or daunt them at all, to say naught of pitifulness. Alice and Marjorie kept mostly

apart, in nowise adding to the coil. Ratcliffe Warren and myself were mostly with these twain.

We four came early to agree that all outspeeding on the part of the *Tiger* was mere illusion. She ran fleetly, but not enough so. The *Lamb* coming after—Marjorie's conceit for lack of a name—was indeed larger and plainer than awhile before, and her men could be discerned by the bare eye as figures, not as blots only, with much that fell out among them. As the morning wore on, the matter grew so apparent that even the sturdiest withstander came perforce to our view.

But not in the same distraction of alarm as at the first; for the continued strain of danger with very slow increment wrought in part its own cure. Yet the effect was not alike in all. Now and again, one would be visited with vision, and break into sobbing or turn short away with staring eyes. Others were strung for awhile to a strangeness of ecstasy, or set free from normal restraining. I heard one very modest girl—to judge by daily walk and speech—cry out to the Captain in a hard voice,

“Which am I to belong to, Captain Fleete? Christian pirate or Mahmed-worshipper? The latter for choice—he would at least take me ashore.”

“Neither, please God,” answered he, mighty gravely. “But if you would know, I judge this leech of ours to be a Turk from Tripoli or Tangiers. Not the hull, though, only the manning—and mauling.”

“I care not whether it please God or no, but I'm glad on't!” she cried recklessly. “I affect not the vile quarters of a pirate ship, nor——”

“You would not elude that by Turkish captivity,” cut in Ratcliffe, uneasy for what might follow. “There are no dirtier ships nor crews, they tell me.”

“What have I to do with ships and crews?” she demanded. “Think you they would keep me long from the mart? Look at me, then,” and she flung herself up, strained to fullest height, as I had never seen her before, indeed a very challenging disheveled beauty.

“O, shame, shame!” cried Marjorie.

“What?” quoth the other. “Did I hear aright? And who was it burst in on us this day to taunt us with coming afloat to be sold? Why, so did I, and I care not who knows, and little who is the buyer——”

But Mistress Broome had clapped her hand on that riotous mouth, and without more words the damsel went struggling below. Marjorie was red as fire, moist-eyed and scant of breath; but Alice bespoke her gently, “Come, dear, it is fitting we seek that Power who has been flaunted so lightly, and who alone can save us.”

They went below, and we looked after them. “Is she not lovely?” quoth Warren. “And so true of heart and warm and strong, though right womanly! I marvel she was so wistful at the first, being so steadfast now.”

It took me a second to get my wits righted, for I had fitted his words to the lesser maiden, till near the last. Then I made answer.

“Where there was foreboding, there is duty and the need for aid.”

But I said nought of Marjorie.

CHAPTER V.

OVERTAKEN IN THE DARK.

TIME crawled away, with ever that slow lessening of distance and the nearing of fate ; with fever-wavering here and there among the women, and a weariness in us all that sometimes awoke a momentary longing for any end. By Fleete's contriving, dinner came early ; but for once he might have spared his marvels. None sat long, nor ate well. The Captain himself was called away early. I marked the signal and went after him.

A seaman was pointing out a strange aspect where the sky had been thickening ; but indeed it made its own advertisement. I have seen somewhat like it, though with less menace every way, up and down our great bay in Maryland many a time, ever presaging fury of wind,—a great tower of cloud, not regular in taper, but piled in handfuls like the awkward labor of young children a-play in wet snow ; lopping over or bulging out here and there, with a small woolly poll atop white or grey, as the light takes it. Only this time you plainly felt the thing a-moving ; not merely traveling on, though it did so toward us, but turning solemnly on itself as it came, with little change of outline. I say felt rather than saw, for the eye could scarce hold any point where all was so like and shapeless. Yet ever

the part away from the sun was dense and slaty of hue ; and throbbings were both there and in the white, and now and then a glimpse of quick fire broke through without sound.

“ Will it be in time to aid us, think you ? ” said I.

“ Aid !— ” began Fleete, but went back to his calm tone, saying, “ Truly, it may ; and it should be with us not later than they. ”

Of course I knew his thoughts very well. What man could love to meet the devil and the deep sea both in one moment ?

He looked warily about to make sure that no woman was in earshot, and said, “ I take it, young man, your wits have settled themselves by now, and when that comes to pass they are very good and steady ; so I may tell you for mine ease that I have been in many a jeopardy, but never in one I did less affect than this present. The men will have it that ill luck has come of the women, as when one crosses you in a country road ; and I go thus far with them that I would right willingly see all that cargo safe ashore. ”

“ Be certain, so would they, ” I made answer, with a very sorry grin. One or two were nearing us now, so we turned the drift of talk.

“ You call her a Turk, ” said I, nodding at the vessel behind us, “ yet English built ; how may that be ? ”

“ A prize, ” said he ; “ English yarded but Turkish captivated ; gone astray roving on her own account, with more than a prize-crew aboard. Do you not see what pagan tricks the rascals have played with her

canvas and woodwork, so that she is neither fish, flesh nor fowl, and would hardly know her own creed?"

Even my uninstructed eye could mark something of this, giving to the enemy an unnatural look. But I made answer, "What I chiefly note is the way they have served themselves with attire. Why go to sea for costuming and masquerade?"

"Truly, why?" echoed he, "save and except they be a scratch crew made up of all odds and ends. Many good Turks, my Richard,—the veritable output of merry Hell and Salee; a sprinkling of volunteers, and impressments, too, with a few Christian slaves among 'em; a fantastic lot, and Satan himself for commander."

"Satan?" quoth I.

"Much the same, or my glass misleads me. Some renegade, I'll be sworn, as hath befallen many a time—more the sin! Here, take this, and look you."

So I did, and could very well understand his way of speaking. The glass brought a straight figure very near, who was plainly in command—not garmented like a Moor of Barbary or any other Turk; indeed, with nothing loose-blowing about him, but very un-Christian for all that. The face I could not well see, but there was no beard nor other trimming, only long black hair of the head; and when I caught his profile for a moment it seemed a strangely evil one to me, and quite unforgettable.

On request, I handed over the tube to one of the flightier girls, who could not thus discern him, but was

inclined rather to compassionate that fine and haughty bearing, so soon to be affronted by disappointment. For that was the tune now. A word or two of Captain Fleete, overheard by chance, with I know not how many more extorted afterward, and the whirlwind was coming directly, sure and true, to be our deliverer. One sweet precisian averred that the hand of the Almighty was manifest. Others looked more fearful than ever on finding such a champion—what with its quivering of hidden anger, the doubtfulness of its course, and its very sinister air of being all alive. But most, though in awe, were well content with asking no questions at fate or Providence, if only they might be rid of the Turk and his wickedness. Haply they found it hard to believe that a power coming so kindly when needed might really mean them harm. In all this I must say I was much of their mind.

But the storm, or whatever one should call it, did not keep so straight a course as did our chasing devil. An hour before sundown it was veering about hither and thither, now threatening to cross our path, now to go away altogether in a goblin dance of its own. The Turk, so far as we could see, made no great account of it, and our discomfiture grew apace. By this time he was within cannon shot, and presently, after a flash, a ball came skipping along on one side. Thereon there was great outcry, and our damsels for the most part went incontinently below, with very lively scuttling; which was a relief, considering all. Soon afterward there came another ball and another,

but always at a little interval, as if intending menace rather than damage.

I admired at Captain Fleete for not retorting, and Warren was loud against that supineness. "But," quoth the Captain, "see you not, youngsters, that they have a care to miss? Think you Christian rovers would have done likewise? I tell you to these we be good merchandisè every man Jack of us; and much more so yon fair maids. They will not risk the spoiling of our strength and beauty if they be not angered overmuch. I am not the man to deal them the slap in the face."

But later they seemed counselling, and sent a few balls viciously about our rigging, whereto our gunners at length made reply. Probably the aim was bad on both sides, for no harm came, beyond the cutting of a rope or so, soon repaired. Even this ended when the sun went down, leaving a thick twilight, for the sky was mottled, or more than that, and the stars could be seen at intervals only and unsteadily, as through windows opening and closing in heaven.

We could make out even yet the hounding Paynim craft only a little way in rear, though no hail had come at any time. There was a stillness about both vessels unnatural and expectant. This made it possible to hear something between a murmur and a sigh, that came from anywhere and everywhere; at least I could find no certain place of issuance.

I looked at Fleete. He shook his head, saying, "It keeps up a mighty pother; but I doubt we shall

have much good thereby. The darkness is a better friend, if 'twould only last. But you know the moon rises before long."

"May we not slip aside ere then?"

"Such is my thought, but I doubt they have guessed it; and anyway we can do nought as yet. Be sure, while we see them they see us."

But soon it was dark enough even for him, and by whisper at the wheel, he had our bow slanted conforming. Only that I overheard and foreknew, one would have been little the wiser in that lack of light. We stood by the taffrail nigh together, and breathed our words like death.

Warning had been given in the cabin; but it seemed rather to work like a talking spell, for voices came brokenly up to us, no doubt seeming louder than they were—a matter of grave disquiet. I judged that a few were contending for silence, there being a sudden brief interval of it now and then, or an exclamation in remonstrance, or it might be a few reckless words at random. There were graveyard sounds of lamenting also, and little shrill cries out of will control and half smothered as if by another's hand.

"This is not sufferable," muttered Fleete underbreath. "Slip below and bring about quiet, as you love life and the salvation of these baggages—who ought to be gagged."

I had not before seen him so wrought upon; but indeed it was a ticklish quandary and one to bring out feminine unreason in an ugly way. As Warren and I passed very gingerly below, we could hear him clos-

ing and battening the hatches behind us, to muffle the cargo as a whole, since he might not in detail. But the work was ill done where every motion must be guarded against enemies' ears.

We found the womankind—as I well guessed—in a state not describable. Shaken all astir as they had been by the cannon and the sure onrush of the enemy, it needed only that caution to hold tongue in the darkness, for all manner of bogies to troop abroad. Poor maids, they looked every moment to see the whooping foe come pouring down the stairway. Even our own entry, more heard than seen, brought divers low cries about us, and one distracted maid would have shrieked outright, but for sharp smiting from Marjorie, who demanded, fiercely enough, if she meant to ruin them all by her panic terror.

You could see a bit of the confusion here and there, for some had lighted tapers and held them half-shrouded, so that the light struck upward strangely on faces and garments and woodwork, and shadows of unearthly outline went dancing with the trembling of the fingers and the moving of the ship in the waves. Now a face went out in blackness, now it sprang forth again with long locks dangling and eyes of fear. The tints, too, were all unnatural. Somewhere amid the shifting darkness that voice cried again, gaspingly—“O let us die, let us die by our own hands, ere we pass into the power of the Turk.”

Now this was of all lunacies the most dangerous, having in mind the many keen-edged weapons lying

about and the plentifulness of firearms ; but I was assured again directly, on noting that it won little favor even in that desperate hour. Alice said directly, "That need surely is not yet,—if you will only be quiet it may never come ;" and Ratcliffe made way to her side as a protector against all saviours by slaughter. He spoke thence to the others quietly and well, his demeanor spreading a hush about him. I cannot repeat the particular of his oration, being myself at that time amply engaged with the fair martyr that would be.

I found her verily up in arms and making passes on every side with a sickle by way of trial, one of which had like to take off a finger end for me. However, I prevailed on her to forego bloodletting, and presently there was great peace. Yet I found something night-marish in it to the last,—the wash and sobbing of the water, the rats hurrying about with scuttling and squeaking, the swaying of light and gloom, the shivering whispers, the many cowering forms, half seen yet full felt in their fear, and beyond all the imminence of the horror from which every nerve was straining.

I know not how long this may have lasted ; but the end came when Captain Fleete let in a rift of moonlight and called us up, if we cared to come. "For," quoth he, "it is not possible to do more mischief." Ratcliffe and I with Alice and Marjorie hurried on deck, and more came after ; yet some drew away with cries at what they saw, and went below, as if hoping for shelter.

The moon new-risen had found a window and threw

her light aslant our pursuer, bringing out hull and sail and cordage very plainly in every line, with all who stood or clung thereon, by this time too perilous near. Indeed, they could scarce be a furlong away, nor have lost a stone throw by that shrewd doubling wherein we had put our hope. Not a sound came from them; all the outlandish transforming which we had seen afar, was wilder than ever; and they held a straight course, like one certain of his prey.

Fleete raised his brow. "I said the Devil commanded," quoth he; then drew a long breath and added, heavily, "Two-score women to signal and Satan to follow!" He said no more, as though words for that once had failed him.

"We must fight for it then," said Warren.

"Truly," assented Fleete, "and you cannot arm yourselves too soon. If only these many, many lasses were lads——"

He stopped as though taken by sudden thought. "Let us make them so," said I, with the same notion in my brain.

"Wise youth! Wise Richard!" cried he, speaking out briskly, for him. "Your wit jumps with mine, but ever a little afterward; a good proper wit, sir, I dare be sworn! Come, Mistress Broome, what say you? Will your charges be our reinforcement? We have good store of male garb and toggery below. I warrant a fresh two-score of ruffling blades and musqueteers would daunt yon sea-thieves. Will they, then?"

"Aye, that will we!" answered Alice, holding her-

self tall, like a man. "Yes, and gladly!" cried Marjorie. "It is our plain duty," quoth Mistress Broome, "being the only way whereby we may yet save ourselves."

Indeed, all those above made quick assent; though two or three of the others seemed for a time more in fear of the breeches than the many-wiving Turks. But their shepherdess was in no mind to give way to such nicety, being surprisingly taken with our sudden scheme, and having the major part of her crew to back her. For all the tragedy we were in, I could but smile to think of that stern discipline going to the putting of young maids willy-nilly into man's attire. And very surely it would be the more insistant and requiring, for that it had been sadly in disuse, and even flouted by fits and starts that day.

I know not how they managed it among them, beyond that there was a great glare of lamplight and the sound of rummaging below; and Captain Fleete went down briefly, as who could most fitly show them how to come by what they needed. There was no lack of it when found, the ship's lading in part being male apparel, both new and cast-off, such as might find ready sale among planters and their serving-men,—livery of divers design, and work-a-day clothes for land and sea; finery of rich and poor, and even a few soldier uniforms not so much weathered but they might yet be known for what they were by moonlight, a little way.

That light had now taken a new character from the fringe of cloud which went drifting before it,

whereby the vessels in their still flight and all the tossing sea about them grew wan and ghostly. Everywhere a bit out and off from us it was dark well-nigh to blackness, with undeniable and instant threatening. Not eye nor ear, but what was behind them both, told of something terribly astir on the face of the deep.

Presently the women in their new guise and armament were marshalled up to our recruit. I do suppose they would not have borne any test of drill very well, and it was right marvellous what small warriors they made ; but for the most part they were heartened by the strange activity of their proceedings, flauntingly defiant for the sheer need of masking something weaker, and all in all of a variegated warlikeness hardly to be withstood by any paynim soever. At the first look I made sure they far outdid the very motley gang that came after. And indeed I then heard from these paynim the first beginning of outcry that day. It was whist in a moment ; but they seemed in disquiet, moving uncertainly, as though to draw back or come no nearer.

Captain Fleete passed me word of this, though I partly guessed it without any hinting ; and I sent it along by Marjorie, amid great jubilation. But that untimely stir put us in a fright, and we were at much ado to still it quickly, the feminine ring of voice from so many being fraught with all danger. And meseemed it did not pass unnoticed by those in our wake, though one could not be sure, since no more change was discoverable among them. They had abated little, and now kept on steadily.

I could not choose but turn my eye to the particulars of our reinforcement. And chiefly to that marsh-fire Marjorie, now grown a marvellous small gallant of the day, mighty trig and dapper, though with bright velvet caught something awry, and rapier hung on the wrong side, momentarily threatening her downfall. Now and again when she moved it would tangle about her silver knee-buckles or between those rounded stockings, that were never quite easy in trying to be out of view. When I, laughing, taxed her long afterward with coquetry in this demeanor and array, she made answer stoutly that they had no choice but to take each one what her hand first came to, looking only that it be such as would go on and stay on. And, indeed, I think her mighty lucky that it became her vastly, however mirth-moving.

The tallest of the soldiery came silently to her as a screen on the other side. At second look I knew him for Mistress Claiborne, but so wrapped in a loose winter cloak, such as great generals use in all the pictures I ever saw, that you might scarce venture a guess at any part of the outline.

Near the man at the wheel, another soldier, though without cloak, might easily be resolved into redoubtable Mistress Broome, now sedulously deepening her voice and stretching her inches toward manhood. Also she set praiseworthy example by weapon brandishing and other terrifying challenges to fight. She held waveringly aloft a halbert which for bigness might have been the father of all that kind. I protest

I was ready, putting aside all grudges, to engarland her forthwith as a mighty woman of war.

The remainder may be figured by what I wrote erewhile of costume in cargo. Only I noted here and there an especial oddity—a staid Oxford gown and cap on the fair maid who that morn had let blood from her arm in her singing; a Merry Andrew mixture of suits and hues on the dismal one who was all for suicide. A damsel that I had seldom noted came out right nattily in buckskin borrowed of Captain Fleete, she leaning easily on her fowling piece with the right greenwood air. The others let this one be, as bearing the test of eye even better than they; but there was yet another maiden whom they would by no means receive into the bosom of their company; for either there were some who shifted wilfully from before her, or others confederating would in some way thrust her out near the men with no cover. And this was a very fit word, for being modest and withdrawing—as well as white and goodly beyond the most—she had been put off in the scrambling with the wild Highland Scotch costume—desired by no other—that leaves a great gap to admiration 'twixt kilt and knee. Sorry antics truly, and for her distressful, but between strange garb and long overstrain, irrational hope and the mere craze of excitement, some were too light o' wit for censure.

I have seen much in my time, but there is hardly one picture comes back to me in still hours with wilder vividness; the full-winged straight onflight of the two great spectral things, manned fantastically, with

wildness of unreason before and deadly expectancy behind, under the black heaven, through the ever dimming light, over the moaning sea.

Fleete had been watching the Turk with cat eyes after she was a mere blur to the rest. "They are making ready for something," he whispered me presently; then at top of voice, "Down all and hold tongue!" In two seconds there were flashes all over her, and the lead came pelting at once into our masts and bulwarks, while great balls went by overhead or skipped the water by our side.

There were smothered unwarlike sounds among the softer part of our crew, but none that could travel far to do harm, they being thus mindful under trial, to their very great credit.

Some dozen of us fired back, with aid from a sudden outbreak of the moon, and there came a cry as if all had not gone amiss. There were shots from the women too, or some of them, and wild enough no doubt; and our cannon, bow, stern and amidship, let fly while that vantage held. One ball hulled the enemy, doing some damage, but that was all.

It did us more, by aid of Mistress Broome, unwitting. That valorous dragon at war, being too full of zeal for self-containing, must needs perch herself on the piece like chanticleer and call at them with exulting and derisive intent.

Thereon came sundry responses, more solid and serious; whereof one drove a splinter beside her, just razing the skin that the blood ran. At the sight and smart she leaped from her seat, and fell back on the

deck in a panic, with shrill female outcry, nor could any for a space bring her to other belief than that she was bullet-smitten near to death.

Fleete made moan for other cause. "There will be no more firing from them," said he.

"Is that so sad a matter?" laughed Warren. "I can well spare their pellets."

Fleete answered wearily, "Can you not see? Well, make ready then to fight when they come aboard after the she live stock they will not slay without need. I hope you are better at that than at guessing. Until now there was always a chance they would deem us too strong and give over. But hear them laugh yonder. Blaze away boys, great guns and small, good shots and bad, we may chance to wing her yet, or knock over her captain."

This we did willingly, fast as loading would let us, aiming as best we might, and doing some execution, though assured thereof by ear rather than eye. Nevertheless, she came on still, replying not at all as Fleete had said, growing fainter in her nearing by reason of the change of the air, a grim rushing darkness in darkness dreadfully like fate.

It may be their leader thought better of the slave-conserving policy before quite coming to touch of steel; or haply our hot peppering stirred his men beyond control. Be this how it may, when very near, we saw them all at once in a flame-burst out-dazzling our own discharges—the wild picture of an instant—the long hull aslant, the uncouth litter of the deck, the prodigious faces above bulwark all distort

for yelling, the figures, frantic of garb and of arm, crowding toward the bow and firing as they came!

Between quick light and deep dark the missile-storm swept us, doing damage though how much there was no time to learn; albeit less than might have been, for the maidens had mostly gone below, and therewith a great inhuman uproar of babel tongues, but chiefly that shrill "Allah!" which bears their blood-thirsty notion of God.

Amid these and the shrieking of women out of the depth, or as they fled, I yet heard Fleete adjuring all to load and reserve fire that we might slay them as they should leap. To that end I drew a little out of the crowd about the stern, where Fleete and Warren still were, with most of the sailors and Mistress Broome and Alice and Marjorie: and had but slid a half handful of loose lead in my gunbarrel with no time to wad it home, when the wheelman sank all limp where he had stood bleeding very quietly since a bullet struck him, our stern flew round, the bows came together with a jar, and behold they were clambering over already where we had few to stay them.

I had gone down on knee with the shock, yet still holding my muzzle upright, and now without rising let fly into the thick of the scramble, very unsportsman-like for I could not well choose any mark. However, distance and aim did well by me, for some dropped back and one splashed over, and three of our men in the forepart of the vessel were heartened to assail those that had got on board, exposing themselves very frankly. These I made all haste to join, with more

behind me ; but my following was mostly called off by Captain Fleete in haste, who had himself turned back the wheel so that the sterns too were closing. I understood nothing of it then, but found afterward that he had a brave plan for our relief.

There was light enough now and to spare, though of a crazy kind, coming and going all about with the speaking of the small arms ; beside, some bits of tarred rope and other litter had taken fire. Half the time one might discern the faces of special opponents, glaring momentarily out of the darkness like so many masks of fury, and the movement of any number was obvious.

I have heard men speak of distressful qualms in the first taking of life, and surely it ought so to be when destroying a brother by race however needfully ; but I am bound to say it was not so with me. In the first discharges, what with the distance, the dozen or more doing likewise beside me, and the uncertainty of result at each firing, it was not easy to take home, had one a mind thereto, any grave mischief and pain we had inflicted. And now the case between killing and being killed was so clear and imminent, and the assailants were so frightful in ferocity, that a very cherub would not have thought of compassion.

There was employment, aft of the bow, the shearing together of the hulls giving them leave to stream along nearer and nearer for their leaping. One such adventurer landed just before me, but as he gathered himself again I smote him across turban and scimeter together and he went over, leaving in my

gunstock an ugly dint. Another held his footing better, and before I could beat him quite down, behold I was engaged by three. Now indeed was there lively need of that strength more than usual whereof I have spoken, and the reach and weight of my weapon, in request everywhere at once. Notwithstanding, it might have gone hard with me but for remembering in time a loaded pistol, pocketed beforehand very providently, as we do put away for special care the things we most certainly forget. With this I made a lessening of the odds by one; and then found some hand aiding me in the press.

Yet were we still giving way, do what we list, when there was a rushing to and fro on the other ship, and the tide of paynim ebbed from us. I surmised, by the shouts, that Fleete with his men—and women—had taken them violently in the rear, springing over at the stern when the vessels came side by side. For a breath I saw our soldier matron charging only a half stride behind him under the yellow flare of a dangling rope-end afire, her lips apart widely with adding to the medley of noises, and both arms well at work with the halberd—straight up and down, though not hitting anybody. More I could not see, by reason of the need for my own exceeding industry.

For now the change of front and vehemence in our enemy gave us good hope of working real enfeeblement upon them. Even their captain, whom I had caught sight of here and there as out of some bad dream, was urging them away to meet the new assault. There was that about him which daunted one oddly,



"His blade cut sparks from my gun-barrel."—Page 61.

but I had a will to make one grand good stroke anyway that night, and flung myself after and on him, whether or no. In so doing I became sensible of aid from a revolter, one of their white slaves, a stalwart fellow who had mighty execution on his former company right and left as we went.

My quarry turned when he found me so set, and his blade cut sparks from my gunbarrel, but by happy chance flew in splinters, and I fetched him blow on blow over the head, with little result beyond keeping him half covered. How this would have ended I know not, nor yet how soon their compact mass might have spread again to overcome us ; but now what had been moaning vaguely abroad leaped out on us all at once in something between a roar and a howling cry, something wet and solid that whirled men afar from what they clung to, and sprung the vessels widely apart again by the stern, tilting the swarm of Turks into the gulf between, and drowning them and their cries together in uttermost blackness and unspeakable crash of water. It fell on me likewise, though not the worst of it, and I knew nothing for a great space.

When I came to, the moon was shining in a dappled heaven, above one mast, which tottered and threatened me where I lay. Rags of sail and rat-tails of cordage blew out from it, and all pitched about extravagantly. There was a great tangle below, much of it about and over me ; indeed in my very wits as well, for I could not at once recall what had happened.

On working up to knowledge and my full height,

luckily without bones broke or other disablement, I saw that the ship was turning this way and that masterless, but mostly in a circuit, as if there were whirlpool motion lingering in the sea. No form was afoot on that deck save my own; but my heart leaped out of its loneliness to see the ship that had been Turkish right near me, with Fleete very apparent in command, nor altogether crippled either in men or sailing-gear. Seeing me, he hailed in delight, and I answered with anxious good will, making inquiry as to Ratcliffe, Marjorie, Alice and the rest, and what we should do. All these were sound, quoth he, but had been near giving over both myself and the effort to reach me; and would know in return of our maids were they dead or living.

This reminded me with a start, for indeed there should be many, poor things, and no sound came from them.

As I was turning to that search, I saw another figure rise from amid the rubbish and work painfully toward me. I held my breath at first, for he might be a Turk, but presently knew by sight and sound my brave revolter, whom I greeted with all welcoming and left in charge above. From time to time during my stay I could hear his calls to the other ship, and their answering, that soon grew fainter.

I found our damsels in and about the cabin, save a few who had sought remoter hiding-places, all masculine still in attire, but soaked and tumbled, and in a palsy of terror, making them very deplorable manikins indeed. Some cried out affrightedly as I entered;

but they were glad enough when they knew me for certain, and could not make too much of me. Others let loose all their nerves together as jerkily as so many puppets of a show ; and the Highland girl—as I shall call her—flung both arms weightily about my neck, vowing that I had her affection as entire as man might ever hope of woman, with other testimonials—whereof she thought shame another day.

Only a few could take relief with saneness and sobriety. From them I learned that the battering had been very bad, leaving aches and bruises on all ; that the first great upheaval of the storm had overturned the lamps among their cast-off womanly apparel and shattered them, making a great blaze, which would soon have ended the *Tiger* and all therein but for the deluge that presently poured down the stairway ; that this latter had been swashing about ever since and fighting the remains of the fire, now all out, and draining away to the hold, though there was more than a little yet underfoot to be its own witness. Meanwhile these poor creatures, all mis-clad and saturate, were crouching in black unhopeful silence, their speculation divided between throat cutting, drowning and other awful fancies. Truly I could not wonder that some were over liberal of endearment to the bringer of better tidings, even though me.

By and by I was called above, where indeed I had meant to go shortly, and found that our friends were unhappily no longer within sight or hail. All effort had been of no avail to keep them by us, owing to the

unmanageableness of their craft and ours or something in the working together of wind and wave. The moon was hid again, and we could find nothing to signal with but a candle that would hardly stay alight even for a moment.

Most likely their case was no better, for we saw only dim yellow winkings, pale in the half-shrouded moonlight, uncertain and far away, which did us no manner of good. Nor came any response to our shouts and hails. This was the last of them for us on that voyage ; yet it was somewhat to know them alive and hopeful.

CHAPTER VI.

WE COME TO LAND.

IN stumbling about, we heard from time to time a faint complaining, very distressful and eerie, but could not easily find the spot whence it came. In the end, from under a great complex of fallen stuff, my revolver dragged another of his sort, but slenderer, who had fallen on hard usage from either side. "'Tis Jemmy Evans," cried my man; "poor fellow! And far gone now, I do greatly fear."

To this, not said over wisely, the wounded man gave some sort of confirming answer; which I hurried from to call the women folk, this being indeed their very proper field; moreover, we were in need of spirits and light. All these came together, for the captain's case bottles were well packed and ready to hand below, and already the damsels of more contrivance had got a lamp into burning order again, if one might say so much for that rickety and besplattering affair. It rolled into all our eyes a deal of stinging smoke, and so scalded their hands with the toss of the wave that first one and then another was like to drop it under foot for the improvement of our trouble. In especial our fair Highlander came to grief, who had been at the front of the ministering, and sweetly anxious and pitiful; but now went suddenly

out through the press with a sorry face and cry, and long thereafter betook herself, when the ship-rolling would allow, to laving and petting the broad redness of one knee.

They were all with us then ; chiefly no doubt in compassion and solicitude, yet eager also to escape the clammy darkness and disorder below deck ; which nothing could well surpass for dismal wretchedness. Our round Oxforder, all wet with clinging garments and sadly betousled, had the weak head of Jemmy Evans in her lap, and was making it steady with one hand while she aimed the spoon with the other. Meanwhile, our trig forester, she of the buckskin suit, who alone seemed as though nought had befallen her, went ranging abroad a little, in the thought, as she said afterward, that there might yet be other need for aid.

Sure enough we heard her presently, and that anear, crying there was one who could not rise and must be seen to. Yet her tone was not wholly of welcome ; and when the light was held thither we noted she had not prevailed on herself to put hand unto him. The figure just before her made me start, for I could have sworn I must have pitched about on that very spot a dozen times, yet here was my old enemy again, full length and well washed over, choosing to be sick, as I could not help deeming, yet after all none the worse to the eye for the mighty belaboring I had given him.

“So, staring doth pleasure the company,” quoth he—“more than comforting them who do not turn limp for a little loss of blood nor crave pity as well as succor !”

He spoke as politely as the purport would bear, yet I could not feel him at all honest in meaning. Such was the covert hatefulness of his tone that the damsel-flock drew away hither and yon, to stairway and lamp and me, hovering as children do when dreading themselves beset and uncertain of the surest protector.

But in the dying man Jemmy Evans a more frightful change was wrought. Whereas he had been all wilted before, he now started up on one hand stiff and gasping. Such a face may a sinner have at the last when evil claws are on him. Twice he strove, reaching forward his other hand for helping the words, and then his voice broke from him as if tearing. "Spare him not!" he cried. "Fling him over! To hell with him for your soul's sake!" Then he saw the other moving as to rise, and changed his imploring with insistence of agony, "Keep him from me! O keep him from me!" Wherewith, waving his hand backward, he sank as before, only struggling horribly with his breath; and the soft girl that caught him broke out in a laugh of unreason, while others fainted. Before the laugh came to an end he was dead.

I cannot give to know how this stirred and shook me. The stout revoler by my side muttered in his teeth, looking as though he thought the first part of Jemmy's outcry very good counsel, if only we dared. But it was hardly to be taken, after all, with one who might be as ourselves; and if other, could we be rid of him so lightly?

However, I put a bold face on it, essaying to be

rough. "Up with you," quoth I; "you are as well able to rise as anybody."

He laughed over that in an inward unrippling way, but as though there could be no better jest.

"It is the other word they apply to me," he made answer; "I make you my compliment on clearer vision."

In a trice he came upright with easy motion, bowing vertically, as though his head hung so; whereat there was a rout behind me making for the stairs, and they had surely taken the lamp with them but that my one backer snatched it, being rightly unwilling to abide in the dark with such company. For my own part I did not recede beyond a step or two, when the thought took me that here was after all only some polite sea-rover who made his profit of that evil gift of nature, the terror couchant in him. Anyway duty called a pause; and I spoke again, hating him none the less, whichever way I might take him.

"Think not to scare me out of life like him yonder," said I. "Have you had blows enough of me or no?"

"Why," said he, very coolly, "I am not minded for fighting without need. Nor yet am I one whom many take aboard and then turn away. You know not what luck I may bring, nor what strange devices." Therewith I heard a groan from my revolter.

Nevertheless, I was very well content at being battle free, having an inward conviction that I might equally as well hammer a man of leather, and not knowing in the least what he might do to me. So I

signified a truce, and desired him to be seated again, which he soon was on a piece of the fallen mainmast with taut cordage for backing.

Seeing me about going nearer, my sturdy revolter clung about me and whispered in a rush of breath. "'Tis a frightful one, I know not what. He hath power on men alway for ill. In no manner of fight hath harm come to him,—or pity from him, and none can abide him long except through mere terror. We were best pitch him over by all means—if he pitch not us instead."

I patted my adviser gently on the back, saying as lightly as I could, "Ought we to look for sweetness in a pirate Turk? Go you to the wheel, good fellow, and keep her before the wind, that we may journey somewhere with less tossing. I will be his entertainer."

I picked up the brandy flask and a brace of cups that were rolling with it about poor Jemmy's feet, and went artfully with them and the lamp toward my guest. That is, I swung about so, by seeming accident, throwing his visage rapidly into divers lights; all which he took with unconcern, though hardly not knowing.

I made little of him that was comfortable. English he could never be; perhaps from the Continent, or more eastern countries, though speaking our tongue no less well than I. His garb was uniform, a faded grey-blue I had not seen before. In the set of it, or in personal carriage, he could not be bettered as an officer of service—only for that snaky dangling of hair, glossy

where the lamp shone on it, and the strange hue of his long bare face, making something wild and unearthly of the sinister will in his mouth and eye. I said within myself that if he were indeed only human, it was at least a very strange and terrible humanity.

For all that, I made myself go up close and pick a seat opposite, with an old box overturned between us, which might serve as a table. Thereon I set my case bottle and vessels, with brief invitation coming up out of me as out of a great void. Not that I was minded to be truly companionable, nor would have sought one who showed such calm blood over that dreadful undoing. But partly there was a compulsion on me as of something we draw toward in wonder and detestation; partly I thought well to allay in him what active enmity I might, considering our state and his formidableness; and no doubt beyond all there was a little sorry dancing of curiosity whether he would really unbend himself to honest liquor.

However he did so, in the matter of filling and toasting at any rate though I cannot swear to seeing one drop go through his lips, and the slow lessening of contents might be no more than deft spilling about under cover of our motion. This was less now, since the vessel kept away before the wind, still in great hamper but with no more cowl-like gambols; and soon I knew for certain that either he distasted our drink or was bent on keeping his wits clearer than mine. Wherefore, being already a little encouraged, and having a great conceit of my strong head, I made resolve to take no note, but to drink on easily, watching what

he might do. So, in this hopeful plan, we were soon talking like a pair of plotters or boon comrades, he still furthering every access of good-nature on my side by a very gentle and man-of-the-world-like civility.

Sure there were never any spirits so potent as those of our good Captain Fleete, for long ere it should have been, I felt myself growing light and babbling loudly, quite at home with my fearsome companion, even half-pitying him.

"Your Eminence," quoth I, then halted, being tender of his feeling.

"Say on," quoth he.

"Why, then, with leave," said I, "you must admit very certainly, my lord Satan, that your conduct and carriage in this universe have been open to blame. You really have not done rightly, Satan; and may thank yourself for all that has come on you."

There was a tipsy cunning in the name thus repeated and the way I dwelt on it, though he took no notice. For the rest, my tone remonstrant was all that might be hoped of a wise young man addressing in his cups the whilome Prince of Archangels.

"I never thank," he made answer mighty drily. "I leave that to such as can find another soul in worse plight than themselves. When that comes to pass—," and he looked at me in an ugly, covertly hopeful way. It went in a minute, though, and left only a great abiding sadness, which I doubt not to have been real.

"But you have done very wickedly," I insisted, with bull-dog hold on my homily—for an opportunity

to preach point-blank at the devil is what no man may get twice. "If good influence and prayers would avail——"

He laughed quietly. "What!" said he, "You would like to set the women on me for my salvation? Why that might have its merit, if it did not issue quite so."

I felt mistily the wrong I should do them by that crazy mission, supposing they would at all consent, which began to appear most unlikely. Therefore I sat silent, working up an answer.

"But as for my career," said he. "There are few who have made no mistake, and we never can know the temptations of another."

"That is true," I said, having heard it often enough before to be very sure; but I could not tell whether he were in gibe or dead earnest.

"If you only knew the extenuating circumstances," he went on with a sigh. "The up-boilings of passion that were not put there by me; the aspiration that no tame spirit could ever know; the weariness beyond speaking where all was goodness and inanity forever; the bar above me nowise to be moved, though ever tempting assault; the despotism that I had no share in making and could not bring myself to bear; and since then the unceasing hounding enmity of gods and angels and men, till there is little refuge but in cunning for one who would far rather act with chivalry! I tell you, the lies that have been told of me, to say nought more, would make your best parson a slaughterer. Earth and heaven, what a long-suffering scape-

goat I have been! Why you cannot even charge a man with knife plunge or bullet speeding, but it must needs be *I* that instigated him."

The view was novel to me, and uttered in a very concentrated way, as if there were great inner heat of wrath and contemning which flared not outward. I set it down now in mere fairness to the Prince of the Fallen.

"But still," I urged, "evil is evil. You might yet amend."

"Say you so," quoth he, as in relief. "Pray tell me;" and I was now too hazy to guess at other than frank speaking.

I will not try to relate the fine schemes we devised between us, he leading me hither and thither for his diversion. They come and go before me like windy cloud-figures; and no doubt there were more still that I have clean forgot. Somehow it seemed that our minds, put together in that way, were oftenest working benevolently toward the damsel crew below. Thereunto he spake better than ever I heard any creature—love and religious yearning and words of like import coming very pat indeed to his lips. Nor did I surmise any snare until he made very plain offer of division, one half to be saved by me in my way, the other half by him in his—whereat my soul went sickening, he being what I knew. I said him nay very stoutly for all my muddling of thought, and was going on with a strain of denouncement when he rose half way, all agrin, the lamp swinging in his hand, and brought it down at full sweep of arm in a crash of fire on my head.

But my revolter, for good reason, had lately quit his post and come near. With a spring, he smote the lamp aside and overboard as it fell. That I saw very surely, but what more I cannot certainly say. Only they were tumbling all about a goodish while before I could get to them, having a wonderful ill luck myself in the matter of falling, and oftener going wrong than right I do believe. When at last I got within reach, it was only to snatch after, as they pitched out through a gap which the storm had torn in the taffrail and down to the water below, my champion screaming horridly as they fell. I flung after them all I could lay hands on that would float; but, beyond the splash, there was no sound nor sign.

Then I sank down on one side without much thought even of safety, and if you please went to sleep, that being a matter quite beyond my will.

When I woke there was clear sunshine all about me, and a pillow or some like pad of a thing under my head, which needed it, being very bad. The vessel rode the water pretty easily, for our forester girl was trying her hand at the helm. Soon all the women, seeing me with eyes open, came about me again, and nought would do but I must make relation of everything that had fallen out that night. This brought my late boon companion painfully before me in fancy, and his victim too whom I have called the revolter, a stout man of his hand, none better, and surely gone in a complete and ghostly way, for to save me I cannot make shift even to recall his name.

While I mused on this they grew more urgent, so

that I gave them it all as told here, with more mayhap that I have now forgotten; only no doubt passing in wisdom very lightly over our plans—those of the devil and me, if such he were—for their happy conversion. But they heard enough to lay stress unpleasingly on the cups and my sorry plight, and some were willing to be severe; as though I had been made a sot of by an arrant imposing fellow, who took my terrors for his cue.

I thought it the more unkind, since most of them were altogether wild with fright of him not many hours ago and ready to believe anything. But now we were in sunshine and he not there, circumstances which might be relied on for that illogical though lovely sex.

Yet this I will say for them, that I sometimes have doubted whether this after all were truly Satan that I sat in such friendly converse with, or indeed any darkened spirit whatever, other than human. For could the mere ocean engulf any subtle fiend thus completely? Gone he was and gone he stayed, nor in all that voyage had I any more sight or hint of him.

However, contesting nothing, I made my peace with light labor, they calling to mind the hard knocks I had given and taken among the boarders, and having indeed some need of me continually, if 'twere only to tell them which way to go.

The sea was quieter now, giving us little trouble, and I saw with admiration how well they had set to rights the litter of the deck. No great amount of blood had been there to affront their nerves, most of it having

been washed well off by that black downfall of water which so timely ended the fight ; save only where the dying man had afterward lain. So good and industrious indeed had they been, that they were still in very sad order of person, though drying. Some began soon to steal away to correct this, and later re-appeared half men half women as to attire, or in what other proportion might hang on the degree of success in getting out of one apparel into another. Which work was never quite completed, for that the gowns and such like had so suffered through chances of flood and fire that many damsels could never regain much of what they had cast off. Therefore, according to choice, there were some who became feminine again in aspect, though clad scantily, like shipwrecked ladies or Christian converts in a sun-warm heathen land ; others preferred still the male attire notwithstanding hard usage in their first essay ; and a few held yet by their compromise, which at least covered them, without being wholly mannish outside. By that eve we had a dry crew and a very comely crew, though here and there one was ailing, and all taken together were more motley than ever yet.

We gave Jemmy Evans a burial that sundown, sailor-fashion so far as I knew. No other corpse was aboard, though without doubt there had been some at the first after the fighting. We could not but be sensible of great mercy in this, for it was doleful work, as indeed the putting away of any dead must always be. There was no living man either but me, which I had in regret unless he should be very

ill-conditioned for I would gladly have shared the burden of trust. Yet some would think my present state more favorable; and at least I could not be lonesome with so many damsels to look after.

There were thirty all told, leaving a third more whom we were fain to believe on the other ship, as indeed we knew very well of some. Truly Mistress Broome too was away; yet were we not grieving beyond solace to be the part of her flock out of eye. No doubt I ought to have been in despair about my severance from Marjorie, but it was hardly love in full feather with me as yet; I knew her to be even more secure than we, and there were those nearer whose needs and charms and importunities left my thought no time to roam.

I measured them into watches, after the manner of ship-life so far as I had seen; putting with each of these one or two pairs of eyes that might reasonably be relied on to keep open and show some discretion at need. The wind and the sea were good to us. We held westward by the compass, prospering well. That is, for a *Tiger* which had lost all his limbs but one, the mizzen-mast, and went in fear of losing it likewise at every wakening of the breeze. The rigging was of our own devising, and quaint enough, since I knew nought of sea-craft and the maids even less. But it did us double service, affording no end of very wholesome mirth.

We were all mighty home-like and familiar, our minds and hearts unbending cheerily with a quick spring after their late horrible strain. My fair ship-

mates felt this, and showed it even more than I as indeed was natural, being attuned more finely. They were busy as bees, or else full of diversion, singing either way, with many a jest about our house-keeping and the floating home we had won, without captain or dragon; to say nothing of mad pranks played on me, inviting a jolly punishment.

When mere teasing would answer for this, I now and then made mention of the husbands expectant, in array with all their purses. Whereon one would frown, another grow saucily defiant, while in the end there would be great stir of laughter among all. My Oxford minx ended that by a bit of dare-deviling. We had beaten the Turk, said she; why not pick a leaf out of his book and rove the seas thirty wives to one lord, giving the planter host good-bye unseen, and ending at some eastern land? It would not be so bad as Solomon, quoth she, who was even wiser than Master Smith. But at this there was a great cry of shame, and then no more of that jesting.

We sailed this way near a week very contentedly, our good luck still holding. Then late in the night we grounded of a sudden, having seen no shore, and there was lively pitching, with a strong current running alongside from stern to bow. I felt this diminish after a time, thereby knowing that it must be a true tide in some confined place. Sure enough, when morning came we could see ourselves in an inlet of no great width, a bit of rising land on our northward side of it, on the other a waste of marsh running far away. Westward was a low distant line of coast,

with water between; which made me think, rightly enough, that the dry land beside us and the marsh were both insular, being well off shore.

Yet here was ending of some sort unto our sea-faring after all. I was minded to make much of it, having piloted them so far.

"Come, fair maids," I cried very lively, "all of you come look, I pray! Lo, here are we in America!"

But they were not quite so answerable as I could wish. A few did indeed brighten at the sight of any land; but some looked away over the marsh very lonesomely, and then at me as if asking what I meant or why I played so sorry a jest on them. Quoth one, "And is it thus indeed? I had seen something very different in fancy." And another, "America is a large word and a long land; belike we have come among cannibals."

"No! No!" I protested. "Surely we cannot be far from the new plantations at Jamestown by the great Chesapeake Bay." But indeed I had nothing to go on but eager wishing and conjecture of the wildest.

"Yet I see no planters," averred my goodly Highlander, ranging the marsh with her eye.

"Did you look to see them wading out to us with the crier at their head?" scoffed Oxford, both being now partly in more maidenly guise. "Fear not, the vendue shall yet go thrivingly, though not so well, it may be, as if they had seen you some days ago."

"But how to win ashore?" queried our forester, yet in her deerskins.

This was too hard for us all, the narrow interval

being in occupancy of the man-eating shark-fish, that very plainly broke the surface of the water with point of fin and tail.

“It is not the land of the cannibals, but the water of them,” said I wofully. “Let us at any rate lessen them in number, if we may.” For I thought the report of our musquetry would surely reach any Europeans who might be dwelling or lying near.

This was well approved by them all, and in the course of an hour we had put many bullets into the neighborhood of the monsters, doing them some hurt now and then. Finally, I let off the one great gun that was yet serviceable, and went down with the maidens to breakfast.

Before this ended we felt the stern swaying gently, as if meditating further motion, and when we reached the deck it was indeed afloat, within leap of the shore; but there it stuck fast again, nor could be persuaded nearer. However, we made this do, for I took the passage at a bound, after which they threw me such ropes as were handy, making a rude sort of gangway, through which appeared the yellow running and wear of the tide between bank and ship.

They could not make that transfer calmly, though there were knots to aid them; but mostly slid down one or other of the ropes like boys down a baluster rail, a very odd spectacle indeed, if only for their lack of skill or curious diversity of attire. Four lingered in some access of bashfulness or dread; nor could any persuasion prevail. But when we were moving inland the greater distress of being left alone took hold on

them and they came swarming after us, making in their descent a more random exhibition of disorder than all the others. But of these many were yet in blush, though trying to carry the matter off hardily.

I now began to feel great disquiet, there being no response to all our signalling. I knew not, to save me, within a thousand miles of where we might be; and as little concerning the fortune that awaited us. Bearing in mind the prodigious extension of that sea-board, and the very few places and far between where people of our complexion had made lodgment, who was to warrant that we should not be cut off all the days of our lives, or spirited away like that woful colony of Roanoke?

But being come into the royalty of this realm, though suddenly and against our will, we first had a care to see what it might contain—after the manner of shipwrecked folk time out of mind. This became very soon a pleasing pursuit, the damsels not clinging any longer in a knot together, but spreading over the face of the isle, when they found that there was nothing to make them greatly afraid. Undoubtedly a few discovered some terror at coming on a grey fox bird-nesting among the dunes, which for all that went the other way as quickly, though without their noise; and again there was outcry from two who had wandered over toward the sea-front, giving us all a share in the disquiet until we came to know they had only waded ankle-deep, and an inch or two more, in hot sand.

But the most of them, straggling, held with me along the upland that ran northward from our mooring

in knolls and dimples, a kind of backbone to the island ; where were trees, the oak and pine and holly, which we all greeted, and a sprig of mistletoe on another, the sweet gum, which we knew not then by name ; also a few patches of greensward, and, better than all, a clear spring upbubbling in a little ferny hollow that slanted westward. A thread of a brooklet ran from it, but soon died ; albeit in rainy weather it no doubt fed in some degree the fringe of salt marsh that lay below, broken by winding inlets of still water, and luxuriant to the eye as any pasture.

We did not halt for more than quaffing and gazing, though after that long time on shipboard you may be sure we took note of the place for future encampment. But indeed, we could not get very far from it, the ridge and beach and marsh all coming together in a point pretty soon, so that we quite knew our area and boundary. I judged a league to be more than the latter, even taking into account shore-denting, such as was common on the western side ; and the face of the land left nothing to be long hid from us. Nor from any vantage-point was so much as a trace of man to be seen, look where we might, whether gentle or savage—no canoe or wigwam, habitation or spire or sail. For better vision I clambered a grape-vine to the upper fork of a tree ; an awkward performance that set the hardier maids a swarming likewise up all the growth around me that they dare essay—not without much tumult of laughter and some downfalls. Yet we gained nothing by it beyond our merriment and a livelier good will toward the repast at noon.

To make provision for this, I went back aboard ship with a lively party, and soon cast out such store that we were fain to leave a portion behind in a safe place; making up for this deposit with adornment of flowers—a blithe and joyful procession of merry-makers as ever you would wish to see in May! I cannot pretend that we found any riotous abundance in form or color, yet there were store of wild-roses, pink and sweet, with a very delicate vetch or wild-pea trailing about the higher ground, and something that we called a primrose, for resemblance, putting up singly out of the sand.

But after all, our chaplets could not vie with those awaiting us by the spring, where more leisure had gone to the gathering. Berries too they had found abundantly, some large, black and clustered, some round and bluish, uncertainly eyed at the beginning but very well affected by all on trial.

Small wonder it is that the fair lambs of my flock were like so many prisoners turned free. No more of unstable footing and feeding, of water kept overlong, of narrow quarters and ocean wearied eyes, but in their stead the fresh blossoming of earth, enlivening adventure and the surprise of treasures new. The peril and horror seemed to have drifted quite away behind them, or gave their present employ a greater zest; for there was hardly more than one thought over that meal—our outing in Eden, and how to make the most of it.

Anent some such utterance I heard a saucy girl murmur in her neighbor's ear that it was all unscrip-

tural—too many Eves to the Adam ; the Oxford lass, thus bespoken, replying, they had evaded one Turk to find another, and perhaps the planters after all were no better, and so on, consuming with laughter, till a third, somewhat more thoughtful, put a period to their jollity.

Doubtless it was not a very profitable strain. But, later, even she was asking me whether we must remain there very long. Being in the spirit of mischief, I made answer, " Most likely altogether ;" whereupon the other two laughed and she frowned ; which made me think that speculation was astir already amid their fun, for surely our lot was of the strangest. When, indeed, was a young man ever before cast quite out of the world with a whole cargo of comely young women, all self-confessed as very willing to marry, being in some sort brides elect unto husbands unknown, and all grown mighty kind and familiar through the changing conditions of our company ? I knew not what the planters might think, or have title to think, of the situation, but they were afar ; nor precisely what I ought to forecast of it myself, being already in part of the opinion that we could not get away and would be safer with no visitors. However, there was all time ahead, so I turned over the matter to the future and went about present business.

That afternoon I shot a few curlew and marsh-fowl, my forester and others aiding. Also I put another party at work with hook and line, myself trying a long cast among the breakers ; all of which went well, so that we were assured thereafter against any lack of

food. There was great rivalry also in getting shell-fish, and shells too for that matter, though only a very few of them were at all beautiful.

We spent the night in our usual quarters on ship-board, but after the day's run ashore the slight jar of the waves and continual licking and spattering of the water were displeasing. By morning we were all very ready to prepare for abiding ashore.

In truth it was either this for us, or to keep quarters in the old craft, which was neither truly afloat nor yet stable like a building; or finally to get away with her or some part of her to the distant shore. Now it needed very little trying to make sure that the *Tiger* would never budge again for any force at our command; there were no boats wherein to leave her nor had been this long time; and to propose a voyage on a rickety raft over that shark haunted waste of water, with not even a warranty of good weather—it is like my thirty maidens would have set me down as quite lunatic for the mere mention. Rather would they forswear all other mankind, planters or no, and spend the rest of their days where they were—that I knew well.

So with very brief consulting after dispatch of breakfast we made a good broad plankway to the shore, and then another nearer the bow. Over these, with the aid of wheelbarrows and trucks, we moved a good part of the cargo, the fair hands, all but a few, taking hold with right vigor. Beside, the hull could be come at over the sand when the tide was low, but we found this an inconvenient way of unloading. We

could not indeed get our encampment quite ready for that night, but another day brought this about also, making a very cheery scene, I can tell you—what with swinging hammocks and tents of sailcloth under the trees, and store of good things all about us, and the laughter and singing of the maids beside the spring. Even such little bickering as had latterly been on ship-board was now at rest, and in the stead thereof a most nimble-witted, kindly, affectionate bantering spirit abounded among them, making free with even sundry passages of our late awful experience.

One such frolic of the tongue I must needs call yet to mind in especial, since it had a more intimate linking than most to the scenes and home fortunes, with not a few stirring perils and heart pangs, of many a later year.

For they bore yet in memory the noisy, unwelcome eagerness of one among them, when distraught with fear, that they should slay themselves out of hand for their comfort, herself taking the lead. Wherefore, looking on her red cheeks and her strong quick bounding gait and the remnant of rainbow apparel that yet hung oddly about her, they did often unmercifully make game of the good maid as Our Deadly One, or Miss Motley Suicide, with other gibing of like import. She took it well, as indeed all things but pirates, laughing with the laughers—a quaint lass i' faith, hearty and homelike, with often a jovial lilt in her voice, and very well loved and thought on among us, albeit rather I should say of the fustian than the silk and satin half of life.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CARES OF A BEVY OF BRIDES.

I MADE not any precise account of the days we dwelt in this way, like angels or savages, a world unto ourselves. All felt as in a dream, I think, what with the strangeness, the abounding leisure, the ease wherewith our wants were supplied as by manna fallen from heaven, the white sea-birds that went by, the haze, the voices of the deep echoing round us in light and dark with a very lulling sound. In the air was something drowsy born between sun and sea, a vague dulling of distressful memory and anxious thought, a yielding unto the drift of fate, yet with no real abiding content. I felt Ratcliffe and Marjorie like phantoms waiting without; aye, even that lusty partisan the revolver, so frightfully undone for me.

Yet we had used our best endeavors toward making a veritable home, solid and undoubted, of the fleck of land whereon we had been cast. Not only was the isle explored, but we were in wide-spread occupancy of it at all hours, insomuch that I could hardly turn any way without seeing a maiden. The ship, too, was so fast by us and so easy of access that it made a second abiding place, a robing room and field of curious research for all.

Wherever the tide was low our domain enlarged

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itself greatly, the new fringe becoming forthwith a great resort, whence many rare things were derived. These were encountered too, though less often than at first, in the marsh and the upland as well as among loose dunes toward the sea. And there was wading knee-deep in the inlets of the western side; and scrambling back from the race of the surf along the sea-front; idlesse under the trees, and all sorts of mirthful converse, only not quite as in the beginning. For daily repetition ever breeds a weariness; and I have thought since then, that even Paradise would be hardly a blessing forever, with no vivifying change. Moreover it is against human nature to see bounds encompassing one without chafing, or else flagging and losing heart.

It happened one day that I went in the latter mood to the old ship, slow footed and dull with the drowse whereof I have spoken. Yet as I drew near there awoke in me something different, by no means to be put in words. I could see nought amiss, but disquiet grew with my nearing, and when I had gained the deck I knew of a certain there was something waiting below. I had nearly withdrawn, so urgent was it with me, but seeing two of the young women coming toward me from the bow unconscious, I heartened myself in very shame and went down before them. In my belt was a pistol which I did not always carry. This I drew, to their wonderment, keeping watch and ward.

Not a living soul was in the cabin; only garments male and female, cast about with such disorder as may

be when housewifery has gone mainly otherwhere. Yet, on the table, right across a tattered blue gown, lay a very alien thing indeed, a long eagle feather such as notorious Indian warriors and werowances do use to wear dangling behind them, the quill being dyed a bright red. It looked as though it had been dipped in blood, and indeed it very well may have been ; though wherefore, or whether left by will or accident, in warning or menace, I cannot pretend to say.

Before this my sense of peril had spread to my company, so that when I held it up we three took counsel by eye without word, then made craftily for the door. I went last, as in duty ; but my breath came with more freedom when we had put a double bow-shot betwixt us and the haunted ship.

There was no lack of wakefulness and tongue-wagging when we put our trophy in view. Some I thought were stirred in fancy with a kind of charmed awe, as marvelling what knight o' the greenwood had thus given us the dare, or of what deeds of prowess the deadly thing might be token and record. But I doubt not they would have been content with no further discovery, however curious. Nor could any one lend a confirming word to the hope that it might not be new-come after all ; Captain Fleete had great store of quaint belongings, but—we all agreed—none like this.

We could not sleep with such a menace fronting us from the whole length of the *Tiger*. Therefore, I made stout my nerves, and boarded her again that afternoon. A few of the hardier maids followed as far

as the deck, some in male attire, some not, but all with muskets or fowling pieces. The remainder held by the shore, straggling away according to the degree of their fear, and taking no other part in what went on than an outburst of calling and pointing whenever they fancied anything dreadful.

But I did not let this work any discomposure, having no longer oppressing me that sure sense of ambush. I have thought it all over, often and often, and suppose that I must really have seen something ominous the former time, without duly distinguishing it; or there may be some warning emanation, like the smell of the copperhead serpent—I do not know. But this I know very well, we made a thorough ransacking without any further cause for fear; then, to be quite at ease, removed everything to our camp which we were like to need for a very long time, thereafter sealing every inlet of the ship with planks and nails, so that no one could enter it unless by noisily tearing a way.

Now, for some days, it was part of our living to go over the ship outwardly morn and eve, that anything hostile might bewray itself; but we could never find a trace. At the first, in these expeditions, my damsels were very solicitous to keep one with the other, as indeed in their movements everywhere. But as time wore on with no new alarm, they began to forget their fear and scatter abroad again; one or two of the saucier ones even mocking at me for a very understanding gentleman, rather too easily scared by a wildfowl feather;—a flat mutiny in speech that I

could not check but with threat of affectionate penalty.

This little stir made every hidden trouble spring out on me, quick and vivid. The sea-horror gripped me again ; I grieved in heart that I had failed my rescuer in his need ; I was often half beside myself to think of my true friend and Marjorie—for indeed where were they now ? And Fleete, with his wonderful, calm lying ; and that noble lady, Alice ; and Mistress Broome, our doughty warrior-madam—I would fain see them all again, if it might be.

But, notwithstanding these distresses, I, too, was beginning to find some peace in continued immunity, when another alarm befell.

You are to know that near the northward end of our island was a little pool of brackish water, but very clear, bordered by a low shielding growth, and fed only once in a while by the tide. It lay just under a low hill, the shoulder of our upland. Here were safety and warmth of sun, with waist-depth or little more and good footing as one might desire. No marvel that it soon came to be in use for bathing ; our maidens going away thither one by one ; for they did not affect company in their ablution, whatever pictures may say.

I first learned of this habitude by a pure accident growing out of my restless roaming ; whereon we need not dwell, though it made a commotion. Only thereafter I was careful to leave them that end of the isle as their very own ; whereby a much greater trouble fell out, which else might have been averted.

For one day, being along the marsh, gun in hand, looking for snipe—the kind with ruddy-breast—and the bird that cries, “Will, will, will!” hence called willet, I heard a great scream away northward, and then many more; but all in one voice, until those nearer took up the outcry. I did not await this, but made up the hill slantwise, and then along the top as fast as I could. When behold, a goddess!—for that is the way they show them—coming in ecstasy of flight between the trees, her skin very fair and glistening, her hair weighty with water and deep golden behind her as she ran! When that she saw me she came straight my way, and faster than ever, without any shame, such terror was on her. She seized me with tight gripping, too spent for words, beyond a broken ejaculation or so, until I passed her on to hands more fit, and hurried back directly over the path she had come; for a bare savage or two would be no great matter in open sunlight.

But 'twas all to no purpose. I could not find a man of any race or quality, nor even so much as a foot-mark; nor any bit of apparel, though I went quite to the pool where hers yet lay, and beyond into full view of shore and water and the great northern marsh. I was at no loss to discern her own deep imprint where she had sped; above all, in first leaping, or wherever she had crossed a tender place, the ball of her foot, though naked, bearing well in, with every toe apparent. A mighty good speeding for sure, yet hardly to outfly a wild man eager in chase.

Returning with the clothes, I found my flock all

together, and properly fearful ; to whom I made my report of no discovery. Thereon some went forthwith to extremity in relief, chiding our runaway for their panic and the distracted quality of her day-dreaming. She, being no other than the luckless Highland lass, was in some sense elbowed to the front for inquiry ; and stood there, a little recovering, as witness her fine color of cheek and evading eye. Nevertheless, she held to her relation as they all agreed, only more in particular than before.

While in the edge of the pool, as she said, she had turned about by chance, and saw anear her a tall man, dusky of complexion from head to heel, who had motioned as though he would have her stay under fear. Which possibly had been done in her great bewilderment, but that there was a dreadful sign about his face, a little serpent dangling through the leaf of one ear and evermore feeding his lips with horrid kisses, whereby she knew he was a demon. So, the very excess of terror breaking its own palsy, off went she on springs without even half a will, and screaming likewise.

Only once did she look back, and then he was racing her hotly, the little snake being flung away. More she knew not until she saw me, but fancied the same sight halted him, though why an evil spirit should fear a gun, I am sure I cannot say. He was long of limb, she told us, and high of feature, with good carriage and a swift motion, very strong in seeming, coppery, and quite naked but for his black hair drawn behind and that frightful snake adornment.

When they were done with shuddering, we went very gingerly all over the place again, but there was nothing to see. This had in sooth a very spiritual look, though I discerned more likelihood in red men lurking near us, which would be a little better, no doubt. I felt very well convicted that she had seen what she said.

After that, laughter was no longer a matter of course about our well spring, nor free range of any maid alone; but rather looks that drifted sideways while talking, and urgent walking on if left ever so little behind where shadows fell thickly. I myself carried a more vivid conscience than ever before, remembering painfully, it seemed to me, every past sin and shortcoming, nor did I at any time hitherto feel such a yearning for the company of that dear girl Marjorie, who had not since our parting been quite always in mind.

Thus our second menacing worked every way like the former; only vastly more, for this time we could be in no doubt of evil intention, but felt ourselves wickedly sprighted, either through longing or malice. A mighty pleasant state of things for one with such a charge as I! Nor did this mood pass readily, though it might in time, had time been given.

'Twas, indeed, but the second twilight of eve after that alarum when the next one came. We were seated, easing a little in mind, about our camp fire, where hung the pot and kettle, making wherewithal for a late repast. I had been guard myself, but was now fain to rest, while one of the hardier maids went

out instead, though clinging pretty tightly to our skirt after all.

Whenever the talk was at pause, and that would happen rather often, we could hear insects of many sort, being such as ever are rife at that season, chanting and buzzing and cricketing with divers voices; and now and then some bird would give us a note or two, whistling very clearly; which has ever a strange effect in the dark, though pleasing. One such, from a tuft of bushes over against us, made oftener and longer than any other a sweet melody, as if expressly for our hearkening.

I doubted nothing, nor did any, when that blithe girl, who had before been arrayed in cap and gown, rose up from among us bare-headed, avowing that she would love to catch that songster on his perch. A comrade chid her lightly for foolery, but this only put her on; so she went forth saying, "I will start him anyway." The yellow light was on her hair a moment, on her shoulders round and gleaming, on the tattered grey stuff that she wore—a lovely figure of a damsel though not to say queenly—and then, something calling my eyes away, I fell into thought.

I think it was a rustling not so far away that raised my eyes again, but nothing very ominous. Yet on every side they met glances of more than perturbation. Some sudden instinct of terror was there, sparing none, not even me. Then, from another side than whither she had gone, her voice cried for help—quick and keen as if momentarily escaping. We were all up directly, I with gun in hand, but ere I had taken

three paces I heard her again another way, and stopped bewildered. Yet once more came her cry, still amoving as it seemed, and this time it was "Fire, O, fire!" I knew the voice of mortal need before the hand smothered it, and pulled trigger aiming by guess, though knowing the lead might reach her. Also I ran forward, shouting mightily.

But that outcry awoke a riot of echoing scarce earthly—such derision of devil-screaming, such insulting of ill triumph and exceeding hate as I had never fashioned in fancy, notwithstanding all that Fleete had told me of the Virginia naturals in their war! This all around, far and near, insomuch that I could not say whether there were fifty foes or five hundred, nor from what quarter I should first expect them. Whereto the huddling maids added their voices, until I knew not but more were gone, and so ran to their aid—with an arrow close after me. Indeed, it remained sticking in the ground before the fire all that night; we keeping in the shadow behind a poor cover of boxes not far away. We saw no more of our enemy but that token, though I cannot guess why, unless they believed us more fencible than we were; nor did they let themselves be heard again after their first hideous merry-making.

Sure never was dawn so coy and tardy, nor looking in on folk so woe-begone as we. One half would have been in dead faints or jumping fantasies long ago, but for the very extremity of their fear; and there were which did verily grow extravagant in more ways than one when they found no enemy

about them any more. I had little time for these, but set about ascertaining what I might of the Indians and their dreadful visit.

By the slant of the arrow, it must have come from some point near the shore running southward, but there I found no sign of embarking. I moved about warily, and not over sure but that another missile might at any time come from behind a tree or out of the rushes. For all that, I looked below as well, and not wholly without result. Where the brook from our well should empty was a damp V of beach like the delta of a river in small; and here I came on tracks of two human feet, moccasin-clad and not turned out like ours, moreover deeply imbedded as if made by one carrying weight. I thought I saw other marks too, as if more had crossed with him.

I could not make a chain of the trail either forward or backward; only on the other side of the camp, where the false bird had been, the weeds and grass were all down-pressed as by if couchant figures. What a horror of springing and seizure was there in that blackness, while no one knew! Doubtless they swept her from her feet, with hand on mouth, ere she could utter any cry. Thence to the delta-crossing, a half circuit round the camp there was nothing sure, though she must have fought mouth-free once or twice therein, to judge by her screaming.

Further up the coast we did indeed find a blue shred on a locust-thorn; and again further a place where we deemed she had momentarily won out of their hand, making flight for a few paces. About her foot-

marks there could be no question, and they were as of one running and stumbling. Why she had not called again it was hard to say ; but maybe they had bound her tongue with withes or some rags from her garments. Perhaps, after all, it was only a bit of cat-and-mouse deviltry for them. Anyhow they had her again beyond doubt ; for we saw where she fell.

Not much beyond this the island lessens in breadth by reason of a deep inlet putting from the westward sound. Here at the last we found some slight marks of embarkation ; but nothing that told in especial of her who was gone. Over water we had no means of following, even had that course been otherwise feasible ; or, in that great waste, had we known whither to go.

We returned with sore hearts, blackly o'ershadowed ; I pondering within myself whether there were not something which I ought to have done for her and had left undone. But indeed I think it was not so. I grieved over the girl from more than duty, such a pleasing, bright way she had, ever kindly and companionable, the one best liked and least to be spared of all that had come with me. Susan Fortescue was her name ; of a very good family they tell me.

In the latter part of this discovery a good half of the damsels had joined. We found the remnant in a tremble still, with furtive eyes, but making some attempt toward breakfast, cold meats mainly, a very dismal meal. Howbeit I encouraged them a little, saying that we should not pass another night out of doors, but go back to our quarters in the ship, where at

least were walls to defend us and as much light as we might choose, and where if we went to ruin it would be all together, and not by any such ghastly spiriting.

That day we busied ourselves in getting back on the *Tiger*, not without some slight tremors, inso-much that when we went or came it was all in a body, each one bearing more or less of our belongings; very speedy and watchful. No time now for picking wild flowerets; but rather such things as we might need for our food and defending. Indeed so diligent was our zeal that in a few passages we quite removed our whole store to the bank over against our gangway, dining timorously about the spring, just before our last procession but one. For I had deemed it best not to open the ship until everything was ready to go quickly on board.

But even when nails were drawn and doors open, I minded that we had brought no supply of water such as would be any avail to us in case of siege; wherefore back we went again, each with whatever vessel might be found in cabin or hold, and this twice over until we deemed that we had enough. By then my maidens all were very dismally weary, so that only a few could aid in stowing our goods away. Indeed, when the sun was near down there were boxes yet outside; but for this I cared not greatly, since it was no distance at all and we had our wing over them, so to speak.

At supper I learned that a very thorough exploration of the vessel had been made from deck to ballast;

for the quieting of their nerves I suppose, and that was well. No feather had been found this time, nor any sign of house-breaking, excepting only where some rascally squirrels had made a hole and come therethrough to get at our provision. Indeed even while we sat and ate, there was irruption of one into the pantry, whence I chased him,—a matter of great commotion among the dishes and petticoats. However, 'twas with no damage but to brittle ware, which we did not lack; and he went toward the supplying of our larder, with more that I shot next day.

This little stir did good to all. Afterward I lay down for sleep, giving charge to be called on failing of the light. This they did scrupulously, even jostling me from a deep slumber, in mirth as well as pity. I went above, as soon as I knew myself and the place; and looked around with solicitude. It was blind work at first, for I came through the glare of the cabin, and the sun had well nigh drawn all brilliance after him; but soon my vision grew more accustomed, and I could find nothing to make us afraid.

A few of my fair shipmates were with me; but went below again on my insistance, for I knew they must be in need of rest. Very much later, when there was a thin paring of moon in the sky, one more came bashfully stealing beside me, whom before I had noted little; for as she said there was no sleep to be had, thinking on my peril.

This touched me, and I had not the heart to get rid of her curtly, even for her own good; so we walked a long time together, chatting and keeping good ward.

I eased her fear in some degree by explaining that our besetters were not like to appear then, it being next after a prosperous foray ; but would rather wait for us to become a little secure and careless again.

For all that, I felt her spring or sidle whenever anything out of the common called from the marsh or wood ; a bittern booming, a frog of deeper voice in the chorus, a wild gander honking over head, or even a hooting owl. When an otter went skipping down the bank near us into the water, she clung and drew breath, as it had been some savage man. For singing birds, I think they were never more in the best favor with any of our party, in particular those that whistle and make melody by night. We heard not many of these before grey dawn, and they afar, perhaps again by the spring. I own I knew not rightly what to think of them, though this time they may have been harmless enough.

It being near the wakening of the other maidens, my kind companion kissed good-bye and went below. I name not her, nor any other, as will be seen, save only that poor lady who was abstracted so dolefully the night before ; since they and divers persons beside them might distate a more particular mention, though all went innocently. However, she that was fearful in my behalf will not among later cares and charges have quite forgotten.

In the fag end of my watch, I mused not a little on my odd predicament every way I could take it ; but finally made out that I had more than enough to do in keeping us all alive and free for the present, which

undoubtedly was very true indeed. Then came the reddening of the east and the slow uplift of the great warm sun, from amid which brightness I went below for another snatch of rest.

After breakfast I spent some time in ranging the island, with two or three for company, they being better armed than Diana, and I heavy laden at the first with gun and munition. But afterward our lading had a change, for we made a great bag of birds, partly a large kind of rail easy to shoot by reason of its tardy flight, and a few inland fowl between a quail and a partridge, whereto we currently give the latter name. Indeed we shot all that we could come at, being edible, on two feet or four; not knowing what need there yet might be.

Of course we had a care wherever we went, no doubtful mark passing without scrutiny; but I could not discern any new sign of visitation. My huntresses were at ease for the nonce, and even elate over their ample conquest; although to say truth, where a many things were so tame, this did not call for any great skill.

When we were near our goal returning, the for-ester, as I will yet call her, had sight of a great white crane, then dropping by a sand hill from flight toward us. They be wary birds, and we were thus far without one for that reason; though often stalking them or giving chase. Wherefore she passed her game to another and went back alone, the remainder being aweary.

But when they were aboard, and she gone a little

while beyond sight, my heart misgave me, though it certainly did seem we had explored every foot of the island in this our rediscovery and knew all which it might harbor. Yet I began walking after her, faster and faster; and when I heard the sound of her gun I ran, though it might only be a shot at the great bird. But then I heard her voice also, and it minded me keenly of that other first affright.

It was well that I had come so near, for when she cried again I saw her all at once pitching forward with two naturals behind her, on whom I fired over her body with no delay. Now was the surprise their own and in more than stinging fashion, for they had sped so quickly from behind a hillock that they could scarce pull up on seeing me, to say nought of dodging back out of the way. There were slugs in my barrel, too, as well as lesser shot, for I had dropped them in while walking; so that one of the bronze men doubled under that peppering, though seventy yards away, and was hardly aided to shelter by his colleague.

I drew a pistol and hurried up to the spot, where their late quarry awaited me, new risen and no less valorous than thankful—seeing that she had knocked over one to good purpose when first they sprang out at her. She told me this, catching breath while she loaded, and would fain let fly at another for their wickedness and the scare they had given her; but could not go farther either way that minute on her own feet. And no wonder, though she was a tightly strung damsel and not easily put to gasping.

However, when I, having loaded likewise, crawled to the top of our dune, she came after. We could see them going northward, seven by my count, beside twain whom they carried, one a very limp dead weight, and moreover, their last man limping. Almost at the same moment they saw us, and made more haste, which I expedited by blazing away at them, although too far for much hope of harm. But it is very like they heard a bullet going by, which I had rammed home with that load, for they nearly dropped their burthens, and did quite leave behind some article of apparel that one of these had worn. Having a fancy for the trophy, and seeing them so badly scared, I put after them mightily on the instant. It proved a cloak or mantle made of many soft feathers, the tinting arranged very deftly, and the sewing so finely done that a sharp eye would hardly detect it; altogether a very surprising piece of tailor-work.

"He wore it," said she. "Look here!" and she put her finger beside a scorched hole that might have come over his breast. She made no more words then, being scant of breath and also eager for a parting salute, which indeed she gave them from the top of the next hill, but so far away as to be mere bravado. This I told her, well pleased with her zeal, though laughing a little; for I felt much more like laughter now, and in better feather every way, since we had put them to flight.

We tarried on that mount until we had seen them take the water, all together in one long canoe, paddling with no loss of time, as though glad to be away.

Then we turned back, exchanging mirth and gibes ; but she shuddered in pointing out by the way where her fire had been delivered into our feather-man, then nearly touching her. In truth, there was a deal of blood on the sand, though the garment had somehow come off with only a little ; and I could but think she had put an end to his life.

“A very good shoot, my dear,” said I, encouraging her. “How much better this than the lot of our poor Susan !”

“Ah, that indeed !” said she.

“Moreover,” said I, “’tis something to be sought by the great of the earth, even in heathendom. No doubt the wearer of this may have been some king among them, or a notable prince at the least.”

While talking thus, we hurried back, for I could not rid myself of the fear that some other adventure might have been attempted against our party while I was away. Nevertheless we found all quiet, and my fair crew ready to become very valiant and confident on hearing what we had done and seeing what we had brought.

This was excellent well, the next three hours not going by without putting some of them to trial. For, as I was at work in the hold by way of arranging our stowage to greater convenience, there sounded a hubbub from the upper regions and even faintly through the side. Both ways the woodwork muffled it, but there was enough to start me upward, even before any called me by name.

When I got to the deck, the stir was less, or rather

different, our damsels triumphing together, but no longer struggling nor in terror. One let fly her piece into the tall wild grain on the other side of the inlet, where sundry disturbers had entered in flight.

By what I could learn, my Amazons had been quietly about their usual doings, a few fishing over the outer side, when a mass of drift, rather oddly compacted, came sheering by. Out of it, on a sudden, leaped an arm and a thong with a noose on the end, which went straightway over the neck and one shoulder of our Highlander that had been, at the very moment she lifted a great fish.

You may fancy how she cried out on finding herself in a trice the caught as well as the catcher. But as I have said, she was a right stalwart lass, and moreover in good posture for holding back, which she did with a will, screaming likewise. Thereon those nearest ran to her, making good her anchorage, and one thrust in her hand the first sharp thing that could be come at—a hatchet, as happened—so that she might sever what held her.

But she improved on this counsel, for one of the red haulers below having come up the side in his impatience, took such a keen smiting on the side of the neck that he pitched back whence he had come, and they all made off together, swimming for dear life.

I think a part of their discomfiture may have been in the way weapons were turned on them, hatcheting being their own proper practice, and in great favor, when not directed to themselves. However that may

be, our large damsel assuredly won her liberty, and the thong to show for it; though her face was red enough to paint with, and the pulling each way had given her full many an ache, so that she was fain to go below. Indeed, she seemed always a little longer after that stretching.

Being curious of the drift which had brought such commotion, I found it, washed ashore on our bank, as soon as I could—a mass of light undergrowth, still dashed with wet and red on the top, with a canoe under all, as I had hoped, and a paddle therein, bearing a blade at either end.

Now I had wings, now I had fins; and the island grew less unto me, no longer my whole bounding world. I drew out my prize with a shout, and put forth awkwardly in her across that strait, with sudden seizure of desire to carry the war into Africa. Yet it was no easy matter to keep myself, even so little a way, clear of the water in that dancing shell of a thing, very like a hornet nest for lightness.

When I got into the marsh, I found it not all of a level, either underfoot or as to height of growth. Whereas near my landing the wild rice, or whatever it may have been, was well above my head, and the ground firm enough to hold one with no great sinking, there were yet many treacherous spots within, bare or thinly matted over, or breeding a succulent herbage that would rather float than stand upright. But on the whole the remoter parts were no doubt higher, for water was coming down in little runnels from the leavings of the former tide, although the

present one kept flowing in. Somewhere amid this mightily overgrown and betasselled inner region my worrying naturals were like to be.

Here indeed I came on them right suddenly by a little pool ; twain, both naked save a clout, with a taller man between them. Before I could get aim the two whole ones were gone. I came on the third where he lay, bloodied from the red wound in his neck, and as I judged, near death.

At first he looked very grim, then, seeing some tender feeling in my face, rolled his eyes like those of a dying calf, making a weak sign for water. But as I turned to scoop it in my hand, I heard him rustling ; and behold he was half up, with a knife in hand that he drew from I know not where. Nor yet would he give over without one furious lunge, that never reached me ; seeing the blood spouted out of him midway, and he was dead.

I could not waste any pity on the treacherous dog, though finding him not ill favored by nature in face and form. There was a great hole in one ear only, minding me of that little caressing serpent ; also the attempt had been made on the same woman, as though she had awakened some particular fancy ; wherefore, be it right or wrong, I set him down for her demon. Yet it may not have been so ; and, though partly agreeing with me, she could never be certain. I took no trophy at all of him, but left him as found ; for there was nought worth taking.

I could not find the others, and when with much wading I got back to my boat—which I had drawn

carefully ashore—behold it was afloat again. I waded on after, but the shore fell off abruptly, so that I did the same to my discomfiture, and was like to drown ere I could win back again. Being a poor swimmer, I could never make the boat in my garments, although so near; yet 'twas death in some way to remain. So willy nilly I was even driven to strip very hastily, quite too near the *Tiger* and with the distress of the maidens' eyes and the water sharks on my mind. As I took the plunge, I could hear—or fancy—faint cries and some giggling of laughter, no doubt from those least able to feel the gravity of my plight.

Even in this bare fashion I did not gain fast on my estray, and it seemed an endless time I was undergoing that sore torment of fear. But at length I made out to roll in, well nigh oversetting; then lay quiet a good while, breathing myself. When at last I took the paddle, there was long labor against the tide, we being borne far down the inlet and out on the great water of the landward side. Looking abroad and below, and seeing here a great fin and there a gliding shadowy form, I shuddered, wondering why my swim had been unmolested; but it may be they were no less feared than I, as will sometimes happen when one splashes manfully. No doubt my navigation was fit to scare anything.

Unhappily my garments, too, had gone a-swimming, so that I saw none except only my shirt, very brown and saturate, which I picked up by the way—denouncing my idiot carelessness. I was fain to put on the dismal thing for lack of better, and completed therein

my journey, a wretch of the world, if ever there was one.

Being fairly aboard, I had no great trouble in providing myself again ; but these new clothes did not fit so well, and awoke some motionings of fun among my charges, with revengeful laughter. Perhaps, after all, this was not unfair ; since in every predicament thus far the account had run greatly the other way.

At any rate it aided to hearten them, which was well. As to myself, our later episodes were making me feel much less like that unhappy mother in the children's game who still has nimbly to do all the fending against a witch or devil or gipsy or some such outlandish murdering creature, the while her progeny scatter as they may, yet are taken one by one. For now mine, or they who stood for such, were proven well able to do somewhat in their own behalf.

Nor could we deem our worrying neighbors quite so formidable as we had thought after all. They could make an outcry of devildom in the night ; but by day, we boasted, even a sturdy maiden seemed fit to cope with them. No doubt we were at some risk of undervaluing these naturals, in whom I afterward found prowess enough. Rather might we next look for them in a fury, since blood had been drawn.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAUGHING KING OF ACCOMAC.

THUS far our troublers had been working their devilry after the manner of great vicious ungovernable children tempted by dainties into breaking bound ; the dainties, I need not say, being those fair creatures so superabundant about me. Thus they had adventured severally or with little concert, clad or unclad as might happen, sometimes with apparelling such as they would never use in war. But we were to see them in more regular enmity.

For next morn we landed and again possessed the isle in force, making our meal with some bravado by the spring ; and going thence to the uppermost point. But here, to our great surprise, we found there was yet dispute of our ascendancy, five great canoes coming bow on, not far away, silent, with mighty regular paddle-dipping, one boat a little ahead. No soft garments now, nor yet mere bareness ; but a splatterdash of color beyond any rainbow that ever was, and a very damnable grimness of face and weapon.

“What is that ?” queried a maiden beside me, huskily. “As I live, the strange things are bringing a doll-baby to fight us.”

“But was ever such ill favor of a doll on this

earth?" cried another. "'Twould give any child the nightmare!"

They tried visibly to hearten themselves into laughing; but 'twas poorly done, being against the grain. So I judged it better to withdraw them from that onset, more especially as there was so little cover in the place. Indeed, seeing the number of our besetters and the ferocity of their war-paint, I was not a little in doubt whether any defences would enable us to stand them off. But no doubt the ship was best for that, even without Captain Fleete's artillery, whereof two pieces had long ago gone over in the great storm, the third being quite dismantled and with no available munition. So to the stranded *Tiger* we repaired again.

For a while they did not disturb us there, being occupied seemingly by some necromancy around the spring; which reprieve we made use of to tear up our bridges and strengthen our bulwark with every sort of barricade. Happily there was a moat of good water at that hour between us and the shore line. As for the captive canoe, I bore that into the forecastle, to keep it from them, although doubtless they had means of transport enough without it. And then they began coming at us out of the wood.

A very odd sight it was for certain, every man of them stark naked but for a breech clout no greater than a napkin, yet seeming clad by reason of wild pigment, flinging themselves about in Merry Andrew dance with utter abandonment of legs and arms, yet nothing merry in their features, but rather Satan and Tophet. And before them all that wild bedizened

manikin, white-faced, black in the mouth, red all over beside, leaping and flapping with the motion of the great imp who bore it.

Quoth I, "'Tis their god, brought to help them slay us!—Down then, devil, in the name of Our Lord!" And whether by luck or providence, my lead very certainly did strike it clear of his hand.

They were sorely put to it when they saw their omnipotent one thus wallowing; and divers of them suffered while thus incapable, even from the not very precise aiming of my damsels. But I must own, I think they would have picked up and come on again to our confusion, for all we could do, if just then a herald from abroad had not appeared alone in a canoe. I saw his coming, and wondered; yet not so much as at the issue. For they had scarce heard out his tale, but they began moving off mighty sullenly toward their navy, and straightway departed therein as they came.

Now espying westward, we were aware of a greater armament coming likewise; and at first were like to faint away out of all hope. Yet after looking more narrowly to the matter, I began to ask myself, why if that coming meant ill was it of so great avail in our deliverance from those others? Truly we might merely be a passing from leopard to lion; but on the whole it seemed best that we should think well of what had given aid.

When they were fairly within range of eye, one could see this was right, for they wore no such fury of gaudiness on them as the wrathful ones who

fled. I fired my gun straight upward as a signal, and to my joy the report had no more than died away when there came another in response, being from the boat that led. Nor was it very long before I made certain of my dear friend Ratcliffe Warren therein. Whereupon I believe I did weep for very delight; which is not indeed a thing to tell, but I was broken, more than I could guess, by long enduring. However, I made shift to pull myself together again, and met him right genially with a hand up the side.

His own eyes were yet moist as well as bright, for he knew how near a squeak we had, being so very sorely bested within the hour. Partly to carry it off, he looked around on our company right jovially. "Dick," said he, "methinks had I been in thy shoes there would be no longing for any rescue."

"Would there not!" cried I ungallantly, with a kind of groan.

But the damsels held by me therein; averring that it was the very most awful outing that ever befell. As for the island, they would not so much as hearken to any scheme for lingering there—no, not one minute more than must be; this paradise had so turned against them. But I saw several cast eyes toward me, as if in deprecation of what they could not withhold, or in fear lest I should take it to heart. This I certainly did not.

The aspect of our convoy was the only thing that gave them pause; being too like our late kidnapping enemies. Howbeit these bore nothing hostile in face or manner, being as Warren averred merely the good

and true liege red men of Accomac, near whom our own people had long been seated in a friendly way. Moreover he made me to know their leader, a sort of duke or lieutenant of the king, and every way a most assuring savage. Broad was he and light of tint, with a scar here and there as fight had left them, and a great black bush-beard, such as I never saw after on any Indian. It made me doubt his fathering to be French or Spanish, such people being long in use, by report, of some parts along this coast. Yet the only tongue he spake beside his own was a little English; but ample to bid us welcome to the dominion of "the laughing king of Accomac."

I had heard that designation of old through Captain Fleete, and forthwith made haste to impart it, pleasing all greatly. Now was there diligence in getting under way, space being left for us, and even some canoes brought along quite empty, against need. Nor could there be greater singing and jubilation on the way to Paradise, now that everything had fallen out so merrily. Save, as we went, the thought of our lost one would strike in at some times with heavy dole.

This put me on to make inquiry concerning our harriers, and what hope there might be to get her from them by pursuit. But our friend shook his head over that, averring they were Kuskarowaks, a great nation, able to make many hundred men, dwellers in and about the vast northern marish land where many legions of feathery and fluted cypress trees everywhere stand up orderly out of the water, and all the

rivers take their rise ; owning several fastnesses too, which might hardly even be won to by any save themselves, who alone knew the way. He added that now and again some small party would come south along the coast, as far as we had seen, or perhaps inland, with great disquiet of the inhabitants who loved them not. They had taken white women before, and never had he known any redeemed by force of arms ; albeit there was one, rarely and strangely beautiful, who went and came among them very wonderfully.

On this, Warren put up his ears, I may say, and would by all means know more of her, resulting in a tale of shadow and wizardry like that we had before of Captain Fleete. There was more to follow, but I cut it short with urgent inquiry for counsel.

They averred, all of them, that our best hope was manifestly in The Long Gar, as these natives called William Claiborne, whose good will had a value with nearly every tribe. It was chill wisdom, going against the grain, but thinking it over I found some weight therein. So at last I sighed and yielded the point, above all since we had so many to guard to their new homes.

Already I knew that Marjorie was safe, and with her friend according to purpose. Ratcliffe told me now that their voyage had been quiet, as is common to all things that do prosper. For they were wiser in seafaring than we and far stronger in men, hence well able to hold their straight course, with no new enemies, between the Capes Henry and Charles, where enters the great Chesapeake Bay. Thence it

was but a little way to Captain Claiborne's plantation, along the Eastern Shore of that same, whereto we were now going.

At that time the head of the settlement was away at Jamestown, and Captain Fleete went after him; when the rumor coming of white people in trouble on the outer shore, Ratcliffe Warren took on himself to borrow some force from their good red neighbor of Accomac and come at a shrewd guess to our aid, the peninsula being in this part very narrow betwixt bay and sea.

I queried if they had any trouble in their voyaging with the Turks that abode on board. But he said there were not any such but one after that huge dropping which had like to have ended us all, and they made sale of him to a Dutch vessel they encountered, serving up to him his own sauce in that way with a vengeance. One or two Christian slaves indeed there were, more or less in the way of thinking of my poor revolter; but these made only so many hands to their strengthening. From them they had learned the prodigious quality of that Satan-Captain who had been left with us, whether man or fiend; and on this and every other account were in a rare distress for our sake. Marjorie, said he, with a glance, had been pining, yet was now in good courage again.

This could not but pleasure me; yet so mixed is our nature and our life that I would rather he had said not so just then. For I deemed there were several in that company who might hear it with no welcome. Already I was in some concern as to how I

should disabuse their minds of any fancy for me, and put them, as in duty bound, into such train of feeling as would content the planters when they should bid for wives. But I own this kind of meditation went much against me. I began to have a great charity for the Turk, who, though he may love one best of all, yet finds a warrant for holding on to more, and persuades himself that they are better so.

We made right speedy passage, considering the boats were so o'erladen and our awkwardness in them, which brought about more than one posture of peril. Moreover, the paddling of our Indians, though able to drive a bit of bark or thin wood very swiftly, was noway to compare with good English oar-play for labor of might.

The distance may be rather more than three leagues to the main land, across open water though shallow, where black-head gulls were in plenty, and lesser whitewinged fowl that we call strikers, very pleasing and graceful, hanging watchful over us with bill pointing downward, or often dropping from a great height to the water after their prey. Also a fine pack of dark long-winged birds racing together like hounds along the water. After that we were awhile among the inlets and marshes, when at last we came to land, very well willing.

We were now in a flat country, more sand than clay, but with ample growth of wood, through which we took our way one behind another in a long string, by paths which only these Indians make or know. I had some fear we must keep a journeying through the

night or camp out as best we could, a thing not pleasurable to the women-folk after all they had been through. Howbeit, this was not so ; for when we had sometime passed the water-shed of that low slip of land, the little rills began to run the other way and to greaten ; and following one down an open westward valley, behold in a bend thereof most like a ring the palisades of Accomac. The sun was level with them, goldening that circuit and the arbor-like homes within, and the little fields or patches of culture encompassing all with green.

When we came nearer it awoke surprise to find mere savages provide so wisely ; for they had corn of that lofty kind which we call maize, and a good edible gourd or pompion, beans in plenty which they do mingle with the corn and sod together, calling that succotash, and a rude kind of pease which we found to answer very well. All these were reared from the seed to the garner on some system of their own ; chiefly making use of stone or wooden tools and these very poor, though now they were getting a few bits of metal from the white-folk settled near them. Only women labored at such work among them, the men finding enough to their own hands what with hunting and fishing and war.

The little realm whereof the capital was before us had once been quite free, its border ranging from the cape a good way up both the shores. But by some means the emperor Powhatan from over the bay had reduced it under him, ruling so jealously that their werowance had even been in dread lest he should

offend by too sumptuous living, and fared over-meagerly for prudence sake. Yet now, on the breaking of that empire and with English countenance, he had taken heart again to set up for himself in some state. Wherefore his present lodge was a great one, arched over arbor-wise like them all, yet running near two-score yards from front to rear, with a great effigy at each end of the roof and another midway.

All these were truly unlovable, one being most like a wolf to judge by hide and feature, another like a catamount, and the third a monstrous kind of man. This last was the foremost in place and easier to be seen than the rest. There was a rude, strange kind of art about it after all, being, as I was given to understand, the highest pitch of skill for carving and adorning in that confederacy. The vast outlandish fellow had a queer grin to his chops, that might come by misadventure of the knife, though I rather imputed design; feeling it somehow a figure of derision rather than of self-exalting. Even the more animal effigies hinted at the same thing to my fancy. It may well have been, for Accomac was of a very quaint humor, and like enough to settle his account with the dead Powhatan and his two brothers in this uncostly way. If so, the precise point of the gibe escapes me. Either it might be something in their individual quality, as the number—three—of the great puppets or caricatures would needs imply, being one for each; or a flier in general at their well-known passion for over-spreading their domiciles with such wild statuary.

The king did not wait for us to pass within, but came

to the entrance gap of the palisades in welcome, and even a trifle beyond, widening the eyes of my bearded friend by this unroyal derogation. It seems he knew Ratcliffe Warren, by message from Mistress Alice, for a special good friend of her brother, The Long Gar, his strong white ally. Also he thought I must be even more notable and puissant, being followed by such a retinue of wives, according to his way of thinking. Undoubtedly he had seldom seen any emperor of his acquaintance—even Powhatan himself—thus well provided as to number, saying nothing of quality. There was a wink of envy in his jovial eye, and it runs in my head yet that he had some notion of friendly gift or barter, seeing I could likely spare a very few to one who esteemed and had aided me.

Yet I will say that if a woman had a fancy to an Indian king for a husband, she not being strenuous for youth nor undivided queenship, I know not how she might do better, by what I have seen of them. For there were no snakes in his ears nor horrid ornaments of any kind, but his paunch was very round and mild as of one acquainted with good living. A kind of broad scarf came down about it slantwise, in flower with tinted plumage and very feather-like and foamy. Also about his loins was a breech-cloth of mink fur that would have been worth moneys anywhere; both moccasins and tobacco pouch were brightly wrought in colored porcupine quills and beads; about his neck there went several windings of that wampum which is their coin and their ornament; and finally he bore in his hand a huge pipe with the

head and antlers of a stag in carving thereon. 'Twas really a neat piece of work, and with much else might have made him pass for a good Dutch burgomaster persuaded into half-naked masquerade.

Yet we learned that he had shown himself on occasion a grim ruler and worse enemy, with that sudden fierceness which belongs to these terribly childlike people; though not without such provocation as might stir any. And there was undoubtedly, under his fleshiness, a hankering after those shadowy elements of being, which do come forth we know not whence nor why to disquiet us. But this only now and then, for he was mostly unspiritual.

He bade us in, mighty complaisant, only bidding for one look back of huge commending while his lieutenant told him how valorously my ewe-flock had borne themselves when the wolves were at them. No doubt he had been all his life maligning the Kuskarowaks for women or less than women in fight, yet with small faith in his own words; and it did him great pleasure to find for once the vituperation made good.

As we passed, there were many women and children who joined in acclaim, and on either side his men of counsel or battle. These were still as trees in posture and silent also; only a few of eminence gave out a grunted welcome.

Within the great kingly dwelling were more people, easier yet in attire, for it was warmer there; and among them some half dozen queens, if one may call them so. These were young women of no ill favor, as might be expected of his good judgment; all with

no outward jealousy or discontent, being also fairly and finely bedecked in their own heathen fashion by his bounty. They opened their eyes more widely even than he over my following; for I suppose it never entered into the thought of these simple people that a man and twenty-nine women might be driven to wander for long over strange lands and seas, yet only with needful comradeship and good will. Thus at least I suppose. And indeed as I have admitted, our case was unusual.

But I never saw more kindness between women than was shown by these young dusky matrons to mine—as they held them; albeit they had to talk mainly by play of finger and feature, beyond “How!” which these folk have borrowed to salute with, and some such fragment as “glad see,” whereof a smile would eke out the meaning. So our very plentiful and feminine troop were made free of the town, pending supper, and went about it by twilight and firelight, in fear no longer, nor in any care, but rather in pure glee.

Meanwhile I sat in converse with Warren and the king, who had English enough to that end, though put forth too quaintly for my reporting; we three being raised above all others by a dais or platform at one end of the long hall, which was the only room in his palace. There was a fire before us, larger and nearer than I should have preferred, also another by the door; over them both and others outside, pots were hanging for cookery. We had plenty of light thereby, though of a dancing sort, where else would have been darkness,

It gave me a strange feeling to see, between our bits of talk, the furs and feathers in motion, real or seeming, adown the long reach of wall each side, the tints changing with the change of the flare, and sometimes both hue and form withdrawing quite out of sight even while one did look at them. For there were many of these wild things, beside those dangling from above, though whether hung for storage or decoration I know not; very likely the latter, they being for the most part bright and new. Yet I could but think with more charity of Captain Fleete and his golden narratives, since there were many glimmerings did surely look so, beside wizardly awakening the fancy. I made certain the flapping and shining in one place were all of human hair; black in the main as of scalp-locks, yet with some terrible admixture, long and blonde. But this, I now believe, could not have been; for were they ever so guilty in that regard, they would never have affronted our eyesight with such trophies, we being their needful allies. Nor have I to this day any call to question their honesty and good will.

Accomac, in gracious proof of kindness would loan me his mighty pipe for a whiff or so; and I, who never yet fell in love with that unnatural weed tobacco, must needs grin and make trial, that I might not seem unregardful. But I found it verily an engine of punishment, for the bowl or barrel of it was vast in capacity, and I know not what else he had been tasting; and, to be plain, I cannot think his material was of the best. In fine, I relished the flavor

so little that it went far to take away my hunger, which had been in growth since our very early dining, with all whets that exertion could give in the open air. However, I made my obeisance over that ordeal, keeping as good a countenance as might be; yet with one eye of malice open afterward, to judge how Ratcliffe would endure in his turn. It was less well than I, though he came off without offending. I saw his covert reproach, for no warning, as plain as if printed; and no doubt I did treat him sadly.

The discourse went prosperously, for Accomac was a merry tale-teller, nor sparing of laughter when we had our turn. Haps and mishaps of white and red he related unto us very plentifully; and in particular of that robbing emperor, whilome his overlord, whose keen unconscionable practices were very safe and proper matter for jesting now that he was quite dead and gone. It will be to note that I call our jolly monarch by his kingdom, but mark you I could not give his own proper name if I would. The same is true of that greater potentate, who owned as many syllables as tribes; and hence, little doubt, will be known always territorially as Powhatan.

But now was supper well forward, all being bidden in who were to share; the women coming in a mass, white and red together, as a royal grace. About the pots we took seat in divers rows, helping one another cheerily with our bare hands or hunting-knives. Yet the substance of that banquet was not so ill; being venison and wild turkey with other game, fish and excellent good oysters from the salt water near by, such

field produce as I have told of, berries, and something, not bad, between a sloe and a plum, to which they gave the name "papaw."

This meal being well over and the hour late, the question of lodging arose, and I found the king was devising to pack me and my many "wives" into one apartment; but since there was no other great hall in their village it puzzled him not a little. When Warren heard this outrageous fancy he was in suffering for mirth, nor could keep it from the damsels—to their consternation.

Then the king was all astray in mind, though discerning that something had gone amiss, until I made him to know the fact of the case; whereon he joined in the merry-making, but for my comfort would have it there was no impediment, since we might surely be married wholesale forthwith, after their Indian way. I think it was by breaking strings of beads over clasped hands, or some such easy fashion, no doubt as good as any for those bred to it; but such were not we.

When he found that this also would not do, he could only smile and query, "What then?" So at last I hinted that he should give up his palace to the womenkind, he going with us where he would. It might seem overmuch to ask; yet he thought not so, turning out of home, I grieve to say, a whole family for our comfort. Nought we could do would stay him. And we rested well, though our quarters were not of the neatest.

He spent the night with us also, talking late and lavishly. With much else, he had a deal to tell of

The Long Gar—Claiborne—and the very sore drubbing given by this white chief to the Pamunkeys, the home tribe of Powhatan and Opecancanough, but a few months before. For on them, dwelling in security, he had fallen at once with a power from this side the bay, at once revenging all past massacre and treachery and unfitting them for further evil, insomuch that there was not like to be either corn or wigwam on that site for many a day. To our good Accomac this partner of our house appeared a mighty leader among men.

Then, the hours lapsing and dwindling, he got on the trail of subtle mysteries, to such effect that in less fatigue we might have been disquieted by his ghostly maundering. He told us of the dead kept magically alive in a manner, by some spell or conjuration unknown, so that the flesh was amenable to the touch and there was very apparent meaning in the face long after all should have gone to decay. Yet they who but looked on that wonder did shortly after die in very truth one by one; so that the dreadful objects were rightly buried at once and out of reach, where found, by the outcast wretches of the tribe with hidden eyes. Also he told of the wandering devil-priesthood and their hellishness, which had been with him lately; but he had revolted from them, finding his own rule unstable, and now would have no religion at all about him for his discouragement. Only some of his people went to prayer with the white people, understanding little; which he liked well enough. And with this moral wisdom in my ear the world ebbed from me.

In the morn, long before the women were awake in their darkened fur-flapping tomb of a sleeping hall, we bathed in the stream, narrow yet rather deep, which nearly engirdles the town, beyond the palisade; and were served with feather-tufts, after the manner of towels, for our drying.

We marvelled at the strength of his fortification; yet doubtless there was need—witness our Kuskarowaks, who would lose little time in coming on him if unprotected, the Wicomeses, a pigmy people for stature, but given to make trouble, and the canoe pirates, as we might call them, being mainly Susquehannocks or the far away Massōwomekes of the northern lakes, who sometimes came sharking in flotillas adown the bay. This indeed is not wholly ended even yet. So, after all, we thought him discreet in thus impaling his little town.

After a kind breakfast, we went our way with the maidens; not afoot any longer, but roundabout in several canoes, following their little creek toward the great bay, each boat with a pagan, very neat and tall, at either end. This transport and all the needful provision was of the king's contriving. At the water-side, he bade farewell in great jollity, with his dear love to The Long Gar, and a merry word about the planters and me which made the damsels redden. Beyond question he knew not the usage of white people, socially; yet I thought I should never shake hands at parting with a more jovial savage.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE TURMOIL ABOUT MAIDENS.

EVE was well on, with great pomp, as I remember, ere we went by the first homestead of our English people; nor can you think nor I say, how welcome was that sight. It was a plain thing of logs, with some planking such as may be discarded from a vessel, being weather-worn; but wild vines had begun to clamber, and there were goodly maize-fields and clothes a-drying in a homely way.

Soon there were more and better; not strewn abroad very widely after the general manner of farmsteading where land is cheap, nor yet gathered in a village, though at first there had been some such endeavor,—but shouldering and straggling after one another in a neighborly way around the curve of the land, which set inward. A little cultivation appeared between them, and more toward the forest where we could not see so well. Everything had an air of wonted comfort and adjustment; which was not surprising, these adventurers having been seated some years. No poorest dwelling had a suffering look; and for the best, it would have done well enough in Kent.

About the middle of the curve was a little quay jutting out, and a throng thereon. I saw the flutter

of garments when first we won between those wide headlands ; and there was that in the vision which made my heart throb expectantly.

Yet I heard a sigh, and looking back, there were one or two fair faces not all unclouded. Haply 'twas weariness in part, after all their enduring, but what was to me a happy termination could not be that alone to them, but also a very uncertain beginning. Beside, they must have been conscious of their wild array and late experiences, with risk of such questioning as it might be a trial to answer. In my own birth of joy at safe-coming again to land—and to Marjorie—I was yet ill at ease for their sake. It seemed to me that Ratcliffe was sorry for them too ; though he had less of their fellowship than I. Well-a-day, it is certain they could not every one have our company always.

Marjorie was there, indeed, and her swan-like friend Alice, head of table now and household manager for her brother's home in Accomac ; also that doughty Mistress Broome, with a look more doubtful than grateful. But then she and I were ever half at feud. Nor need I concern myself that her maiden flock had grown so vagabond to the eye, since none knew better than she whence came that extravagant apparelling. It was not so long since she had been in breeches herself. But she and those with her had come to their own womanly attire again ; so she could afford to censure.

We missed three from among them, two of whom they had hoped to find with us ; but these must now

be given o'er by all as dead somehow in that frightful night of our parting. The other, on the contrary, was married already, and so well provided unto her life's end; as Mistress Broome was at pains to inform us, while we went in long array toward the house. There could be no dearth of like offers, to judge by the impatient interest of men who thronged on either side; not though our maids had been attired like frantic priestesses of the wild—for in truth women were wofully wanted there, and at Jamestown also. I began to plume myself, and take credit for the great number who would become happy and easy by my wise management; nor to be any longer in concern for such little unavoidable kindness as had been; which no one really could blame or need care for.

Yet are there shadowy things, feather light, which will not quit their pestering so easily. Thus, I could not go pay my duty to Marjorie that evening without a brace of my terrible fair shipmates—each of whom had memories and fancies and glances and I know not what beside—all desperately astir in the imminence of parting and purchase.

These were quartered with me at a house not far away, for you may well suppose Claiborne's overflowing; and I gave thanks to find our entertainer my relief, in that he came anxiously after me and drew the more effusive maid away directly. It was not over courteous of him, nor all unselfish, no doubt; and she would have me stand him off obdurately, as I could well see, but this was beyond me. So she went with him a little resentful and sore, nor

would hear at first with any pity his moan about loneliness. But he plainly found her beauty heightened by that sullen humor, and waxed ardent in suit; so that in defiance or responsiveness her manner with him grew more kind, and I perceived all to be going prosperously.

But she who stayed with me was my forester of old, no longer now in buckskins but in right maiden costume, nor half so pretty as before though her archness of feature was quite fit for any man's liking. She had wit enough to see quickly that our old comradery was nigh its end, though I strove to be manful and kind unto her at least, feeling shabby about the other and divers more, though where to put my fault I could not see. There was nought of reproach or lamentation from her but the one saying that she would she were back in peril on that barren isle again; but this went very near me. Then she was under shade a little while; but soon began talking brightly about things indifferent, which gave me great relief, though I could not but know it to be feigning. She had good luck in her marriage sale, the best of any but our tall and imposing Highlander; and is now a mother in Israel, presiding over a westward county and the children of her many children.

Ah, me! when we gained the door I was no way in spirit for commending my suit unto Marjorie. Moreover, she being a belle already, there were suitors twain before me, each over ready to give her what I could not yet, a home and settlement. Moreover, my ancient adversary fastened on me—I mean Mistress

Mary Broome, and not the devil though it matters little—demanding a full justification of that one loss I had undergone on the islet, as though I might have prevented or won her back. Nothing I could say would quite fill our dragon's requiring. Think of the poor child's horrid fate—O, beyond imagining! But here our hostess interposed, whereby no doubt I was exempt from a very ghastly category. I knew it all, though, better than she could say; grim nightmares born of that horrid yelling and her cry.

Still, enough had been put forth to stir me inwardly and make me speak out my feeling before them all. Haply it was more than I would feel another time, for who could weigh words under that taxation? I think I said there was none I valued more than poor Susan, not one for whom I would give my life so gladly. Wherefore I saw dark fire in Marjorie's eye, and knew that again I had missed my way.

I passed out presently, bitter of soul. Several of the company were on the verandah that ran around the house, so I went further. Already there was a figure moving under the trees. When we had come near each other I knew her for the sweet companion of my long watch by light of star and moon. I was in doubt whether to turn aside or go on, between soft memory and new resentment; but she resolved that by coming straight forward as before, and joining me.

She could not but see that I was under cloud and strain; and seemed a hovering about what she would hint as though doubting its welcome. At length, like one compelled, she declared to me that the time

was very brief ere under contract they must submit to be chosen to wife, only with some little right of selection among wooers ; for how could they return and whatever could they do there all alone ?

I said nought, but stood working my wits.

Already, she added, one had made his suit for her hand. There she stayed her utterance, waiting in a gentle hesitating way, as one who craveth counsel.

“Is he a proper man ?” quoth I, not knowing what to say.

“Some might esteem him so,” she made answer ; yet with no zeal nor zest.

I could not bid her “Take him,”—by what right should I charge her “Turn him away,” myself not being at all ready to offer ? “It may be well to linger awhile for some one better,” I counselled her at last, lamely enough, though doing my very best for a benevolent, fatherly tone.

She looked up at me a minute as in wonderment ; then turned away and went with a sob ; and I could have stamped all over myself with steel hoofs had I only known how.

But this was not the end. By the door I met that suitor, though I did not know him for such at the first. Indeed, I saw him but vaguely until his big finger halted me.

“I would fain have a word with you, sir,” said he, in a husky voice, but civil.

“Well ?” I said, shortly.

“It runs in my head that I should like to buy a woman to wife,” he went on ; for it seems he had

somehow come by the notion that I was their salesman. I waited, half understanding, but worn out of patience by overdoses of sentiment, untimely taken.

“My name is Thomas Broadnax,” continued he. “I keep a good home, though belike we shall soon pack it northward for our bettering, if all be as they say. I am not one to haggle over what I want—nor yet to be cozened into over-payment,” he added hastily, as fearing he had laid himself open.

I moved as if to get away. Then he leapt at the bait.

“Name your price, man,” cried he. “What would you hold *her* at?—the trim lass yonder in the shadow.”

I looked. Yes, she was leaning by a pillar of the gallery, near where the window light fell. I groaned. “O how should I say? She is true as steel and worth her weight in gold.”

He laughed, with some shaking. “Look at me, man,” quoth he.

I saw a huge figure, but no way monstrous; long of leg and arm, vast in the chest, rounded out everywhere, with a great broad face above, not many years older than my own, but threaded with red and blowed with wind and water.

“Well?” said he, in turn.

I answered, “O I am no painter, and care nought for your looks. The maid you bid for may be suited with them;—pray God so.”

’Twas not gracious; but such a mood was alien to me then.

There was wrath in his face for a minute ; it came there easily, as finding a natural home.

"Name your price," he demanded sullenly.

"O, I have none," I answered.

He looked at me in angry amaze ; then seemed to consider. When he spoke it was after the manner of one who would be both just and generous ; but luck was against his word-choosing.

"You have been long with 'em," said he, "and safe conducted 'em. I'm not the man to blink that, nor deny you your due. It stands to reason you should have some choice among 'em ; and I see very well I must e'en leave her to you."

"I meant not that," I put in hastily.

"Ah well !" said he, waving his heavy hand. "So be, so be ! When I bade you look on me but now, I meant not to vaunt my handsomeness, which truly is not great ; but that you might judge whether crying up your ware would be like to win a wild price of me. There be those can tell you—Fleete or the Secretary if you will—that Thomas Broadnax may be a bit hot and hard-headed, fond of all good things and over sound at sleeping, but he is no gull neither for all that."

I said "Undoubtedly not, who would dream it?" and strove to work by him civilly.

"But I see your meaning was otherwise," he kept on, clinging to that thread. "Nor do I blame your taste at all, seeing I too was taken with something about the quiet lass ; a good homekeeper I thought her like to be, if no beauty. Ah well, there

be more. See *her* within, yon queenlike damsel, with Thompson and more buzzing about her,"—'twas my great Highland maid—"think you she would be beyond one who hath had a sore run of luck this year, what with corn devourers and green crawling tobacco worms bigger and juicier than your finger?"

I was about to set him right as to my status and powers, but that tongue of his went ambling on vehemently, being, I thought, somewhat steeped in hot liquor.

"We stalwart chaps ought to stand together," quoth he, "and make all things pleasing and easy. Shoulder to shoulder will be needed ere long, that I can tell you.—Or what say you to this one coming toward us?"

I moaned inwardly, for 'twas just my poor fond forester with head bowed down a little for all her cheerful will; and he minded my signalling as little as could be.

"A neat bit of goods," quoth he approvingly, she ever drawing nearer, "tight in the waist, and footing it softly; round ankles I dare be sworn. Good action, very good action, and kind. But noway notable other than that, no way I assure you! A lass to hang heavy in sale I warrant. Shall we say fifty pounds of tobacco? Or I may go as high as seventy if you mind not a little sun-spoiling. There be who think it doth improve the flavor; and marry the sun hath been a spoiling her likewise. No beauty,—you will not pretend she is a beauty. Come now, come—what price do you set on her?"

At that he did nudge me with one elbow, the other well nigh stirring her likewise ; and all at once behold that good face upraising, with such a grievous look on it as will not pass from me. I howled something at him about silence, and made off into the darkness. But I stopped soon, perforce, not knowing my way ; and he came after me.

“ You have a strange manner in business,” quoth he, very menacing, “ but I will not be put off thus. Tell me straightway what weight of tobacco will buy the maid we did first discourse of, or the tall and goodly one, or she that threw up such eyes at you ?”

I turned on him at this baiting. “ Great heaven,” I cried, “ why not buy the whole ship-load and be done ? I wish heartily you had, while they were yet in cooping at London. Or how would *I* do ; wouldn’t you like to bid a few pounds of damaged tobacco on *me* ?”

I expected him in a fury ; but he began to laugh. “ I partly think you *are* a woman,” quoth he, “ though a tall one for sure. They do say that many of ’em went rampant in breeches a while ; and may be yours have stuck on longer, somehow. But you are too crabbed and unlovely for any great outlay. My last Indian squaw would be a betterment, though surely no pink angel. Come, deaths-head, what sort of a price do you set on these raw-bones ?”

He had vastly the better of me at that argument ; so I even did what hath been done by others, in answering logic by somewhat more convincing, to wit I sent him lengthwise all at once by sleight and

strength together. Where he fell there was moisture and soft earth, yet not so much but he must recover his footing soon. I did not await that ; but hurried away through the night. Luck was my friend so far that I won my quarters without a great deal of wandering.

I was long in expectancy of our doughty Broadnax, breathing such fiery breath as might belong to some maned serpent of olden time. Yet he came not, and there was nought to keep me awake but my own inward stew of trouble. I cannot remember, nor would the relation profit, all the sound warning morals my brain kept spinning out of disaster. But this one I will set down. If, then, it fortunes that any well-meaning man must needs go to sea with a cargo of women, by all means let them be two or three in number, or four at the most, though one only would be better than all,—and not on any account as many as two or three dozen. For I assure you out of such an array there will still be some to fall distressfully in love with him, and make war on his account with their own spirits and stranger men and each other ; aye though he were lame as Vulcan, cast of an eye or pock-marked like any pepper-box. Yet it may be that I write overstrongly, as was my feeling then ; for the memory thereof is strenuous with me even yet.

CHAPTER X.

BACK TO THE ISLE AGAIN.

THE next morning I learned that Secretary Claiborne and Captain Fleete had returned overnight and would look for me shortly. This gave a color of duty to a longing which was fighting within me albeit I told myself that what I chiefly desired was some active employ, to take me out of trouble; yet when I came on Marjorie midway, it was half in my perverse fancy to go back again. But she would none of that, coming right forward with hand out, not to be denied, a genuine contrition in her face. There were golden wild-flowers woven among her dark hair, and her dress was very modest and sweet and pretty. She spake my name, as never before, with homely shortening; moreover, I thought, even as though a "dear" went before it. "Dick" says she, "I was a very wicked girl yester-eve. You ought to go save poor Susan, if that, with God's aid, may be. My prayers go with you."

That took my breath, for prayer had not seemed any notable element of her living, but action rather. For the moment, I could only say I was thankful to her; but if you will believe me I never felt less like going than after that great encouragement.

Now I have a fear that all these feminine com-

plaisances following one after another so swiftly, will quite break the credit of my tale among you ; and even that Richard Smith, Esqre., may come by the repute of inordinate self-conceit, a character and quality which we do all disdain in other people. However that may be, I must add that when Marjorie spoke as above related, I could not doubt there was more at work within her than mere compunction of conscience ; nor did that tenderness affright my own, as had sometimes been the case with her too numerous and conflicting companions ; and my own proceeding was in accord therewith.

Now if you harbor any fantasy that I shall set out before you a true picture of just what did ensue betwixt us there in that young orchard with the unripe fruitage and yet unbrittle leaves all about us for a love-screen, I prithee disabuse thy mind. Some things there are, which I call not sacred, because it is very cheap and easy thus so to do, and I have no great sureness in the applying of that word ; nevertheless they are very intimately and modestly the concern of two only ; and so there be no harm in them but only comforting and ennobling, why who shall quarrel with nature and her decent mystery ? I have no notion to mouth her whisperings before you ; nor rhapsodize turgidly over her under swell of passion. If I had, Marjorie would not let me.

Enough that when we left the orchard my arm aided her, and I was in no perturbation of mind about her taking any planter's bid, however prosperous and fervent.

I was very late indeed in my appearing before the Secretary, insomuch that there was some kind of motion afoot to go and fetch me *volens volens*, I believe. The stamp of impatience yet appeared on Secretary Claiborne's face, when a murmur from his sister and a glance at Marjorie made it change to a kind of protective interest. I saw by that how greatly he had come under the lady Alice's hand already, and no marvel, for there was great likeness in unlikeness between them ; so that at first sight you were given to think she had all of him but the ill.

Not that he was very evil either, for I shall ever stand by that man's memory through all defaming, and especially now that at length he has gone from us ; yet, to tell truth and shame the devil, he was a very worldly hero, oftener selfish than not in his meaning, less often scrupulous than not in his method, more manly in other regards than directness. He intruded first on no man's right, yet was he a thought inhuman in bitterly cherishing all infraction of his own, and the world hath not seen elsewhere such many-sided ingenuity in bringing home that bitterness where he thought it should abide. There was great strength in him, as any man might be sure, and alert many-sidedness and every sort of quick apprehension, with outreaching purpose and memory.

He was not at all fair like his sister but with weighty black locks falling far over his ruffles, all other face-trimming very dark likewise ; that face too, not with her curves in it but making of the broad forehead an upward turned base for a downward tri-

angle, which form his long figure did repeat less perfectly. The bones of cheek and hand and every joint, not hidden, stood out indeed to view, yet was he far from earning the skeleton by-name our Indian friends had given him. Over-straining is ever their way, though now and then it may come of going more deeply than we see, for their eyes do pierce undoubtedly. Now the gar is a proud fish, of a strange hard fashion, gaunt and long, keen and vigilant, arrow-like for celerity, yielding place to none, but ever ready to fight any comer on any quarrel even unto grim death.

Beside him and me, Captain Fleete was there, and Ratcliffe Warren, and Broadnax fuming in the corner.

"I think myself more than fortunate in you, Mr. Smith," began the Secretary, reaching a hand of welcome, which I took, feeling as if it were a prince's. "For once my good partner Cloberry and I are in accord. I would I could say as much for the remainder of that consignment. I would rather sell beaver skins than women, Mr. Smith. Well, well, it has brought a pleasant increase of fair faces, if only for a season. And in this new palatinate will be land enough and to spare for all who stay with us and will wed, and for every friend that has borne himself as well deserving."

His bow at the end swept in Broadnax with myself. I understood him, and for all reasons went straight over to the latter.

"I will try a fall with you when you like," said I, "and not run away this time, if only you will forgive

my crossness of last night, and not go from your own words 'shoulder to shoulder.'"

"Well said," cried the other two together, and we made up our bit of wrangling then and there.

"Now tell me," quoth the Secretary. "I would fain know all and the very truth of it; for I hear many things of what befell you that are past believing.—But then one does hear many things." He ended slowly, and his eye wandered toward Henry Fleete.

These twain were rivals in the fur trade from of old, as I knew well; and, though now working together, each would prod other on occasion for old acquaintance sake. William Claiborne could make a spread and garnishment of the truth on occasion as well as anybody, and that is putting the matter very mildly; but this was ever for some adequate reason. He had scant patience with that unending web of romance which Fleete spun philosophically about him, even when nought was to gain. I saw little prospect of any linking that would last between that couple; nor yet between Claiborne and Cloberry, whom he held in unhidden scorn—repaid by doubting and espial.

I could but smile, yet gave my hand all the more heartily to Captain Fleete; not only in remembrance of old *Tiger* fellowship; but also as one adventurer may greet another, with vehement welcome and sympathy, on a doubtful sea. For I was sensible that some parts of my relation would put a tax on faith, which pure invention, however worried, could hardly go beyond. My own mind was already in a waver

about them. And to this day I do sometimes admire whether they come back to me as truth or illusion.

Yet so it is ever with memory. You who do read, I challenge you tell me in all details but one passage of your own—aye, though no more than a month ago—as it verily happened. Distances greaten or dwindle in remembrance, faces take on a new complexion, all things vary their favor by reason of that haze we carry within. Wherefore testimony, whereon we so do build, is become very innocently the bauble of the devil. I could only tell the facts then as they came back in memory, and for the life of me I can no better now.

Claiborne and all did listen, as who would not?—but with such moulding and re-moulding of countenance, such eye-opening and winking, such long-breathing and whistling under the breath, as made a very comical pantomime. All but Fleete, I should say, for nought of it overcame his much-enduring quietude, beyond a grave twinkle now and then ;—no, not even when Warren and Broadnax were quaking and grinning over my very distressful predicaments about the fair. But when I made an end he faced about toward the Secretary with a query in his eye ; then turning again, handed me his fur cap with all deference, amid a salvo of laughter.

'Twas a crown of nettles to me, though a little thing every way, for I valued myself on my truth-telling, and I sat among them with a surly face, thinking to have merited better. Claiborne saw this, and came about forthwith.

"Do not mind," said he. "'Tis *not* a fool's cap;" but as though one would need some strong asseveration to his word.

Fleete made his bow of thankfulness.

"Call it a wreath of romance; they are both great champions in fairy-land," Warren cried out laughingly, with as little consideration as would be looked for in him.

It made me feel darkly, and look so, I doubt not. Quoth I, "Surely, you and Captain Fleete saw enough and more to the sustaining of my credit. I thank the Lord I did not tell you——" then I halted, being sure that I was making a fool of myself.

Thereat the younger men laughed again, with some murmuring of Warren about "Adonis" and "goddesses"; and I thought Claiborne looked uneasy, for he could not wish to have dissension among us, nor yet his fair disturbing consignment in any doubt or dispraise. Then I saw how in withholding half one may seem to tell more than all; for truly I had endeavored to keep out some very harmless and trivial matters. But I was at a loss what I should say to their undeceiving.

Presently he—that is Ratcliffe—came over and put his hand on my shoulder in a brotherly way. "Come, come, Richard," said he, "do have some mercy on this nimble tongue of mine. As for you and the damsels——"

But I would have no more; he was doing and undoing in one breath.

"It likes me not," I broke in, "to hear all this

merry ado about nothing, when one of those very maidens—nor the least lovely, I can tell you—is yet the thrall of the heathen. Are we men or are we mountebanks? What would you say were you the brother of Susan Fortescue?"

At that, Warren reddened but said nothing. Be-like he felt a justice in my words; and so there was, but with a spice of resentment also. They bound me in another way, for we cannot set up a standard and then with dignity come short of it. Moreover, I was ill at ease with myself that I had yielded readily before to peaceful counsel, sage and impotent. So I demanded, "Who will go with me to-morrow to her rescue?" though certainly I had not intended to set out so soon.

"Marry, *I!*" answered Broadnax, ere the words had left me. This took my breath and made me affront myself. Truly I had thought him but a beef-haggling fellow; not knowing then how many several aspects the same man may show.

Ratcliffe was not backward either. "You *know* I will stand by you, Richard," as one hurt undeservedly; then, with more brightness, "It may be we shall learn somewhat of that phantom-like white woman, Virginia Dare—or priestess or whatever she may be. Her concerning whom Accomac told us; and Captain Fleete before. You must be with us, Captain."

I thought Claiborne sought the latter's face rather oddly; either incited by this new instance of marvel-mongering, or as one old rat may view another caught behind wires and forefated. Anyhow, that look made

the choice for our sea-comrade. "I will go," quoth he, quite as of course and in all willingness.

But the venture was not to Claiborne's purpose, nor to his best judgment either. He looked from one of us to another, between forbidding and dissuasion.

"And did you really think that nothing had yet been done?" said he. "By your good leave, I need you here, gentlemen, where at least you cannot imperil what little chance there may be of her rescue by ransom." Seeing our disquiet, he took on a tone of commending. "Very well meant—O, 'tis very well meant indeed! But the devil makes his plaything of young hotheads' well meaning. This I will promise, that if all else fails, you shall try."

Now this should have wrought conviction in me; but 'tis scarce human to be twice put in harness by reason and discretion concerning the same crying matter and within a short space. I could not answer him to my satisfaction even in my own mind, but my feeling was against it, and that feeling even weighed me down. There was silence, and I lifted my face to find every gaze on me—his the most intently, with a bit of a frown coming.

"And if 'twere Mistress Alice," I began slowly, in words that seemed wrung from me.

He rose as one stirred by a shock and strode about the room, knotting and unknotting his brow; then cast himself in the chair again, with a low laugh, wherein I interpreted concession and some self-blame.

“Well, well!” said he. “I too would go, but that my duties in the council, and the state of the province and the furthering of this coming adventure in the northward isles,—you will all see, I make sure.”

“O, yes, we see very well,” said Fleete, mighty drily. His words might mean anything or nothing, so we all let them be. But I thought the Secretary would not be sorry of his long absence; nor yet himself, that his coming back might be as from another planet, with an astonishment of unveiling.

So our party was made, only we tarried three days longer than I had said, that all might be ready. And chiefly for “Blackbeard,” as we called him, Accomac’s lieutenant-commander of the bushy chops; it appearing that he had made aforetime sundry razzias into that region where we must go.

Meanwhile two magazines, empty of their lading, with good complement of sails and men, were sent round the cape to try if by any means the *Tiger* might be floated off again. I may say now this was done after a time with less labor than might be feared, owing to a notable high tide; and she brought safely to Jamestown, with only the storm-damage and some inroad on the cargo, most likely by the Kuskarowaks returning or by other thieving naturals.

A very little of it we did, under good authority; for, being first at the ship, here was a providential opening to complete our store of things needful ere going northward. In particular I did endue Blackbeard with the same abominable scimeter that had pricked the hand of the poor victim whom now we

sought, for I came on it kicking about some corner of the cabin, and it was a pleasure to him. Also I took an armament of pistols, with powder and ball therefor, out of a locker where I had before hidden them, so that each of us had an extra pair without cost. We might have burdened ourselves to any degree with such-like means to offend, but that would be un wisdom, so we took nothing more save food, with some clothing of Captain Fleete for himself, and very welcome ; also a little good aqua vitæ.

The boat we had was giant-like of its kind, though yet so light that it gave no manner of trouble in going overland on men's shoulders. Twelve might be easy in it, not to say our five ; howbeit only two could paddle expertly ; though Broadnax made some bungle at it by sheer strength, and Warren and I were learning. We had room in abundance for weapons, munitions and all.

Our first care thereafter was to take Sir Blackbeard to the very spot of her diabolical translation, as one will do with a hound in lifting the scent of the quarry. He did confirm me in every article of my conjecture, as did also Captain Fleete, who was master in woodcraft even more than in craft of sea, nor much behind any natural Indian. This put me in good conceit with myself and, as I could see, did likewise uplift me in their esteem. Then we went to the various points of the Kuskarowaks' incursions and excursions, finding by the way no trace of any newer descent. In the end we held by the first plan of our devising, which was to creep quietly along the marshes and

sand banks ahead, noting the signs of their going ashore for dinner and at night, until we should come on them still thus camping, or run them fairly to earth in their own country.

For you must know that all along this part of the Atlantic ocean known as the Virginian sea, the waves do not come to the bare face of the main-land, but ever between is a long reach of shallow waters divided by some low barrier ; insomuch that you may sail for many a day within sound of ocean yet never fairly upon it, being between one beach and another. Also you may fare sumptuously on all sea-food as you go, whether finny or shelly or winged ; which no doubt is why the Kuskarowaks and their kin do so affect it for their highway.

Now you may wonder we came not thither with a power of men, as did they whom we pursued. But Captain Fleete held otherwise, who was the best of wit among us and had like the rest his very life at stake on our happy fortuning ; and so held yet more behind us, of ample and educated discernment in such matters. For, said they, if but once the runagates took fear on them, there would be never an end of dodging and feigning and fleeing outright ; so that we should return as bootless as we went, unless a great mire held us forever, or mayhap an ambushade.

Conformably thereto, it behoved our little party should go stealingly. Yet there was less need at the beginning, for we learned that of a surety they had gone far on, with little likelihood of doubling.

Our first halt was one to breed speculation. We

were all of a mind they must have had some camp or base along the marsh northward of the isle ; wherefrom had issued those many several women-stealing ventures, that had been so distracting to me. So, too, we found, in little more than a double league ; where was a deep incurving of the shore to firm ground, with more bushes on it than reeds. Here were signs of occupancy for many days, such as long shell-heaps mingled with bones and other offal, a canoe stove in at one end, a broken mortar for their corn-grinding, with the pestle yet by it, burnt circles for their fires, foul circles for their lodges. Four of these were still erect, though uncertainly ; being very slender things of drift and brushwood.

In two of them we found black stains, where men had lain and bled ; also in one, so stained, another shred of poor Susan's blue gown and a curly bit of her hair. By the door, inside and out, her heel had left a dint so often that she must have been housing there the better part of a week. "Nursing the wounded enemy," said Warren ; but Fleete and Blackbeard thought it more like they had given her to this one in solace for his pain. I did not wish to take that view, nor was there any need of doing so.

Howbeit she was in great distress to leave them and very desperate, for our keen trackers followed her twice where she had stolen forth and then run as for dear life, miring one time by the water's edge until withdrawn by sheer force, no doubt in sorry plight and amid laughter.

The other time, she had made off oceanward,

though only with one shoe now, and keeping on bravely over shells that cut her, and in little hope even of hiding one would say. It made my heart sink with heaviness to see how leisurely she had been followed from the outset and taken again at their ease ; for my own surmise of the cat-and-mouse bedeviling came up into mind ; and I could not doubt that here once more she had been the very pitiful sport of these heartless creatures. Ah me, what must her life have been among them every night and day !

I could not sufficiently wonder at our Blackbeard, who was able to bring before us vividly, with circumstance of date and number and manner, all these passages that had left no impress legible to me. In particular, he could give us the interval between the two flights ; could say that the one was in the night, very dark at that, with no contriving but her own, and some canoe for a magnet,—the other about gloaming and left carefully open to her, with most likely some incitement of terror behind. Also he showed me at divers times where she had hidden something in trees or behind tussocks, without avail, no doubt for guidance of that salvation which her hope would not wholly forego.

I cannot say what she looked for, poor thing, unless that I might sally from the isle,—a very impossible fancy ; or may be she had read in their demeanor the outset of our rescuers from Accomac. We found at length one of her scrawls in charcoal on a bit of birchbark, all ashen white or sooty from the fire where some Indian had thrown it, and so tender

that it was like to crumble under the finger at every moment.

Never was ancient vellum so pored on by any scholar, nor so great a zeal put into its revival. Yet with all our pains we could not really read anything. Only Fleete was of fancy that he descried in the confusion a name which Blackbeard knew when spoken for a Kuskarowak village some little way below the morass. This became very naturally a kind of finger-post later unto our journey of rescue.

From that time we made it our custom to stay over night where they had done so, for better assurance of missing nought that would guide us. This answered well everyway, since their rate of travel was all we could allow ourselves, and they were very gourmands and Sybarites in selecting a camp-ground for comfort.

We found a grave at the second camp, and another at the fourth, either of which may have been my deed, yet I would not go into mourning. By the imputation of our wise men, the later contained that dilapidated chief who held Susan in waiting on him, if no more. Some discussion arising, we had him up again without compunction, a very ill-savored morsel. We found a stone hatchet beside him, black and shiny, with other articles not at all to our purpose.

Blackbeard, who did not mind displeasing sights, took off the dead man's apparel and put it by after some cogitating, before the owner went back into his hole. I believe he would have had us return to dig up the other corpse as well ; but we were scant of time, if there were no other reason ; wherefore he gave way.

At these landings we found often in the ooze our poor Susan's foot-prints ; both being naked after a little ; but later still in moccasins, though easily to be known. Sometimes, too, we could see where she had sat for long,—thinking,—thinking. But there was no sign of any motion to escape ; it may be on account of its hopelessness, or for having less urgency on her since the chief's death. We could follow, too, the giving way of her garments, as give way they must with no chance for shifting or repair. But this was doleful work and we made haste along.

We had ample time to parley in our going, be it swift or slow, for we spelled one another at the paddles, whereby a part were free. Often too we lay by, while our natural alone, or Fleete with him, went roaming inland on some discovery. And when night came there was enough, you may be sure, to keep thought and tongue a-going, until the strangeness of life was become the strangeness of dreaming, or gone in a dead slumber.

It would be idle and weary to tell of all our speech, which wandered widely as any sea-gull, and with no less random dipping. Broadnax more often spoke of her we sought than the many we had left behind ; for the daily signs of her, the tale we pieced out of them and my own regretful reporting of things past and gone did all work on him, notwithstanding his great crudeness. Only once, when the fire was new built and the twilight far fallen, he discoursed lingeringly with commendation of that shapely maiden who had devised in panic the hopeful scheme of self-slaughter,

yet afterward bloomed out a human rainbow in motley. He might do worse, thought I, for we had found her shrewd and heedful in all homely things and neither uncomely nor uncheerful, albeit having so lost herself a little time in the vain extravagance of calamity.

Warren went with him and the rest in vehement pity for Susan Fortescue and eagerness to set her free, but I could see there was yet beyond all this a dancing of that folly fire which Fleete had awakened. Indeed I had not been so swallowed by my own love concernments before leaving the plantation, but that I was aware of the great tax he had laid on many a friend by his haunting myth of the necromantic dame; not wholly sparing one who was too proud for any show of impatience! If she bade him farewell with quiet face, I saw her grieving afterward; and thereon took occasion to disparage before him the years of this old-time cast-away, wishing very heartily she had been content to abide in her proper realm of shadow-land. Old or young, I felt sure she could never at any time have holden a candle to that admirable lady, Alice Claiborne, now in some despite for her sake. But Ratcliffe opened on me at once with the ancient weariness of her great woe and her magical beauty, which Fleete had no choice but to stand by—with enlargement. Accordingly, hearing them, I grew nearly as small as my reasoning in my own conceit, though not one iota convicted; for after all who was to make me certain that she had not died, a small baby, a generation ago in the far southern woods? There

might be enough wandering white women and to spare without her, to say nothing of fantasies.

Now here were we, on this desperate adventure of pursuit, with one real and living damsel ahead, beside the good and noble women who had speeded us, all owning our best duty ; yet this unmanageable friend of mine must play the visionary as well as the knight-errant, wasting devotion on a thing of air.

There were not many incidents of our voyage. Game was often plentiful, yet we would not discharge any of our pieces, except on some great occasion. Where the marsh broadened, we held as far as might be to shallow inlets and channels among the reeds, by preference to openly skirting the border. But there was need of choice and care in doing so, for sometimes the water way would greaten as you went, and sometimes it would dwindle and shallow ; nor was there any pleasure in being left on the ooze, as happened at the last, with a narrowly pent inroad of tide pressing up behind. Thereafter we crept along outside.

Yet this again did not give us ease ; for about noon of the next day a long arrow came with no warning out of the wet covert, glancing overboard from my paddle in a great leap. 'Twas a clean surprise, no token of enmity having reached us, and we not suspecting that anyone was nigh. However we put to land swiftly, though warily, and spread abroad in search of our assailant ; but had only wading and splashing for our pains, with at last a poor trail that melted and washed away. Captain Fleete and Blackbeard were

of the mind that this aggression was by some straggling Wicomesese all alone ; very like an outlaw of the tribe, for such there be even among these wild people, themselves the outlaws of Christianity. I do not remember on what base their opinion stood, but will not gainsay it.

That evening I heard one of the night-birds near our camp, with the very same sweet note which had grown so sinister ; and you cannot think what a start was given me. The whole scene of that other frightful darkness came back directly, making me call out above my breath, and thereby waking laughter in Broadnax and Warren, who wondered what I could be at. Fleete said nothing, but picked up his gun, looking uncertain ; while our bearded aboriginal arose with a very comprehending air and slipped away. No doubt the musician would have come to grief condignly, if found to be featherless. But after much waiting our spy was among us again, reporting no enemy near. 'Twas an honest bird, he thought ; and so, this time, I suppose it must have been. For all that, I slept very ill before daylight.

The next afternoon we came in sight of an Indian camp, all alive with its people, who were easily recognized for Wicomeses, or Wicomicas as they are sometimes called, from the river where they mainly abide. This nation being now at peace, though not reliably, with the whites and also with the naturals of Accomac, we put on a bold face and made toward them. Their wretched curs barked at us, and themselves had a wavering look, that might mean

any wrath or treachery. Howbeit we spoke them fair, hinting nought of the late archery; so they grew to be more at ease. We gave them some tools and bits of metal, with gauds for their women, and became fast friends thereon. In proof, they assailed the vitals of me with smoke messes concocted in their foul, abhorrent pipes, no excuse availing, until I felt within like some ill-cured sausage of Bologna. 'Twas a very dismal experience of good fellowship.

However, they had better things, and shared them with us; notably oysters, both fresh and dry, which latter is their way of preserving; also venison and divers fowls, and flakes cut from a great fish they had speared, which we call the drum-fish now, often prodigious in size and very good eating.

These were a dwarfish people, ill-favored as dwarfs will be, and very regardless of person. They kept as dirty as they could, doubtless with regret for no better opportunity, being so much in the water. Their hair was matted every way, more often than trimmed after the fashion or cognizance of their tribe. Mostly they wore skins, but not many, and these were ragged and twisted, nor did they seem to take it to heart if convenience left them naked in any company. They were at a distance from home, being anchored by the favor of nature about them: and had suffered disquiet by the passing of our Kuskarowaks, who were uncertain friends at the best.

They had seen the white captive, and even tried to purchase her, which might have been little for the

better. Meanwhile her captors held their camp a half league northward; but in the end the two parties fell out over the bargaining and came to blows, wherefore they passed on. When they learned our errand, the bolder of these Wicomeses were for going on with us in hope of a few scalps, and indeed we had to take them, or leave an enemy in the rear.

Concerning Susan, they could give a just and close account, seeing she had been an object of their coveting. She had suffered from travel they said, as might well be; her dress was little better than their own; she often sat by herself, though using some art of complaisance, more especially toward themselves, and indeed promising vastly if they would bear her far away to where the white folk dwelt. This hope or somewhat else did so brighten her before she went away that she smiled and sang a little, while making shift at neatly fastening what had been her garments. For treatment, they thought she fared not badly then. Her ownership was in abeyance, which matter of title had to do with the final rupture; yet more than one of the young men were pushing their claims, nor would be likely to scruple any measure on nearing the end of their voyage.

We went on in force and no longer with caution or any tardiness; our flotilla gaining on them rapidly. After leaving the Wicomeses in defiance, they had taken their time, so that we were hardly a day behind, when we made resolve to descend suddenly on that village of the enemy which bore the name read out of the

birchen ashes by our wise ocean-forester, and whither the wandering crew were evidently bound. We were more eager to end our purgatory and her own than to follow anybody step by step.

CHAPTER XI.

OUR ATTACK AND RETREAT.

WE did not venture to the mainland by daylight, but lay hidden in the first convenient place we could find that was not too far away. This was a cluster of wooded islets ranged in a circle or nearly so, with tall marsh-growth for a curtain between; the whole environing a shallow pool. Here were few traces or relics and those of long date, our Kuskarowaks having no doubt gone another way. We had an idle time of it waiting, with nought to do but bring a few crabs to pot; the smoke whereof was kept within bound very jealously. Also, through the leaves, we could look westward across the water to the woods; or eastward to the ocean and a rolling ribbon of sand, which last made a natural dyke between sea and bay for I know not how many leagues.

Once we saw a canoe along the nearer verge of that sand-belt, with a man in it; and three of our Wicomeses, finding him thus cut off, were for giving chase; but their chief would have none of this, holding that one scalp would never pay for the risk of discovery. Therefore we had no call to intervene.

Again toward sundown, another boat made a crossing to the mainland far above, so that I could only discern two upright figures, with another bending be

tween them; and my eyes were pretty keen too. Yet there was debate betwixt our Blackbeard and the Wicomesse chieftain as to whether the middle one were brown by nature or by sunburn; whether skin-clad or in the remnant of her tatters—for both agreed she was a woman. Fleete had somewhat to say by inference from her carriage; but there might be other causes for dejection and other women dejected.

On counselling together, it was found wise to keep in hiding, but to note their course and goal from our covert, sending spies on that trail as soon as ever twilight fell. Accordingly this was done, Blackbeard volunteering with another. We went our own way not long after. A bit of storm hurried up from the south to threaten us midway; but we won safe ashore and went inland.

Our Indian allies were in great scorn of our clumsiness about this hazard of surprise. Indeed, barring Fleete, every man Jack of us white folk advertised our coming continually to any prowler who might be near. It was a mercy that none came by. And no one who has seen a mechanic of skill hampered by a bungler, or a card-worshipper with a partner who minds not trump nor trick nor any single point of the game,—no one such, I say, but will thoroughly pity these good gingerly Wicomeses. At any rate so did I; and represented that it would be far better for us to await the moonrise. That being done, the improvement in our behavior was quickly manifest.

From this halt it was only about five miles to the village, over a country nearly level, but moist and

thick with woods. Ere we were come half-way, I heard a sound ahead, first a mere murmur, as of the wind, but growing to a medley of voices; not very human and quite beyond my guessing. I made inquiry, in a whisper, of Fleete, who went before me.

"It must be some article of their religion," answered he.

"It sounds more like the devil," said I.

"I have known the two go together," he replied. "There is a deal of worshipping in this world which ought to please the devil extremely."

"Doubt not it doth!" came in answer, yet from neither of us I will be sworn.

"What say you?" cried Fleete, as he turned on me, forgetting all caution of voice. But it shook, and I saw him tremble bodily.

Nor could I at once make answer; for surely I thought it the utterance of that uncouth being who had gone overboard from me with my revolter. At the moment converse had left a gap between us and those of our party who went on. Those who followed were no nearer.

Fleete and I made for a thick bush whence the words had seemed to issue, meeting on the other side, with desperate looks, though frightened sorely. We were quite alone; yet in the moonlight I could see, as I thought, an outline between two trees, watching us. Again I made myself go forward, though I want no harder task; but there was empty space after all, even when I stood where I had supposed it to be.

By this there were more of our party with us, white

and red, and the latter were in some discouragement when they learned what we could not well keep to ourselves; even as when at home some boor setting out on a venture finds a hare or an old woman crossing his pathway; only they felt it more strongly. However, we prevailed with them to keep on; and at last they agreed that the observances at the village were all in our favor, if only this interrupter would not take the part of our enemy.

To that end nought would serve them but they must put up little stakes with feathers on them, and a heap of weapons and wampum with other small offerings between, environing all with a ring of some magical powder dispersed amid low wild crooning. This I understood as in propitiation of that evil thing they did fear. Then they went on more contentedly, though regretting that their rites were not ampler, as one explained.

Since then I have sometimes thought our fancy may have misled us. But if so, we were not at the end of such illusion, as you shall hear. Nor perhaps would it be quite out of possibility for this demon-like man, or man-like demon, to win safe to shore, seeing that we ourselves had done as much, with only a common human ship and no necromancy to aid us. Why he should be there, lurking for us in those woods, that verily I cannot tell you.

By good counsel, we held our course to one side of the shouting, which was now grown hellish enough to suit any fiend that will bear naming, and so on to a narrow deep river which wound about the open flat

of land, whereon this part of the Kuskarowaks had long been chiefly seated. For you are to know that nearly all the wild peoples do ever take some water-site for their home; and this water, which I tasted plentifully against my will at first entry, was good to drink and wholesome, though of a dark unusual aspect, a quality given by the cypresses, which grew right tall and in great plenty, wading out as it were in the shallower places, with fluted upright boles, and roots that one might lean on, and a spread of feather-like foliage overhead, so that I thought them, when I had more time to see, the most gracious and goodly trees of this new world.

One by one, with gesture guidance, we slipped over the brink into the shadow where the moon came not at all; and went between creeping and swimming from trunk to trunk, from hollow bank to heaving tussock, till there was a long line of us all round that low peninsula where stood the lodges with no impalement of palisades, for it seems they were secure in distance, not foreseeing any invasion.

At that time a multitude of the savages were afoot, other towns having sent in each a great quota to forward the rejoicing; all marching about in strings, with the most infernal array of headgear, or circling and prancing, or howling together at the moon like dogs or devils, for she rode full and high, and had, I thought, some unaccountable connection with their orgy. Beyond question they were hideous enough and numerous enough to affright us, yet not armed in any effective manner. The chief of

the Wicomeses pointed out to Fleete, and he to me, the heaping place for their weapons, which lay by great good fortune quite open to our attack. So, finding all ready, we rose together; and that storehouse, beside half the village, was carried with a great rush and cry.

The Kuskarowaks did not resist that onset, but melted every way amid great execution, and not of men only; so that there was blood on every side, keen shrieks and racing and smiting with hatchets. It was past any stay by me, yet already I began to repent my share in bringing one savage on another, and ran wildly from lodge to lodge, lest perchance the captive we sought might be in peril from either party.

One larger than the rest I threw open, yet stood frozen in the doorway; for there, if my eyes were worth anything, behold that inhuman enemy, bowing as of old, with a very cruel politeness! "It were a shame to bar such pretty work," said he. "I am half a mind to go with you, as I did awhile on the *Tiger*." What more he intended I know not; for then other hands pulled the structure down on both of us, and when I rose he was gone, and my mind was like to be altogether distraught in that very hideous tumult.

It was vaster now and even more dreadful, since the rude dwellings were blazing one upon another, and the nearer Kuskarowaks, being packed altogether beyond fleeing, had turned very desperately with what armament was to hand, and there was danger that

any little success would bring their whole weight rolling on us.

So indeed it presently befell, for a great villager, being wounded in rear by our Wicomese leader, did snatch the little fellow from the ground bare-handed and shatter him down again, the great stag-horns of his miming shaking above that raging victor as he stood. Then, snatching the spear from his thigh, back he came like any Berserk of old tale, with ever so many more behind. Nor could any stop him until Warren did it with a bullet.

By this time we were shooting for dear life, and many fell; but the Wicomeses were breaking and hurrying back, so that we white men could but draw together, and cover by the dread of our unfamiliar weapons—yet not wholly new to these people—the retreat toward the boats. Alas had we led it, there was a chance of going back as we came; yet now when we won the shore those faithless ungrateful people were clean gone, taking every canoe with them, not sparing even our own, albeit knowing very well the deadly peril we were in for their sake.

Then we thought of the one in which our spies had gone ashore, and also that which they had followed; but when we came to the place, each had been picked up and borne inland. We went after, but very cautiously, not knowing when some ambuscade might be sprung on us or a pursuit fill us with arrows. But had we known the truth we might have spared this concern, for as we learned afterward they were too overcome by their sudden losses to venture

anything further against us, although having the better of that fight.

Now by comparison of experience among us, it appeared certain there was no damsel in that place but they belonging to it by nation or haply by the quarrels and captures of the red Virginians among themselves. As for my sea-villain—or sea-devil—the others would hardly take my word for him, excepting Fleete only; and I was amply content he should remain resident there in quiet, if that were his good pleasure.

Thus we had no motive at all but just mere wantonness for attempting the town again, however discordant its moon-howling. And I make no doubt they found some kind of inner good and soul-satisfying in that antic service. Nor were we, like the Spaniards, by their own thinking, divinely commissioned evangelists having a charge to murder these heathen into better worship. We lost no time in hastening elsewhere after Susan Fortescue, whom we now conjectured to have been she of the bowed head with the two captors only.

Their trail, which we were on, made for that same river of the cypresses, reaching it higher in a bend, whither it came from the northward. Here was an end, with only signs of embarkation; wherefore we sat down for rest and thought and daylight. By turns we got some sleep in the fag end of night remaining.

That was my case when the dawn opened; my slumber also breaking, with a glad cry in my ear. I sat up, and behold our good bearded Virginian coming, canoe

and all, to our recruit. Only the other spy was no longer with him.

He told us he had a new name now, which he meant to abide by, inasmuch as it magnified him. For it seems they whom he did prosecute were of greater forecast than our party ; so that when he came in sight he came also into waylaying ; and his partner fell dead behind him with more than one arrow. Death flew plentifully at him also, but in the beginning he made evasion by diving ; yet was taken prisoner at length, after much pestering, by a troop of enemies.

They were in more delight than he at his having so far gone free of any serious hurt ; for this would make him more nimble and entertaining in the running of the gauntlet. They held grave converse, he listening, on the particular of this their raree show ; and above all could not felicitate themselves enough that they would be able to make two scalps of him, one growing from his cheek and chin. Therefore they called him Two-men ; which tickled his heathen fancy ever after.

Yet it was no great consolation for the grim death which had him by the heels ; only he found wit and skill enough even yet to slip out of their hand and away. Keen chasing had there been, yet none quite came up with him, wherein we discerned a better warrant for his new name than the mere growth of hair. And truly when I perceived how very far he had sped in that brief time I wondered at it greatly.

“What saw you of the woman ?” said Fleete.

Very little could he tell. White she was, no doubt ;

as he had averred from the beginning. For apparel, more fur than cloth ; for demeanor, an invincible forward bending. It might be grief or thought,—he could not say. She and the two with her did behave like phantoms ; not a stroke varying, nor an eye turning backward even amid the Babel of that outbreaking ambush. After that he saw them no more.

This was a scarce believable aspect and carriage for Susan Fortescue, in such a conjuncture ; and my heart fell. But Ratcliffe would yet go on. After some parley we took up his plan, for lack of a wiser.

The canoe was a tight fit for us, and ordinarily two of our party, taking it turn and turn about, followed the shores a little ahead ; a tedious business, for they were often marshy or thickety, and the stream had more and shorter windings than any snake. Now and then some tributary brook was to get over ; and everywhere we stood to be on our guard. Howbeit none did molest us all that day. So it was the next, only that about sundown we frightened a lone fisherman out of a creek, who set up a warning cry, until our Two-men winged a death to him and whipped off the hair from his skull. I could not abide that vision ; though it was one life or another, and such things lay in our way.

Not far beyond, we had to make a wide portage, avoiding a town like the former one, but less and now with few men in it. We spied about to make sure there was no white woman among them. But we could not stay, dreading every moment the hue and cry for that homicide.

Then on for sundry days, ever twisting, paddling and wading ; gaining a little, yet only a little ; the river dwindling as we went upward, the land soaking, the feathery trees thickening and still thickening ; until it came to pass that we were a very weary handful in a great endless waste of swamp and shadow and black water. We fed ill, being with no store like that in our former great canoe ; we lay down hot, awaking to shiver ; there was no comfort in or about us, nor much beside aching. If the savages knew our plight, it was wisdom to leave our undoing to that nightmare wilderness, they being quit of any charge. I have thought this might be, for how could we have come so far after such turmoils, and they in ignorance ? Certain it is at any rate, I did undergo sundry apparitions or ghostly echoings of my old sea-troubler, minding me of his menace to keep near ; yet these were all when we were beginning to grow light-headed, and none knew of them but I. 'Twould be like telling dreams to recite them now.

Under all this there could not but be crimination and growth of ill will ; Broadnax being worst of all. At last in a sick turn he flat revolted, and must needs find a way out, either with us or alone. This was after we had left the tread of a rivulet, going overland with the boat among us on that same trail to the border of a lake. It could not have been a great water as I think ; but there was no telling then, the many isles, the trees innumerable and the wet vistas between were all so bewildering to the sight. Indeed Ratcliffe Warren did aver he could catch the far flut-

tering of drapery, sometimes here, sometimes there ; but then this was not the first occasion with him, no, not by a great multitude, on that woful excursion. Therefore I set it down as no better than my fantasies of the man-demon ; and will stand by the one if there was aught in the other. I need not say, however weary, he was still for going on.

Howbeit we were not spirited along like him, and Broadnax carried the day. We launched our boat on those dead waters making land on the other side after a weary time ; then went westward, unsteadily, for the sickness kept gaining. Very lucky it was we had those who could read the bark-moss the way it grew, and were mindful of the stars ; yet, even then there was no straight line one could follow, what with quaking bogs and channels narrow but deep that would still cross our way.

Food was something that we had to learn to do without. We made and set some few fishing devices, but our prey was nothing to brag of ; and when we grew hardy in our need and shot a venison or two, behold the shadow was all alive with enemies and such hellish uproar as no man ever heard. But I think they would have fallen on us anyway ; for surely they were our very faithful attendants all the time. However, we beat them off then with some punishment ; wherefrom they took a proper fear of our weapons and wrought us little more annoy.

We were nigh starved when we won out of the morass, and Fleete and Warren had each a little arrow hurt beside ; so that it was an especial providence

we did first enter a land of good civil heathen people, who sometimes traded with them of Accomac, and could partly speak their tongue ; being indeed the most notorious merchants of all this Eastern Shore. These entertained us with very friendly welcome ; and afterward furthered us down their river, the Nanticoke, and along the shore of the great bay, to Claiborne again and his people. Yet with all our retinue, and maugre some repose and fattening, we were but a sorry party. Nor was there any with eyes in his head who would throw blame on us for not enlarging that poor captive, Susan Fortescue.

I worried my own mind over it ; and sometimes will do so even now. For, whom or what had we been following in the latter half of our essay ; and how much truth was there in the Wicomeses' witness ; and where—but why continue questioning ? There are things in this our life which it were better to put out of mind as merely dreadful and beyond all remedy. A very sad part of philosophy as I take it !

CHAPTER XII.

MARJORIE AND HER NEW HOME.

BEING now reverted home—for that ever seems homelike where love is awaiting—we found changes not a few. And firstly there were sails in harbor, two armed pinnaces, a great barge low-laden, with other transports and floating magazines, as though something adventurous were brewing. New faces, too, some staid, some rakish, all expectant, from over the bay!

But women cheeks again were rare among them, our fair assembly having gone their ways in marriage, the major part along the River James. In all kindness I could but wish them as great contentment as mine own; for now I could live without heaviness and fear, with no thought of being deplorably wicked or a target for unmanageable affection.

Yet it did me good to see that one at least had been holden for our coming by sheer clutch of Marjorie's and Mistress Alice's wise counselling, and that was the good motley maid—motley no longer, but of a sturdy womanly decorum, and gracious to their hinting, with no least will to make away with herself before that Broadnax should return to speak his mind. For it seems they had some inkling of sundry passages between the pair at eve of our outsetting, which had

quite eluded my own vision, and wherein, being buffeted and baffled into a less peremptory turn of mind, he had acquitted himself gently and reasonably; and they were of one opinion that having stood by Warren and me in time of need so unexpected well, he should in no wise fail of his fair chosen reward.

All which came properly and prosperously to pass; nor were there many wives in our later plantation more vigilant or forthright or serviceable; of wiser discernment in the lesser daily things that chiefly make up life, or of a warmer conjugal affection and good will.

We found also before us one George Evelyn, Esquire, come out from Cloberry while we were yet in the woods, to do half witting what we would not. A doughty and masterful man in his own eyes undoubtedly; also a gentleman by birth, training and repute, but rather undersized both in body and mind, easily blown about every way, even in matters of manly faith.

Already he felt himself an overlooker and inspirer of whatsoever was done, looking to that northward emprise; and none so stout as he at that time in berating the papistical upstart, miscreated Lord Baltimore, who with his son already had begun pestering along the Chesapeake.

Now, whether spurred by competition of Calvert or Evelyn's worryment, Claiborne had put forth his hand to that northerly insular domain sooner than his intent, so that already a glimmer of life was there

and a beginning of traffic, and all the gatherings and stirrings that I have mentioned were to make that promise good. Thus far everything had gone well, he said; only a few more men were needed, of industrious and undertaking spirit. Then he looked at us.

“But what of the natural devils?” I made query, having new come from their antic fury. “Think you, sir, they will bear respect unto royal licenses or charters of the province?” For I well know he had both.

“If they levy on our hair ’twill be a detriment” quoth Warren, meditating.

Claiborne looked at me with a balancing eye.

“These are but mild and bartering devils,” he said, “whereof a man may make his reasonable profit. In one word their kings have sold me the isle—and other purchases.”

A little triumphing side look went from him toward Fleete, who coughed uneasily. Then I knew these “other purchases” were peltry; and how the one trafficker would grill inwardly over the advantage the other had taken. When a great man turneth small and cunning what a fool he may be! For Claiborne very certainly would have need of every friend; only this covetous passion led him astray.

However I had my own fortune to push, and took him up straightway, my heart beating to a more doubtful tune than my words. “Give me land enough to maintain a household,” said I—Ratcliffe began laughing—“and I engage to stand by you. I think I know a maid will dare it with me.”

"Marry, so do I," said he very kindly; "though not in that quality, so please you. Two hundred in the open shall you have, and you may begin the home-building this se'en night if you will, for then I go thither. And no prejudice truly shall you have, my doubting Richard, but rather advancement."

Thereat I was at once in very great joy. Later I remembered that he had left unsaid two hundred *what*; and in all had promised vaguely. But it mattered nothing; he was better than his word to me in this and in many things, however he might be to others.

Need I say that I had some converse earlier with Marjorie?—in whom, as in her friend Mistress Alice, there was no manner of change at all except what came of distress and long watchfulness. For it was a trying thing that we were abroad from their knowledge so many days in that monstrous wild, a great silence which they could only fill with terrors and petitions; and surely these were heard by the gracious Patron of all good endeavors.

Now that we were safe and home, my Marjorie at least was more in humor, I fear, for laughing than praying; nor unready for translation to the fair new isle, after nuptials good and due, and the place being made habitable. "If you must go adventuring," she said saucily, "it were better for one wife to be your company than some dozens of rampant young women who would only quarrel over you—as heretofore."

Broadnax too had been provided amply, and in like fashion, with dowry to his excellent helpmeet; and

the faithful rough spoken fellow went northward willingly, in good profit thus far and better hope.

“Two-men” was not thus to be rewarded; for how would land, or indeed anything, profit him away from his tribe?—and as to wives, he was very well off for them already. We let him keep the pistols he had borne, adding a string or two of blue beads which were a great pride, being eloquent of our esteem and his merit.

Warren went with us, albeit Claiborne had shown some uncertainty; but eyeing him and Mistress Alice warily for two days, very suddenly came to resolve the matter, and in the end greatly favored and furthered him who seemingly had her favor. Ratcliffe was indeed in some sort nominate to be chief and leader whenever the Secretary should be from us; a bit of empty honor, for it never came to more, which set Broadnax a grumbling. But no man could long keep ill will toward Ratcliffe Warren. As for me, I was too busy raising my house walls against the time when I should be wedded and bring home my bride; also I had more than my right or expectance already, and I hope I was too good a friend for any mean envy. Likewise I foresaw no great amount of governing.

And now I being come again to Accomac on this happy errand, it was Marjorie’s pleasure I should be made a Tantalus for a while, not over reasonably.

“Sir Richard,” quoth she, with a face of concernment, “it is but a little time you have been away.”

“I had thought it might seem long,” said I gravely, and I lightened the pressure of my arm against her hand.

"A fact is a fact" said she with an arguing voice, "and no seeming will mend it. Now how many days have you been gone; and how many of these were made away with in mere sailing? Ah! well, no matter, no matter! you must have been a very necromancer to put up a dwelling in that time. Come now, sir, is it not some packing-box or clothes-press from on ship-board?"

"Or a hen-coop!" cried I in a dudgeon. "Or a bee-hive; or a good clean sty!"

"Now, now," said she "that is irony;" and she looked me in the eye as warning from some task unsuited.

"Well, see!" said I, showing hands which ought to have been a reproach unto her. "And it so fortunately I was not left unaided; we were many, and all did their best. Men do not fail men, I find. For the house, 'tis a good one, my lady, where you may live soundly and make merry with all daintiness. The walls of sound oak and cedar trunks, padded that no winter may come in, three rooms, one aloft, all neat and shapely, a fire-place that will eat all the wood a man may cut and haul, and for furniture, the bed-posts are sunk squarely Indian fashion and——"

She began to laugh uneasily. "There, there," said she, "that will do."

"I thought you might like to hear," said I in malice, with some notion I was getting the better of that tilt after all. "Now I can give you every particular as you shall find it."

"You spoke of the Indians," quoth she, putting

this by. "What like are they? Great like the Susquehannocks we hear about, or small as the Wicomesses?"

"Between," said I, "and more chastened in spirit than either, being a feeble wandering folk, with a king like a decayed gentleman. They look to profit by our countenance, and may be of some aid in the matter of provender. It is a wonder what fish they will catch with their quaint engines, that no stickleback would take at home. They are called the Mattapeakes, and may make fifty men. On the mainland are the Ozinies, their close confederates; an equal tribe for power, but seated, a villageful, within a pale not easily broken."

"They tell me the isle is a vast one," said she. "Ah, well, I dare say it will be great enough to hold Sir Richard's conceit and my petulant tormenting."

All which prophecy fell out as prosperously as might be desired, nor was there ever a merrier launching, nor one more hopefully befriended. For our sake, and no less but rather more for Ratcliffe Warren's, the isle was new named of the Secretary, now its lord, after the dear English county where we were born and bred. Until then it had been known foolishly as "the Winston isles," with some neighboring necks and offsets of land, and reputed a little archipelago, which was a manifest error.

It was near the beginning of autumn in the year of our Lord 1627 when we made our plantation on the Isle of Kent in the great bay of the Chesapeake:—a time when the wide world was all awry with dangers

even more than now ; whereof we had surely our full share in remembrance after so many and frantic disquiets from picaroons and savage natural heathen in the passage of the Virginian sea.

Yet was there little need to dwell on them, had we known it, for the mere wilfulness of fate had cast yet other adventures across our pathway and but a little way before—being quite enough to set any heart astir ; as you shall hear.

Now were we adventurers for long time a little world unto ourselves, being compassed on every side by desert land or desert water. Seeing us rooted, our patron went and came, like a thoughtful overlord, as indeed he was, bringing news now from Accomac and now from Jamestown, with echoings from over sea, which alone would make his visitation a thing to celebrate. In general he stayed but so long as might serve for accounting and for inspection of his own farmland, its tilth and its yield ; but he made it his business to hearten the settlement in one way or another every time he came.

Mistress Alice went briefly with him twice, making a notable stir ; for you may well believe there were not many like her even among the worshipful ladies then gathered at Jamestown. But I thought she and her brother were of a mind that she would better abide among us ; mayhap in part by reason of his worldly indirectness in statecraft and much beside, which would not very well bear her daily eye. Nevertheless Ratcliffe Warren may have been a more potent argument with her. Whatever the cause, she was with

us most of the time, being met with such greeting at each return as may be imagined. To Marjorie, in that loneliness, every such voyage was a kind of bereavement, and often and often she did fervently desire her dear Alice that she would never, never, never leave the isle again. Haply this too had some share in her remaining.

It will be seen that my Marjorie was of those women who hold by their maiden friendliness after being taken to wife. Nor could I fault-find therefor, since she had chosen so well and with no loss of love to me. I have just nought whatever to set down against this Marjorie of mine ; more especially as her spectacle glasses will very certainly be soon brought to bear on every page of my inditing. But if I had, it could not be any silly jealousy, whatever her mischievous tongue before wedlock might give one to fear. She would let me go abroad from the isle when I must, for we were all more in traffic than tillage, with no concernment other than for my safety ; commonly betaking herself for the time—babe and all, when it had come—to the home of Alice Claiborne, that honored and beloved neighbor.

This lay southward of us not very far, on the same—the eastward—side of the isle, with only some open fields between, where the stumps did show among the corn and tobacco. She had two or three bound servants with her, staid people, for cultivating under the direction of Warren, who lived as he might, bachelor fashion, in the warehouse by the second inlet, a long stone's-throw away. This was our great building and

place of concourse for the men. Here we kept, above and below ground, the material sent in bulk by Cloberry and Company, or added by afterthought of Claiborne ; being our munitions, our common stock of tools and clothing whence advances were made as needed by each ; our food-reserve ; our motley array of things for barter with the aboriginals—each commodity in its own proper place.

Here, too, was our open shoproom, hung with our best for enticement, where savage merchandise did meet Christian, and where beads and trinkets were made over to squaws that came a-shopping, in return for their bits of peltry. Their men were sometimes taken with such coin, too ; but craved more often things of real use,—knives and hatchets or some kind of body wrapping, or fish-hooks better than their own, being made of steel. Fire arms, fit for use, we would not suffer to go to them, our own lives hanging thereby. However, we found they got some from other traders, who came without license along the shore.

By right these poaching bay-farers should have been taken in charge ; but our great longing for some advertisement of what went on outside made us rather give them a welcome when they came. John Harmon of Accomac was notable among them ; likewise our myth-mongering comrade, Henry Fleete, who spent much time with us, though not tarrying to meet the Secretary.

Both of them I am sorry to say, after their kind, would sell very damnable liquor to their red customers ; finding no other commodity would so fetch

the furs they coveted. It was a deed to think shame on, especially considering our jeopardy.

All traffickers, white or coppery, were commonly to be met with about the magazine or the landing, though now and then one would peddle from house to house. These main central points, with the Clai-borne house and the windmill, a scattering of cabins about and between, the canoes coming in or drawn up ashore, the pinnaces riding off a little way, and now and then a strange sail or two, made up a very living plantation or settlement. We had a pastor and a doctor with us from the first; and a small church soon went up below the mill, Evelyn also building near, as became the senior warden; and there, under shadow of the toy-steeple, they laid out a graveyard, with due enclosure. Not that we had any need for it as yet, only it made us feel more completed.

Dandy the mad blacksmith, who loved strong waters dearly, but was not mellowed thereby, offered to start it fairly with the next natural that crossed him, if that would do; but his proffer was not taken. However, in fulness of time he suffered and made us to suffer for such offending.

At this period he had his shop, now at one end of our settlement and again at the other, but oftenest about the quay where vessels with rum on board were most easily come at. He wrought mainly on our implements, there being no need for shoeing on our isle, where were no stones, nor much travel but afoot; although we had at one time five horses among us, including my old brown mare.

Now I think I have given the main points of our new home. Only picture the straggle of cabins, lesser and greater, down toward the point ; on the very tip, our best marksman for wild-fowl had early set himself in the woods. Northward were more of them along the western shore to where Broadnax was thriving in his rough way—our very outpost he, though by and by others gathered about him.

These up-isle folk were mainly hunters of deer and wild turkeys in the parts above them, who found their account in saving the steps of more stay-at-home people like myself ; also in the largess of their good neighbor. For Broadnax did never weary of dispensing ; though he wrought to such purpose that still he had to give. His wife, Mistress Motley as we would still jestingly call her, had the swing and headlift of prosperity ; with his own bluster and redness growing on her also, belike by imitation or infection.

Marjorie took not over kindly to this—nor, it may be, to the thought of their outstripping us in worldly gear. But there was no patent rupture between these good women, and they met very often at the house of the clergyman and elsewhere, with Mistress Alice Claiborne and two or three dames beside ; for the miller had a sober wife and the dominie a lightsome one, and the fowler of Kent Point had brought his thin sister with him. More than once women of worsen carriage were smuggled into some part of our little colony, to the proper indignation of that coterie, but these commonly went soon away. As for the squaws, they were—some of them—a perennial evil ;

but our zeal was kept alive for their exclusion or ridicule.

According to rumor, there was gossip with sewing at these moral conferences ; and I believe they set a many buttons for bachelors, in lack of other charity. Anyway, whensoever I went out with Marjorie, or for her, I could be sure to find some two or three. I heard Broadnax in his blundering fashion brewing somewhat of disquiet in the mind of our excellent pastor, when his blithe dame had been, as often, more debonair than dourly reverend in such company ; and our loud ruddy neighbor was graceless enough to haw-haw about it afterward in private with me, when I made protest against it as being quite too bad. Beyond this, and such like mosquito scandal, I know not that either good or harm came of the needlework and gossipry.

There was little else to pass the women's time when off work, save a stroll by the water, a game by the firelight, tale-telling and the magnification of all good things in that other island home which did now appear clean out of our world, with the haze of a great gulf between. We men had them away with us briefly now and again for a turn on the water with sail or oar. Sometimes we took angles along toward sundown, if the tide were right, and did a bit of quiet fishing. We brought odd spoil, too, from our trading excursions, for the raising of their hands and eyes. Also we went foraging in the woods after venison. Doubtless it might have been a long slow life to all, but for the industry that claimed us without ceasing. For busy people, not overcome with their burdens,

will rarely find more hours in the day than should be.

'Twill be seen that I had settled, or begun to settle, in every sense and way. I was in the wild undoubtedly, cut off from the main army of my kind, face to face with nature primeval and her stealthy, passionate children, rarely quite out of peril, whatever blindness our daily use might bring ; yet from week's end to week's end with scarce more of change or wandering than any orderly tradesman of London City. Indeed I knew not one could have his vaunt over me for my being more unstable.

It was much the same with Ratcliffe Warren, though in less degree. The steady pressing of responsibility, the grim duty of bargaining and accounting, the need of afterthought and forecast, the handling of things you could surely feel and own—all must needs concur in driving mere fantasy out of mind, at the least while they were urgent and new. But they left his heart well open and daily put their compulsion on him to face her who might fill it best. For his duties went toward supplying her, and when he took thought it was to save loss or bring wealth, which, though it were chiefly her brother's in name, would also be her own. There was she to reap the fruitage as it came, with the wit to have some say in that coming.

So there was ample counsel between them, and the habit and hand-clasp of daily life together, walking it may be along the level bay-shore where light waves came lapping, or rocking idly in their boat

against the vivid broken hues after sunset. It pleased all, for what I saw, and us—Marjorie and me—more than all others, after the common use and wont of new-married people, who have good hope to see every well-deserving friend in like cheery comfort.

No one heard them speak together of love, but there was great peace and contentment in her eyes; and he made no secret of his thought that the world had no other women such as she; but it was not in Ratcliffe Warren, save when honor bade, to make a secret of anything. When she went away the second time, he was nigh dropping everything to go after; but I laid him aboard stoutly and battered him out of that. When she came back, his passion of delight made a fair target for our teasing. Even her brother had his watchful smile over it; as might befit a merry thing not wholly past his own contriving.

We looked for them to wed; but the Secretary was hardly ready; the which Mistress Alice was somehow made to feel, and was guided. She had good warrant for trusting his foresighted wisdom; yet it could not see all that would come, or I think that in pure pity he would have let them follow their way. This reluctance may have come of that great stir ahead with the Papists and Calverts, the which was already deepening in murmur; or of that lean year whereto tended our mis-harvest and folly-dealing and the greatening ill-will of Cloberry to send us aid. Surely either were reason good for lingering a little. Both troubles came on us, but the want came first.

Yet ere this there was revival, I know not how, of

another and subtler thing which had before put us all ill at ease and quite out of patience with our friend ; being that strange waywardness of delusion whereof I have spoken more than once, and which had its birth undoubtedly in the tales of our fancy-broidering Captain Fleete, on board the good ship *Tiger*. We had deemed it quite grown away from and lost to memory ; but willy nilly, as months wore on there was no denying the evident signs again. It came and went like a recurrent dream living on perversely into the day, or like a glimmering out of a second life running on beside that of our daily stir and sunlight, and mayhap was in some measure beyond resisting—with a most apparent savor of magic.

As of old it had power to catch away the very spirit and longing of our Ratcliffe, with picturing of that strange lady of misery and warning whom I was fain, for mere ease of mind and inner refuge, to hold as myth and shadow altogether, until made to see otherwise beyond cavil.

Indeed, I know not yet what rightly to think of her ; only that forth out of the demon-haunted wilds she came, and from time to time the spirit of Ratcliffe Warren seemed to wander back after her, in the fantasy that she was the lost Virginia Dare, the girl-babe first born of our race in this new world, and reared to womanhood amid rites unholy under the wood shadows that saw the passing away of our colony in Roanoke.

How then—may a man love more than the lady of his devotion, and, as it were, nearly in the same

breath? Dare one answer "Aye" to this query, with the wrath of the fair impending? Yet how shall he truly answer "No?"

For this word, love, undoubtedly hath divers meanings. The deeper current of life may set one way very strongly while yet there shall be power over the dimpling surface in every light caress of leaf and willow-twig, in every daintily brushing zephyr-wing of fancy.

In this, our new plantation, we had at the first no lack of sustenance, our initial supply being ample, and fed at intervals both from Jamestown and London. Also the fish and waterfowl came by legions in due season, and while we were felling trees or clearing brushwood from the soil, we would often startle out many kinds of land game which made our meat. Later, our fields made proffer of their store, and all went well.

But there came a break in this; for first my good neighbor Broadnax, untaught by disappointment, had brought from Accomac the fever for raising tobacco, the price whereof had run very high that year, tempting poor people from more needful culture.

I made fight against it, yet only set his obstinacy with fuller sail its own way; and he had the major part of our people with him. Indeed, as it is hard to be among the lunatic and yet remain quite sane, I so far yielded that one-half my own tilth went for a season to the broad low green leaves which no beast living, excepting only man, will devour. Then a punishment fell on me for raising poison and the wherewithal of evil smells; and this was right, only that there were more than I to suffer.

For there came to our confusion a green succulent unnatural worm, the bigness of a man's finger, which did eat and eat, keeping one in a state of disgusted vigilance. Also, between ill weather, when all should have been fair, and some lack of knowledge and preparedness, we fared but dimly in the curing time. So what was sold brought us little gain; and when we cast about for comfort, behold there was but scant store of corn anywhere on the isle, whether among white men or coppery Mattapeakes.

A part thereof was mine, but more was Secretary Claiborne's; for Mistress Alice had been converted betimes to my warning wisdom and, after the manner of women, had holden the faith better than I. Also there was a hide or two of corn ground about some of the cabins; and the Mattapeakes and Ozinies had to sell if they would, though not very largely.

Now we lamented also the working of our greed another way, having been over eager for furs, whereby we had quite glutted the naturals about us with the commodities they most affected; so that now, when we must have food, they demanded double and treble quantity in payment. We bought of them as we could out of our lessening store, also from our people by the James with the remnant of furs, and with tobacco. Yet the whole sum was not very great. So Claiborne, having aided largely of his own, must needs cross the sea and lay the urgency of the case before Cloberry, who had been long in receipt of our main consignments, returning us nothing of late.

After he went, we of the isle took counsel together,

and made resolve that discovery should be put forward, in those parts where our nearer naturals had warned us not to go, for that cannibals and other invented dangers were in wait. Howbeit we had come to know their ways. It is not among Christian folk alone that one dealer will fright you from another by mighty lying. Your heathen savage is nearly as graceless in that regard.

Wherefore, Ratcliffe Warren and I, taking Marjorie and Mistress Alice with us, who needs must go for greater peace of mind, and leaving the miller in charge, set sail in a pinnace of good provision and armament to a certain point southeastward, which, though not very near, was still ever faintly in our view; voyaging thence along the deep eastern bight or inward curve of the bay, which was itself a notable great water.

We met divers wild people there, but had little barter, notwithstanding we took with us good store of what they most would value and offered the same freely, for they were unused to us and shy. Very like they, too, had heard that we were entrappers and devourers.

We spent the night far off shore, for safety, but by noon of the morrow came to a good broad river-mouth. First therein was a bold islet, thick with woods; and above that a much greater one dividing the river into two thin streams that came together again at the point of a long cape like a finger. We were two days in going about this, and thought it beyond anything we had yet seen; being populated

with trustful folk, and obviously prolific in corn. Of the latter we easily bought a sufficient lading ; and seeing that they and Marjorie were well-affected one to another, I proffered also for that lower finger of the isle a few things of no great value, being mainly, indeed, an old hammer, a hand-mirror with a crack in it, and an ancient silver watch that would not go. They closed the bargain, with good will to see us again. So I found myself lord of a domain, and we sailed away, jesting ; for we had as yet no fancy what it was to be to us. We called it then the Isle of Wye, and the river Wye also, after that greater one betwixt England and Wales. The name yet endures ; I doubt not it will for many and many a day.

This, with other enterprises, brought us through the coming winter ; and that year we did not feel the pinch, unless in prospect and by the dearth of what we could barter. Our crops were meagre, partly by mere ill luck, and partly for that the seed corn had improvidently been trenched upon. As winter drew near, we were often anxious. To make the matter worse, the heathen about us were quick to see our trouble, and like all rude folk no longer held us in so high esteem.

Now and again, one would come mocking, to offer a handful of meal or some such Tantalus-fare in exchange for gun or plow or boat, which truly we could not at all do without.

I myself had some passages of that kind which tried me sorely, though I still kept a good understanding with them beyond any other of our people, as well

knowing the exceeding great need thereof. But when a certain Sharknose—after their frantic manner of naming—did essay this jocular carriage toward our hot Vulcan, this Dandy, who was no dandy, gave him not a word of answer but only the fierce end of an iron that he was reddening in the fire, and in such wise that the wild jester went limping forth with a yell, sorely discomfited.

Thereafter, we had peace for a time, every Indian being clean gone from our eyes and ears; which would have been excellent, only there was dread among us in that lull of worse to follow.

This fiery mischance would hardly have befallen but that both parties thereto were somewhat in liquor; which, I doubt not, was bought of Captain Henry Fleete, he being then moored to our shore.

Yet we could not blame him without reserve, being in sundry ways benefited by his coming. He brought us from afar divers kinds of meat and drink that had else been wanting, nor was ever found overhard in the matter of payment. Indeed, he often gave freely of these dainties to us, his old companions; who profited likewise by his calm, genial presence and marvellous gift in narration; and he was more than ready to stay by us during jeopardy.

It is true he might have spared to bring that jeopardy on us; but in this makeshift life, I have commonly found the good and evil of men's actions thus braided.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RAID OF THE TOCKWOGHS.

TH**ERE** is one evening I shall not forget. We were in our cosy front room, hearth-lighted with blazing dogwood, though it was at the opening of spring. Upstairs, the baby had chosen of his grace to be quiet, thereby leaving his mother free to rule the supper table in comfort.

Friends all, we were drawn to with good relish, the Broadnaxes our next folk above, Mistress Claiborne from down the isle with Ratcliffe Warren for convoy, and at my right hand our most worthy trouble compounder and promoter of that repast with its divers cates and garnishings. Least ahungred of all was he, yet vastly comfortable by the look of him ; sedate, smooth of tongue, manifold in fantasy, our Henry Fleete to the life, albeit going a long way beyond it in the tales of his experience.

Only now he shifted his ground, having less to say regarding those coppery neighbors, the knowledge of whom was already a sore burden on us ; but rather disporting amid Eastern realms of magic, whither, by his averment, he had wandered long ago ; or else in those wild countries beyond our western mountains where great monsters and marvels well may be—cities of gold and oceans with fairy islands—for to this

day there is not a man who really knows aught of them.

“If I could but find the way!” quoth Broadnax, with half a sigh.

“No, no!” cried his wife. “I set my face against it. ’Twere more motley and more self-slaughtering than ever yet was charged on me. ‘They that roam come spare to home.’ Good lack, haven’t we been ‘spare’ enough here already?”

“O, as to glitter!” added Marjorie, seconding this neighbor woman, “What good is that to any one? Isinglass will glitter in a hill; but can you eat it or coin it into money? The waves glitter with the sun on them. The frost glitters under the moon. What then, will you sup on rime and salt water?”

“Yet we do eat many things that come from the sea-glitter, and very wholesome we find them,” observed the Captain quietly.

“Now, Captain Fleete, Captain Fleete!” cried Marjorie, and I feared she might go too far. “Will you in good faith undertake to guide any single soul by any path which men may tread to these brave enticements of fairyland?”

Then, as never before, I saw Henry Fleete a little discomposed; for her eyes and cheeks were bright together, between inward heat and merry mockery.

“Have I not told you,” he began, “how that I was blindfolded and led away?”

“Even as he would fain deal with our goodmen!” broke in Mistress Broadnax, rather blowsily, with a laugh—before any other—at her own jesting.

Even Mistress Alice took up the cue ; for with these women it was only most apparent self-defence. That any man might see.

“Captain Fleete,” she said, “I greatly fear such a voyage would be no wiser than making sail after rain-bows and phantoms.”

With that we all laughed aloud, for her words brought to mind certain false chases and misadventures wherein he had his share. Whatever there was of heaviness, and far worse, in under memory came not that cheerful hour into view.

The general mirth incited Broadnax to a laughing answer. I knew and all knew that he meant the fleeting figure which we had taken for poor Susan Fortescue, and followed well nigh to our undoing.

“Ho, ho !” he shouted out. “I have had more than enough of Fleete’s phantoms ! Did not I run the best of them to earth, or water, in the great cypress swamp ?—and nearly died of that running ! ’T will last me ; ’t will last me ! No more of that ‘phantom,’ I pray you !”

As at the word, the door swung open, and he fell back, staring.

Now what or whom it was that stood there surely I cannot tell. Only she was tall and swayed upward easily ; being habited between our fashion and that of the wild. Somewhat of necromancy there was in the marks, like unknown writing, that went sprawling over her gown ; something far away in her feathery mantle, and her voice that came low and leisurely. A smile was on her face, but it seemed to bring her no nearer.

Very fair she had been, of a certain remote high loveliness. Nor was her face quite otherwise even now; only in gazing on it, you thought of some sad half unearthly history.

I noted two things more in the glancing of the fire-light. On her bosom, against a bed of quill work, bright hued and quaint in its devising, hung a little golden locket—such a token as a child might have of her mother and wear through grievous years. In the hair above her forehead was bedded the skull of some small animal, a squirrel or weasel it may be, with red jewels in the eye-sockets; and they burned at you as they shone.

She kept her place a half minute, challenging our eyes, then swayed lightly toward Broadnax, who tilted farther away with lively consternation.

Quoth she, "I sorrow that my sometime follower should so ill esteem me. I come—" then to Fleete—"but you will surely guess my errand."

The rest of us were stricken and stilled; but he sprang up on the instant, crying aloud, "For God's sake, how near are they? How near?" almost in a scream. But the door came to between them, as she stepped back with no reply. When we had it open again, she was gone.

By this, the wives were in a fine to do. Mistress Broadnax kept locking her great arms about her greater husband as often as he broke their hand-clasp. Marjorie, with more reason, went hurrying up the stairs to our darling, lest perchance the horror of a scalping knife should have been before her.

Presently we were together again on the outside, with what weapons we could lay hands on, and, at first, a very clatter of counsel. The Captain said nothing, but peered and hearkened on every side; being perhaps in some shame for his late perturbation—a mischance which never befell him so completely, to my knowledge, before or after—and hardly daring to trust his own judgment as yet. So the planning fell quickly to me; and I could think of no better than to move northward, surprising the savages at a little pass that we knew, where we might hope to withstand them until aid should come, the women in the meantime hurrying down to the warehouse, which was by far our strongest building, and rousing all our people by the way.

It wrung me to leave Marjorie and the babe thus unattended; but all were agreed that the danger must be from up the isle, and it was plain enough that we should need every man. No doubt we might withdraw, guarding them; but this meant mere devastation and starvation, with the enemy cheered by the sight of our burning homes. Broadnax, on whom the first ruin would fall, was urgent well nigh to tears that we should avert this dismal outcome of all his labor.

We found three men at his house already, one being the blacksmith, Dandy, who had brought this trouble on us, and now came with tale of a summons and vision most like our own, which had broken his tipsy dozing not far away. He carried a pistol in one hand, a round iron bar in t'other. His wits were clearing like a roiled well-spring with every moment.

As to that, each man had some forewarning ; but the other two said little, being men whose life went mainly under shadow. Sure of aim, and keen of every sense, they were altogether good to have at such a time. While we went on, another joined us, without monition but that of his own senses, for, being abroad in the forest after nightfall, he became aware of more night prowlers than the raccoons and opossums or the mincing deer which were his proper game. By his counsel, we made the better speed to our post.

Now at this point the thin inhabited southerly part of our island is narrowed to a mere ribbon or isthmus by a rounded piece of water coming in on the west from Chesapeake bay. Sometimes this is only a salt pond quite within the land. More often, as on that eve, a strait connects it with the greater water.

We did not wait long, each man keeping very quiet and watchful behind his tree. Suddenly, where a wall of vacant woods had been, there was a stir of savages under the moon, coming on plentifully, insomuch that I thought a half dozen villages could scarce have made so many.

For the most part, they sported a brave joyful togger of feathers and tufted weapons and sundry savage cognizances ; yet were a few stark naked as the day they were born. Only these last, as we came to know later, had each some uniform stain or dye from head to heel, being lime white, coal black, blood red, or whatever single tint the strange devils in their choice might take to render them even more horrid and ghastly.

Each of the stark painted ones also bore one weapon, a long knife, a spear, a great hatchet, or whatso it might be, only that and no other ; and they seemed to go more stealthily than all the rest.

Indeed I conceived a very special hatred of them from the outset, they were so monstrous in their deviltry. They seemed like to be that demon priesthood concerning which I had heard a many things from Captain Henry Fleete ; and he afterward confirmed me therein, if I remember rightly.

We knew not what hint they had of us, whether by sight, smell or hearing ; but for all our hush of breath and clinging in the shadow, they halted ere half way over and went down as one amid the long grasses ; wherein we could see a few of them wriggling backward, or the serpentine wake that they made.

No shot was fired at them, and the world lay still for a space, only where the frogs were going on wonderfully and increasingly about the inlet of the cove. I saw Fleete move that way uneasily ; then a ripple cutting across to our side, and a flash from the nearest of the hunters.

With the report, a bullet struck into the ruffled water, making a great scatter of sparkles ; and at once a bare brown form did leap yelling up into view, then went over backward as one dead.

He was done for, no doubt ; but in that rush a few others made the land—some said four and some five—and hurried southward behind us, only one of them being crippled or hampered at all by our rapid shooting.

We were in a world of chagrin to see that evasion,

remembering our people not yet secure, it might be, and doubting what these devils might do.

Yet to fall back was to let more wolves into the fold. So we chose rather to make a better barrier against their host by guarding this water passage. Wherefore Dandy and one other were put there; with Fleete on the shore of the cove half way between them and us, ready to help either party at need.

Presently there was a show of coming on again, and at long range I brought down, for a moment, a man of many feathers; although in truth not the very one at whom I had aimed.

Just after this and midmost of the hubbub, a flame broke out behind us where the house of Broadnax ought to be, and I heard him groan, believing no doubt that some dire evil had begun.

But ere the smoke was wafted where we were there came also the sound of firing and shouting, and these drove the invaders back toward us. Anon a bare natural went bounding northward by me like a deer, and indeed got clean off with slight hurt for all that I could do.

Another had worse fortune, issuing on Dandy and the hunter, who turned him toward Fleete; and Fleete toward Dandy again; so that in the end, though showing fight, he went down altogether, and whether the iron bar or the pistol had the honor of it I do not rightly know.

For that good deed I long bore with our rough Dandy, whatever might be his failing in appetite or temper.

A third of these invaders had been fired on by the miller nigh at hand, who indeed thought him to be slain ; but as nobody could be found, this was a palpable error.

At any rate, one or more of them still must be in our rear about the houses, lurking and menacing. But there was at present no good help for this. The women were under guard, which was a comfort to learn ; and the fire had been only of a small corn-house, then quite empty, help having come to the main building in good time, as also to us, with sudden ending of our besetment.

It seemed well to try our turn before moonset, when the savage crew if left alone would likely essay another onfall in darkness and desperation. So, having advantage of the wind, we set the yellow sedge alight here and there ; and the flame went rushing and crackling from us, for the growth had been tall and feathery, with utmost good will toward any blaze.

It caught the young cedars, too, that hardly held their pointed tops any higher ; and made a wild race beyond the open land, over the pine shatters of the forest and among the tangled undergrowth, here and there winding up the stem of some dead pine tree, flowering out mightily at the top and melting it quite away in that embrace. Indeed 'twas fiercer than we had hoped, making us sure that every enemy before it must have fled.

Perchance the prowlers in our rear were daunted, too ; for they attempted nothing more that night, unless it were to hide wonderfully well.

On the morrow, beginning with early dawn, we searched, as we believed, every covert within our boundaries, and had altogether given up these evil ones as quite gone away. Yet the fowler's sister, who dwelt with him far down by the point, as I have said, was vouchsafed, quickly afterward, a memorable visitation that showed otherwise.

For these good people putting faith in our thoroughness and venturing back to get a few things from their home, she bethought her of heating a mess of broth for their dinner, while in the perfect peace and brightness of the day her brother watched for wild-fowl beside the shore.

In this employ, she heard nought, only some chance or impulsion turned her; and there in the doorway was a tall, grim Tockwogh, mother-naked, red-eyed, black as sin and very much uglier.

Perhaps the savor of the food had drawn him; perhaps herself, unwitting, though she was no great beauty; perhaps only the devil of cruel malice.

However that may be, the fright of him was her salvation. Her ladle hand flew outward like that of a St. Vitus dancer; and he got the broth, aboiling, all over his countenance. Finding him blinded for the nonce, she sped by him to the open air, yelling and screeching.

Her brother came, as did more, but there was no Indian any longer; only a plenty of good broth wasted on the ground.

We saw no more of him that day for all our ranging and prying. Yet it could hardly have been her

fancy. And this very endeavor was to give us an aching proof how ghostlike or demonwise we were haunted.

For, after some hours at this work, lo ! one of our best young searchers was wanting ; the least and tenderest youth we had under arms, though passing keen and vigilant.

Before long we struck his trail and followed it to a clump of thicket near a cabin. Here we came first on a dead Indian, being another of the unclad creeping sort, as I think were all who swam across and went by us ; but white, white utterly. Coat upon coat, the paint lay over him in every part, making his grimness yet grimmer ; only with a blotch and rillet of red where blood had followed the knife.

Yet he had lived long enough to take a scalp which we knew well, and it lay beside him. Not far away we found the body of our friend, sorely gashed and mutilated, with torn clothing. But the struggle could not have lasted long, or some of us would have heard. Most likely it was over in a few passes, being with knives about a narrow corner.

You may fancy the pity and wailing and horror among our women folk, who knew and liked the lad very well. Indeed, that sight and all else appertaining cost the stoutest of us a many heart beats for long thereafter, whenever the gloaming overtook one afield and alone.

It was at that time we made our forts, which were of logs, being rough strong buildings, not easily fired ; palisaded also at an interval, after the fashion of the

villages of the Ozinies, and overlapping in the upper story, with loopholes both sidewise and for shooting down below.

One was at the pass of our night battle, and named Fort Crayford after some place which the Claibornes had in the old country long before. The other, which was but the warehouse done over, came to be well known as Kent Fort or Fort Kent in all this part of the world. The name was indeed spread over all our plantation.

Although long in disuse, there are yet divers parts and relics of these structures to be seen where they stood.

We could not all endure living together in that warehouse more than a few days. One household after another was drawn by the loadstone of home, and the many things and creatures that must needs be seen to ; each taking up the old life again with some disquiet of mind and eye, but great comfort in getting out of straightened quarters.

Even that disquiet was allayed wonderfully soon, without reason. Our human minds are not wholly unlike the grazing tenants of the pasture in coming easily to feel that whatever is will last.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ORDEAL OF MARJORIE.

THE spring was on us now quite fairly, with tempting lights and free soft airs, that brought the women often to us in the field or sent them abroad on light errands of their own.

The woods, the shore, claimed my Marjorie more often than any task. I could never guess what new fair things I should find at home of her foraging;—the flowers, varying in kind with almost every day; the baby fern-fronds coiling, tip inward, so delicately; the young song birds that she was ever trying to rear. But for all her fond skill they would die.

Now it befell, one day nigh to noon, that I saw Broadnax coming toward me out of the wood, a thing unlikely at that hour, unless he had somewhat to trouble him, being no shirker at any rate. Indeed, as he drew nearer, I could see an idea struggling into his face. There was concern in his voice also.

“Do I seem out of mind in any way?” cried he.

“Not otherwise than common,” quoth I, answering sedately.

He took it for reassurance, and that only; yet seemed ill at ease.

“Because,” he went on, “a strange thing befell me yester-noon. It was at the pool where the women

sometimes go for wild flowers. I had dipped my face, being heated, and rose again with the water yet in my eyes. Maybe it mazed them; but, Richard, I could swear I saw below, as in a broken mirror, a black face—black with paint—wild, strange and dreadful. It peered at me, eye to eye, from I know not where; since, when I turned about and made search, I could find neither man nor print of man, nor any other token. Likewise there was no vision of him in the water after that one broken view.”

I had no thought now to gibe him, nor for anything but the growing inner shadow of my dread.

“What like was he, did you say?”

“A stark natural Indian, all black as far as I could see, only there were red rings, like new-let blood, around his eyes.”

“The very horror that came upon the fowler woman and vanished away,” I made answer in a voice like a knell.

Broadnax gave me a stare as of one awakening. “Let every man look to his own!” cried he, and went striding homeward vehemently.

I lingered a moment or more, piecing together dangers and remedies in my wildered brain. It must have been a little later than I knew when my own feet followed his good example.

Now Marjorie, with a quick foresense of my coming, even untimely, would often show herself before the door or window, greeting me with her signal, though yet afar. But this evil day there was no fond wife awaiting, and when I saw it, I groaned aloud as I ran on.

Coming nearer, I called her name frantically, "O, Marjorie,—Marjorie!" as best I could in the lack of breath, but with no real hope of answer.

As I leaped the sill, our babe awakened with a manful outcry. It struck on my ear and soul as a wail for a lost mother. In great access of pity I snatched him to my arms and hurried out, crying, "You will I save at any rate, my poor dear!" for I had some thought of bearing him to a guarding and nourishing neighbor.

But on my way our clock had caught my eye, with the small hand lingering yet near the sign for noon; and at once the tale and awful vision of Broadnax were back with me—they and Marjorie and the very hour! That minute might she not need me?

I swayed back on the instant, pendulum-wise, the babe in my arms, and kissed and laid him down, taking the gun in his stead. The pouch and horn I slipped about me as I ran toward the pool.

A dainty spot it was and kindly known to us all, none better; but void now—only for a terror so keen at heart that it seemed real and living, as though a demon were by me.

I called aloud in a voice which was not my own, verily in a kind of yell or scream; but there came no reply. I peered wildly without avail into the shallow water and up through the overshadowing boughs. I ran hurriedly hither and thither among the trees. I fired my gun in the air by way of summons. It was loaded and fired again; and so yet once more, then paused all at once, and leaned quavering against a

broken pine, benumbed and aghast at my great helplessness.

Presently, awaiting aid, I betook myself with little hope, to peruse the ground more narrowly. Ah! she had been there, Marjorie had been there,—witness the herb stems yet exuding their beads of dew, the flowerets fallen from her hand, the footprints in the soft margin.

These last were in one place only and but two or three in all, a straight line of them, ending at a great beech tree between land and water.

Now the slant of its whitey-gray bole, and the uplift and twisting of the roots, and the moss cushioning, were all such that it offered a high and tempting seat, most like a sylvan throne, with delicate resting places for the feet below.

On study, I found one of these ground and scored, as might be with the strain of violent clinging. A shred of cloth was on a bit of a snag higher up, being quite obviously caught and pulled away.

Below, half across the pool, I could see the bottom well nigh as plainly as the dry ground on the other side. There was no mark. Neither she nor any other had forded it; nor yet made any sort of commotion therein.

I was too sorely wrought upon to know any deepening of horror. But in after days the fantasy born of that moment often awoke again—even as now, creeping over me with the creeping of the pen along the line, as if with a slight and a chill. Had the wings of darkness come for her—there amid the spring flowers and in the blaze of noon?

Natheless from tree to tree I went, mindful that there are evil ones yet in the flesh who may climb and cling and swoop downward upon their prey. Hastily I swarmed up to the lower boughs, peering into every squirrel nest and vine-tangle, with a brisk rummage of the leaves ; yet found no sign at all of any sinister presence. The limbs were quite unscored.

Moreover the gaps 'tween bough and bough were so many and great that I deemed this undertaking beyond mortal compass.

I sat me down again grim and gaunt of heart, my brain weaving as in a burning web, so that I hardly knew what was real about me.

Thereupon a strange thing befell. There came to my ear, thus waiting, an echo, as it were, out of memory and dreamland ; being a human whistle, faint and fine and low, in several bars of a tune that I knew right well.

I raised myself and hearkened, wondering if this were mere illusion, born of my great trouble. Yet even while I pondered, it came again. "Marjorie,—O Marjorie !" I breathed out in little more than a whisper, for I felt awed in my spirit, as by a message from another world. My eyes went all about me quickly.

But my voice had power only to make silence of the sound. Wherefore I held my breath, keenly awaiting.

Some few women perversely will try to whistle, with leakage of wind, but only a faint ghost of music. Even so did poor Marjorie when with me and our neigh-

bors of the isle, or among her girl comrades earlier, or I doubt not by herself in any placid and well contented hour. There was something quaint and laughter moving in her kind of failure and in the one tune she clung to, putting it quite beyond mistake. Now that tune, that music, that personal quality, had just been borne to my ears.

Soon it woke again, more lingeringly, as though she were diverting herself at ease with blithe heart amid that peace and beauty. Yet had I ransacked every nook of all the grove, and well I knew that Marjorie in the living body was not there.

Worse came. The thin ripple of music was broken suddenly—torn across by a piteous gasping cry, her voice, yet not hers as I had ever known it—in a very ecstasy and horror of fright as at some hideous seizure.

Thereat I snatched my gun and fired madly, more by impulsion than will, taking a rustling overhead for my target; then fell back and knew nothing.

When I came to, the grove was filling with our people; Broadnax for one, as also Captain Fleete, who held up before me a little songster whom my shot had torn. It is one which hath ever a rare, and, as I think, dreadful gift of mimicry; whence the natural inhabitants do call it in their several tongues a mocking bird; and we also. For the sake of that hour, I hate all the kind, even when they make their own proper melody, which is very wild, varied and exulting.

I hated the dead bird then; yet would have willed

it alive again, in the hope of further revealing ; albeit, if you consider, 'twas a more shocking witness than any spectre. Her cry in utmost extremity echoing to me with every torment of imagining out of the throat of a careless bird.

Truly the mocker might have brought its token from afar ; yet no sooner had they heard me than all were at search again in a frenzy. We paused ; and there was naught to show. Turning from eye to eye for any hope, I discerned only a ghastliness of soul that spread and grew.

One struggled with his shoulders, as though ridden by a nightmare. Quoth another, not for my ear, —“*What hath taken her ?*”

Then, in good time, appeared a notable reinforcement. Far away over the field behind us rang out a hunting call, answered by a nearer sound between a yelp and a bay. In a whiff, a squat form ran swiftly among us with nose to ground, pausing by that cushioned throne of Marjorie beside the water. I knew him for the beagle hound of Ratcliffe Warren, bought in Accomac from one who had it over sea for running cottontail hares and grey foxes, a shrewd pot-bellied little beast, lop-eared and bandy-legged, yet marvellous good and quick at any sort of trailing. I hailed him as a four-footed angel of blessedness, tail and all.

But lo ! he, too, was at fault, and went sniffing desolately about the roots and trunk, or trying this way and that along the shore in most apparent perplexity. When I spoke to him, he turned, whimpering eagerly,

and looking up; yet as one seeking a hint, however willing. I held the scrap of Marjorie's clothing before his nose, and his nostrils quivered with recognition; yet as to her going he seemed no whit the wiser.

"A trail no hound can follow!" began Broadnax gaspingly; but Fleete cut in with, "Let us try farther afield. Come! Come!"

I knew his aim, which was to break the palsy of the place; and indeed would not linger there even now for any fortune, since in all my life there was never one thing beside so utterly unmanned me; but stumbled through to meet the dog beyond the grove, not so much with hope as the sense of another random endeavor.

As I issued, there was a burst of divers voices, and over all that of a wiser than I. Hitherto, on this new quest, our hound had been quartering dutifully, with alternate excursions into the open land or underwood, but with no look of special incitement or understanding. Yet, behold, of a sudden, almost at our feet, he broke into joyful outcry, and went off in a straight line with fury.

Hastening after, we could at first perceive no trace, but soon came thereon farther afield and plainer than printing, the naked footprints being heavily boꝛne in as by one carrying weight.

Dreadful though this might be, you cannot tell how it lightened and spurred me. No enchanter, no foul spirit of the wilderness, no horrid fright unnamable, had done this thing; but a mere natural human vil-

lain, who ran afoot even as we—howsoever astute in hiding his way, so that scarce even a hound could follow! A feasible object of vengeance! How I lifted up my feet and sped after!

Now where the dog gave tongue lay a bit of thick sward, whereon the waylayer must have dropped from an overhanging bough, with his burden, having before come a long way through the upper air, as we are told of the great apes in foreign parts, by many a flying swing from bough to bough and many a leap that was a miracle. For indeed every part of this damnable feat seemed more unbelievable than all the rest when you considered it alone.

At the thought of that hideous human yet unhuman thing, swooping down through the leaves on my darling's nest—that accursed one, apelike for agility, fiendlike for malignancy and patient grim design—such a passion of black longing awoke within as went nigh to strangle me.

His trail made outright for the nearest cover on the northward, a ragged selvage of the great woodland beyond. Here for a time, amid the black traces of our fire, we lost Mattapeake, as our nimble four-footed guide was named; so that I began to think we should have done well to keep him near. But presently he gave tongue again, running hither and thither distractedly; whereby we guessed our quarry must have put new arts hurriedly in play; as indeed proved very true.

However at the last, in following hotfoot, we were led to a nook of water where a canoe had been deftly

hidden. It was gone now, and she no doubt in it, with this her captivator.

There we found as well some undoubted signs of a desperate essay that she had made to elude him, wrenching free and running for it, most likely while he was busy a moment about the little craft. A brief race—for the claws were on her again. Yet neither here nor elsewhere was there any hint of grievous harm ; wherein I found some comfort.

We turned then to Fort Crayford, if by chance our friends there should have discerned aught that could aid ; likewise to have them send for my waif of a babe that he might be cared for until his mother should be recovered to Christian life again.

This was done. For news, we had the upward passing of a canoe along the shore beyond gunshot, maybe half an hour agone, with only one occupant visible.

Doubtless the cunning paddler had hugged the land at the outset to be hidden ; but when needs must, in passing the fort, he had gone off boldly, putting such space between that he was in no real danger, his captive lying bound at full length below the water-line, as indeed she did until the end, quite out of view. I judged he would make shore again on the isle, but far above ; and there was nought better than to hurry on and forestall him.

They had a sorry nag at this fort, a poor thing enough, yet in some fashion he could go swiftly. I saddled him without demur, and went racing up the level land, with the little bandy legs of that good dog Mat ever twinkling beside me.

I know not how long it was, nor how many miles we traversed, meeting no one, white or red, by the way; but at last I had a far glimpse of my woman-stealer well ahead, paddling along near the shore and very black in the sunlight.

Not to be seen, I turned short inland; then slipped to earth and tethered my horse, for I dreaded the sound of hoofbeats. After which I kept on with all speed and prudence, inclining ever back toward the bay.

He had not won quite so far when I came out suddenly in an open cluster of oak trees on a knoll above a haven; quite to my discomfiture, for he might well have seen me, only his vision was elsewhere.

With many searchings and pursuings, I had well nigh worn out the brief spring day. Already the low light was warming into richness the new leaflets about me, and burnishing wonderfully the reach of quiet crinkling water before my eyes. Thereon the boatman paused as in a picture, with one quivering blade uptilt in air; a glossy demon form that sorely tempted my aim.

But I had covenanted with myself to let him draw near until he should take fright of me, then cut him down with a bullet and spring in to save her. Beyond question, it was a jeopardy, the canoe being such a feather of a thing; but any outcome would be better than that he should bear her quite away.

However, he saw me not, coming right on with a slow unceasing drift like one in a trance or dream; nor could I wonder at it when I followed his gaze



“Out of the core of that sunset.”—Page 219.

with my own. For out of the core of that sunset, and down its broad path of glory, came, as driven by some power unseen, another feather-craft, birchen-silvery in its filminess, daintily delicate in fashioning. Within—or my eyes were mazed into error—sat and swayed the fitting lady of the wild who had warned us.

Coming nearer, she rose upright, with no pains at all in her balancing, but rather as a water-lily might waver securely amid the ripples. The necromancy of her attire, the majesty of her mien grew a power to still one's heartbeat in that divine supremacy of light.

I deemed she knew not of me, her gaze being toward that black-avised, red-eyed minister of evil, to whom she lifted her right hand with certain motionings, uttering sounds also which I took for words of a tongue unknown. They were sweet notes of the human voice, yet dominant withal.

He obeyed her humbly and without demur. Or ever her fleck of bark had come wholly to rest, his own went arrow-like toward the shore on the other side of a hollow or embayment that was next above me. In the meantime, I also hurried thither to intercept him.

But 'twas of no avail, for I found more of marsh and underwood to impede me than anyone would guess, or any fury could penetrate quickly. He had full advertisement of my unwillingly uproarious coming.

So when at last I broke out of covert on the landing place behold he had come and gone, leaving no

more record than any other black dream that is past.

I sought not after him ; for there, leaning against a tree, faint and tremulous and fearful-eyed, I found my Marjorie. Unbound she was, and thank God ! without any harm at all, beyond a lingering terror. There was the ecstasy of a saved soul in her welcoming.

Away out on the bosom of the great bay, our living salvation urged her course into the dying glory of the sun, while fire opals leaped outward from her paddle and showered around her.

CHAPTER XV.

RATCLIFFE WARREN SAILS OUT OF LIFE.

IT was no long time before we had Claiborne with us again, eager in vengeance; for when the bruit of that savage onfall got to him, he came like an echo. Nor would he halt for more than disburdening of needful stores, but kept on in his armed sloop, taking all men who would go; so that there was a memorable visitation of divers Indian villages.

Yet without bloodshedding; for Mattapeakes, Ozinies, Tockwoghs and all went speeding before him out of gun range, leaving their habitations to the fire, and their store of corn to replenish our hollow garner. So were both our need and our danger well at an end.

Yet in their escape it may be the Secretary had felt some bafflement, for he showed a rankling temper; most of all toward Captain Fleete, when he knew of the latter's part in the brewing of that trouble. The kindness of the man moved our Secretary far less, for he had not felt it in stomach and palate as did we.

I mind well their meeting, that almost had not been, since Fleete was now oftener away than with us, and would not have come at all, but for some disquiet of conscience and a warm good will.

It was in the great selling room of the warehouse fort, where sundry of us were idling, who might have

found better employ; and one, instigated by the devil, must needs have a wonder tale from our doughty wanderer; whereto, though not eager, neither was he loth. So was he spinning from that fertile inward of his brain, I know not what, only it had to do with a magical Persian liquor,—and then Claiborne strode in.

It may be that neither had known until this moment of the other's presence at Kent Fort, they having made sail but lately from opposite quarters and cast anchor with the tongue of the island between.

That apparition caught up the Captain in his flow of speech; but in a moment he had begun to go on again very sturdily, when our tall patron struck in with a venomous and sweeping courtesy.

"You are too modest, my good sir. The magic of your own nectar can call devils with the best,—aye, and create them! My sword to a turkey feather for that!"

"The feather had been as useful in our trouble," answered the Captain quietly.

"*Our* trouble!" echoed Claiborne, "O, lavish man! Why cede any part of the title to what is all your own? O potent concocter and inciter!—A grievous outcome! I trust the profit contents you."

Fleete was stirred. "There are who can never make any, the wit being to seek."

"No, truly," retorted Claiborne, "they being beset by keen neighbors, who stand not for a little heathen-maddening and devastation."

Warren arose, expostulant; but the Secretary went on bitterly.

"I say," quoth he, "that these poison-mongering

Christian heathen are the worst heathen of all, and well worthy to be a-swinging."

Fleete arose. "You being thus madly minded," he said, "it were best that I betake myself to other company."

"Aye! Captain," sneered our patron, commanding himself again, "Aye, truly! Such as you, sir, will ever be more welcome among Lord Baltimore's renegades, now coming to vex our unhappy isle, which you have brought so near to ruin. You see that I know a thing or two."

Fleete wheeled and fired back, "Know what you will; I am no man's thrall. I repair and consort as pleases me; nor ever went less wisely than when I went near you."

"Be wiser then," cried Claiborne in a fury. "Mind you there are stout boughs yet."

The words of menace went out into the darkness after their target.

All save our leader were in disquiet over that rupture, and what it must portend. He sat down with a smile, but that glint yet in his eye.

"Let be," quoth he; "better a foe declared, than a half friend who stings you." Bold words, of general wisdom; but they did not convince us.

I held back a little, uncertainly; which is no great matter of pride; then made myself go out after our old comrade in his hour of ill treatment. As I might have known, Ratcliffe was before me and speaking warmly. But Fleete heard him out, with neither "yea" nor "nay;" and presently began to remember aloud some

cavern of gems in the Golden Mountains, which put Warren in high disgust, for all their glittering. I could not choose but smile, withholding my dissuasion as mere waste of effort.

By early morn, Captain Fleete's anchor was up, his canvas bellying out before the wind. I looked after it sadly, deeming that for long we should find him a harmful enemy.

The opportunity may be judged by Claiborne's expounding—as I went in again—from the very abundance of his heart.

“He hath an *Ark* and a *Dove* to him, this lordly Noah of a Calvert, who would fain bring on our deluge. With white wings out, they lie under the Point of Comfort, bearing a Jesuit or two, with other freight, and well nigh ready to pass up the bay. Beyond peradventure, they have a royal charter conveying much wilderness on every side.”

“A royal charter!” Warren echoed after him, hardly over breath.

“It is what we have known,” I said; for indeed we had expected as much, reluctantly.

“But mark you,” said Claiborne, “it gives only the lands uncultivate. Yet I know for certain our upstart is minded to include us also.”

“Very kind of him,” laughed Warren. “Let us be thankful,—and send the *Ark* and the *Dove* to Mount Ararat.”

“Blithe were I,” answered the Secretary. “We will so endeavor. And I have yet some wild friends in the forest.”

At that, we cried out, with visions of the recent in-road ; and he paused in his speech.

“What, gentlemen? Think you I am for scalp raising? Nay, not so. But I hold it kinder to fright a bird with a scarecrow than to give him cold lead.”

“I am for neither,” quoth I. “It may be they will not prove so hard but we can come to living terms.”

It was waste wisdom ; Claiborne, as ever after, being dogged and sour and stiff-necked on that issue, even unto all sorts of scorning.

“My right is my right,” said he. “I’ll not yield it to Lord Proprietary, nor King, nor Devil. Nor yet shall I be too nice in my dealing ; but render them again their own Jesuitry in the way of delusion and discouragement. So marry, good night t’ye all.”

Now I had never thought so ill of him as these words might convey. Yet was he making fight for his own, with good need that every true man should stand by him. I said in my heart that I would be one of these until the end, whether or no his ways and means were all to my liking.

This converse befell on that same black eve which saw the parting of those who had thus far held together ; and for a time there was little to tell, only surmising and resolving.

Claiborne had left us, to do even as he had said, being friendly and deferential of mien to those of the other side while scoffing inwardly. It was a harrowing picture that he insinuated before them and vouched for—soil unwilling, solitude appalling, famine immi-

ment, endless bedevilment by the frantic painted savages! No doubt our late distraction lent many a true shaft unto these arrow-flights of fancy. Yet such ills were not at all beyond avoiding or curing, as he well knew.

Howbeit, I would ever more readily brand the robber than the honest man, for once untrue, whose cunning lures or frights him away.

We were told that his art and insistency did well nigh turn them home again. But Calvert, having much at stake, held on despite the murmurers, until the coming of Henry Fleete with his happier pigments.

Now was every shadow, by his explaining, become a thing of brightness. The soil, which had been called niggard, scarce could be persuaded to withhold its abundance. The climate was lovelier than in those fortunate isles where men do live on forever. Such music and beauty were abroad in all the land that no man need ever be lonely. The poor ill-reported Indians were the most excellent unspoiled children of nature. No doubt there were a few outlaws with whom Claiborne had prevailed, but they were not worth, all told, one moment's trepidation. As to furs, and gold and precious stones, there is no guessing how many he invented for them,—but a little beyond reach.

It may be that Calvert had no more faith in this tale than in the other, for all the Captain's convincing air and even flow of words. Yet no doubt it was much more to his liking.

They took it for their gospel and sailed on with

good heart ; leaving to this ally the choice where they should dwell. He pitched upon the place then called Yoacomico, but ever afterward St. Mary's.

Henry Fleete had much honor of them, and likewise an ample manor or barony by the river Potowmac, with vastly more beside ; which we who had known and liked him of old could have no heart to grudge. But it touched us more nearly that he let pass no opening to wreak evil on his old friend, our patron and leader.

Now a mild man turned sour, and a kind man grown hateful, are what the Lord must ever abhor. And this is to speak after the manner of King Solomon.

Full soon we had notice of Lord Baltimore that all our trading was in flat derogation of his sole right and sovereignty, making our goods and chattels liable as prize to St. Mary's.

For maintaining these stout words, two pinnaces were sent forth against us with good armament, being the *St. Helen* and the *St. Margaret*. One Cornwallis had the command. We could not love them for all their holy names.

Abstinence from traffic was plainly not to be thought on ; else why were we here at all ? Moreover, we had still the King's license, unannulled.

An ally came to us in this quarrel, hastening what must have been in any case. This was John Harmon, who, finding a rival in such favor among the saints, and himself nearly under ban, was fain to seek protection and countenance of Claiborne. These

were given willingly ; so that Harmon's little craft, which he called oddly *The Long Tail*, became to all intents our own.

He did us many good turns, bringing cates and dainties, no less than tidings ; and all was going excellent well, when one day, behold, there came word to us that the two holy fighters had descended on this poor *Long Tail* of ours, with the natural outcome of yelling and snapping.

Soon our honest John was back in Kent Isle, wrathful and mournful to a degree, which is no wonder. Alas ! the prize by that time lay well ashore under the lee of St. Mary's.

Thereon we held a council of all our men, not barring even the parson ; and agreed every one that the deed was flat piracy. Nevertheless there were two or three of my mind, counseling patience and due process of law, lest a worse thing befall the weaker side. But we did not prevail.

Indeed the enemy had set a parlous and tempting example. The trading boats and supply barges of St. Mary's were everywhere abroad. If they could confiscate, why could not we ? Thus friend Harmon would more than come to his own again, with fair profit for those who righted him.

We also had two pinnaces, which we named, not after any saint, but in appalling and unholy fashion, as the *Cockatrice* and *Basilisk*. A foolish vaunt ; but men of small experience will do these fond things when they are stirred, not considering how little any mere words can aid them.

The first was given to Warren for that cruise ; the other to me. Unhappily, mine had been backward in preparing, and Ratcliffe would not wait, being altogether in a fever. One eve he was with us, yet by the next sunrise far away on the sky-line, fading out of view—to the wrath of our leader, whose orders were exceeded thereby.

Now whether Warren meant to await me at some convenient place, and failed by chance only, or whether it was his design to go roving of his own hand among the prey ; or whether again he had the madcap fancy of taking the two warlike saints by surprise, and so wreaking retribution—I cannot say. For I was not with him—the more pity !—and they who came alive out of that adventure had many tales to tell, not agreeing one with another.

By my conjecture, he had no settled intent, leaving all to the mood and inspiration of the day. Most like, a tempting prize would have drawn him anywhere ; or at sight of me his prow had whirled about forthwith, all else forgotten in the meeting. Even the sequel, it would seem, came on him with the whiff of the moment.

One lingers—it were well had he also lingered. Yet not the deep eyes of Alice Claiborne held him even a little, for on the morrow of his departure she was no wiser than we. Yet she brought back a serene and cheery face from the shore, and rarely thereafter stood gazing. But there was that in it all which made my bright wife cuddle to me and take on the shadow of disquiet unwontedly.

Our time came, and I was in haste for it, my friend being alone in his danger. So, driving before the wind, I lost sight of my boy and the mother who held him aloft on the shore now and again until the very last.

Words of William Claiborne haunted my ear, echoing the same dread. "Run down that rash fellow first of all and take him in tow," he had said, without undue stress of anxiety; but I knew.

Yet where to find Warren? From the beginning, it was all haphazard. Here we dipped ashore for tidings; there we sped at random over the sunny water. Our first hint of him came with glamor of forewarning.

He had touched, as the Nanticokes of that shore related, on a long barren point where the pine trees run out in single file into the bay above a crescent curve of still water.

Over that smoothness, between dusk and dawn, there went out to him a canoe and therein a sorceress figure, undoubtedly our lady of warning. Some of the wild folk were so near they heard what passed between them.

"I knew you would come," says she. "There is a loadstone which no man may resist, nor yet slip by."

"Then to what end do you tell me?" quoth Warren.

"For none but the burden of speech laid on me. What is written, is written. But you will do no service; you will get no thanks; you will earn scant fame. The side you fight for will be beaten—and branded, as all beaten folk are!"

"Is there aught more?" says he, keeping a careless face.

"No," says she, "save that these are waste words all. It is and will be even as I have said. And wherefore I should dash wings and drive bill against it is beyond all telling. The hand is reached out that will hale you in whether or no—the hand of Death!"

He shivered a bit, and would fain discourse of something gentler and more kind. But she drew away, and he lost the morning searching for her without avail.

I do not give this converse word for word as, in their scant English, the naturals told me; but piecing together and filling out these fragments for coherency as best I may. Yet had they in themselves a quite uncanny air which I am not skilled to reproduce.

Here, at least, we were on his trail. I followed after in an aching and boding gloom; yet with some dash of vexation too, being unwise enough to sorrow that the wrong vision, as he neared the end, should be with him.

Little may it matter to the great universe that, one slight man hurrying rashly out of it, this woman or the other—or none—should go fleeting in ideal on before. Yet after all, the world of a mite is his world; and, being in the soul or mind of him, perchance as large as any.

By marshy cape we went, by neck of land, by deep inlet and wooded isle—through a whole bewildering archipelago indeed toward the last—until one morn, the water mist being all about us, we heard the sound

of firing far away. We took it for our guide, hastening with eager heart before the rising wind.

Soon there was an end of all noises, even of those faint cries that had been so perturbing. When the air cleared, we found nought at first only one fur cap, well riddled with holes and floating.

Later we espied two sails, heading across the bay. One who should know discerned them for the *St. Helen* and *St. Margaret*. We could not have overhauled them if we would—a mad feat, surely, seeing the odds against us, and quite without need, the *Cockatrice* being elsewhere,—to our great comfort!

Looking for her, we put about and fetched a course landward, finding ourselves in an estuary like a funnel, whereby grew those feathery trees that I had come to know as cypresses. Down through them a river drew slowly, with a bronze hue as though they had stained it, minding me, with reason, of the great Kuskarowak marsh far above. Ever after, I knew that sombre coloring well.

For a league thrice told, we followed it against the flow, winding about in sun and shadow; until we came where a narrow inlet gave access to a rounded cove, with a crescent of pebbles bright against the cypress wall at the upper end. 'Tis a known place now, for later cause, whereon I need not dwell—a stately home and a lonesome—and not the inland bay only, but the mansion and estate as well, bear evermore the name of Cypress, or—when we use a by-name unthoughtfully—Paramour's Beach.

There lay to our consort, with splinter-marks of

battle on her. Hard by, under a draping bough, men were gathered in divers postures, living and dead. One had his head and shoulders a little way propped above the sand. Others tended him with solicitude, but he seemed near his passing. From the first moment, I knew him for my poor friend, Ratcliffe Warren.

His crew came all about me at the shore, but I had no eyes nor ears for them.

He strove to lift himself a little as I bent over him. "I am right glad to see you, Dick," quoth he.

I did not answer at once, for I could not; nor yet knew what to say. Then he smiled; and it stirred and shook me. "Never mind," says he feebly; "it fetches every man Jack of us in his time, soon or late. All's for the best, Dick—and you've heard that, too, before. Only—three good men lie dead, yonder; and another, not so good, is on the way."

Here Dandy, who was nursing his own arm near us, broke out with abundant imprecation, averring that there was one villain the less anyway, for he had good aim on him and saw him fall.

"Can not we get you back again—to—Alice?" I said when the noise had died away; but took shame to myself in a moment, the words were so idle and troubling!

He moved his head feebly from side to side. "She will be sorry, I know that," said he. "She is a good woman—of the best. Richard—"

The change in his tone hinted the birth of a new thought. His weak eyes were lighting.

"What?" said I.

"Dick," says he again, "I have seen *her*.—You know—"

"O, yes, I know."

"Be not so solemn and sour," he pleaded. "She gave me good counsel. Fair warning is ever best help and wisdom—for the wise. Then she was gone, and I could not find her. What think you, is she altogether of the night or of the day? Angel—or human—or a mere wandering voice and phantom?"

"O, Ratcliffe, my friend!" I cried, nigh to weeping. "Put this wild thing from you. End not your life in an unholy dream, when one so noble will soon be a widow unwedded. Mistress Alice Claiborne—'tis to her your thought should go."

"I dare say you are very right, Dick," he made answer, looking wistful and straitened. However, he dutifully asked me a question or two concerning her brother, and all on Kent Island.

But more willingly his mind went back to old boy-sports and adventures, and the manifold precious trifles of that life beyond the sea long long ago, until I was most utterly thrilled and broken.

After that he seemed to wander, mixing Alice Claiborne and the woman of mystery in shifting haze, even as though love uncertain had somehow made them one.

Then, of a sudden, he died; and so lay there, face upward, with the leaf-shadows of the cypress tree flitting hither and thither over him.

Soon we bore the dead to the *Basilisk*, and set sail for home, leaving the *Cockatrice* behind, for quite too much lead had gone through her planking. But the ill fortune would not stay with her.

This was the woful outcome of the first battle between those of our race in this new world. I grieve to say it hath not been the last, young though our living here and scant our number.

Indeed we were not done with trouble even for that voyage. Going northward, very hot and black of soul, we came of a sudden square upon the two saints militant, in the rounding of a little islet, off the harbor of Great Wicomico.

Both sides began firing while yet not very near, and I looked that there should be hot work at close quarters. But it did not fall out so. For whether our grim freight daunted them, or there was something too savage and desperate for their withstanding in the front we showed—anyway at the last they opened out for us and we went by.

In passing, I saw one man among them who sate leaningly ; and died not long afterward. This was laid to my charge, and perhaps not unjustly, for I had the command. Also it may even have been my bullet which did the work. But I rather suppose him the target of Dandy in the former fight, concerning whom our smith had so boasted.

What with favoring temperature and great speed, our dead men made the voyage with this doleful prosperity that they might still be bowed over and looked on by those at home. We had feared otherwise as

we fled. Withal, 'twas a keen and horrid race against the last defilement of humanity. And I no more than a very young and too thoughtless man; with the body and face of my best friend—but no soul in them—never one moment hid from me!

CHAPTER XVI.

AWAITING THE STORM.

WE drew near home in the dusk, when we could see little save a light here or there. We came to shore easily, taking my deep inlet, and thereafter going quietly afoot, with steps that halted oftener than they hastened on.

Not all our slain could easily be borne at once, wherefore the body of Warren and one other were left a little while alone in the pinnace beside the shore. Mayhap some unwillingness to disturb him went to that choosing ; for indeed he was very quietly at rest, under the stars.

I made on before the bearers, to warn Marjorie of their coming and take counsel of her deftness how to summon the bereaved.

But she was before me, leaping out from ambush.

“O you stealthy fellow, you sly Dick !” she cried, kissing me womanfully.

I could but groan.

She drew back, and I heard her catch breath. “Are you hurt ?” she asked me hoarsely, just over a whisper.

“No, dear—no, Marjorie !”

That was all, yet the truth began to make its way. She stood a moment, bewildered, then cried, as half in reproach.

"O, Richard—and I thought you were coming to surprise me!"

"A sad surprise, Marjorie!" I answered mightily gravely. "Poor Warren is gone!"

"Oh! Oh!" she cried again, in a tremulous murmur; then, with a change—"My darling, my darling, I am so glad it is not you!"

Yet was she weeping. Presently, she spoke again softly. "What *will* she do? What *will* she do?"

We talked the matter over and it may be that our voices went farther than we thought. For there came ghostlike a form over the meadows; and when we turned again to the waterside, there were twain in that pinnacle. Her head was bowed on his shoulder, her hair wafted across his face. Her swoon was at one, for the hour, with the longer repose of death.

We bore them to the house, and one ran to bring her brother also. He came, with a lip that moved in silent cursing; far more hate than grief in his eyes. In this wrath he had no lack of company, even Mistress Alice, ever kindest of the kind, going well nigh beyond him therein. Her desolation we well knew, yet have I never been able to think of William Claiborne as sharing to the full my extreme of sorrow. But there was never anything made him so bitter as that, nor cost the Calverts and their people so dear.

I speak of the stricken lady as we found her afterward; that night she was between dying and living. She sat by the hour staring down on her unburied lover, one hand in Ratcliffe's hair, the other held by Marjorie, who saw no way else for any comforting.

So at least they were when by chance I had sight of them, we men being for the most part very willingly withdrawn.

"Now," thought I, "see life and death, and their mockery! I must give her his love—he said so. Even though I should not, she will live and die holding him verily her own. *Her* hero—whose soul went flitting on wayward wings to the very last!"

Surely this meditation was unworthy and out of time, if not all untrue. We are as we are; and God made us. More than once, a sense of grotesqueness in our unreasonable lot on earth has knocked at my door in some such way, willing or no.

Next morn we had the burial, under a bright sky. There were holy words—for our uplifting, else would our rector never have spoken them. But the desolate pain, the deepening dread and shadow, these abode with us.

In sheer grimness, many would have gone straight-way against St. Mary's; and this time I held with them, seeing wisdom in a stroke ere the odds grew any worse. But it seemed that the curse of indirectness fell on William Claiborne; and the curse of over-scheming.

"Men," quoth he, "should be more considerate than bulldogs, if they would fight to win." From this philosophy—so lately justified—it resulted that he spent hurriedly a little time in Jamestown and elsewhere stirring up a foray from Virginia; then a little more among the Susquehannocks, whereby they shortly went out by land and by water, howling the

deeds of their forefathers. The lawless folk who hung about the bay felt his inciting too, and were never so plentiful nor gave such trouble. In a word, wherever venom could spread or armament awaken vengefully, there was he. I doubt if another man ever did stir up so much bad blood in so short a stirring.

Yet, what profit? The more hate, the worse for the weaker side. Stings and lashings would not help us. But who knows what a swoop at the heart might have done?

The King heard the bruit of this turbulence in a way to harm us. At Jamestown, there was so great urgency of the enemy that the Governor, when again the Secretary appeared among them, could no more than smuggle him over sea; whereat, among the Calverts, there was angry mournfulness of howling.

In London, as I have been told, he had soon a whole complexity of intrigues agoing; so that nothing like it for vehement and varied brilliancy was ever seen. Only I doubt he may have been too strenuous and insistent, as before too subtle; an arrogant impatience now and again breaking through his weaving, to beggar his industry. That was the man, indomitable yet self-tripping; resourceful yet ever in a tangle; not failing quite beyond hope, yet never winning for long; and so fated by his inborn composition even unto the end.

The world would none of him just then. His Majesty, having promised both sides aforetime, could not perfectly keep faith, and found his ease in letting the matter be. My Lord Chancellor, on petition, as

in duty bound, heard a world of argument, and took it into his conscience ; which is the very slowest working machinery known to man. Even Cloberry turned openly against his partner.

By grace of the devil and our multiplying adversaries, George Evelyn was now exalted over us, bearing rule very self-sufficiently. In our simple way of living, there did not seem any harm for him to do ; yet he found enough, so that we had certainly sent him into exile or eclipse but for dread of further uproar where was abundance already.

Yet some disquiet would show, beyond concealing ; and no doubt the tales of us that he sent home were quite a wonder to hear or see. In reply came writs and summonses and what not, whereto he would fain persuade our submission ; but at that a clamor went up, making him wish himself away.

Instead thereof, he dispatched entreaties unto St. Mary's, admitting the jurisdiction and authority of the Proprietary, which hitherto he had denied, and calling for aid. In response, there landed five men among us one day, confident in his countenance, and calling themselves officers of the law.

Now had I half begun to forget our wars and threatenings, even as men put by other great unwelcome facts of nature. We can not go ever in a shaking palsy by reason of the plagues abroad in the world, or the storms that will shortly visit us, or even for Death our dreadful ambuscader, more certain than them all.

Wherefore, one February morn which was mild

enough for summer, I had out my old mare and the plow, turning the soft earth between the stumps, partly to kill out the rootlets and for airing and sod-rotting against the spring. It was a new bit which I had designed to bring into corn after our custom at the outset, but more like to throw up a straggle of wild shoots wherever the network of root-fibres had not been duly cut away.

I knew them well enough—indomitable multitudinous competitors of man!—the sassafras velvety and fragrant, the persimmon sprouting desperately in lines and coronals, the thorny locust, the hickory, the sumac, and many more which I was in no kind mood to tolerate.

The plow-point stuck fast and stuck again ; so that, but for my laziness, I should have gone back and fetched some hand-tool and freed it. A heavier labor thereby fell to me at the plow-tail, very rightly. When I found and felt this, I profaned not my Maker's name, as do many better men on occasion ; yet needs must long for three horses and a weightier plow, also that the underground workings of Providence were less tangled and contrary. Then, since wishing would not bring these things to pass, I set myself to be everything that was lacking, all at once.

Thereupon we caught suddenly in a white oak radical of the toughest, and wrangled with it, heaving, dragging and twisting wrathfully ; then on again with a mighty rush and strain, as minded that something should certainly give way. But it was not the oak root. Forward pitched the mare for some paces, with wreck-

age appended unto her ; and over went I headlong. Then I righted myself in the furrow and knew what a fool I had been ; which is not a pleasant knowledge for a man of some wisdom.

To me, meditating sourly, came my wife Marjorie, whom I had not remarked until she was very near. Words of disparagement were on her tongue, though she had a task to keep her face in gravity.

“Why this is the plowing of an old giant tale,” quoth she. “Will you harness leviathan next and plow the forest yonder?”

Then my eyes went and came between her wrestling face, and that sad toil nicknamed of her so rightly ; nor could find any better counsel than to lead the mirth against myself, being palpably in the wrong. Moreover, it was laid on me to laugh, and I have discovered that life is too short for man to waste effort and soul-substance in being other than natural.

But presently I saw somewhat in her face, and stilled my laughter. “Dick,” she began, “Sarah Parrie has been to see me.”

Now Sarah was the fowler’s sister, who had so baptized the Tockwogh, and our accredited vehicle of all gossipry, being lean and watchful and garrulous. No doubt her brother in his calling, and she through him, had some special access to Evelyn and the clergyman, those main centres of our happenings : but more must be laid to the bent and power of natural genius.

“Is it aught concerning the Secretary’s marriage?” I said. “Will she throw him over, think you?” For

we knew of his addresses to a fair lady at Court, with outcome variously reported.

“Not so,” answered Marjorie, “but something far nearer. Edward Parrie is made captive; and—but yonder they come.”

Now past the field, up the narrow road, I saw five men proceeding, one mounted, the other four afoot. I knew that rider, with no need to glance at face or form or steed. It was a part of the vainglory of our small Evelyn to own the one saddle in all our island, adorning it with his person like any chair of state. When he got up astride, he deemed it made a knight of him. If by any means he might have won a tinsel crown to his head, I do believe he would have been monarch of Kent forthwith, and nothing less.

They halted, seeing me, and by his play of hand I deemed he was pointing out also where Broadnax dwelt. He was uneasy enough about it, and rode back a moment later.

Then the leave of them parted company, three holding on up the road, while one, a thickset fellow, square of jaw, came across to me, calling with authority, while still afar, that I would make haste unto him instead. But I paid no heed, only desiring Marjorie to take herself and my little namesake away; and then watched him kindly as he waded through the moist soil and the jags and loops of broken rootwork that were thrust up everywhere to trip the unwary. Soon he was before me, with an evident cramp in one thigh and in his cheeks a flush of pain and anger.

He began, “Here is my warrant to take the body,”

—but broke off to cry “Ow!” and smooth out the knots in his leg—a situation trying to dignity!

I took the paper and read far enough to see it was *my* body they wanted—though with no such imminent need for it as myself had.

Now there must be some semblance of reason in all things, and the reason for their most unreasonable desire was this, to wit, making a clean cut through their many words: “one William Ashmeare of St. Mary’s” had died of a wound given and taken, either in the fight with Ratcliffe and his men, or in my own later colloquy and entanglement. It clung to my fancy that this was the poor fellow whom I saw leaning and weakening. Nor, as I have said, could one be sure but they were right in laying the deed to me—a limp and shadowing thought.

By this my apprehender was free of his ailment, saying, “I make no doubt that you will go quietly with me.”

Yet I thought he looked not altogether so certain; and indeed there is a long way between some qualm over bloodshedding and a willful surrender of one’s self unto the enemy.

“Why—I shall not scream,” quoth I; “but prithee, resolve me a disturbing question or two.”

“Say on,” he answered shortly.

“First, then,” I began, “in all this, where is the devil?”

“The devil?” says he.

“Yes,” answered I again; “never yet did I see him so slighted. In every such document, if it be half-

way right and binding, there's ever somewhat about the devil and his instigation, as I do well remember."

"Oho, you play the lawyer!" cries he. "I had thought it would be the madman. However, I value not the difference. As to Satan, it may be we can spare him from the paper, seeing he had such palpable share in the offending."

Then he grinned, being mellowed by the play of his own humor. "Anything more?" said he.

"Fain would I know," said I, "wherefore they persist that I fired several guns and these loaded with powder and bullets. What should they be loaded with? And am I Briareus?"

"I don't know the man," said he, as though I wearied him.

"One thing more," I pleaded, in solicitous argument, "what manner of man was your William Ashmeare? By the grace of Providence and the good cramp, lo! here are two documents that you have given me; and by one of them I see that another man had him for a target in the mouth of the Pocomoke, with the same ending that you lay to my charge later off the harbor of Great Wicomico. So then I did feloniously kill a man who was stone dead already. There were two of us marksmen, each with several guns, and each of us shot him in the left side and killed him, but at different places and with days between. I crave pardon, being in mere bewilderment. Yet it must be true, for your masters are all-wise no less than worshipful, being lawmakers and judges, both in one. Executioners, too, I doubt not; but never of me!"

Discoursing in that playful, captious way with my hands on the uppermost plow-tail, I had covertly worked the point free, and now, stepping back, with a sudden swing brought the whole implement, clods and all, mightily above him.

He went down, as though with the wind of it, and besought me, when he got breath, not to let the thing descend.

“You see,” quoth I, still poisoning it, “I know not what to believe of St. Mary’s men, either as to habits or anatomy. Haply, if I should smash you, in another fortnight you would be hearty—and fit for smashing again.”

“Great Heaven, never think of it!” he cried. “I swear to you it would kill me;” and he had the tone of a man arguing with a wild March hare.

I let the plow aside and picked up instead a loose heavy root that would do for a club; whereon leaning, I stood like Hercules in the pictures.

“Friend, see this,” quoth I. “You come with a warrant for my body. Now, be rational; can I spare my body? What could I do without my body?”

“’Tis very true,” he made answer; but vaguely, and with wandering eyes. By the working of his shoulders, I knew how his right arm was busy, and smote him, but with discretion; then eased him of his weapons while he slept, and turned the plow over him for safekeeping. Also I heaped sundry other little matters thereon. When I got to the road and looked behind me, the man was placid still.

It pleased me, though no great feat of strength,

which I value little.. For a man may have the thews of a bull, yet be only bull-headed after all; and I would rather vaunt myself in more human excellence. Wherefore, I chose to feel pride in having overcome him by my nimbler wit and happiness in wording. But one must acknowledge that this kind of humorousness will ever be greatly aided by predominance of muscle. And I learned afterward the chief impression I made on him was that of an unusually dangerous lunatic.

Howbeit he was clean gone from my mind before I came to Broadnax his house, where my silly by-play and loss of time had made sore need of me by this good neighbor.

I was yet some little way off when I heard his whoop of wrath and a babel of other voices within, followed by a great crashing and thrashing and pounding. Then out flew his wife through the door and across the sheared stumpy field, crying aloud with shriek upon shriek. When she saw me and that I hurried on, she turned again, but tripped and fell by the way.

As I neared the door there was other irruption, in more formidable guise. Broadnax, being once overcome and wrist-bound within his own house, yet counting himself not wholly beaten, had somehow struggled to his feet and came plunging through, with instinct of the open air. Bull-like was the battering-ram action of his head, the frantic bodily heave and shudder, the hoarse outraged roar of him, the foam on his lips when you had glimpse of them.

Behind, where his hands were lashed together, the greatest of the three men clung, swinging from side to side with the victim's fury; the other twain tugging at him in front, to drag him under and striving to cuff him into submission. Plain to see he was giving way under such odds, do what he might, for they were not little men nor feeble.

None of them all saw me, watching wrathful, as I gathered my spent breath, until a blind swirl of them threw the two cuffing rascals together within reach of me, and I brought down my bludgeon. The nearer one sank backward toward me with no sound; the other groaned and pitched across him. Broadnax went forward over them to the ground by lack of balance, and was near drawing the third assailant after him.

Howbeit this man let go in time and saved himself, but only for a moment. As he came upright I sprang at him and struck him down. A knife dropped from his hand as he fell. It was plain he would keep; so I went back to Broadnax.

My friend was fighting at his bonds, and skinning himself rarely; indeed would scarce let me loose him, in his eagerness to be punishing the punishers. Once up again, he staggered to a hickory stump and tore off the winter-cured shoots that were tough and keen beyond any leather.

I said somewhat to dissuade him. Perhaps I should rather have stepped between and forbade; but I did not, and that is the truth of it. Nor, most likely, would you, seeing his battered face before you and

his shaken way. For these men were not gravely hurt nor like to be. The hickory, though unpleasing medicine—but well deserved—would never lessen their days. Yet it made many a mark and ample outcry.

Mistress Broadnax came up during this discipline, with no harm to speak of, only still out of breath.

We marched these men to Fort Kent, adding my ploughed-under locutor by the way. He was just working free of his anchorage.

As for the fifth man, we found him in Tophet, so to speak. For Parrie and Dandy between them had trepanned him by a shrewd device, and set him to heating irons in the forge fire, where his warrant for the fowler had been made to burn bravely. Meanwhile the great smith worked the bellows with mighty objurgation, as at a wholly unworthy apprentice—albeit the poor fellow had no flavor of youth about him, but a sorry and pitiful staleness. There was so much despair in his face when he turned it, and such a land and water map of sweat-channeling through the soot thereon, that I could not but interpose on the side of mercy.

Dandy bore it uncommonly well, but mayhap he was wearying already and cared more for the new cage-birds I had to show.

Not long after, we sent the five angels home again in the same boat that brought them; not at all grudging their evil prophecies by the way. Nor was I ever one of those extreme people who found fault in that they spoke elsewhere as having met harsh treatment among us. Truly they may have thought so.

Nevertheless, we served their many writs and warrants for them, one upon another and very dutifully, all over the island; excepting only what the smith had destroyed improvidently; he being no good judge of humor nor bearing in mind its blithe utility. I know not if 'twas any comfort to them, nor even if they knew; but there was mirth and jollity in all our Isle of Kent.

Evelyn had chosen to know nought of our misdoing; but we would not have it so. However, when we got to his house he was away, riding up the island. We next heard of him at Fort Crayford; whence his repair was to the Mattapeakes, and thereafter to the town of the Oziniès on the eastern mainland; where no doubt he felt more cheerful behind their stout palisades.

Notwithstanding, he grew satiate of their fare and lodgment, for he came back a few days afterward, when he might fancy us cooler and open to reason.

Coming before him to speak for all, as had been agreed among us, I found on him a shell of confidence and pomp, more than the substance of his nature would make good. Dandy, Broadnax, Parrie and more were of our company.

“Master Evelyn,” said I, “the Secretary of Virginia, William Claiborne, who is also our lawful patron and leader, gave you charge over us, did he not, before that he went away?”

Evelyn bowed with state and made answer,

“Even so, yet not he alone. I may show better title than he could put seal to an it likes me.”

"Loth were we," said I keeping straight on, for all his loftiness, "very loth were we, to treat you, sir, with wanton disrespect."

"It were best not," he averred, swelling.

"Nevertheless," quoth I, "unfaithful have ye been in letting the wolves among your flock ; and we are here to tell you."

He looked from one face to another, disturbed in his petty amplitude and bluster ; for all were very wrathful, very steady.

"'Twas law," he protested ; "we be law-abiding people, I trow."

"We will abide no St. Mary's law," answered I. "Tamper not with the accursed thing, lest a worse event befall."

"Aye, mark you that, George Evelyn !" broke out Broadnax loudly, and he smote his fist on his knee.

Then Dandy began such a broadside of multitudinous cursing that for very shame I was glad to get us all away.

CHAPTER XVII.

OUR STRONGHOLD.

IT may be there were others on the Isle of Kent who could have managed our colloquy better. I can well believe this, having often heard them say so ; but I deem that no magic of words could have amended essentially what was to be.

Anyhow, there came a morn when, alas ! we had no Evelyn. Nought more was left of him but an epistle, going to show in many words how at last he had slipped away to hold a candle to the devil—and Lord Baltimore. Whereby he became quite suddenly Captain George Evelyn, of the Manor of Evelynton in the Baronie of St. Mary's, Commander of Kent, with as many words to his entitling as any pitiful Rhenish potentate.

Now here was an interregnum. At the outset, I besought our folk to set up some head ; whereby they persisted I meant this Richard, and were ill pleased accordingly.

Then I set up Broadnax, with a very good will, when, behold ! here was Dandy green with jealousy and hot with ire. Yet Dandy would nowise do ; and for the life of me I could not think of any other at all expedient.

So I fell back on my unsatisfying self again, and a

few concurred and held by me. But there were others who raised a coil against us, even twitting me that I had once met Cornwallis afloat and been glad to get away, which was a crazy reproach, for anyone with wit to count noses. In truth, I was quite worn out with their foolishness.

All this time we were at risk, undoubtedly. It was indeed a marvel of marvels that we had been left alone so long. Even yet I know not how to account for it, unless the Calverts esteemed our force unduly, or were too much taken up with the many foes that Claiborne ever incited to divert them. But our respite was near its ending.

One eve I went home for comfort, seeing what fools we were and how certain to be overthrown in our idiocy. But my wife Marjorie was there to lay hand on brow, with tender heartening voice, even better than all her most excellent counsel, though in such a strait her nimbleness of wit capered not idly.

"You have done what you might, and they will none of it," she said. "Now why not seek another home, if only for the child's sake and mine, where haply we may lie hidden until better days, and there will be none to thwart or gainsay you?"

I looked at her and smiled, for my thought had come to the same goal, though more laboringly.

"Yes, I mean the Isle of Wye," said Marjorie again. "It is easy to guard and fair for all tillage. They will not seek it nor scarce hear of it this many a day. Our best friends will be glad to go with you."

"But we have much to leave," quoth I, considering.

She sighed and looked about her, and sighed again. "If only you were safe here," she said wistfully. "No, no, Richard, let us go; with the best hope there may be."

Then I took her in my arms and kissed her for her solicitude and good courage; and the next morning I began to talk over the matter with those who were of my party.

Not many would thus withdraw, no instant urgency being yet to see. Even Broadnax, though most of all in danger, held by his anchorage. But Dandy, whom I could well have spared, no sooner conjectured the scheme than he chid me roundly for not calling on him, and thereafter came daily to my inlet, where we were making ready. I must own that he was six men in one thereat, as often before and after—a most excellent reinforce, if only it might have been with continuity and sobriety and good temper.

To compensate, I had two of Warren's unlucky crew, Philip Taylor and Thomas Duffill by name, who stood under the same bloody indictment as myself and might be counted on, wisely distrusting the outcome of being taken. Even without that, they were worthy and steadfast, in every way desirable. Parrie and his sister went with us too, for like reason. But there was little compulsion, other than good fellowship and the hunger for freedom and new experience with the rest of our small company.

We had the *Basilisk* and a great barge for our transfer, laden with nearly all that we owned but the bare land. Also there were many free gifts of needed

things from those who had a good will to us, though shunning the venture.

We beat about a little, for the raggedness of the coast, in finding our river-mouth and island; which we deemed a hopeful sign, so far as it went.

Marjorie clapped hands over everything, and made little Richard do likewise, for her soul was in the voyage with no shadow to bear it company. The Parrie woman mostly took pattern by her, though I think she was at heart very curious as to what should follow.

My decent Indian friends met me very fairly with welcome and a proffer of squaws for hard work. Marjorie cried out at this, although knowing their usage so well; and indeed it had a quaint sound, but I would not say them nay. Also, they gave us corn and venison in plenty, whereof I made parade; saying little to our people, though it may be my looks were eloquent, for I knew the moral they would draw as to the wisdom of staying by me.

We made our stronghold—a great tower of logs with many a loophole—in a grove on the finger of land which ran down from the body of the isle, parting the two rivers. It had a vast excavation or cellarage for our magazine, most like a cavern deep and wide, with two passages running thence underground, one to either shore, great enough to roll an hogshead through and lined very deftly in brickwork. This was an expedient not heard of before in these waters, but which came to me by an old Border tale of the Secretary, and seemed to fit our need, as affording safe

ingress and irruption with a choice of ways, in case of beleaguerment. The notion of it had been laboring in my head as we sailed.

We further strengthened that fortalice with palisades and other outworks, taking heed not to remove our screen of leafage. Now when all was done, our enemy would hardly find the tower without guidance, nor readily take it after finding; since, though hidden so well, it had good command of both rivers and of the open water some way below.

We called it, as was natural, the Tower of Wye, a name ever afterward held, especially in our dear love and pride, although in quieter trafficking days York has been made to overlay it as the fort decayed and the houses thickened above. Ah! well, that too may have its term and period. Even now, for all the richness of the isle, the little town is melting apart and dwindling.

Also, not far above, we made a barrier of earth-work and palisades across the island, with but one gateway—on the crown of that low ridge—this being curtained before and vigilantly watched behind, where a guardhouse was set. It went against me to show any distrust of our allies, who alone were in position to attack from that quarter,—they did toil so cheerily, if women, or offer, if men, such sage and kindly counsel. I remembered, likewise, the proverbs which warn us not to breed treachery by suspecting it; but such wisdom, however genial, goes not always to the core of the matter, and had we not put our scalps in jeopardy of the Tockwoghs and their allies on the

other island through over trustfulness? I hold by precaution, believing that he who scatters ashes on the ice in his pathway will not fall the oftener.

It was wonderful how swiftly all this work went through; but we had many hands at it well divided and laboring with emulation, the squaws being mainly at the upper wall, my men about the fort and covered ways. Our own homes, and simple ones they were, went up between. The few fields we put in tith were mostly hard by the upper wall, within or without.

I mind one or two things that came to light in our underground work; and chiefly a great pipe of some soft and unctuous stone, with ancient carving on it quite beyond the knowledge of our Indians; also a most ungodly skeleton, not human, which certainly can never have been in the ark with Noah, where all the creatures entered two by two, for the fellow of this monster is not, nor ever can have been, in all the earth.

By the time everything was done and some cabins were raised and a few fields broken, the season had changed on us to early summer; whereby instead of white blooms and violets and those infant-like blue flowers that later make a faint frosting of sky-tint over the ground, we had now the first wild roses in the open land, purple spikes along the marshes, and in the thickets a many of that exquisite bloom which we do call the laurel. Also our sad woundings of the face of good dame Nature were for the most part healed or healing.

We were exceeding glad of that prosperous quiet-

tude—all but Dandy. I doubt not human nature hath ever some twist of perversity ; only with him it had turned into hot wrought iron, very ill to deal with. Perchance it was his calling ; yet I have known blacksmiths who could bear rule over themselves and hear reason. When I think of all that came on us without need, I can scarce be just to him or any of the hammering tribe.

Briefly, he was not the sole evil ; there was likewise a squaw, espoused to a chief named Sturgeon, a commendable warrior and of a nice pride in matters honorable, though no hero in industry.

Now what happened I do not fully know even yet, only on a sudden we had a great coil about us, with scalps not wholly safe where they grew ; and after belaboring Dandy at some cost of effort and injury, I must needs bundle him incontinently back whence he came, for the pacifying of our allies.

With a leave-kiss to Marjorie, I set sail, not trusting my fierce culprit unto any one beside. Disquiet hung faintly about me for those whom I left behind ; but none at all for my own peril, which ought to have been so easy to forefancy. No tidings of any change had come, though the pine-tufts of Kent Island were in view from the moment of our starting, on that sunny day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW I WAS TAKEN.

WHERE we first came to land, I set Dandy ashore with scant ceremony; then held on to my inlet, and turned lonesomely aside unto what had been my home. All did not seem well with it, as I drew near in the twilight, yet I could not tell why nor wherefore.

There was only the litter of our departure within, which no one had been at the pains to clear away;—an old shoe in a corner, odd rags of clothing, a broken horn spoon, a leaf or two of a book, all with the mold or dust of long desertion on them. A sorry lot they were, and very desolate.

I sat down and fell to brooding; not that my new dwelling and domain seemed unalluring, nor that I had cause to crave again the elder time and way, but purely for that weariness and melancholy which come so naturally out of the shadow. The will to bestir myself in any way melted from me. I lost all outline of purpose. Briefly I do suppose that, without knowing it, I must have fallen asleep.

Of a sudden there was vivid light about me, and the sound of unfriendly mirth, and an instinct of starting up and grasping. But my belt had nought in it and my gun was gone; and when my eyes cleared of

their blinking, I could see it only too well, pointed straight at me by a grinning man unknown. There were other guns in like case, making my own plight no matter for envy; and in midfloor stood the great George Evelyn, swollen with his very astute victory over this Richard a-dream.

It has pleased God not to make me an utter fool. Nor did I make myself so by leaping with no weapon at tubes which do spout hot lead. Wherefore it befell that I but leaned back resignedly and made speeches.

“Ratcliffe Warren is dead,” quoth I. “William Claiborne is in exile. George Evelyn, trusted of both, is now Captain George Evelyn of the Manor of Evelyn-ton in the Baronie of St. Mary’s, Commander of Kent! Amen! Long live the good Devil, father of all double faces!”

There was a stir of laughter about us, and it did not please him. He bade me look rather to my own going, for that there were charges enough against me. Then I arose, and we filed out, with a fowling piece on either side keeping good ward of me; and I could not sufficiently admire at myself to be so taken in mine own dwelling.

As we went, I heard the tale of what had befallen. After sundry menaces and disorders, the Lord Lieutenant had come by night from St. Mary’s, and set Evelyn up again with a power, seizing both our forts and the major part of our strong men whom he dreaded. Only a few, with Broadnax, took to the woods; where they yet abode in mere wildness, for

all the world like so many natural savages. Now and again, they descended on him, in the dusk of the moon, spoiling the spoiler. I think it was partly this outlying menace that brought Evelyn abroad, scouting upon me ; as again it was the main cause that he so quickly hurried me southward.

A little past my land, we were fronted by a slender man, in a priestly gown. A growth of low saplings was behind him and the moonlight came slantwise through their upper twigs, laying thin wavering shadows upon a face beard-bare. He uttered a low word of benediction as we went by. I thought his eyes dwelt on me with pity ; and could have cuffed him, knowing him full well for one of Calvert's Jesuits.

Yet when we had gone by, the fine lines of his countenance abode with me whether or no, and the breadth of his forehead and his thoughtful gentleness. Indeed, he was even then on a merciful errand, but to little purpose, for even the sick would have nought of him ; excepting the Mattapeakes, who took him for some new and wiser kind of magician. In these miraculous fancies he might be said to share, such was the extremity of his faith and zeal ; yet a marvellous great humility was handmaiden to his exaltation. I may own now that he and his fellows were good men, if there be any in this world ; though not after our fashion.

He lingered a brief while, then came slowly in our wake.

A half-furlong beyond, Dandy fell foul of us, reel-

ing; though sober when he had left me, and where he got the spirits I do not know. He seemed half in mind to quarrel with me, and quite as much to set upon my captors instead. For his own sake, I took my chance to trip and tumble him into a roadside hollow; whereat all laughed, and were well content to let him lie among the weeds.

At that time Leonard Calvert abode with Evelyn, using the house for headquarters and seat of government. We found him before the door, and he bade me in, excusing himself therefor to its owner, yet with a touch of chiding, as though I had been used over roughly. But my heart was none the lighter. No kindness of his, I doubted, would let me see my home again. However, I made shift to speak with him easily concerning things indifferent; and that was his tone as well, though he seemed to read me.

There was a stir outside the door, and Mistress Alice Claiborne came in and stood by me, taller and paler than of old, with eyes for him only, but laying hand on mine. He met her gaze quite steadily, but, I thought, with some effort.

“Governor Leonard Calvert of St. Mary’s,” quoth she, meting out word by word, “either set free this my friend, or take me also.”

A quibble of a smile came and went in his face. I could see he was tempted to lightness. Yet he spoke soberly.

“That may not be, fair lady. This gentleman must even bide his trial, as is fitting. We have not the right, nor the will, to treat you likewise.”

"O, the right, the will, the trial!—words, words, words!" cried she, at once hurried on and stayed by some inner contention, so that she spoke intensely.

"Words, truly," admitted he; "seeing I have nought else whereby to convey my meaning."

"You wrong your eloquence," she answered bitterly. "This isle has thrilled with it; and so has many a good man who came here to dwell in peace; and so have even I. It is not the eloquence of mere words. Exile and confiscation are its periods; its figures are wrong and robbery, the bloody death which has been and is yet to be."

Now at last he was stirred visibly, and cast about for an answer; but ere he found it, she spoke again.

"Evil is your race, Leonard Calvert; evil are the heart and hope of you. I will not plead to the mercy which is not yours to show. But whatever betide—*I shall be near.*"

There was every menace in her eye. Her pressure left my hand; she was gone.

Forthwith I saw the priest in her stead, holding the regard of all.

"Worshipful sir, there may be truth in bitter words," he said. "Behooves you to be watchful, lest in seeking good you come unaware on evil."

You may suppose it made my eyes broaden to hear a Jesuit discourse in such wise.

"You are more a man than any of them," I cried; "I beg your pardon very heartily."

"As to misjudging in your heart?" he answered, with a smile. "O, we all sin in that way."

I heard some one murmur, "The heretic will be confessing the rest of his sins before long."

The priest was quick of ear and turned on him. "That will be another for your own confession," said he ; and the St. Mary's man drew back as though a string of penances were dangled before him.

Leonard Calvert spoke at last.

"It is for the free men of the province to pass on this man's deed. I only bring him before them ; and this my duty, father, must be left unto me alone."

The good man sighed and presently went his way. Not long after, we sought our beds ; 'twas no real sleep with me.

They had one sentry walking before my door, another under my window. I tickled my fancy with speculating as to which I should astonish ; but awaited the lapse of the night and what it might chance to bring.

For I had seemed to find a message for mine ear in the wild and threatful words of our leader's sister, which were else too player-like or oracle-like for her nature. So might speak our flitting lady of the waste, whom we scarce held rightly human. 'Tis true that passion overcrowded ever tends to prophecy and denunciation. Yet—"I shall be near ;"—no, surely, surely, those words were meant for me ; and who but she could know what other help was nigh ?

So I lay and gazed through the window and dozed away, then woke from flitting slumber to gaze again ; and at the last my demi-vigil was rewarded. When the clouds were grey with the low moon behind them

and the dawn had not yet come ever so faintly, I was aware of one man after another slipping through the graveyard over the way, where were already the mortal remains of Ratcliffe Warren and his men fallen in fight, with one or two more of our people, having a goodly array of whitened boards for their tombstones.

Before I could clearly discern any face or figure I heard a challenge below me, and saw my warder facing outward with sudden vigilance ; but not there were his keen eyes the most needed. Even a fool had scarce let the chance go by ; so I dropped heavily behind him, and he flew forward headlong. Ere he could rise, I wrenched his gun from him with a twist, and ran off merrily to my friends amid a great uproar.

Our assailing party no doubt made the most of this, having chosen to be Indian savages that night for greater terror of sound. Broadnax in particular vociferated the most direful things, as the Mattapeakes and Tockwoghs had taught him. Calvert's people bestirred themselves too in the matter of shouting, though at first within doors and confusedly ; then came buzzing and blazing out after the manner of hornets from their hive.

Now I may not scrutinize too keenly the kind rashness of my woodland friends. No one could be more grateful. Yet it is sober truth we were made plainer targets by their manner of onfall than was any real need. The wary people whose howling they copied might have taught them better.

I call to mind a handshake of Broadnax and a glimpse of Mistress Alice hovering beyond, flashes

on flashes behind, half seen with the turning and slanting of the eye ; and then no more at all until my wakening. A pellet had grooved my scalp, coming before the sound that winged it. Over my body there was wrangling for a time, they tell me, as over Achilles' friend. Broadnax was hurt sorely, whereon I think the remnant must have given way, since no life was taken.

After dismal dreaming, I knew myself again. Behold, I was lifting and falling with the waves, and my head aching sadly. By and by there was greater ease of movement, and I knew that the vessel which bore me had left the shallows behind her, heading across the bay.

A leech came to dress my wound, making it the more painful ; and said very pleasantly it was nought, I should soon be abroad again. I looked at him with keen anger, as a wing-tipped bird at its captor ; then was sensible of my foolishness ; and in the end fell fast asleep. "Friend Richard, they are taking you to be killed over again," was the last hazy thought in my jumbled brain.

It was a day or two after we landed at St. Mary's before I could care for what went on about me. My skull had not been split nor even dented, but only jarred ; which reconciled me to my thickheadedness more than anything ever before. No doubt there is merit in all one's deficiencies, if the occasion will only come.

Where they caged me was none so bad ; being a log-cabin with a window at the side and altogether of

the sturdy fashion that we had grown used to in our new world. A rude highway ran before, following the brink of the upland, whence was a sudden fall to the foot-sand of, it may be, seven yards or more. When the wind was high from beyond the water, it drove a salt spray quite upon my threshold, the scent whereof came in to me and was welcome. Through the window, I had a pleasant inland picture, with the spread of grass and the flutter of leaves in it; or, by slanting a little, the gleam and sparkle of the sun on the river-mirror in the spaces between the dwellings as they straggled along the road. The most of the town was behind me and I had little hint of it save occasional home-like or worshipping sounds, especially in the early morn or eventide when the bells rang pleasantly. Now and then a gay butterfly would waver in to me, or one of the singing birds that were so thankful at dawn-time would poise on my window-sill, making music. You may be sure I petted and fed them when I could, wishing with all my heart I were no more an unwilling prisoner than they.

But such converse will scarce make the hours other than irksome when there is no freedom to keep company with philosophy. Of human intercourse I had little enough, and that little could well have been spared. Cornwallis came for one, bearing himself civilly enough in a blunt way; but I was too young in soldier life to think of him who had slain my best friend quite as of another. No doubt I was wrong. I held myself calm and decent; further than that I could not. He went without returning.

Likewise there was Richard Thompson, one of our people, who had in some degree shifted his allegiance, although of kin to the Secretary and holding for him the post at Poplar Island,—a deep uncertain man. At first I fancied him a prisoner on parole, but soon found otherwise. He had come to St. Mary's after fair weather; not however to be made for himself only, since the scheme certainly included my freedom and other good matters, which were even pondered in council by the enemy as I was afterward glad to know.

Indeed there was some thought of putting him in the shoes of George Evelyn, who had become known for a genius in making ill-wishers without end. But Leonard Calvert, being subtle and discerning, took fright thereat, very wisely. For whether the new Commander of Kent would have governed chiefly for Richard Thompson or William Claiborne, I cannot say; but very surely it would not have been for Lord Baltimore. So at last it was determined to let Evelyn go on with his parade and his turmoils; and to hang your humble servant, after proper trial, for being so wicked.

As to the wisdom of this last intention, I am not an even-handed judge. But at least it was unkind; and my comfort of soul at the time was the greater for not knowing it.

Fleete came also, reminding me of a personage in the Book of Job; and I gazed at him as though he were verily the same. He tried to tell me some of his quaint prodigies, partly I now believe as a hint

of deliverance at hand. But I understood not, and ended all by asking him if he knew not that he was a weariful fiction-monger. He could not well deny it, but seemed affronted and went bitterly away. Howbeit, he found the best reproof in the world for my rudeness before long.

Looking out one morning, my heart gave a leap to see Marjorie coming up the road; and none other than Henry Fleete beside her. Presently, with a word to the sentry by the door, they entered, bearing a free pass; and she held and clung to me, laughing and crying and gazing and kissing all together.

"My dear girl," quoth I, "you cannot think how troubled I have been for you!"

"Troubled!" cried she. "Was I the one to be troubled for? O, why did you not send me word of what had befallen?"

"By the birds?" I asked her. Yet this seemed but a sorry evasion; so said I, "Marjorie my love, no doubt, even in St. Mary's, I might have found some one to take a message from a man in prison to his home; but I knew you were safe hidden, and had no mind to tempt you forth into peril, nor yet to show them the way."

She made what the Frenchman calls a *moué* at me. "I would have you to know, Sir Wisdom, that I have been hereabout this long time, nor are you the first man I have visited to-day."

I took no heed of her jesting, yet found matter for disquiet. "Marjorie," said I, "surely you did not plead for me, as for one who had done wrong?"

She looked at my grave countenance and mimicked it. "O no, not wrong!" she protested. "Have I not always maintained 'twas mere playfulness and tender loving-kindness? There was that little merriment with the officers—O, Richard, my dear, of course I know, I know! But they have all been so gentle of speech to me!—and my hope for your deliverance so high!"

She began to weep, yet not unhappily, indeed with a little laughter as well. I comforted her for all the trials that were gone by, and for present uncertainty. Be sure my own spirits were exalted in some degree; it could not be otherwise. Yet had I no sureness of mercy, unless that Leonard Calvert could see his advantage therein.

I questioned her with cheerful caution, and the more freely that Fleete was withdrawn for the moment very decorously, pending our love passages. Then first I heard of the plan to advance Thompson, and that he had some part in it.

"Henry Fleete is ill to trust," quoth I, shaking my head.

"But for him, I should not be here," she murmured, her lips quivering.

"How say you, Marjorie?" I cried.

"It is so," said she. "I had no tidings of you until he came, and knew only that you were long and strangely from home, perchance in some trouble. No doubt I had soon made shift to reach the Isle of Kent, following you; where it is like that George Evelyn of the many titles would triumph to lock me up for a

mighty rebel, or drive me into the black woods to dwell among the outlaws. When we knew the shallop for Captain Fleete's, our men made ready to fight it. But there was no need; he gave assurance of peace and that our secret should be safe with him, who had won to it partly by his own conjecture and partly by the report of the Indians along the bay. He brought safe conduct and had the thought, as he still has, that I might be of some aid. When I knew your strait—O, Richard!—aid or no aid, of course I came directly."

I cast about in my mind, but found no just cause for doubting him. Unless Henry Fleete were a demon of subtlety and malignity—and I could not think it—I must own to having dealt him hard measure. That was in ignorance; yet it brought shame to me.

"I will thank him, dear," said I. "But what hath moved him to this?"

"What but his good heart!" she cried warmly. "Richard, he had not dreamed that they would use us so ill. The death of Ratcliffe Warren was in fight, and he strove to put it out of mind, though it touched him nearly. But their usage to you and the robbery and attainder of our people!—not even you, Richard, could be so hard on them for a sorry crew, unmerciful and ingrate; though still he must dissemble. Why, they reward not even him according to his desert, after all they have had of him!"

I raised my hand at this, fearing the guard might overhear; also, with significance, my brow. She was quick to apprehend.

"O, well, 't will hardly be for us to search the hidden springs," she said. "Kindness there is, undoubtedly. And, Richard, my dear,"—whispering, "I know for sure that word hath come and gone betwixt him and Secretary Claiborne, whereby they will be at variance no more. Also there are more friends astir; I hear vague breathings of that strange lady who saved me. Pray God that if she come, no peril follow her! And Richard, Richard, whatever she may say, go not you a-roving like poor Ratcliffe to your doom."

"That is scarce a likely thing," said I, looking round the walls. "Yet I think I should like to rove beyond eight feet by ten."

At that she laughed a little, and whispered eagerly, "You shall indeed, poor boy, and full soon, but not with enchantresses. We have no need of her woodland crew; though I do not doubt their kind meaning nor that they hover near. And now, you have not once asked after the little man—you bad, bad father!"

"The question was on my lips," I said. "But you seemed in more concern for Captain Henry Fleete, so—"

At that she exclaimed indignantly, whereon the sentry looked in to see if I was murdering her, as a precaution against widowhood. Then he growled at us hurryingly; and she said the boy was well and she would bring him. We kissed, and she was gone.

Then it came over me that this visit, however pleas-

ant, might be of doubtful prudence for Marjorie. In that revulsion, I would fain have had her left in the safe covert of our tower on the Isle of Wye ; yet no persuasion would have availed to keep her there while trouble was on me. Beside, I could not pretend to vie in shrewdness with Henry Fleete ; he knew the Calverts and their conditions perfectly, and he had counselled the venture.

With these self-communings, I eased my mind, putting away all solicitude, which anyhow came too late to be fruitful.

Not long after, I had both her and little Richard lovingly with me again, and yet again ; but saw no more of Fleete, unless at a distance, until after my trial went by.

CHAPTER XIX.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

A COURT of justice is commonly just that, or so called at any rate, and no more to be said about it. Yet there are who have been made much of in this world, being tried for their lives by the chief lawgivers and peers of the realm. I would have you to know me—Richard Smith, gentleman—for one of these grand people ; whose taking off, when it befalls, must no doubt be greatly eased and brightened by the honors attendant.

'Tis true, the Province having no House of Lords, I must needs content me with the Assembly, of burgesses elective and proxy-wielders and doughty freehold men compact, having the full legislative power with that of a high tribunal as well. Over them did brood with serious courtesy that great man the Lieutenant General Leonard Calvert, Chief Captain and Commander, Chancellor, Chief Justice, and Chief Magistrate, moreover President of the Pardon.

For once, I think I have successfully run the gamut of his powers and titles. If any be wanting, let me sue my pardon of him directly, in whatsoever world he may be. As to that, I have my opinion, though doubtless it were unbecoming to say.

Some of his paladins I knew well enough ;—as

Cornwallis, the mastiff-like for faithfulness, though not always obedient in peace time ; Fleete and Thompson, covering their ripening venture with a very decorous fluency, each in his own way ; Evelyn bourgeoning out in his littleness beyond what was good for him, yet panting after more dominion and glory ; one Philpott, a very slight fellow, who came with him from Kent Isle ; the three angels—that is to say messengers—who once had taken Broadnax, and been sorely belabored for their pains ; my plow-captive ; Dandy's unwilling apprentice ; and divers whom I had seen quite near enough in our little fight on the bay or guarding me after that I was taken.

There was much quaintness of confusion. From the outlying parts, beyond convenience of repair to St. Mary's, not a few had sent their votes and powers by deputy ; and one of these thereafter changed his mind, appearing in person also. It mattered not ; they accepted both, and most welcome. I call to mind, also, the inroad of one noisy carpenter, wroth beyond measure in the fancy of being slighted. It was a cheap purchase of harmony to make him a lawgiver also, and equal judge in the matter of life and death.

Seeing these things, I had some thought of offering myself as another candidate ; but put a check on my humor, fearing it might be taken for raillery. Yet, indeed, one could hardly find it in him to take that concourse or their doings in any seriousness ; it was a wholly unbelievable business. There were moments when I looked that the dream should lapse away from me like many another of more reasonable fabric ;

yet in sober truth, under God these were the worshipful and judicial folk who must settle for good and all whether I should live or die.

There was no love in their faces and as little of anything as might be to cheer one, whatever miracle my fond wife might look for. Even Fleete and Thompson kept their eyes another way; which I well knew for policy, and approved—with an effort; but it made me feel a stranger among men. The only face that seemed human kindly was a face unknown; and I found that harder still.

I never met him after that ordeal; a brave fellow left out of both factions, for that he would not tyrannize with the one nor conspire with the other. Here and now I set down his name as a memorial, in fraternal remembrance. John Halfhide it was; and after all it beliieth him, for he was by no means half-way in anything, nor at all given to hiding, being an upright English yeoman, frank and natural as the day.

They called me with much circumstance to the bar, which was but a railing of pine wood painted newly; and the white pigment came off liberally on my hands, wherefore I had less respect unto it than to the long honest log-walls on either side or the unpretending rafters overhead.

Mr. Lewger, their Secretary, set up to be my prosecutor, coming at me with that same ridiculous indictment, whereof I had before made merry beside my plow. It began by styling me "Richard Smith, gentleman," but made me out several kinds of malefactor ere it had done. The pith of it was that I had

killed William Ashmeare, and was a pirate ; whereunto they would have me say "Aye" or "No."

Thinking it all over in my cabin, as indeed I had ample time, I was well assured that this poor fellow came by his death-wound in the fight with Warren's men, when I was not even near ; though doubtless if present I had been as ready to deal it, under compulsion of duty. 'Twas no murder ; yet if murder, my deed it could never be. As to piracy, this were matter for the very extravagance of laughter ; only a man may not laugh with a gibbet before him. I pleaded "Not guilty" soberly, with all the stoutness I could muster.

Then they brought testimony to bear, and in especial the averments of two men who had exchanged bullets with Warren and his party ; also, later, with me. I soon saw very well neither of them was the Solomon to unravel these happenings.

I did my best in expounding when they gave me leave, yet might as profitably have held my peace. After I had fully shown that there were two pinnacle-fights, at two places, on two days, with the killing only in one, and I only in the other, yet they persisted in returning on me with wrong-headed questioning, until I found they desired not the truth, but only occasion to bewilder, entrap and ruin. Then I held my peace, and Mr. Secretary Lewger brought his proofs to a head against me, arguing from lies and from nothingness very cogently.

Next they would know whether I desired to challenge the right or fairness of any one who was to pass

on me; but without covenant that my will should prevail. I shook my head, seeing no hope therein—nor in anything. So, without much further ado, they took a vote on my iniquity, and all but Halfhide adjudged me fit only for the gallows.

Then did Leonard Calvert wax mighty solemn and regretful over this deadly business—of his own contriving.

“Richard Smith,” he said, “you have been indicted for felony and piracy. To your indictment you have pleaded ‘Not guilty.’ You have been tried by the freemen in this General Assembly, who have found you guilty and pronounce this sentence upon you, that you shall be carried hence to the place whence you came, and thence to the place of execution, and shall there be hanged by the neck until you be dead, and that all your lands, goods and chattels shall be forfeited to the Lord Proprietor, saving that your wife shall have her dower; and may the Lord have mercy upon your soul.”

Now in this last concession there was surely a comical generosity; heavenly mercy, being assuredly not his own and costing no strain or effort, was beyond question the very cheapest commodity that he could hope to deal with.

Through all this procedure, and the difficulty of crediting it, and the chill that must run down a man when other men are talking civilly of stretching his neck, I yet felt a grim ironic mirth in me. Had Marjorie’s mission profited no more than this? Her dower!—“Saving that your wife shall have her

dower!" It has served me for raillery with her in more placid days—that sweet forethoughtfulness which had at least provided the plucking of one plum from the pie. Yet not overmuch, for the words were burning poison to her as she heard them of his high mightiness, nor ever at any time to be tolerated long in pleasantry. With all my inward grinning, I knew her bitter thankfulness, and added my own private malediction.

As I was led away, in passing Henry Fleete I had one covert heartening glance from him, hinting that something would be adventured for me. 'Twas but a moment, as the sun will break through a tatter of cloud and be hidden again, bidding one not despair.

It must be that I am unsanguine by nature. Notwithstanding that kindly hint, and the young heartiness of my body, and the certainty that friends were near, I no sooner found myself shut again in that guarded cage, without light or any soul to speak to, than it seemed there would never be brightness any more, and as though evil rather than good must come of any effort. My distress and the wrong done me haunted me like something alive. The hate that grew up in my soul would have been a peril for Calvert had his throat been within my grasp.

So the twilight melted into darkness, and the stars, with brief and fitful peeping, were for the most part under cloud. I could hear a whippoorwill not far away, and marked an odd variance in the note, as if the first syllable were doubled. There was what we call a screech owl, too—though their mournful quaver-

ing little cry is deserving of a better name—and the even footfalls of the sentry before my door, and the many low changeful voices and whisperings of the wind.

I cannot tell how long this endured; but at the last I was aware of other steps approaching—Marjorie's beyond a doubt! Surely I had known all along that she would not leave me uncomforted, with no knowledge of what to look for and what to do; but in the leaping up of my spirit I was touched with misgiving. Had she indeed been so unwary as to come to that place, at that hour, quite alone?

Then she spoke, and my trouble deepened. Being so very near, I must needs thrill at once with every inflexion, every lift or break or pause or fluttering. For though she began with her own kind utterance, as of a gentle woman who looks to be guarded by men and fears no evil, yet nearly at once there came into it a shrinking tremor that broke and grew, and stilled desperately, and then broke again in gusts—even as though she were withstood by some affright, personal and present, yet driven on by some exceeding need; which I well knew was my own.

The sentry paused as she made her plea to him, and shifted about a little, with coarse laughter, answering as though the words did him good.

“Marry, not so!” quoth he. “Enter here?—that you may not—never any more! Sentence of death for good cause hath been passed upon your felon, and ’twere more fitting that so fair a dame should linger here with a proper man like me.” For it was one of the brutes whom I had castigated on Kent Isle, and

who had voted that death a few hours ago, triumphing now in black taunting malice over my helplessness there behind the bars.

I raged at the door, but it would not budge at all. He jeered, and I heard her cry as one seized upon; then I sprang at the window, but it would not let me through. As I dropped back to try again, there came the sound of a quick scuffle and rush, as though she had violently broken away; and afterward her voice in a burst of passion that startled even me.

“For your black heart may the blackness of darkness come on you! I appeal to One who waiteth, but is swift and sure.”

At that denunciation out of the night, I heard his breath come gaspingly. Then my own voice returned to me, and I began cursing him fiercely with all the ill wishes that ever slew a man. 'Tis an appalling thing to look back on; yet we could not know what was lurking beside us.

It may be that in seasons of inner stress there are walls and curtains riven, letting in gleams of wild prevision, for which none should bear the blame. I can not say if such a seizure were on me; only quite of a sudden I drew breath and held my peace, aghast at being so exultant and unhuman.

There was dead silence; and through it came a sound that stilled my heart—the sound of one taken mightily by the throttle and struggling for his breath; after that a great fall against the door, a dull tugging and panting on the ground beside it, faint moans and devilish murmurs intermingled.

My frame was all atremble, my breath was gone ; then my pulses woke and leaped anew, my brain went wild. I flung myself on the door again, yelling as a wild beast may yell, being indeed quite at the limit of my human tether. It drove open, and I pitched over a fallen man, who did not stir. As I rose to my knee, one struck a light above him ; and I saw my worst hope embodied, as I had spoken. It may well be that he had earned his most unutterable doom ; yet it blasted me also. I could scarce feel my own deliverance, but went on silently with vague and trooping figures, as though borne through the gardens of the dead.

Before I had gathered my thoughts or roused me from the shock, we were at a wooded place by the water's edge and picking our way between the prows of divers canoes. They were put afloat and we entered. Then I saw that the men with me were altogether the natural wild folk of the land. Whether I should remain their prisoner was quite beyond me ; but with death behind, I held my peace, thinking it not amiss to keep on. Had my brain been clearer, I should have felt concern for Marjorie ; but I can recall to mind only the most assured, unreasoning faith that she was alive and safe.

Not much later there awoke a notable uproar toward the town, and several muskets and fowling pieces were let off, one or two of the bullets clipping the water viciously beside us. I fancied they had some guess of our whereabouts and were pelting their lead after me ; but I soon saw this was wrong, for the

noise grew more patently that of contention, until one party—for it was a land fight—seemed to draw away, and the other to pursue, though not far, then halting with cries of consternation. I rose high enough to see the skurrying and flaring of lights where the body of the sentry lay.

At that thought, a vehement eagerness to get to Marjorie and comfort her came over me. I made one strenuous effort, but never were eyes keener nor hands swifter than those around. So many took hold on me at once that I might as well have been a yearling babe, for all the good my utmost frenzy could do. Yet there was a strange moderation in their restraint of me, and though they uttered no sound I felt some intent of reassurance in their touch and their dim gesturing. Therewith I was fain in a measure to content myself.

Lying thus, my brain busied itself with what had befallen and came pretty near to the truth, as I afterward found. There had been two plans for my rescue, with a woman the heart of each, one striking in most frightfully as the other gave way. By some chance, an alarm was given in St. Mary's, a little after I tumbled through the doorway, and armed men poured forth hornet-wise with that doughty Cornwallis at their head. They had no clear apprehension of our course or presence, but in making for the prison cabin came first on a part of those who were with Fleete and Marjorie. Then followed a skirmish in the dark that will long be borne in memory—shadows grappling shadows, defiance and curses flung

out by unseen lips, here and there strokes and the ringing of steel, and again quick red flashes whereof one, by some chance, winged the leader of St. Mary's; yet he gave not way, but kept on the fiercer, until of a sudden he could find no one to fight with, since Marjorie and Fleete, hastening to my cage, had discovered it quite open and the bird away, whereupon the word went round and their men drew off like shadows.

On that same spot, the St. Mary's men were halted by the apparition of their friend the gaoler under the tinder-light, as he lay with face upturned where fiends had been at him.

It made them huddle and get back into shelter, with creeping and quivering of the nerves over the nearness of that heathen vengeance. Yet Fleete and Marjorie were far nearer, and heard them, wondering, for they had passed the body well nigh unnoted in the dusk. They could not choose but borrow somewhat of all these qualms and tremors; but found comfort to know that my very horrible deliverers must at least mean well by me—a point and topic whereon Fleete enlarged unweariedly. 'Twas plain they had no more to do but flee; and the early dawn saw them beyond the waters of the bay.

Concerning these latter movements, I had that night no more than conjecture; but argued well from the confusion of a double flight and the evident disposition of our enemy. I could not believe my Marjorie quite out of danger, but at least she was under convoy of the discreetest of men, who was now a

good friend again after long estrangement, and bound to us by every tie. But we had neither sound nor other indication of her party after that firing.

When the night was far spent, after sundry lurkings and wanderings which may well have been meant to mislead, we ran into a broad and forest bordered creek, soon narrowing, which meanders a long way through the land from the northwestward, and whereto the Jesuits have given the fine new name St. Inigoes ; and followed it upward for maybe two hours, with such daintily delicate regular dip and sway of the paddles that you could hardly hear when close beside them, waking only a dull ripple and faint glinting along the surface of the water.

The grey dawn was on us now and made visible, when we drew to the shore, a wood-path under the boughs ; which we took, following one after the other very swiftly. We held northward, as I thought, excepting when some slough compelled us to go about, which happened often. This course no doubt would take us toward the river Patuxent, and I judged these Indians to be mainly of that silent tribe, returning home. Whatever they were, it tried me to keep up with them, notwithstanding some pride of prowess in that line ; and I had twice fallen prone over some jutting root and railed savagely at myself, ere they called a halt in a dell, and I went sound asleep, forgetting everything.

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE UNDERWORLD.

WHEN I awoke it took some little time to apprehend that I was no longer on earth ; but rather under or within it. I conceived it must be noon or later, and bright with sunshine, for even there in the cavern a subdued whiteness and warmth came to me.

Indeed no whiter place assuredly was ever heard of—the long walls, the level floor, the high and arching roof, the very blocks and fragments that had fallen, chalk-white every one of them ! Yet the substance was not chalk either, but something more open in texture, more lace-like to the touch, and akin to sea-foam for gossamer lightness.

In the forms that it had taken, what part was man's, what the mere by-play of nature or the subtler hidden powers ? Of a surety, there were pillars and entablatures, deep entering niches, countenances that leaned outward with grewsome lips, and much more hardly to be taken for other than sculpture work ; stiff lines of figures, too, like those a child would make, or the grim sons of our desert lands in their symbol records. Yet again there were shell-like castings and the imprint of great claws outspread, and in one place a dragon skeleton, beyond any man's doing, out-

stretched along the surface. Dragon I call it, but indeed have no idea what abominable creature it once might be. So splay were the feet of it, so devouring the jaws of it, and so frightful the whole reach and length of the thing in its ungodly survival, that I felt my breath gone as I looked, and a gripe was laid on me inwardly. It was no less a nightmare to the eye—but rather more—for its long and perfect bleaching. The whole cavern, being everywhere of the same ghastly hue or no hue, took on the quality of that ancient occupant. It grew on me so, and so weighed on me, that I sprang up from the deerskin where I had lain and made hurriedly toward the light, eager for any outlet.

Here was a disappointment. This end of the cavern hall bent abruptly in a sharp elbow, hidden until now. I turned with it, seeing a goodly disk of brightness before me, and thereon plain to the eye the motion of free boughs and herbage ; but halted at three paces, for a dim chasm, beyond any leaping, lay between. As I stood, certain fragments, jarred by my coming, loosened from the nearer verge and went down, down, down, battering from side to side and springing from slants and ledges, until I lost even the echo.

I crept on delicately and peered over away far below, where the glimmering paleness melted into a slow throbbing whirl and up-curdling of half luminous mist, holding a throbbing phosphor fire that is not in our upper world, and wisp-like outreaching figures, that could scarce be altogether shapen of terror magic in the soul and eye. The more I gazed, the more surely

I grew aware of something direfully astir in that lifting underworld, something uncreate and chaotic even now taking form, something craving and pursuing, threatenful and ill.

I drew off, lest my brain should wholly go, and stumbled wavering around my foam-white prison, with scarce even the care to miss the dragon-horror in seeking another exit. But there was none at all nor any hope of one. I stood by the gulf again, though in deadliest fear, and called vehemently across for aid, that perchance any watcher beyond the portal might take pity, or some passer-by might hear and save.

I won no answer but a great thronging and mocking and mob-merrymaking of the echoes, that dinned their malignity into me on every side. They died away, and the silence was even more dread. The lifting of pallid chaos from the gulf grew nearer, nearer. I tried to yell my agony abroad, and behold my throat was clogged, that no sound could follow; until all at once my voice broke through—yet all without my will,—shouting in one frantic word, the name of man's last Enemy.

Walls and roof and floor took it from me, bandying it about demoniacally, as though a score of lost and frenzied souls were clamoring for His evil presence. Then all at once, I seemed to surely know that I was not alone, and with that awful knowledge fell back stricken with fear, yet not senseless, against the soft white cavern-wall.

How he came I cannot say, but seemingly out of

the depth ; for he was by the brink when first I saw him ; caring not at all, so far as one could see, for any crumbling. I knew him at a glance for my old pursuer and tempter of the sea, my apparition of the lands unknown. The same glossy midnight of hair, the same soldierliness of guise and bearing, the same covert menace and pitfall and leer !

Quoth he, "I am one of those who come when called on," and he made me a shadow of a bow.

Now as to what he was my thought will veer to-day, as it may have veered once and again in this writing ; —only something under ban, horribly uncouth and accursed forever. But then I had no doubt at all, and his presence did crush the life of me like a great weight pressing. Nevertheless, after a little, my breath came back in a shriek, and cried bodily for me, "Get you gone to the place appointed, in the name of Christ our Lord !"

Now by all tradition I had shot a bolt beyond his enduring ; but he did not melt away, nor change in any wise, beyond smiling. "How may that be ?" said he ; "seeing, *we—~~are~~—there* ;" and this he spoke very slowly.

Now that I had not thought of, nor even yet could quite accept it for true ; but it filled all my blood with phantoms.

"Mind it not," quoth he. "But rather the witness of the dead saint that 'hell is not as reported.' Be of good cheer, you shall not lack entertainment."

My brain was in a fine daze, be sure ; yet not so but that I could see his words coming true very



"I am one of those who come when called on."—Page 290.

strangely before me. For one of the great pictured entablatures—bearing a moon-faced man and a thing on stilts that went before him—did swing outward like any door, though silently. And lo! in that portal the jutting of horns and weapons, the dusk of she-forms a-glimmer, the glint of peering eyes, the eager out-crowding of malignant beauty! Round me came the rout, round and round me sweeping, antlered in more ways than stag hath ever dreamed of, birth-bare—if ever birth had they—but for girdle-flutter of vine-leaves and otter fur adangle, and preposterous bewilderment of color. One bore a weapon which I lack words for, it being angled and splintery most like a broken dragon-wing; another a living mace, with eyes a-stare and lip corners drawn as by torment; and yet another a beaker of opaline enchisement, frothing over with some poison potion of blood.

The foam-white loose rocks of the cavern-floor went flying like play-balls over head from hand to hand. All uptossing devices of savagery and wizardry and devilry were in that whirl. Changeful were the forms and features, mocking in allurements, blasting in threatfulness, but ever with that frightful beauty. Furthermore the eyes were unchanging, and as one with them all; not green I should say, nor indeed of any tint, but rather a steel fire with no flame, a blight for the marrow and the blood. And the terror beyond terror was in this, that with all their swirling and melting I knew them from of old every one, even so surely as they knew and did welcome me.

I had not thought to have harbored so much that

was ill ; nor dreamed in what multitudinous variety our sins, passing and half-forgotten, may yet dwell with us. But now was to be no more forgetfulness. Bodily concretions of evil I had them before me, the devils of my own begetting. The stir of malice, the wrench of envy, treachery instantly flitting, greed that abode and came again, the flush of unlawful desire seizing the pulses all too often, every dallying with what is under ban ! Born of a moment, they had life and will to my ruin, merciless and forever. I would gladly have chosen any other hell.

Surely I know not how long it may have been, scant time I trow, yet seeming ages of torment beyond all telling. In the end there did come, with no especial appealing, out of some upper depth, a white irradiance, of no form, though vital and supreme. Virtue it had so solvent that all the forms of my trouble melted in it from about me and were as though they had never been. Even my jeering haunter and waylayer was not permitted to wrong me more.

I was not borne aloft nor elsewhere at all, but lightly fell ; and clear vision with great content came unto me as I lay. Beyond the unspeakable pain and waste of the world, where such a vastness of loss will go ever to win so very little, I yet was aware, very surely, of a mind and will compassing all, working not as the mind and will of man, but in a benignity that transcends his comprehending, so that even what had been as cast away did win a bountiful reward. I cannot make it plain nor even feel it so ; but all that I had once dreaded and been in doubt for was become a joy

surpassing unto me. And I heard murmured voices, and felt many souls in happy presence ; not as journeying from far away, but as though, world within world, they had been by me ever, unseeing and unseen. Then said I, "It is the coming of heaven."

No doubt I was given that grace to my encouragement ; yet it abode not long, and in my beatitude oblivion came gently on me. When this went by, the fantasies of fever-wakening were there instead, flitting and intermingling, fairy-light, good and ill ; whereamong, waveringly to my vision, towered the forest lady who had so aided us, though coming ever with the blast of evil. Her wild and plumed following were all about her, silent before her chiding—for she seemed in anger, as though I had been overlong forgotten of them—and obedient unto her every gesture.

While I yet followed them with swimming eyes, a great rude bridge, though narrow, was heaved and thrust out from among them by main force to span the gulf, touching again quite near me and overlapping well at either end. At once they came trooping over man by man, inviting me by gesture and little more—for the Patuxents are ever taciturn, even in converse with their own people—to take the same road outward. Indeed for my better assurance, they executed divers infernal capers, midway in the passage, that may well have been borrowed from some torture dance or other demoniacal outbreak of wild riot and flying limbs and heathen vengeance, the fabric beneath them swaying and springing and complaining, and the broken white masses of unnatural stone tumbling, jarred by

their orgy, down, down to the glittering shades abysmal—and I all the while with the best possible reason to know Who lurked there and surged upward with his legions!

Whether my caperers were of Him or affronting Him, the sight was equally ill and weakening to me. Already I was rising on elbow in eagerness to escape, when they brought the image of that intercepting horror so home to me that I sank back again incapable. Nor do I believe any one who hath been thus invited by sportive demons to dance or travel on loose bridgework over the head of the ancient Devil will marvel at my reluctance. Howbeit, no doubt the experience is uncommon outside of mere deluded frenzy.

Then the lady also came over and bowed herself beside me and lifted my head upon her knee. I could hear her voice, bidding them cease for fools and marplots, though in a tongue I knew not, and 'twas all as plain to me, for the tone and face of her, as though my sister had made such frowning woman-protest in our English home. Then, as they stilled, she put the narrow neck of a gourd to my lips, and my eyes were taken listlessly with the quaint carving thereon, while a bitter potion went down my throat. I knew no more distinctly, beyond the picture of her kind solicitude bending over me. Thereafter there is but the sense of being borne away securely into brighter light, and then mere dead placidness and contentment, bequeathing no memory.

When I woke again, stars were over me, and by the constellations and their place in heaven, I judged

the night to be more than three parts gone. In my ear there was a faint sound of lapping water, and when I sat up and gazed eastward, behold a broad expanse, with the handbreadth tracks of stars across it, and a shadow that might be cloud or shore-line away beyond.

Then a bird cried out near me, with one note, being molested in repose. A step drew lightly near and paused, yet I could see no one, only the fringe of shore bushes and the grapevine tether of my canoe. The air came salt to me. By every token, I made sure of being on the western border of our great Chesapeake bay.

I looked about for the paddle; and with a little rustling sound, such as a wood-robin may make among the autumn leaves, and a light patter less than fairy footfalls of the rain, behold our lady of the wild already swaying and poising upright in the landward pointing prow, waving her lifted paddle airily before me, and as silently smiling.

I could by no means conceive how she had contrived that sudden presence and invisible entry unforeseen; but by this time had come to know that surprise and some semblance of miracle, magic or prophecy were in nearly all things a part of her good pleasure. Already, too, the vine was severed, and with a swift alternate dipping of the blades on either side, she darted our little craft arrow-like forth upon the bay; then waited, while that impulse died, until we hung off shore, as some sailing bird of broad still pinion oftentimes will hang easily in view not far

above our earth. Alike in onward motion and in quiescence, her own poise and posture, airily erect, varied not at all. She gazed upon me kindly and spoke aloud.

“ My potion hath worked its remedy ; there will be no more fiends to affright you—unless it should be your good will to return and seek further revelation in that strange cavern of the froth-stone, where indeed I meant not that you should be left alone after waking.”

Her banter baffled me, perchance because of the dread shadows lingering in my mind ; as though there were some covert meaning, not wholly for my good. But in another breath I saw how ungrateful were such fantasy, and how senseless and unworthy.

So at last the words came warmly to me, “ Lady, I do clearly discern you as both kind and human.”

At this appraisal, a light ripple, even in the starshine, played about her cheek. “ So I do hope,” she made answer demurely ; and her look was winsome. Lifting her glance sidewise, with a subtle archness, “ Is it then your choice to linger here,” quoth she, “ or to cross yon slumbering water to the Isle of Kent ?”

Now I doubt not that the world one daily dwells in will ever have the stronger hold on him, unless that he lack sanity. Nor was I ever of those who flutter about the perilous unveiling of mystery ; notwithstanding my late converse, whether real or delusive, with the secret beings of the hollow earth. Yet as I looked upon her I could but own that even sorcerer’s magic may not be wholly ill—in its embodiment.

“O let us away—and most thankfully!” quoth I, speaking in some haste.

She bowed, and dipped the paddle again, but with a more strenuous sweep than before—as indeed the small buffeting of the wavelets now required—bearing us due eastward. Presently she spoke, with no intermission of her toil,

“One who would have freed you hath gone before, and, being advised, awaits you.”

It was what I had meant presently to ask, but lingered over it, I know not why.

“Is Marjorie safe,—unhurt?” I stammered now.

She bowed gravely. “Safe—unhurt—hopeful—happy.”

The music of her voice died on the night air, with a faint under-echo of mournfulness; and we drove silently on under the stars with her deft caressing of the bay.

I strove to find some word that should bear the burden of my compassion, yet not in any way displease her, nor add to her grief and pain; divining well the loneliness that was on her, the alieny from Christian kind, and all her lost estate. However, I could not, and with the rousing of a breeze before dawn, it behooved me, having no skill with the paddle, to do nought that might disquiet her own, but keep silence, and, if possible, the salt spray out of my mouth.

Viewing her closely in the wakening light, I knew not whether to marvel the more at her stroke, for its power and surety, or at that abiding look of her, as

of one from afar, which no jostling of the elements could change in any degree. So might look some wan queen of faery, with warm yearning in her heart toward us mortals, and eternal severance imprinted on her brow.

When the east was reddening, she brought me safe to land in a little harbor of Kent Isle, where now the old church stands with clustering oak trees about it. The most of these were there then, and under that mighty shade had Marjorie awaited me worn and wan, on that day of her most dreadful ordeal while this our dear deliverer fledted wonderfully away from all thankfulness.

I craved her company into Christian life again, being grieved to part so, with the knowledge of what lay before her; but she only smiled, very bravely, nor would so much as leave her canoe.

“Bid those who love you ask a blessing on Virginia Dare,” she said; “who will need it sorely, and hath done what she could.”

With that leave-taking, and a wave of the hand, she was gone. From the shore I watched her long, speeding westward far through the white caps of the bay, driven onward as it seemed by the radiance of the rising sun. Then my steps turned inland, seeking Marjorie.

CHAPTER XXI.

ROBIN HOOD IN THE NEW WORLD.

'TWAS no long walk that brought me to the fringe of the pine woods; where I halted suddenly, being counseled thereunto by a man in a raccoon-skin cap, with an active and threatening gun. However, in a moment we knew each other, and rejoiced abundantly. He had been my comrade in that memorable vigil and onfall of the Tockwoghs; also in divers later happenings.

Our first greetings over, I had begun again with "My wife?—" when behold that nimble lady coming southward toward me between the trunks and over the pine shatters, her voice going eagerly on before.

"O, Richard, Richard!"—clinging to me as we met. "And have you never a hurt at all, my dear,—not one? Thank God! It was but now that her message came to me. And where is she? Gone?—O, could you not keep her for my thanking? God's good blessing go with her! But—why, Richard dear, you are a very hedge-beggar for tatters and raggedness. Who would take you for a prime figure of history now? And pray, sir, where may you have been, to so whiten up and overstain your unhappy garments? But come now, come to our camp by the spring of the Mattapeakes, where is another Richard

awaiting my return—and I doubt not crying indignantly.”

So on and on she rambled, in broken extravagance of delight, for was I not alive and whole and free, who had so lately been in durance, at the doorway of a hateful death?—Alive and hurrying along beside her, heart by heart and hand in hand, speeded and uplifted with the sunshine of her dearest company! What wonder that the loving soul of her sang out its joy, taking no more measure of utterance than doth a wild bird in its delighted carolings.

Before this, others were returning beside us, yet not many. From their words and jollity, I gathered some notion of the lure which held the major part together; and it hastened my own steps yet more, if that were possible. But the sight, when I came on it, was better to a hungry man than the best forerunning fancy.

That spot was well known to all inhabitants of our great island, even the shy dainty deer being palpably in love with the soft grass and the clear upbubbling water. It made a little eye in one of those pouches of land that dangle southward on the eastern side, being nearly cut off by creek and bay and mere. The unstable town of our fishing Indians often might be found there; but now they were altogether gone, and our outlaws and broken men were seated merrily in their stead.

As we came near, another warder gave challenge, but drew away at a word, to let us by. I saw the smoke upbillowing among the columns of the grove,

beyond a screen of briars and tangled thicketry. In a minute more, I found a gap, and the jovial scene opened out before me, like an old ballad stave come to life again, wherein do figure the doughty Robin Hood and all his greenwood crew. Albeit, Broadnax was hardly the true copy of that deffest and sightliest of archers; nor could his worthy dame (whilome our "suicide in motley" of the *Tiger* and the seaboard isle) be altogether taken for slim Maid Marian. She stood before the fire, where hung a great ox roasting whole, with a heedful eye to the browning and basting; and as she bade them, six goodly fellows of the company turned and twisted the unwieldy beast, with many a jolly quip and prank and snatches of random song. In all my life I never did see any-one quite so ruddy as she, yet beaming with an assured sense of her good service and a triumphing contentment.

Others of the men played at cards and divers games not far away; or mended their apparel and scoured their armament; or lay idly around gossiping, as though the world had nought else for them to do; and one or two were dipping up water from the wellspring in gourds and quaffing it. In every face methought I could read the same jocular yet eager expectancy. For when, indeed, had a whole beef been barbecued before, in all our western lands?

They saw us presently, and were astir with urgent welcome. Broadnax hurried toward me, thrusting forth his hand. I thought his face broader than ever, as though forest life went well with him. It was mot-

tled about the jowl, too, and mapped over with scarlet lines, the brighter for the fire.

"Zounds and death, but it is even so!" he exclaimed. "They told me, yet I could scarce take it in. Why, Dickon—why, iron knuckles! Solid Richard Smith as sure as I live, come to our browsing and thieving!—And alive too!" As though I might more reasonably be expected to come in some other fashion.

"But I shall not be alive long without better food than words," I protested.

Thereat he took on a look of commiseration, being one who could well comprehend that pain; but likewise I saw him eye covertly his busy spouse, for a cue. And suddenly she caught up the word, ball-wise, and tossed it back at me over her shoulder.

"Food,—aye indeed!" quoth she. "A whole mountain of it, which I do believe will be the roasting of me, too, before it is done! You must e'en starve a little longer, Master Smith, on nothing but our good welcome; and that you have with all my heart."

"It shall amply suffice," I made answer, dropping on the ground between them. "But where did you get the noble beast? I knew not there was one on the island."

"'Tis an agricultural experiment," put in Marjorie. "Not every one may eat that!"

"Nor would have the heart," answered I. "Yet I know by his very pleasing expression I shall find him friendly. Whose, my freebooter?"

That word was not to the taste of Mistress Broadnax, ever more genial than discerning.

"They have taken all we had," cries she, sullenly, with a toss of defiance.

"All they could get, my dear," suggested her husband. "Enough though, and more than enough! So I count them but my stewards and purveyors, and help myself to my own as I may. Yon beef was sent hither, with a yoke-fellow, for Evelyn's plowing, but we broke through by Fort Crayford in the night and carried them hither. All the settlement was left in a fine hubbub, I can tell you. But what will that be to the tempest in the teapot-soul of Evelyn when he gets home again from Saint Mary's and learns they are confiscate?"

I laughed with him, yet found it a grave matter. For now must Evelyn come with a power to root him out of Kent Isle or confess impotence altogether. A cattle-lifting from his very stall and byre; spoil driven through all his realm and feasted on at ease, with every flaunt of arms! Assuredly this was a portent.

I said as much to Broadnax; but he answered, "I fear naught that he can bring against me, without more aid from St. Mary's."

"That," said I, "he will surely have, and quickly. Even while I was in prison I heard talk of putting forth to smooth Evelyn's couch for him. 'T will be sport for Cornwallis."

"O he is wing-broken and out of the fight," quoth Broadnax confidently.

"Nay, I said not that," protested Marjorie. "He was nimble enough and truculent enough until——"

She checked, like a horse on the brink of a quag-

mire, and I struck in with my own narration, being well aware of what she remembered. They all listened, and I saw her face clear, as her mind followed me. One and all, they drew thin breaths and glanced about them through the deeper shadows of the forest, while I told them of the unearthly foam-white cavern, the dragon-skeleton, the bottomless abyss, and my intolerable and killing terror of the evil beings which I there heard and saw,—or did not see. My happy rescue put them in a thankful mood, which ran easily to merriment and lightness of mind and bantering.

Heaven and Hell we all agree to be very real and long ago revealed unto men ; but let any one profess any new knowledge of either and he must found a new sect of his own straightway for his defending, or the best friend he has will consign him to punishment. But in my case they allowed it to be no more than the fleeting and harmless delirium of one outworn.

There was some bartering of glances, too, between our dames over my converse with the lost woodland lady, Virginia Dare, her manifold kindnesses, and the tender wondering compassion that I must ever feel for her ; which I thought a little unjust of them, and still do think so. However, they could not mean it in seriousness, and, in any case, we never heard of her again, beyond the merest floating rumor from the mountain land.

Our good dame Broadnax broke in upon the end of my narration, bidding us to the feast ; and Mistress Alice Claiborne came presently to our company, blithe welcome as May flowers, having been briefly

away on some occasion of her own ; so that all went happily on. And if the Romans and other wealthy folk had fine music to their banqueting, for certain there was ever with us the billowy caressing murmur of the pine-harps high aloft, and bird-melody exultant. From neighboring boughs came a flood of song, and more plentifully still from secluded nooks both anear and afar—like unto the manifold sweet warbling that greeted good old St. Brandon from the erring spirits transformed, who had no heavier penance, “for that their sin was but little,” than to dwell awhile as birds in an Eden island prison, chanting hymns of praise unto the Ever Merciful ; a quaint and lovely imagining which I am glad to remember when I see and hear their happiness in the summer boughs above me.

’Tis true we could not rightly hear these our choristers and orchestra save in the lapses of warm hilarity, wherein was nothing spiritual, nor fanciful, nor poetic. But in my memory there is no more human kindly nor welcome repast, for all the gypsiness of its quality and its wildwood enframing.

When all this was over, and we at ease upon the sward, the mind of Broadnax went back to our earlier converse, after its manner of heavy toiling on the trail of an idea. I could see his brow knitting and working. Then he looked up and said,

“Friend Richard, you were ever a man of rede and counsel. You have told me wherein I have dealt unwisely ; yet in that alone is no great help for me. Now tell me what should we do in our present strait ?”

“What you should have done at the first,” I made

answer. "By all means go with me to the Tower of Wye. Together, we may make it good against all St. Mary's—long enough at the least for concerting other resource."

"Your good lady hath told me somewhat of it," he said ponderingly. "Yet she hath not fled so far."

"That we might aid Richard, haply, at need," she answered with a flush.

"I would rather you should inquire of Captain Fleete," quoth I, uncomfortably, for my blunt friend could ruffle one. "But where is Fleete? I thought him with you."

"He hath gone round Kent Point," quoth Marjorie; "with menace of both shores and some hope to win further transport; but will surely be back with us ere long."

Then I told the men, item by item, of my fortalice beyond the Eastern bay; lying at my utmost length outstretched on mossy cushioning under a gum-tree, and speaking lazily, as was proper to one overfed and over-weary, with instance and illustration and humorous tale, as one thing after another came to mind. Yet my shaft went plainly to the mark. Nearly all the men gave in their votes for the migration, only two or three choosing rather still to seek hiding in the woods above.

Broadnax hearkened; at first quietly, then rustling and brightening. When I had done—"Why, that is rare!" cried he. "We may lie secure in your hold like any pike among the weeds, darting out upon the minnows at our will. The Long Gar shall come to

us there ; and what care we for St. Mary's? Zounds, man, how we will bang 'em !"

He was grown well nigh as forward in zeal as poor Ratcliffe Warren ever had been. I said nothing in dissuasion, partly because I well knew what will come over a man in a gleam of triumph after long down-pressing, and was loth to lessen either his willingness or his glee ; also in part by reason of my own heart warmth, for eagerness and confidence are catching, so that you cannot hear or see them without being stirred thereby. Nevertheless, in the depth of my soul, I did not believe that the Isle of Wye could be more than a camp of refuge to us, while awaiting more effectual aid or devising means to escape from this region of the Chesapeake altogether.

Howbeit we of the Tower would not be nearly so weak as before, since, beside this great accession, Fleete was coming and had now fully cast in his lot with us, and sure to be followed anywhere by his crew.

So passed the day in counsel and in pleasing restfulness, waiting for our sea-captain errant. But, as the sun went slanting westward, expectancy grew into unease, and that again into sheer punishment and burden. Man after man swarmed up into the tree-tops or ran at intervals to the farthest outjutting of the low shore beyond us ; but ever their report was the same. 'Twas time and over that we should hear from Fleete, unquestionably.

What could have befallen? Had he run upon some mischance in navigation, some covertly devised entanglement or piercing stake of our enemy? Had

Evelyn's garrison tempted him ashore or put forth and boarded him by surprise? Had Calvert or Cornwallis, coming unexpectedly from St. Mary's, cut him off at the rounding of Kent Point and chased him quite away? Or had he been lured afar, beyond return, by some fleet escaping prize?

Nearly all things are possible; but not all are likely. For this was a man of utmost wariness and cool self-government, and learned above others in shoals and winds and currents, nor hardly less in every movement of the devious heart of man, especially the men of St. Mary's.

Some of our good folk hinted sombrely of turn-coats and troublemakers, averring that he who had of old brought danger on his friends through cupidity, and twice changed sides in mere spleen, might happen to do either, or both together, once again. But I would have nought of such aspersions, rebuking them the more cogently for an inner disquietude, of which I was wofully ashamed remembering all that he had ventured for Marjorie and me. Moreover it seemed worse than idle to mar with futile foreboding the later hours of so bright a day.

But neither fact nor fancy will be disposed of thus condignly. When our anxiety had been often bidden go hide itself, and the sinking sun uplifted the slant of his gold from us into the needle-tufts and pinecones loftily overhead, there came one, running delicately, with a tale to revive misgivings.

'Twas an Indian lad of the Mattapeakes, whom they called *Lame Opossum*, following a custom of

these people, from some quaint circumstance attending the night of his birth ; a name that hinted little of his slim, upright bearing, his arrowy swiftness, or the spirit-like coming and vanishing of his dusky outline adown the early twilight of the aisles of the wood.

Since the friendlier of our Indians had rallied from their first panic, after the reprisals for the Tockwogh invasion, a few of them were often to be found about Fort Crayford, whether for barter or gossipry or to look on while work strange to them was adoin'g or to render some easy service. It was mere delight to them to go through the woodland bearing a message, with no trail that a white man could follow, swift, silent and unseen. They counted the coin or whatsoever else it brought them a clear and perfect gain. In a miracle of time, for one, our shadow-racing Lame Opossum would attain his goal whatsoever the obstacles might be. Clear and complete would he deliver the message or narration given him, without falsehood willing or unwilling ; a gift but rarely found in more instructed people than our naturals. Good friends of ours had sent him to our warning ; and this is what he had to say.

Captain Fleete, in tacking southward off the western shore of Kent Isle, had overhauled a boat loaded with beaver-skins near Fort Crayford, and intercepted a sloop with white perch and other fish for the provisioning of Fort Kent ; which craft were turned adrift after being eased of their lading. But nought pertaining to the island people had been in any way disturbed ; and at one point between the forts our doughty

Captain, dipping landward until nigh aground, had tossed a flask and a merry word to an old comrade, ere slanting out again. Wherefore every dweller along that coast put by all dread of the foray and rejoiced with hilarity, wondering what exploit would follow.

But the garrisons could not take it so. They ranted at him over the furs and yelled curses for the good provender that he soon would eat in their stead. When he made into shore with the flask, they ran thither from both sides a long way, out of breath; and behold, he was out again in full good time, like one playing a game, with greeting that could not be bettered for politeness, when quite beyond reach.

They would willingly have wasted powder, then and afterward, at a hopeless range; but their officers forbade. Only, as he went by Fort Kent, a marksman, crouched upon the roof, sent a ball skipping along four fifths of the way to his target, then unwillingly gave over what was beyond his power. Thereafter they waited, with vociferation and confusion, for there was no great discipline among them, hoping for better fortune on his northward course, whichever shore he might follow.

He chose neither, but hung off the point, hovering surprisingly, till they saw to the southward the lifting sail unknown that both tempted and daunted him. At last the magnet drew and he sped forth to grapple his prize.

What followed they could not perfectly understand, the distance being too great. Shots were heard as the two vessels drew together; then the lesser one,

that of Captain Fleete, sheered away and took to flight; the greater pursuing and gaining. There were shots again, over by the western shore of the bay, ceasing suddenly. After a little, the two came back side by side; lay off the Kent'point a while undecidedly; then went on toward the Isle of Wye, not long before sundown. Therefore, we had our warning, though it was not easy to see how it could do us any good.

Undoubtedly it had the look of another transfer of allegiance, the Captain being cornered and over-matched. Even so, he surely need not have fired our thatch to hold a candle to the Devil. With retreat cut off and our last hold and home taken behind us, what better had we to look for than the life of wood-outlaws, hunted and harried for our lives on the border-land of humanity, ground more and more into the aspect and reality of savages, dodging desperately between evil white men and evil red?

I set my teeth at the thought of Marjorie and the little one doomed to such a fate. I grew murderous in heart over the treachery and evil cunning that could bring it on us.

All at once a wholesome instinct revolted from credence of this most inhuman thing; and I arose to denounce vehemently my own suspicion as it came from other lips.

"I would put my hand in the fire for Captain Fleete!" I cried.

Therewith, as though the words had been a spell, a vision of the very truth came to me, so certain sure

that I laughed aloud and strode away, fearful of revealing what no doubt was meant to be a secret until it should become a surprise.

Broadnax looked at me as I went by him, willing in his perplexity to draw comfort from any well. Others were of like feeling, by what I could hear; but some were ill-pleased with me, or mayhap deemed that I had lost my mind.

While I was pacing to and fro beyond the camp and beginning to doubt again already, a hand fell on my arm, and Marjorie spake, very low, beside me. In her words and tone I found an admiration for my discernment scarce believable; that quality not being one whereon she was given to compliment me.

“So—it is the Secretary—William Claiborne?” said she.

I bowed. “But say nothing. Who knows? I may be wrong.”

She shook her head strenuously. “It must be so; else were treachery abroad—treachery unspeakable! No, no, no!”

I put aside some thoughts that made for what we must not believe. “To be sure,” I answered, musing, “it fits well together, supposing him come again. Taking each other at first for enemies, they would naturally cease fighting and sail in company when once the Captain’s adhesion became known. And what more rational than that they should seek the Tower of Wye for our men, thereafter coming in search of us, that our whole force may fall on the enemy together?”

"Yes, yes," she said; "but after all were it not over-wisdom, such as falls on the other side? They were strong enough, to-day, I trow; and what if a hindrance should come from St. Mary's?"

"I fear we go too fast; the new sail may be that hindrance," quoth I, laughing glumly.

As I laughed, I saw the Indian runner had drawn near; and the thought came to me, here's one can resolve our doubt for us. "Boy," quoth I, "seek you a canoe and torch and hasten away. Find me out whether we have friends to look for. Some one red or white, some token of earth or air or human-kind will be sure to let you know. Then, if it be so, let us have, as soon as may be, a star of light and comfort from away on yon long reach of water. 'T will carry far, now that the wind and waves have died."

Before I had done speaking, he was gone.

That eased me, for there is ever a solace in the hope of early tidings when a veiled fate is coming and yet lingers. With quiet cheer I went among my mates again, telling old tales and cudgelling my brain for more, or jesting with some effort, seeing the while, though I would not seem to see, their eyes of curious intent and query bent on me. It may be they gathered a blind hope therefrom and from Marjorie's elate suppressing air; for as night drew on they seemed willing to sleep. Marjorie by this had withdrawn to little Richard in that rude wigwam which had been given for our abode. I paused uncertain, but threw myself down before the doorway.

All was still within. Some few paces aloof, our outlaws were settling into quiet, with here a low tone and there a light rustling or twig-snapping, and that half-heard vital throb and thrill which belongs to a concourse of living men in their repose.

One coughed, not loudly; then another chided him. The whippoorwills were calling insistently and proclaimingly overhead. Anon they had flitted, and their notes came to me from afar with a dreamy echoing sound; and so at intervals, backward and forward and hither and thither, shifting in a company like veritable rangers of the forest.

More than once I rose on elbow, hearkening to a stealthy even tread, which went round and round us. Haply my own heart-beats were deluding me, for my ears could distinguish nothing when well off the ground. After that I heard an owl, too, away somewhere, and went lapsing out of all knowledge with his vague and eerie cry.

I wakened again for no cause that I was 'ware of. It seemed a little time, yet my eyelids were lightened as by long resting. I felt it my plain duty to go look abroad.

Our good folk lay quiet and unmoving, as I slipped away between the trees. At no great distance I came upon our sentry of that side, a very weary statue; but with a whispered word he let me by. Onward then, carefully picking my steps, to the verge of a long southward wisp or rag of land; whence I peered with obstinate eye-straining away out over the water.

The air was weighty, and would have been sultry,

too, but for the chill hour and the salt presence of the bay. There was not so much as a zephyr to shake or ruffle the stars that shone below. Yet on the southern skyline a low heaped-up towering of cloud grew luminous intermittently with throbs of noiseless light; whereby I knew that a tumult of storm was verily on the way.

It sharpened my zest for tidings from the Isle of Wye, yet at first I could not even fancy that I saw what might tell me. Then came a doubtful glimmer, so very faint and far that I turned my gaze gingerly aside, for greater surety, fearing it was no more than some will-o'-the-wisp of hope. But still it held. I set my gaze thereon, with beating heart, and waited,—waited quietly, until there was in very truth and beyond all question a tiny spark of fire upon the wide still waters, ever coming on and on from the south-eastward, though with little growth or change.

I whirled about then, and ran back, with many stumbles, which brought all the camp out of dream-land ere I could get among them to tell. There might have been a hasty shot or two in that darkness, but Marjorie was the first afoot, divining my errand, and her voice forestalled my own in its jubilant explaining. I heard the cheer that went up, a veritable tempest of delight, and the hive came swarming forth to see.

Midway, the fire jewel was again in sight through some long alley or aperture between the trees. They had my name for it pat enough, which Mistress Broadnax lengthened into "our star of hope," with

lusty clapping of her hands, deeming that for this once, if never again, she had achieved poetry.

"'T will be a star in eclipse before long," grumbled her husband, as we came clear of the boughs.

It did not seem like him to take the gloomier view; but the proof was before us plainer than any handwriting on the wall to one who knew the wont of wind and water along the Chesapeake.

Where my heaped-up mound of cloud had been, there was a pursuing mountain now, most like a piling of grey fleece well nigh ready to topple, and momentarily flushed and vivified by the winking fire of the sky, a mighty to do and vast impulsion being obviously within and behind it, for all their noiselessness.

"Not that way!" answered I. "Yon lad is never the fool to be caught off shore in a whirl of tempest. Behooves us to show equal judgment."

"Yes," quoth Marjorie, looking ruefully at the babe now on her arm. "Any shelter, any!—save only Richard's dragon-haunted cave! We are not inured to drink lightning and play with deluges,—are we, little traveller?"

"'Tis astonishing how soon one gets used to anything," chuckled Broadnax.

"Baby shall not come to harm," declared his wife consolingly. "Nor his little mother, either. As for me—I have been under the bursting dykes of heaven too many times already.—Amos, what hinders that we make a run for our own home?"

He stood musing.

"Fort Crayford," suggested I.

"They would scarce fall on us by the way," she said doubtingly.

"That they would not!" cried Marjorie, leaping at the idea, with the desperation of her dread of the storm.

"I'll chance it," cries Broadnax; "in this dark, with that brew of weather a-coming and after the lively beating up of quarters that they have had this day!"

"Come on then!" I shouted, lifting little Richard from Marjorie's arm, and hurrying toward the camp; where others paused for torches, that soon overtook us, enabling more rapid way. We were lucky in our path also; but at the best it was a ticklish kind of journeying, with constant dread lest the tender skull should batter against bough or tree-trunk, or I pitch forward with him on the ground.

He was heavier, too, than of old, as will happen to these offspring when they get on from mere limp infancy toward crawling. On a smooth road he could even have toddled beside me a little way, but it would have been craziness to think then of any resource in his feet. We had a good long nightmare of such fleeting, ere we came out on the Indian trail which forever and a day had followed the backbone of our island, where now is a good road, northward and southward, for hoof and wheel, as any man may desire.

Down this we urged our way to the head of the first inlet making up from the western side, which gave like a portal or window toward the coming

storm. This was not silent any longer, but rumbling audibly, and broad before the eye like the cloak of some threatening genie, outflung to the straining of the tempest, and swaying blindly about as it came on, with instant inner leapings and illuminings, now and again making rents through which fine eager lines and snake tongues of quicksilvered golden flame kept darting hither and thither. This wavering and strenuous motion gave it an air of will, and of cat-and-mouse play or choice uncertain.

“One might fancy it had its eye on us,” quoth Marjorie, through her panting.

“God forbid!” gasped the other woman in plain terror. “Look yon, I do profess that I see somewhat like an eye yonder! O I’m nigh dead, but come, come, come!”

Her husband’s hand fell on her shoulder. Though not beyond superstition, he was too old an open-air man for the clouds to fright him. “Wait, my dear,” he said, “I cannot have you chased into a corpse by any fireworks.”

We drew breath while one might count two hundred; then on again, and with a vehement will. Midway the swaying ceased and the storm came steadily in a rush. The thunder was loud now, and by the flashes we could see the churning whiteness of the water, and the silvern rods of the rain. A low thrilled sound, like a threatening sigh, if such may be, was borne before it.

When we drew breath again in the southern edge of the last woods, the first great drops fell smitingly

about us. Half the sky was black. Then all the scene leaped out upon the eye, vivid, wildly lighted, and strangely near. The two arms of water nearly interlocking, the low pass between them where we had withstood the Tockwohgs long ago, Fort Crayford on the right, looking as though it might pelt us by hand with any missile, and beyond it boats keeping even with a straggling line of burdened men on foot, who all hurried southward! Then the darkness closed like an eyelid, and we sped onward through it, the women running each between two men, hand in hand, while the thunder awoke and echoed and re-echoed with most bewildering uproar. As we crossed the isthmus, our people on the right, myself among them, went plashing half knee-deep in water invisible, having thus far missed the narrow way.

“Did you see them?” I gasped at Broadnax, who ran beside me.

“Aye, the fort’s empty!” cries he.

With the word, all heaven and earth blazed again, showing the blockhouse nearer for our westward slanting, the last man of its garrison tumbling out of the door with a pack across his shoulder, one boat beached, another struggling desperately to make the shore, and the field ahead well sown with fugitives and their shadows, all in full flight from the first vision of us along the border of the wood. They threw up their arms now, at that same terror of sight repeated near, casting off burdens and shrieking above the storm, as if indeed they had mistaken us for some new kind of savages or demons. Our men helped on the delusion

with a very horrid outcry. Then, at a word, one and all, we hastened to the fort, the wind also bearing us along amid the faster smiting of the rain. Just as the door slammed behind the last of us, a deluge fell heavily, like the emptying of some great reservoir, and was whipped and whirled against the building on every side with a most furious wrenching.

For a while, we could no more than get our breath again, leaning and gasping. Then I barred and double barred the door, while Broadnax wakened the embers in the fire-place, and others of our party went searching overhead through every nook and corner, lest perchance an enemy should yet remain to do us a mischief.

But they found none, nor any vestiges of our St. Mary's forerunners that were worth the keeping, except only some little food out of a cupboard, which perhaps they had not found means to bear away.

Looking southeastward in the eye of the great storm, and in the rapid alternation of its brief noon and midnight, we could see what may have been another cause of their departure. Plunging forward, with masts all aslant and bare as any walking cane, our two vessels from the Tower of Wye raced helplessly for the shore. 'Twas an ill sight, but unlikely to be fraught with any great danger at that season and in those sandy shallows. They were yet too far for any aid; nor indeed could we hope to do aught before they should come to land.

Meanwhile we were in strong and homelike quarters, better every way than that deserted house of

Broadnax, which at first had been our aim. So we heaped on fuel and made the best of all things round us, until even little Richard stilled his crying in his mother's lap, and began to reach coveting hands toward the merry brightness, where good things were already a-simmering toward our breakfast at early dawn. I wondered what might be his inward explanation of our wild unreasonable race through that terrifying light and darkness. But he had few words yet and they gave no insight into the matter.

After a time, I opened the door and stepped into the blast, holding hard and gazing. In the moment of the next flash, the greater vessel struck with a cry, well out from shore, and hung there atilt, a picture of leaping whiteness and clinging forms; one second only, then the curtain was down again.

I called Broadnax, and with ten more we hurried across the isle toward her. By flash after flash, we could see that Fleete's shallop kept on over the bar, being of far less draft than the other, and indeed not beyond all government and pilotage. I gathered he was making for the mouth of the eastern inlet, which had better depth of water, as will often happen, than any near part of the bay outside; being, indeed, but a lane or trench between sedgy banks and reaching nearly straight before the wind up into the marrow of the land.

When we gained the upper end, she was indeed coming obediently along that water path, rasping the earth with her sides and brushing through the grasses in a way that would have been marvellous indeed to

one not knowing the place. For all the world, it was like sailing over and through a pasture field.

We hurried eagerly to meet her, and leaped aboard one after the other as she still moved on; for behold on the deck not Fleete alone, but beside him, and in open amity, the tall leader and rightful lord of our isle, William Claiborne, for whom we had both fought and suffered.

I was at him first of all, and stood there in the whoop of the wind and the lashing of the rain-whips, hand in hand with him and his whilome rival and foeman, hearkening to their delight over my salvation, and uttering with that same breath my own cordial welcoming. Nor do I think there was ever a wilder and stranger one in all the world.

But we could not leave the greater crew in their most miserable case. Together we hurried along shore opposite where they lay. A boat had made land already and was fighting to return. Yet the men, in numbers, finding no great depth about them, kept floundering ashore without it, now quite lost to view or swimming hardily, now standing up clear of water from the ankles in the passage of some sandy bar; for the most part laughing and shouting as they came, or swearing aloud with voluble profaneness. They had little need of our aid; but we gave it, sharing merrily enough in every mishap. Then away to the fort helter-skelter, a very saturate band of mortals making for the fire.

There was little else to give them. We longed uselessly for the remnant of our great ox from the

wood. In its stead came Dandy with a prime case-bottle of liquor, which by chance, or instinct, he had picked up in the field after the scattering of the St. Mary's men; where, he said, was now a fruitful crop of many things that grow not with us commonly. He made light of the outer turbulence, having so much of it already within, and a fair prospect ahead of jovial fellowship. I had no heart, though, to blame his neighbors for being more cautious and tender, when I looked abroad or hearkened to the chaos of the night.

This man was most easy and friendly with me, as if we had not differed in any serious way. 'Twas patent he felt himself the pink of loyalty to our good cause, though such an abiding sore and discredit. He cared nought for hardship and less than nothing for danger; but when all went well and quietly you could not wish a more unkempt, unmanageable savage in any Christian government.

At his first entry, I saw a frown on the keen and strong face of William Claiborne, who had lost by his violences and could never forget evil service even from a friend. But seeing the genial gift and our general tolerance of that losel, he put on a graciousness, asking many questions of the isle, whereto he found the blacksmith well equipped and ready to answer.

Dandy told us that two pinnaces from St. Mary's had made Kent Fort a little before the storm, and lay there under strain, unless by this time their cables had given way. What with these newcomers and the men who had fled before us, he thought the lower fort

might have nigh as many fighting men as we ; but after our magnifying alarums and menacings he misdoubted their good will to the fray. Most like, an onset in the black bellowing of the storm would bring them down on their marrow bones directly.

While we were digesting this bold counsel, there came a knock on the door and our Indian runner slipped in among us, wonderfully dry, his progress from shelter to shelter having doubtless been a thing of surpassing art ever since his first evasion of the storm. Who, being interrogated, made good the tidings and counsel in his own way.

But these plain hints met with evident disfavor. Broadnax would willingly have gone, I do believe ; but I could not pretend to any great eagerness, after all my late experience, though never the man to shrink away if bidden. As for the rest, when Claiborne fain would urge the matter, they had only head-shakings for him and dogged murmurings. Wherefore he presently gave over, and waited between scorn and wistfulness. While that extravagance of the weather lasted, a command would have been a bid for mutiny.

CHAPTER XXII.

COMING TO OUR OWN AGAIN.

A HALF hour before dawn, the sky cleared and the air quieted. A light touch in the side woke me from my dozing. I looked up to find Claiborne bending over me.

"Listen," he said. All was calm. "Think you they will go now?" quoth he, slow and bitter.

I arose, without speech, bewildered by my slumbers.

He took long swift paces back and forth among them, with little care in his tread.

"Was ever man so beset by clumsy folly!" he cried. "O, that men will not be really men but only mules! See you not how St. Mary's was delivered into our hand, with these men of the lower fort all taken? I wager they are flown already—O!" In his exasperation, he stamped his heel into the floor, grinding out a curse.

"O, I fear not that," I hazarded, casting about for wherewithal to ease his mind.

But he was in a venomous mood, with some reason, and not to be pleased with any utterance.

"Not that," he echoed, in his mock-polite manner of satire, which I ever found most unbearable. "Not *that*' prithee! And of what is Master Richard

Smith afeard, that he will no longer obey nor make others obey him?" Therewith he swept his long arm and body at me slantwise, with a truly Satanic courtesy.

I faced him hotly, defiance hurrying to my tongue, when Broadnax, whom I had thought a-dreaming, sat upright and took my quarrel on him with an angry bluntness.

"Gad-zounds, William Claiborne!" cries he. "The man hath affronted death and Hell for you; and this is the best word you give him! Nay, if that be all, we may well go back again to our woods. However, for this one night, at any rate, they shall do your bidding that you may not taunt us with being afeard—we who did not dread the power of St. Mary's while you were far away! Now up with you, boys, and out with you—all of you—to the storming of Kent Fort!"

While that outburst went on, Captain Fleete sat up likewise, but with an innocent and neutral air. I knew well enough he was thinking of the good lesson at last read to one who by like arrogance, and fury of urbanity, had aforetime driven himself into plain hatred. In Dandy's rugged and reckless face I found a more evident pleasure, such as must needs come to him with any jar and clash. I had no time to remark the leave of our men, so quickly were all now hurried abroad.

In these bickerings a little time had been lost, and with all our haste we must lose yet more by the way. The many ponds and deep miry places bade us go

about and about, or clogged our passage through them. We could not often keep to the usual road, but seemed forever getting into some new course and new difficulty.

The grey of dawn came on us while we waded through a broad shallow inlet or strait of new water, then for a little time linking bay with bay. Beyond it rose the fort and the pine-trees about the point, with some little land between, making an islet all alone. Smaller ones were dotted about, and folk new wakened, or who had not slept at all, peered at us from the houses while we went by. Then from an upper window one grizzled man reached a lean arm westward, pointing out upon the water, and seeming to tell us, "They are gone."

I looked that Claiborne should have vented spleen again, but he held his peace. My heart was stirred as I saw him walk into the empty fort under shadow. Well we knew, all of us, we had lost the chance for a quick triumphing.

"But at least we may follow them to St. Mary's?" besought my good Broadnax when our leader came forth again.

"Rather to Saint Disaster," answered he. "No, I have not yet the strength for the main hive of them. Master Smith, you have been there; is it not so?"

I owned that I thought it was; adding that we had been sorry fools together, all save himself, and had done what we at present could in no way undo or repair.

"Now that is wisely said," answered Claiborne,

staring kindly at me and laughing in a cordial way ; for nothing, not even victory and good fortune, pleased him quite so well as for one to own him entirely in the right.

After a little, quoth he, " If men could but bear it in mind, they would repair their errors before committing them ; which, indeed, is commonly the only time. Ah ! well, what we have won we have won ; let us make that good at any rate."

For action was ever more akin to his temper than moralizing ; which may be the reason I remember this one quaint aphorism of reparation so very well. In point of fact, a great part of his own life's effort was given to refute it ; for surely no man has stumbled more often in plain paths of policy, nor shown himself more ingenious and indomitable in regaining his lost headway. But if 't will make men careful of error, pray let his doctrine stand.

Then went we to work at what might usefully be done, with an honest will and the sense of getting off more easily than our desert. First of all the good bark that had borne him to our shore was floated from the sand that held her, with the rising of the tide, and brought unto a fit landing where she might be bailed and unladen. Then, by her aid the forts were stocked with better munition and plenishing, the loss in cargo not having been very great. When we found ourselves in good case to resist either sudden assault or long and patient besieging we drew easier breath, and took comfort, each man having his own again, liberty included.

Cheery were the days in that our little colony on Kent Isle—days of happy junketing and visits between neighbors and many a festal eve. Sailed full often from the Isle of Wye, unto our gatherings, good friends and true, with tidings that still there among them all went well. Alice Claiborne, too, our most rare and kindly lady, was with us ever; and given, to the abiding delight of Marjorie, a kind of social sovereignty over all.

That year our cultivation spread far northward into the forest, where settler after settler had cut out his clearing and made his sturdy home. Never was traffic with the coppery folk so promising, a plenitude of fur-skins being brought unto our hands from every side.

'Tis true, with St. Mary's beyond the bay we were quite openly at war; but that had no meaning now beyond petty capture or incursion and reprisals, both sides being so alert and well guarded that it seemed more like some frivolous and mimic game.

This lasted not, nor will I dwell upon the ending; when with William Claiborne and his sister and many a true friend beside, we sought our strong Tower of Wye, standing there for a time desperately at bay; then, all availing not, betook us in sore dislodgment and through many grim and eerie hazards to old England once again for few years only.

Nor boots it to set forth what history has told—the see-saw of rivalry and hate that followed, now Calvert uppermost, now Claiborne, and then Calvert and Claiborne each again; King and Parliament, Vir-

ginians, Puritans and Jesuits, regicides and buccaneers, all by turns to one scale or the other lending a forceful hand; until at last the swaying and turmoil has come quite to a balance, and there are no Lords Proprietary nor Lords of any kind in this our Maryland any more, but Richard Smith may write out freely among all men on this fair level Isle of Kent these bedappled memories of olden days, answering to no hostile assembly for the plain duty that he did, nor driven any more to the woods or the waters for refuge, and fearing by night or day no manner of evil.

I will but add one matter, which indeed I have touched upon before. Soon after our last returning to the islands, one lately from the dark and desert parts beyond the westward settlements brought to me, with kindly messages, a golden locket, sent in an hour of loneliness and deathly shadow by that strange wandering princess or priestess of the wild, then harboring with the restless Monicans who hunt along the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

I minded well the gaud, and, musing, pressed the spring, but there was no inner token.

1817

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