

THE ISLAND PROVIDENCE

By
FREDERICK NIVEN



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BY THE SAME AUTHOR
THE LOST CABIN MINE
Crown 8vo

THE ISLAND PROVIDENCE

BY FREDERICK NIVEN

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**TO
L. M. T.**

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THE ISLAND PROVIDENCE

CHAPTER I

THE SECOND ADVENT

In the year of grace, 1675, the seventh day of September, John Upcott, being that day breeched for the first time, contemplated his shadow with no small pride. And his appetite for applause being now but whetted by the fond and jesting admiration of mother, sister, brother, he set off to West Abbotsham to preen himself before the eyes of Cassandra Gifford. His admiration of himself, crossing the stile from the lane into the cart-track, was immense. Gilford's dog, sighting him from the barn-end, had a moment's doubt, muzzle forward, ears twitching, legs taut, scrutinizing the new playmate. Only with children did the dog renounce the staid, taciturn manner that he had learnt in work with his colleague, old Gifford. With children he renewed his youth, and every new child was of interest. Then he recognised his friend, came bounding—and snuffed. So again John had joy of his breeches; for they had again assuredly been remarked.

This is no milk-and-water tale, but a tale of salt seas; let no one deem otherwise, despite the following picture, nor be deceived by it into fearing that kisses are to be the burden of my narrative. For my narrative is not precisely of lilac and lavender. But the world is not all of one colour; there be grey of rocks for purple of the heather, green of the sea for white of its foam; and though I can tell you of the old painted women of the Isle Providence I can tell you (in my heart had rather tell you) of the Devon child with the wistful eyes, slant-set beneath her pensive brows—already pensive—and her hair, red then, let me say, and have done with it; though to be sure it turned auburn with the years.

Long years after Upcott remembered her tiny, erect figure, her bent head, chin on flat little breast, slender arms pendant, as she welcomed him that day of second summer. Of her words he remembered but one phrase; of their play, that afternoon, in that high upland farm-close, nothing. He did remember that he was hot with playing, and cold with the after chill, when Cassandra's mother came to him with some sweet morsel from the pantry and suggested that it was time for him to be going home to his own mother, the breeches notwithstanding. Cassandra was to see him upon his way; for though her youth and his were equal it is an unwritten law that the girl in such case, and at that age, must play mother. Of where she left him he retained no recollection. It was by the white-washed wall at the barn that he, seeing their shadows cast there by the slanting sun of late afternoon, manlike, so-so pleased with his companion's lean, spindle shadow, and intensely occupied with his own—with the legs gloriously shadowed—cried out: "Ah, I am a man."

One forgets one's childhood; Upcott forgot much of his; but there was some special emotion surely felt, passing by that sunlit wall.

"Cassandra," he cried, contemplating his swinging shadow, "I shall go to the wars and be a shoulder."

"You mean a soldier," Cassandra corrected.

"Yes," he said, "shoulder, soldier; and carry a musket on my shoulder," trying to dissemble, child-like—and adult-like—his faulty speech.

Perhaps it was at the stile that she left him; for one fancies he would lure her at least so far to behold the grown-up method of swinging a leg across the bars.

There she fades, at any rate, out of that picture of the day, and the child is left alone.

The lane wound through a wilderness of nettles and thistles and spiked briar with great spiders' webs trailed from twig to twig; and at that time hundreds of crane-flies staggered over grass and hedge. They had bounced in his face on his journey upward to the farm but, full then with the sense of his manliness, he had blown them aside grandly, although daddies have a notable fad for going head to wind, for fluttering against the mouth that blows them away.

Now he faced the lane with a sense of distaste. Not that he feared daddy-long-legs. But there were also wasps. Not that he feared wasps, exactly. But it was a long lane and tangled.

After all, no daddy-long-legs, no wasps, annoyed him. They seemed to be all asleep. He marched on with regular stride, eyes twitching to left and right. The spiders' webs were still there; but there was no spider moving. Each spider sat bloated and motionless in the centre of his grey winding-sheet. He saw one slow beetle as it strolled under a stone from the muddy centre of the lane. A little further on he saw a solitary daddy-long-legs feebly crawling, and falling, and

fluttering, and dancing creepily downward, into the abyss of a blackberry bush. And both these living things seemed exhausted.

There was not another sign of life; and the lane suddenly wore to him such an aspect that almost he would have welcomed the golden flash and the spiteful hum of just one wasp. He felt so utterly alone. Overhead was the blue, glittering sky, without a single high tenant: here was the lane, forsaken, with not so much as a perennial wind passing through its drear sunlit and shadowed chaos. At last he came to its end, and mounting the hither stile and holding the topmost projecting post, standing so, perilously, on tip-toe, he saw the hills wavering round the bays, yearning up to the sky, rolling down to the sea in abrupt declivities, broken here and there by the "mouths," cut off here and there by sheer cliffs.

On the outjutting points he could see the white of breaking waves; for though you could not have counted, on that day of calm, six white flashes of foam in all those blue acres of confronting sea, yet the verge of land and water was marked with the white breakers from Hartland Point to Baggy Bay. And in all that vastness there was no sail of any ship.

For a little way the boy's path led by a cliff whence he could hear the sea on that day even, of calm, in a multitude of ceaseless sounds. For groundwork was the eternal sigh, as of silk drawn through the hand. Then would come a crack, as when one is struck on the cheek with the flat of a hand. Again—you have seen women of a washing-day in the near field, stretching a wet blanket, one at either end, arms extended; then you have seen them give that quick, decisive flip and heard the flack of it. A sound of that kind, but of infinitely greater volume, ever and again burst deeply in the midst of the lesser sounds, burst with an awesome detonation. These were the only sounds on all that shore.

Searching now, with your bird's-eye view, over that sweep of wild North Devon land aslant to the sea, you can just pick out our five-year-old, a mere dot, child and shadow, shadow by him forgotten now, marching home.

It was here that a gripping alarm assailed his mind, open, as you may guess, by the loneliness, to any vagrant and disturbing thought.

He had heard rumours of the Second Advent; for rectors and lecturers, in those days of transition, had thoughtful and critical, if (like themselves) superstitious hearers. Men delved in the Bible as they quested to the Spanish main, to Madagascar, to the kingdom of the great Mogul—quested how naïvely, with what incongruities!

And here was a child of a dissolute father and a pious mother, and none could tell what such a child might weave in his mind out of the loose ends of talks of elder people and his own infantile observations of life.

So now, when the utter loneliness embraced him, in his prepared mind echoed the words: "Like a thief in the night." Quite clearly then he perceived that his ideas regarding the Second Advent had lacked breadth. At least his mind was developing, as minds with any developing capacity do, in loneliness. A thief in the night would come quietly; that was probably all that the phrase implied. By day, or by night, that coming would be quiet.

Upcott swept with his eye the visible world, and imagination showed him also a little farther, beyond the hill-verges and the sea-rim. His heart leaped and swelled, and he began to run.

There was cause for haste. If, while he had come down that silent lane—he remembered now the slow beetle, the failing crane-fly as cumulative evidence—the Christ had come and snatched viewless all the good into the blue, limitless heavens, as he feared, why did he run now? Of what avail running home—home?

What he sought was certainty. Many a time in his tormented future was he to go questing so, but never again perhaps with such a cold helplessness. Later he was to learn stoic and callous aids. Yet already, to-day, till he knew the worst he would not weep; but his heart, he felt, was full of tears bubbling in a spring, rising, filling, bursting.

At last, after what seemed a run of half the world, he reached the gate into the yard.

"Mother!" he cried. And there was no reply.

"Sis!" But there was no reply.

"Tom!" But no elder brother answered to his call.

Then he squared his shoulders. He was cold. His heart was fluttering. And in a high, quavering voice with an insinuated

hardness, as betokening preparedness for aught:

"Father!"

There was no reply.

He crept terrified indoors and the wag-at-the-wall, ticking in the shadowy kitchen and filling the house with its furtive, fearful, lonely echo, told him that there was no one there. The white-faced clock was but counting out inexorably the brief moments between the departure of the good and the first outcry of the almost lost (for he thought he had heard some rumour of a hint the Book proffered, that even then there would be a frail, final hope) when they should discover that the world was theirs, for a space.

He blubbered once and then gulped down the next sob.

To whom could he go? To whom, left behind, yet possessing a remnant of kindness, might he fly, to be beside in that dread hour when the evil of the earth came grinning and halloing over the hills? He bethought him of the old man of the bees, he who lived a little way east above the clover lands; and thither he continued his broken trot. He had but little hope left now, for he thought that the old man of the bees was a man likely to be fit for transportation ere the inundation of the rioters.

On the way he fell several times. The wonder is that his heart did not burst. But at length he arrived at the tiny cot, standing solitary in a fold of the hill with the two rows of beehives close by in the wild little garden. Below waved the clover in the clover lands. There was froth on the child's lips as he opened the gate into the garden.

The place was loud with bees but he had passed beyond any far-fetched hope that their humming might have given, had he heard it. He did not hear.

"Uncle!" he called, or strove to call.

There was no answer. He whom all the children called "uncle" was not there.

That was final. He need go no farther. He had settled his fate. But, to make absolutely sure, he crept to the cot door and looked into the tiny place; one could see both its rooms from the low entrance. Uncle was not there. He turned back and prepared for the worst. In that little buzzing garden, in that hollow of the sweeping hills, under the high infinite dome he stood preparing for he knew not what; feeble before the unknown, yet not utterly cast down. There was fight in the little devil yet.

His eyes, with the sweat running into them, blinked ahead of him into the nothingness as he waited. His ears were alert for the terrors behind, for all sounds that might come. His chin twitched for all that he pursed his lips together. In a word, at one and the same time (pardon me, gentlemen) erect and trembling, he squared his shoulders and piddled in his new breeches.

And then a voice, with an Irish brogue, said:

"Why! God bless the boy!"

CHAPTER II

FATHER AND SON

Upcott's father, to come straight to the point, was a loathly drunkard; and his mother was a saint of that order whose martyrdom is the smiling martyrdom of life.

The churches were then full of petty bickerings; and around the Book then, as always, was seething all manner of talk quite by the point. One fancies, reading the records of the time, that to the disputants there must have come moments when, withdrawn from the tumult and pondering alone, they looked inwards on themselves with doubting, even with sardonic eye. But Mrs. Upcott, thanks to her clarity of mind and capacity for retaining hold of the main issue, was little troubled with what one might call party-religion. With her melting grey eyes she read the old heart-finding sentences at dusk, by the low lamplight, when Upcott lay snoring in bed, the pigs grunting in the sty; and there would be a peaceful gleam on her face as she read. That gleam of calm would fade suddenly at times, the eyes harden, the form, once lissome, be drawn up stately, in a blending of pain and dignity at a grunt of part-awakening in the room above and a thick voice as of a somnabulist crying out, "Moll! Dolly! Bridget!" For Mrs. Upcott's Christian name was Grace.

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but you see me... If a man love me he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him... Ye have heard how I said unto you I go away and come again unto you..."

So she gained courage to live, the words falling gently on her soul, a spiritual febrifuge; and one requisite; for her soul was often fevered by self-criticism.

She had other ghostly consolations: thoughts of loved ones of her people—her maiden surname was Smith, her father being the noted Thomas Smith, silk-weaver, of Bideford, an honoured name in North Devon. Her mother had been a holy woman, lived honourably and gone hence calmly.

Mrs. Upcott was possessor of "the lively hope;" but life is long, and to aid her in the smiling business of the days, when her broken spirit spent half the night in tears, she would ponder these words and others, with their mysterious, delectable peace. She craved forgiveness for herself and enlightenment on the duties of a wife; she craved forgiveness for her husband and a new life. Never a soul durst sympathise with her. She met the folk that looked on her, pondering words of sympathy, with a barrier of smiles. Her mask was one of innocence—she who knew all that is to be known. So her neighbours stood almost in awe of her. All they could say of her was that she had a touch of "gentrice," and they bowed to it with no jealousy.

These prayers by the way, of which I speak, she ever sternly informed herself were heard, such was her indomitable sophistry. But for some reason, beyond a mortal mind to dare, the prayers were not answered, she would say simply, (amazed at her own faith at times) as the maker of the prayer desired. Such was the high, blind faith of these lost days.

If she had not thought her children old enough to know all the mightiness and mystery of God she had not kept them ignorant of certain holy and joyous things. And as there is sophistry in the minds of the aged, trying to make things fit, so are distortions in the minds of children trying to make things comprehensible. So you see her more clearly now, also her son. Without knowing the mother how can one ever wholly understand her son?

Over at Hartland her brother had spoken his last word. He would come not again to the Abbotsham farm until he came in black, to see lowered down from sight and mind the ruination of his sister's life. For only thus could he look on the matter, loving onlooker; and only mysterious God knew, and visionary Grace at times perceived, what a rare thing, like an eternal flower, blossomed in her bosom amidst that "ruination."

My words are faulty. They are material and not fit to tell of the vague anodynes, the more than anodynes, of the Mrs. Upcotts of past or present. Most of us look on these lives with the eyes of—Grace's brother.

"If ever he comes to Hartland I'll set him on the broad of his back," said he, and her face was peaked. "That is all," he cried; "it taxes me too much to come to see you, Grace." And she kissed him fondly as he went; and he remembered how her hand plucked his shoulder.

Now and then, it is true, when neighbours met and, talking the talk of the countryside, "turned over," as the phrase goes, the Upcott household, some shaggy one might suggest (perhaps more from contrariety than belief) that a wife could do a deal to keep a husband straight. But such suggestions either fell flat as though unheard or were violently repudiated. And a fate seemed to follow those who made such suggestions: the ordinaries would presently claim their more frequent presence, and the midnight ditch.

You will gather that Upcott's was no common backsliding. Even those who loved to be "merry," or, as they said in quay parlance, "half-caulked," had a loathing for the man who would throw his money into the tavern tills, hunt all the loose petticoats of the back streets, be none so drunk but he recollected to save horseflesh going up hill home, and then, at the turn off from Abbotsham Hill, start bellowing to the night so that he raised the roosted crows: "Put the pan on the fire; I'm a-coming hoom." You begin to feel the atmosphere at the Upcott farm; and if the place was always clean as a new pin and wore a smiling air that meant very much just what the smile of the mistress meant, you have guessed whose mind directed it and in what a quiet way. There the two boys and the sister grew up. Another child there had been; but—well, the mother's prayer in her prison of circumstance was: "Lord, if this child I am about to bear be not such as will lead a noble and clean life, may the child, I pray thee, O God, in Thy mercy, be born still, and its soul never leave thy sanctuary."

So there were but the three.

Tom, sullen, morose, answering his father in monosyllables, contrived to work away from home as much as possible. Of what service could he be at home when his mother counselled, ever and ever, the bearing of the yoke?

The girl was the mother's right hand. You could not say that she was a pretty child. A late greater beauty came to her with years, just when people had come to think she was to be a plain, sadly sweet reminder to them of how Upcott had ruined more lives than his own. But that is by the way; as a child—no, I think you could not call her pretty, though you would be drawn to her more than to prettiness. She had a wide wonder in her eyes, great brown eyes of the father's hue but of the melting fashion of the mother's grey. The sordid things she saw, the gross things she heard, were never taken for granted, never accepted as being things that are even in merely normal conditions. Not from words of her mother's, but from her mother's manner she understood that this condition of things was accidental. So, when she came to the age of long frocks she saw what she had thus the eye to see in mortals; and while Miss Go-lightly would be met with a sidewise waggle of the head, a half-wink, or leer, to Sis there would be respect tendered as matter of course and accepted so. The lascivious, healthy, robust young stable boy, a great blade, who was on terms familiar with many scattered maids, had been seen to come to Sis with a spray of white heather one morning when the hills were aflame and present it to her in silence and with a bow that was greater than an achievement. Something in the morning hills with the spray of white among the purple, something in that Devon sky, or out of the Devon spaces had granted the stable Don Juan entrance into, for him, another world; and he had in him, it would appear, the native greatness to at least visit that world. So he brought the heather to Sis.

John was learning life in many ways, and some of his lessons were taught then, as you might say, and learnt afterwards.

One day in the autumn of 1685 the pony was put into the shafts and, as Upcott had several calls to make in town, John went with him to play groom. These were great days for John, for there was always stir in Bideford. In the river would be ships from Newfoundland, ships from Spain with wool. There would be tobacco ships, ships from Raleigh's colony.

There were men to be found who had been with Blake and could acknowledge it. There were men who durst not tell the names of captains they had served. There were those who had been to and fro in the West Indies and the Caribbean Sea among the islands, carrying to them much needed merchandise which they sold at rates far below those that could be offered by law-abiding Spanish merchants handicapped by Spain's taxes and duties—rollicking smugglers. There were those who had hung about the far Atlantic like gentlemen-of-the-road lurking on a common, waiting the coming of the galleons on the wide sea highways.

To boys they did not talk much of their doings, nor even to their peers, the tendency amongst them rather being to hint darkly that men must be men indeed to do some things that had to be done in these far sea-fields. But they lounged on the quay and watched the tides come and go, spitting into the river; and criss-crossed to and from the water-front ordinaries. Still, their tales, though the half were never told, were in the air. They made an atmosphere around them. Faces and gait spoke. Their tales exuded from them. And the things they brought home, as sailors always do, spoke—aye, some spoke literally; for they had a great fancy, when they could, to fetch home parrots, till nearly every ordinary had its "pretty

Poll." And the parrots would let out a deal, one way or another. There was one, at "The Dolphin," that would cry: "Prepare to meet thy God. The ship's going down."

These seamen did their best to make Bideford not tedious during their spells ashore, and Bideford did its best to amuse them. Some might go to church or meeting-house, and the meeting-house had so large a following in Bideford that the bishops were moved to be broad-minded and speak of meeting-houses with leniency. But to hear William Bartlett on the text: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters," was, if for the moment it touched the religious emotion, a dry entertainment, despite the text, to seamen who had dabbled in buccaneering. Many had more than dabbled. To listen to much of that and take it home to one's heart, one would resolve to leave the kicking tiller for the kicking ploughshaft: scuppers sometimes spouted blood into the Caribbean Sea.

Into Bideford then, drove the Upcotts, father and younger son. John was now fifteen years of age and a boy by that age is well advanced with his note-book, packing it with suggestions of things that he will examine in due course.

As they entered the town a party of soldiers were digging in the road-side at the top of the High Street. John remarked their uniforms, their swagger, and took special notice of how the officer stood, wrist on hip, head flung back, looking on his men with insolent eyes.

They drove slowly there, partly for the sudden declivity, partly because of the men's tools being thrown on the road and the men giving no heed to passage-way for others; so John had opportunity to note that the men, exchanging speech at their work—they were dropping a long beam into the hole that had been dug—looked at each other with the same insolent blankness of countenance that their leader wore on his, and spoke short and rasping. He took note of this as a thing to be cultivated by soldiers, but by way of a fashion, not surely so vindictive as it looked, telling more what might be of fierceness rather than of what constantly was. Imagine one always looking so! He had no idea that if one of these men smiled at his work, or dropped that mask a moment, the others would leap straightway upon him and rend him limb from limb—with no change of expression.

At the quay they alighted and, the horse being led into the yard, sat down on the bench before the door of "The Ship" to grow acclimatised to the town before proceeding to business.

Now it chanced that two girls had been seated there, had but newly risen, were still indeed in view, swinging along, heads in air stiffly, but eyes glinting sidewise across to the expectorating mariners. Down then clapped father, and John also subsided, gaze roving over the shipping. Upcott called for a refresher (a humble beginning for the fray) of bread and cheese and ale. Then up he jumped suddenly. Here is an incident I do not care to tell; but it has to be told, as it gives you, once and for all and done with it, an idea of the kind of father John had.

"God, John," said he, "there's warmth i' they maids," and nudged fifteen-year-old in the ribs and then sat with eyes twinkling over the only pleasantries he had ever passed with his son, waiting for the ale. And fifteen-year-old, rightly or wrongly, had a sense of the unfitness of the jest between father and son, to say the least. He was old enough to see both sides of the coin, if not quite to understand the full significance of all the stampings.

Another glimpse he was to be given of the creature his father was, when in the Gunstone Lane up came a villainous, cross-eyed man with a nose into the nostrils of which one could look, the impudent way it was set on his face, and began: "Iss, there ye be, Upcott o' Abbotsham come down along to Bideford to carry on your capers and thinks we don't know you. I know you——"

Upcott hastened his steps, his son, shamed, at his side, until they found refuge in a shop where Upcott made a pretence of looking over some goods. But the short-nosed man was dancing at the door, yahing and booing and making sounds like a monkey from Madagascar.

A crowd was gathering. Within was Upcott trembling over the goods and the shopman eyeing him and then eyeing the crowd at the door, beginning to discern the subterfuge of Upcott's entrance. His brusque manner put a period to Upcott's slinking there.

Shame was in John's heart at his father's cowardice, whatever the cause, real or imagined, of this man's animosity.

John was glad to see a sign of fight and a masterly look come on his father's face as they emerged again into the clamant street. But it signified little of action, for again the father sought to make a way for himself.

"You and your gentrice wife!" cried the man for ending to another taunt.

John looked to his father and saw the blood in his face. He assuredly appeared then as though he had an intention to make an end of the weazel hanging to his neck; but some other thought came to him and (though now with clenched fists) he plodded nervously on afresh, in a new resolve. But now, to be sure, his bearing was such that the crowd stayed aside from him, gave him passage freely.

But this was not enough for John.

For himself he could, all his life, stand a deal of abuse and smile on the giver. But a word against family, a word against his secretly beloved, and John was neither to hold nor bind.

"No word of that!" he cried, wheeling and leaping.

White and glaring-eyed he smote the weazel under the chin, following the blow, the only way one can describe his attack seems to be by saying, with himself; hurled himself on the man as he staggered back, falling down in the crowd that parted and then encircled.

I am painting the picture of no hero of melodrama, whatever I may be painting, and I have to tell you the truth.

"I will have no word of my——"

The crowd heard John cry so much in a voice that appalled with its blent, youthful timbre and its madness. He had flung himself on the fallen man, and they both were now struggling and smiting. Either the weazel did, or Upcott imagined that he did, while cuffing and gripping, try to bite his hand. And even as he cried the words, John Upcott, at the hint, and feeling his antagonist's strength, set his teeth in the man's throat. His own ribs were cracking, for the weazel was a man grown, an ugly devil too.

Then he found himself (it was the next thing he knew) standing cold in the street, glaring down on a gulping man, and hands were pulling him back; voices, almost caressing for some reason, saying: "All right, sonny. All right. But that's not an Englishman's way."

The man on the causey was struggling to his feet as the crowd thrust John and father away. The whole thing had not lasted long, the climax not a minute.

They went on in silence, long after they had passed from range of the immediate and curious eyes, the father now and then looking down on the boy, and John, with the tail of his eye, as the phrase is, aware of the frequent scrutiny, though he would not meet it. It was nothing to him, condemnatory or appreciative. Something had come between father and son for ever.

Upcott had several calls to make, many of them with a side-issue of liquidation in the nearest ordinary. Once said Upcott to his son, smiling fatherly on him:

"Now, John, there's no need for you to hang round with me seeing us have put up the nag. You can run off and see the ships, or what you fancy."

But John announced, with something of the aspect of the soldiers on the hill, that he would prefer to stay with his father.

"Ha, ha," laughed the father's then fellow tippler, "an exemplary boy, a good lad, fond o' his father." And Upcott appeared a trifle annoyed at the words, reading, doubtless, in the twinkle of the man's eye, an irony more keen than was intended.

There were two or three such episodes. The father gave permission to his boy to go if he so desired; then he suggested that he should go; and all the while, as ballads have it, "the wine was birling." Then came the command:

"Get out of it now, John, and meet me to the Ship a couple of hours from now."

The eyes of father and son met. They understood each other in that gaze—and there was more than the barrier between.

"Yes, that's me," said the father's eye. "You're getting years, and you can understand things a bit. Well, that's me, so now you know."

And the lad's eye said: "So be it. And I am growing older every day!"

But he obeyed, and gave his father his absence.

In the streets as he strolled round, his face no very placid face then, he encountered a man that he remembered—he having a distinctive, superlative air of vagabondage—as one of the crowd in the Gunstone Lane fight.

This man merits description. He wore, a-cock, a fine hat with braid, and round his pow, beneath the hat, was a red handkerchief with blue and yellow spots, coming down to near his ears, which were long and narrow and ran down in the line of his slanting jaw, with hardly any tendency toward the erect. He was clean-shaven, long of nose, close of brow, had a chin that announced a mixture of strength and weakness. His hair stuck out behind, from under the kerchief, in a tuft. He wore a long gallant coat that had seen some salt service, the buttons, of gold, all there, but many hanging loosely. A fancy waistcoat looked out brazenly and a little worn from the sagging coat, yellow lace from his sleeves, on the brown wrists, and silver buckles shone on his heavy shoes. John gathered him together with his eye, felt himself in the presence of an extreme devil and yet, evil as the man looked, terribly evil, his face wearing the sear of a knife and all the sears of debauchery, found him attractive. His mother could never have seen the man attractive—nor could his father; and he should not perhaps have been attractive from any standpoint. From the romantic standpoint of youth he was. There was in his evil eyes a glitter of comradeship.

"Hullo, shipmate. You're the bloody boy," the piratical person hailed him. "Shaken the da' off, have you?"

Upcott for some reason laughed recklessly.

"Yes," said he.

"That's the bold lad. Come and have a tot of brandy, lad."

"No, thank you, sir," said Upcott, casting off the recklessness.

"Eh? Oh, you are still on clotted cream. Well, I forgive the insult, for you're a well plucked un. Bit of a rat you be, when your blood's up. That ain't English, they said! Damn England, say I. What's English way? I know your breed. If you don't go in over the bulwarks amidships you'll wriggle through by the anchor chains. You'd scuttle your boats, you would, afore you went in over one of them fortified galleons, scuttle your boats, you would, so as when you got in amidships you'd ha' no place to go back to and you just 'ud have to get in on 'em either in the forecastle or the sterncastle. I know you. You're English enough for me. I see your future on the high seas, lad. Never you go to Bristol into no business man's house. Pack o' pimps, them Bristol merchants. I know." And then at the thought of Bristol merchants he fell into the most blasphemous language that Upcott had ever heard. The horror of it prompted flight beyond earshot. And the man's keen preoccupation with his thoughts (he staring ahead with contorted face, seeing some memory-created Bristol merchant, it would appear, on whom he breathed his brimstone) gave Upcott the opportunity. The lad took two tentative steps away, and then, the mariner still swearing, a third; then his steps quickened and he whisked around the corner and ran from the echo of that voice.

But he was to see the mariner of the crimson speech again and hear the tale of Bristol merchants told coherently. At the moment came other matters, for now he met his father rolling and spluttering inn-ward and fell in step with him.

"Supper," growled Upcott at the inn; and so they both were seated. John munched slowly at first and, despite his hunger, soon forebore to eat at all. His stomach turned seeing his father sitting opposite him at that board. Sitting? Nay, lying over his plate, scooping the contents into his mouth held low over it, and then bawling for more.

John slipped into the stuffy passage and saw himself to the stowing of the goods, then arriving at the inn, in the bottom of the cart, also to the harnessing. A little shamefaced he bade the boy who waited on his father to ply him speedily with all the viands for which he might call. The more the father ate here the less he would need at home, and the mother might have a less terrible night of it; for John knew too well the scene that would ensue if, as she cooked and the husband swallowed, there came a too lengthy pause with empty plate.

Here, in the Bideford inn, alone with his father, instead of at home, John felt first and in a superlative, heartbreaking degree, sympathy with his mother.

At last they were in the cart and away, homeward bound.

As they crawled up High Street, perhaps it was due to the meal (or meals) that Upcott had just swallowed, the drunkard began to perceive and have a kind of clearer vision of his surroundings. Now they came upon a ghastly spectacle. The horse, despite the hill-climb, swerved to the side, but Upcott checked the curse on his tongue, risen at his son's faulty driving, for he, too, jibbed that moment, like the horse, seeing what it had seen.

High overhead dangled from a gibbet a thing that was a man and not a man, not only for its broken, twisted state, but by the reason of the droppings from it. The figure, headless, armless, was naked you might say, but bound in what might have been mud, some thick substance that hanged like black icicles from the dead, drooping feet.

"God forgive me!" cried Upcott. "What's this I see?" And he called on the Maker three times in a loathsome voice.

And a soldier, passing on the causey, answered him and said: "A warning to the people of Bideford. The man was a rebel and so are rebels served. Pass on, old hogshead. The devil will boil you in brandy, not in tar. That man was boiled in tar."

John imitated the stare he had seen and practised in the morning, looking down on the soldier from his vantage with an expression like a house-gable, and drove on. But the sight of that pitiable figure sent a gripe through his midriff and the pendant broken thing that had once been a man was before his eyes all the way. And his father, sagging down in the cart, muttered: "Buried in tar, boiled in tar. God deliver me!"

The father was snoring in the bottom of the tail-cart and the son weeping on the seat, weeping for that dying and desolate day, when they drove into Abbotsham as lights were being lit in windows and stars being lit on high.

CHAPTER III

THE HUMMING IN THE CLOVER

The old man of the bees, he who, years before, had arrived at his cot so auspiciously to save a child from apoplexy, was journeying homewards, twirling in his hand a wind-cast twig and turning over in his mind his own foreign thoughts. Already, though he was five miles from where the honey-makers and he dwelt, laden and homing bees were settling one by one on him to have what is called "a lift home." So he plodded gently, evading brushing branches, mouthing to himself some Latin about a hill-top, murmuring trees and murmuring bees. I could not say that his pronunciation was collegiate, for he had taught himself Latin from the Aldines and the Elzevirs that he had sold, time was, in his little shop in Bristol, little shop long since sold; and he had never possessed the assurance to admit his knowledge even to his most friendly of scholarly customers; though many a hint he had culled from them and digested in secret for his further relish of the Latin and the Greek and the old French. But he made a music of the Latin lines, with a difference; and assuredly he enjoyed what he read. He was a lover of rich phrases and of simple. At times, when the humour was on him, he spoke with the rich utterance of the Irish, then coming in numbers to Bideford. That was only his whim, he finding something pleasant to the ear in the accent of these immigrants. In this late day the careful-eared stranger can still hear that Irish blend in the Devon speech.

I need not here give our old man's history, nor the explanation, in so many words, for the book-worm's presence there on the sea-echoing slopes of North Devon: it will leak out *en route*, as do all histories more or less.

When the bees rose from him with parting buzz it was sign that he was come near home, and he arrived there soon after them, his face, ugly and fascinating, a replica of that of Socrates, suddenly brightening in welcome as he saw two lads squatted beside his dwelling, John Upcott and his friend Ravenning.

"Good morning, lads," he said.

"Good morning, sir," said Upcott.

"Good morning, Uncle," said Ravenning. "Did you hear about our dog, stung to death by bees up near to the Hoops?"

"They'd be swarming," said the old man complacently.

"Iss, swarming; and he went nozing and looking on."

"Ah well; bees are just the same as human beings, with times you must either leave them alone or handle them with discernment," said Uncle.

Upcott looked on the philosopher with interest. He frequently experienced a sense as of being near the fount of all wisdom, or knowledge, when the old man spoke. Ravenning twinkled up bantering. It was not native in him to give much respect, chiefly because of lack of discernment also. The brain cells where wisdom goes were not developed in him, perhaps, and he was not aware of the deficiency. He liked the old man; but liked him in the romping way of youth: ready to listen to what he found wise as he conceived wisdom; more ready to listen, a joyous leer spreading on his face, to what he considered hints, at times, that the old man was human and that, even with his wisdom and his years he appreciated the view of life that the cavalier vicar of Dean Prior, by Totnes Town, had put in his "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may"—not that he knew Herrick, though Uncle did.

But when Ravenning would be gone, into what further realms did not the old man lead the Upcott boy, and the boy conduct the old man! Something pathetic, or awakening a sympathy for one knew not what, indicated but unspoken, woke in Upcott's heart sometimes as he watched his Socrates pottering agitated in the wild garden or ferreting in his library; for the old man had books in one of his rooms, books brought hither from the shop in Bristol that was but a memory. Especially did the narration of voyages collected by Richard Haklyut interest Upcott, and he passed many a spare hour bent to their pages, sitting on the stool before the rough shelves. And sometimes the old man, remarking the boy's interest, for which indeed he had hoped, would draw forth other books and read words well-timed for the hour, whose music then, more than their meaning, moved the boy's soul: but the meaning was borne on the music like pollen on the wind; and there would yet be seed take root and flowers bloom next year.

So, one late afternoon, clover-scented, and murmurous with bees and the farther murmur of the sea, there entered his soul these random words: "Pious spirits, who possessed their days in raptures of futurity, made little more of this world than the world that was before it, while they lay obscure in the chaos of preordination and night of their fore-being." And I need hardly tell you that the reading of these words was suggested to the old man as he sat listening to the boy's babel and thinking of those from whom he had sprung, natures so strangely assorted; thinking of them both, but thinking of the mother with reverence.

John Upcott interested him; and in the boy's great brown liquid eyes that started to all manner of suggestions of terror, or were bright to a tale of daring and courage, Uncle saw indication of the Spanish blood, the story of the coming of which to Devon he knew so well. For the old man knew "a mort o' things." His spirit lived much among fables of the immortal dead and the forgotten dead, forgotten only by reason of being nameless, but known of him who wanders into the past. He lived among the splendid ruins of his illusions, carrying his lamp, whose name I cannot tell.

He was a man to whom the boy could unburden himself of his woes. And had these woes been selfish the old man had been the first, I surmise, to alter subtly the trend of thought. But the woes were seldom so.

One day Upcott sat, his hand bound up, for he had been grievously cut when wrenching a knife from the grasp of his delirious progenitor, sat in melancholy mood; but the mood of the most happily circumstanced youth is often so; for youth is melancholy. Upcott had been speaking sorrowfully of his mother, he being old enough now to grieve for her beauty so abused. And the old man took his favourite book and turned the leaves, and found and read: "I could be content that we might procreate like trees, without conjunction, or that there were any way to perpetuate the world without this trivial and worldly way of union." And then said the old man:

"'Tis not but what, taking things all round, life is none so bad. Believe me, boy, the love of man and woman is a holy thing. And after all, in his best hours, when the man thinks of the moments when he does get the knife in his hand, he arranges things so that he will be punished for his lapses. Don't you forget that, lad; don't you get a wrong view of life. There are many happy homes in North Devon where the man and woman are both taking their own parts in the life—happy homes——" and behold, the old man was wandered in silence into a day dream, so that he hardly heard the boy's cry:

"Oh, I know that. I think they are all happy but ours." Then in a little while: "What book is that you read from?" asked John.

"Ssh!" said the old man, raising his great hand. "It is best you should not know, for so there will be for you a great joy in after years, when you come on it again unawares, and open it, and the sentences murmur to you again like voices of old friends. Then you will remember these sad hours of your youth as far off, perhaps even remember them as happy in their own way. You will remember the sound of the bees in this garden, the far hum of your youth. You will remember that sunlight floating there on the floor, cut clean by the door-post; and the dusty motes there: and you will see yourself sitting here disconsolate and smile to yourself; read again these words, and you will be happy in a way no man can prevent, with a happiness of which no man may rob you. I would not now rob you of that future accidental joy."

Upcott frowned and thought the old man odd; but, owing so much to him, he humoured him, sought not to persuade him from what he thought a foible.

Strange things would his Socrates say too, that Upcott had some inner warning it were better not to repeat to Ravenning, held silent as it were by some modesty of soul. Such a thing was said one memorable night.

Upcott, come over on that night of full moon, when the very stars were blinded in the blue summer heaven, had found the old man with radiant eyes sitting before his house and been bidden gently to come some other time.

"I would be alone," said the old man.

And as Upcott turned impressed and softly away he heard Uncle's voice again, speaking as it were to the loneliness then settling again after the faint ruffling by the youth; heard the words spoken to the loneliness and to the glittering night: "No one knows all that the moon has meant to me."

Sometimes the old man of the bees and of the moon would mention his shop in Bristol.

It was one afternoon of rising storm when, under flying black clouds, over dull hills lit wierdly by a light that glowed

from the meeting of land and cloud, sea and cloud, Upcott had gone, a-tilt against the gale, to see his Socrates, his old man of the bees. Said he:

"Why did you leave your book-shop, Uncle?"

"Because the money went," was the reply; and Upcott had a suspicion of another disaster of the bottle. It struck him that the evil, if yet beloved, aspect of his old friend's face might be the souvenir of Bristol bottles; but the old man went on: "My sister was taken with a grievous illness and the physicians required money to heal her." He paused. "She was never healed; but so long as I had the money I paid the best of them to tend her. And then came her deliverance. Oh! there have been nights when the bravery of her stifling her moans took me with such a pride of the invincible soul of the woman that my heart could have burst. There have been nights when she has had ease and I have thought to rest, relaxed, and forget the hardship of things—her ill, and the shop doing poorly; but I could not rest and I have fetched home for a lonely debauch a bottle of brandy that I could ill spare the money to buy, and seeing her sleeping her exhausted sleep I have drunk all at a gulp and sat on the bed edge in my own room watching the walls spin round and laughing low to myself to see the window flashing past; and the chairs would wave their legs at me and I would wave to them; and the moon would look in like a face at the window and wink on me and I'd wink back on it and fall drunk in bed. Ah, there have been nights I have sat up with her: she never knew of these diversions, and me sitting holding her hand she would talk to me in the dark—nights I can never forget."

It is the way of youth, hearing another speak of himself, to reply also with personal talk, instead of being pleased to be auditor. But then for sure he cannot be counsellor, hardly even impersonal sympathiser.

"I know," said John. "I can remember mother coming up to me sometimes at night, on nights that she had not seen me when I went up the ladder to bed because of——"

"I understand, yes, yes," said Uncle on the pause, his mood wholly sympathetic now, his subjective fit gone on the instant.

"And she would sit," said Upcott, "and talk to me in a whisper, till I couldn't abide the whisper in the dark for all I liked her to come there that way. I could have wept hearing her voice in the dark and would crave her to light the candle. I think she wondered why."

The old man nodded.

"Aye, I understand, I know the darkness and the voices in the dark," said he suddenly and impulsively, and rose agitated and made some needless arrangements in his small demesne and sat again perturbed. Here, on this subject, it would appear, he could not get far from himself. Then he came back to the boy.

"And yet the things she would be saying were not fearsome in themselves?"

"Oh, no, not fearsome at all, for she does not hold by telling fearsome tales. We had an old woman who used to come round and sometimes tell us tales of pirates that came to Lundy in the night and killed the fathers and mothers of all the children; and she would tell tales of the plague being in Bideford and how the children that had been playing round the quay, where the Spanish wool lay, took ill suddenly and all died; and how the people were all afraid; and how the mayor ran away in a rare fantod. But mother would have none of that. She never held by making children afraid. 'There's plenty to shake one in the world, she says, 'without telling fearsome tales for the joy of seeing the child's flesh creep.' But us were always afraid. There seemed always something hanging over we—aye, still."

"Yes," said Uncle, remembering the day on which the child had cried out: "Oh, Uncle, we're left—have you got a musket and a cutlass?" And the old man thinking over the matter decided it was not from the mother the child had learnt terror, but from the father. What he had learnt from the mother bore a better name. And more that Upcott had to tell confirmed his view.

"There's one thing I cannot abide yet," said the lad, "and that is when anyone knocks on a door so," and he gave a quick couple of loud taps and a following blow on the wall. "Father has always made a knock like that when——" he paused.

"Yes, I know; I know, lad."

"Sometimes he comes home quiet, steals up without anyone being aware that he is near; then he thinks to himself we

should all be out waiting for him, loose his coat, pull off his boots; and without even trying to see if the door is bolted he knocks like that. Mother used to open herself always. She would have no one else run the risk of his first fury. I remember the night I opened for the first time, jumping there before she could put aside her terror and look not quite afraid. I gave en a look," cried the boy, lapsing in his English as he did in agitation. "'What do you open for?' says he. And before I knew, with mother there, and Sis too, I says: 'Easy now! There's no need to shout for food here the way you wouldn't dare do in an ordinary—' 'What do you mean, you brat, you whelp?' says he and he made at me. And—and, by God, sir, I made to strike en. A man shouldn't strike his father. I think when he saw me ready to do that he took a new thought. Sure enough 'twas a lot quieter that night, and when mother got flustered, and flustered Sis too when 'em was getting more and more cooked for en, I said: 'All right, mother, don't you fret. Let him wait. I'm here.' Oh, us have a happy life up to Abbotsham." Upcott laughed a cheerless laugh. "Mind me," he said, "you won't tell no one, I know—I was but eleven years old then; he had hit me over the head, kicked me out o' the door, cursed at my mother; I mind he cried to en from up over, coming down along holloing so's half Devon could hear en: 'Put the pan to the fire, woman; I've a leary belly. None o' your zamzoaky stuff for me; I'm a-comin'. I took a billet of oak up to his room to study how the bed lay and think how I'd be doing a service all round to hit him over the head, and him lying there one night blind, babbling drunk.

"Well, sir, I was looking, you might say, how the land lay, and planning how to brain him and that's the plain truth, and I know it was but a boy's folly that would never have been carried out. And I thought then I could maybe roll him off the bed so as he'd look as if he had fallen; and I took the billet and gave a whack on the pillow. And there he is suddenly up the trap, him leaping through the house, chasing me with some idea he had. 'What in hell,' he says, 'be you a-doin' of?' 'Boardin' ship,' I says. 'What?' he says, coming close with his swollen hands. 'Playin' at boardin' ship,' I says. 'By God!' he says, 'I'll make 'e walk the plank for boardin' ship on my bed,' he says and took me by the back and hove me over the window—frame and all. I struggled, and with me struggling I kicked him under the chin as he shoved me over; that maddened him so that he came down over for me again to chase me with the billet. I heard him cursing, coming down; and so, sprained ankle and all, and the window frame round my middle, I crawled away and lay in the hedge. Hunted me all night, he did. Oh! we've had a happy home up to Abbotsham. Then I got older. But about that way he knocks ... I always hasten to once now and throw the door wide open to him. 'Tis a knock that gives your heart a leap. I've seen mother catch her breast when it comes and seen her mouth twitch a-sudden with dread. The only way to do with fear of that kind is to face it—set the door open wide and give en a look that says: 'What be you a-trying to do?'" Then the hobble-de-hoy bowed his head in his hands.

The old man rose.

"You've had a sad life," he said, "but it will all pass—for you. Also, there are consolations, lad," he cried, fumbling in his shelves, and reached down another book. One wonders how much of this was due to a desire to relieve the lad in the only way of which he could immediately think, how much was due to the fact that the world of books and of the great tales of the past, historical and imaginative, was for the old man a world more real perhaps than his present world, assuredly as real as this present in which he dwelt.

"See," said he, "how much better fit you are now to relish this," and he fell to reading in the tragedy of Macbeth, that masterpiece of terror, so great that to this day there are superstitious persons who fear the very name of the mighty work:

"Lady Macbeth: What do you mean?

Macbeth: Still it cried, *Sleep no more!* To all the house:
Glamis hath murdered sleep: and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more,—Macbeth shall sleep no more!

Lady Macbeth: Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy thane
You do unbend your noble strength to think
So brain-sickly of things. Go get some water
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there: go carry them, and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

Macbeth: I'll go no more;
I am afraid to think what I have done;

Look on't again I dare not.
Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood
Lady Macbeth: fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal
For it must seem their guilt."

Uncle had read thus far when he raised his head and looked under his rough brows on the intent face of the boy. The temptation was too great for him; he smote, as the boy had smitten on the wall, in the three knocks of terror, and on the very knocking went on:

"Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me when every noise appals me?
What hands are here? Ha! they pluck out mine eyes!
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine
Making the green one red."

The old man of the bees stopped, to relish these lines for himself again, and the house was not in silence, but surrounded with the moaning of the rising storm.

John Upcott felt his eyes hot. The old man went on again:

My hands are of your colour;
"Lady Macbeth: But I shame
To wear a heart so white——"

And then again the old man smote sudden on the wall by which he stood, his hand by his side, and declaimed in a strained voice: "I hear a knocking," and so he read on to the end of that part; and as he closed the book indeed there was an ominous "rat-tat-tat!" at the door of the cot.

Old man and young man looked on each other with something very like terror. Then the young man leapt to his feet and unlatched the door. The old man was by his side and both were flung together backward, so fiercely was the door, unlatched, thrust against them.

But there was no one there. It was but the wind that had rattled so at the door.

They went out of one accord into the blustering, belligerent afternoon. The wind rushed into their lungs at its first onslaught and they bowed their heads against it to regulate their breathing. Indoors their voices had been unconsciously raised because of the slapping of the wind on the walls, the rattle of the sudden rain on the window, cry of wind in the narrow chimney. Now, without, to be heard one would have had to shout.

The sea made one ceaseless roar. For the background of all its sound there was not now the sigh as of silk drawn through the hand, but roar and bellow as of bellowing and roaring of a mighty herd. That for groundwork; and above that, and through it, crash and cannonade, and also, what was awesome to hear, a sound like volley on volley of musketry of an immense army: that was when, in the "mouths," the waves would swing back and rake the pebbles down; and these volleys, harsh, grating, kept on at various points far and nigh.

The old man flung up his head and Upcott saw it splashed with the rain and shining with a strange light.

"Oh God of the Sea! Oh God of the Sea!" cried the old man in a rapture; and his hat, that he had clutched to his head on coming out, was now in his hand, his forehead bare to the keen wind.

Then suddenly, in the white seas over which the spindrift made a haze, under a blackening sky, they saw a ship tacking in the bay.

It was under a flying sail, and a close-reefed main, bearing away to where one knew that Lundy lay hid in the smoking seas; then it would tack and go bravely staggering and the two watchers were proud of the inanimate thing. And then they would feel a pity for its endeavours when suddenly it would fail, go back like a fluttered bird; and after all the arduous tack there it was again (surely with a mortified heart!) back again to well-nigh the same spot of the clamant, gesticulating sea.

Then, ere the darkness of night fell on the storm-lit dusk of day, they saw, as it emerged again from the haze, that the bobbing craft had made some headway out yonder in the wet battle, after so many endeavours; beheld it dimly, fluttering far out, but nigher home, in the "Golden Bay," name then how ironic!

But Upcott did not know, being no necromancer like one who was to meet him on the miry turnpike way to-morrow, that with the coming of that ship (daring so valiantly to round Hartland Point that day of gale against the cliffs) was to come something new and strange into his life.

CHAPTER IV

PROPHECIES—

On the morrow there was great to-do on the north coast. The people were flocking shoreward like vultures to a carcase; for in the night a ship had been driven on to the Abbotsbury rocks, and there was spoil to be obtained. Early in the day a lad went posting south past the Upcott farm, coming from the cliffs. He was breathing hard with haste and anger and Mrs. Upcott saw him and asked the cause of his disarrangement.

He spluttered some words about a fight on the shore and how he had secured a couple of hogsheads, of what he did not say; how two brothers of a neighbouring family had wrested his trove from him by weight of numbers. "We'll show en," he ended and ran on grunting to summon his kin.

From any vantage point you could see, all morning, the people coming by lane and across country, hurrying nearer to the roar of the sea and to the sea's offering.

Upcott senior snatched his hat. "By God," said he, "if there be all them cooming over she be worth pillaging."

"Tom!" said Mrs. Upcott, distressed—the father's name, which the oldest son also bore—"Tom!" she said again and looked on her husband with speaking eyes.

"Well 'ooman," he cried, for he understood her; and then: "What for do you think God gave we a rough foreshore if it wasn't to have the wreckings?" For he loved to wound her, soul and body. "Anyhow, if the rest be pillagin' you don't find Upcott hangin' back."

She moved toward him and laid hands timidly and yet bravely on his shoulders.

"Tom," she said. "Would a Shebbeare or a Rawleigh, or a Leigh, or a Stucley do the like of this?"

"Those are gentry names," he growled; "I'm not gentry. You'm a kind of a half-gentry 'ooman yourself; and what's the good of half-gentry? What's the good of a thing that gives you big ideas and nothing more?"

That was the man! She had known it for long; but to hear his own voice speak so, growl it so upon her, his *credo*, gave her a sense of hopelessness. She thought he had not always been like that.

"Of course they'd go wrecking—if they wasn't gentry," he said moving from her.

"I can tell you," she replied, "that on this very shore a Stucley has gone down with one or two lads that he had sworn expressly, at the first sign of a wreck, to protect the stranger within our gates. Yes, he has stood over the goods washed ashore with a brave, trusty lad or two, musket and cutlass in hand, for no prize, for no prize—for nothing—as you say. And you know that, for you have seen it; and you have seen how Shebbeare of Abbotsbury——"

"Talking about muskets and cutlasses puts me in mind," said Upcott. "It is sometimes rough at a wrecking;" and so saying he took his fowling piece from the rack and brought the butt down with a clash on the ash-lime floor. He saw to the priming in silence, his bearing uncouth, he feeling uncouth, like a shaggy, whipped dog; but looking at his wife now and then as he made his preparation, his pale eyes blinking at her.

Then he threw the piece into the crook of his left arm and flung up his right, half turned to go, as though to deliver a backward blow on his wife. But she did not waver. Then he swung out and was gone.

Meanwhile on the shore the wreckage was coming with every wave.

The ship lay, piled up, side on to the rocks. There was a waterfall running over her waist, for so quickly did surging wave follow on surging wave that you might have thought she gushed a fountain from her holds. You could count her pierces from the land: she was pierced for twenty guns but, with the list she had and the way she was broken, you could see she had but six carriage guns. As like as not she never had more than these six; for a formidable exterior did not necessarily imply a formidable armament. Or perhaps some of her guns had gone by the board in the sea-battle of the night—the ship's battle with the sea.

Of her cargo one could tell now, for it was piled upon the shingle here and there, beyond the clutching, grasping waves, by the clutching, grasping hands of the wreckers, such of it as had come ashore.

There were as many as five hundred persons under cliff already and others a-top. These were principally the women-folk, for the women of Devon are the purse-holders. A man may toil but woman will see that there be no foolish spending and she will see to the storage and the increase. And new arrivals came constantly. The little bay was black with them; they were in the very waves, borne from their feet fighting for the spoils. "Up over cliff" the colleagues of those below were dragging up with the ship's own ropes—cut from her beached masts and rigging—their trove, and guarding it, each over his kindred's spoil to keep and hold, if he had the power. The excitement grew more intense.

"Get back from our rope!" screamed two men, father and son, as they strove to pull up a too heavy load and helpers came towards them; for they knew that if a man helped he would demand his share. But those who had run forward to assist stood back straightway—again because they saw the task was too great for the two. And sure enough they had the amusement of beholding father and son jerked from their legs and going over cliff to scatter their brains with the scattered spoil.

So things went on. And with the shore in such a state one is hardly surprised to know that though a barrel was worth the grappling a mariner swept cliffwards could look after himself.

One of these chance comers lightened the tedium of toil: a score of times he grasped a rock near shore; a score of times the sea dragged him back. At last he held; and then, when the wave swung back unsuccessful, he leapt for the further shingle and began to move his legs as one trying to run. But he ran like a squirrel on a revolving wheel. He was too exhausted to run; he but marked time; and the next wave flung him down, drew him back in the undertow, throttled him and made an end of his playing the part of the clown who gets hurt for the delectation of the onlookers.

The ship was a trader, laden with coffee, chocolate, staves, sugar and rum, but her main lading was tobacco. The rum was already broached, to warm the wreckers.

The master of the vessel had been washed from the wreck, a lean, gesticulating Frenchman, with a face then like a death's head, and his collar bones showing like the crossed bones on tombs. He was worn with the night and the morning, and God knows how he dragged himself from the beach, clutching at the great pebbles, stumbled upward, came to his feet. No mortal aided him.

"Get out o' my way," cried one, thrusting aside the master, and plunging, clattering, after a shore-coming cask. The Frenchman tottered. He understood, to the full, his position.

His chin was on his chest with exhaustion, but he rose brokenly to his knees, to his feet. He drew plaintively, brokenly erect. His legs were tottering; but he looked with his brown-red eyes on the wreckers and waved his arm to them, crooked it out like a tentacle, snapped his ringers and showed gripping jaws and the sneer of his people.

"Dogs! English dogs!" he cried, and Thomas Upcott smote him over the head so that he fell dead on the pebbles.

Meanwhile up at the farm was another scene.

Mrs. Upcott sat staring before her with dull eyes. John went to her.

"Mother," he said; "I know how you feel."

"We had gentry blood in our veins—my people," she said.

"Then it is in mine," said he.

"Iss, boy," she said. Was it the gentry blood in her veins that caused her in that moment of all moments to "talk Devonsheer?" For the gentry blood loves its land with a great, simple love.

"I will go down to the cliffs and see what I can do," said John resolutely.

Her heart lightened at that. Lightened! In a flash she saw that her son was not going to disappoint her prayers. For the son who plunged his teeth in an adversary's neck once—though she had never heard that tale—was a son she had seen and taken note of—and laid before the Lord in prayers when she woke at dawn, and in the white but not yet crimsoned sky

saw the white of the buttresses of the Throne. Then came an idea.

"I shall go down," she said, for she made a quick mental picture of the lad, her stripling, at the beach, and she feared he could do but little. But a woman? A woman? Was not here the high place of woman? Was not it in such passes that woman took her place, not by might, not by right even, but by the divinity in her and touched the God in men?

"No, no, mother!" cried Sis, coming forward. "No, no; you cannot, mother."

And indeed the mother could not, for she but took a step and fell in a swoon into the arms of her children.

They brought restoratives and as she came round, her eyes fluttering open saw John standing over her anxiously. "I am all right," she said. "Go, lad—to help the stranger within our gates and to uphold the honour of your mother's name, and of Devon."

So John went out and hastened to his counsellor's cot.

First he would go to Uncle's for advice. In the last resort—his heart leapt and then beat evenly and the God in him stirred—in the last resort he would go down alone and say the things he knew his mother would have him say—and be killed; and there was a kind of balm, despite his eager years, in the thought that so would he have an end not inglorious. O, youth!

Shaggy fellows were running and panting on the slopes and all with that heavy, intent look of men very keenly bent upon their own affairs—and devil take you!

An old crone tottering downward in the rough lane (drawn thither in what design?) as he passed her, turned her head to see who came. She curtsied when she saw his face.

"Pretty youth," said she, "there will be fortunes to be told to-day."

He was about to hurry on when her voice arrested him:

"Tell your fortune, pretty youth?"

"I am in haste," he said.

"It will but take a moment or two," she said.

Well, he was going out into he knew not what of to-day's occurrences, and was on the threshold of unknown life.

He stopped to know his fate, or at least to hear what the woman had to say and judge if there were any value in her words.

She took his hand in her old gnarled and brown one.

"There be foreign blood in your veins," she said. "You am come of a mixed race. You have but newly left a mother ill. Be I right?"

"Yes," he said, half interested.

"She 'm some better now. Your sister tends her."

Upcott looked keenly on the old dame's face. She smiled wanly. "Be I right?" she said.

"Yes."

"You have an elder brother. Be I right?"

"Yes."

"He has gone over the seas."

"No, he hasn't," said Upcott, relieved to find her in error for some reason; "he is over to Hartland."

"Oh," she said, "is that where he was? Well, he be gone now—with a silver crucifix on his hairy breast."

"Oh, not he. We are not Papists."

The dame paid no heed.

"You will never speak to him again but you will see him and not know him."

"Oh, that will do," said he and made to withdraw his hand from this folly. But the old dame arrested him again with:

"He has gone away with a young man a little older than you, a man with high cheek bones and little peeping eyes and rough hair, a big made, cheery, masterless kind of a lad."

The picture would fit Ravenning, and Upcott delayed, held again. He bethought him that he had not seen Ravenning for some days.

"You have a soft place in your heart for a fair girl; you have quarrelled—no, you have not quarrelled; but for some cause you do not understand—you do not see much of each other now, and when you do you feel a something between. You will come together again—iss, come together again—years after. You will go over the sea first—come together—iss—come together again—why, bhoy, you have a curious line, you have. You will love two other women. One you will never say but three words to and the other you will know. You am a strange lad. You do have a strange hand. Eh! But you have a far ways to travel!" She paused, gazing on the hand, not at all dreaming, but with a kind of concentration of gaze that seemed not for the hand but for something beyond. "God save us!" she ejaculated suddenly.

"What is it, good woman?" he cried, for she impressed him.

"You will be the death of one near to you," she said.

"Who?" he cried almost roughly.

"One near to you," she said with a tone as of impregnable indifference. He felt that he need not try to have an answer to his question. She dropped his hand and her face was transformed. She was but, again, as when he had made up on her, an old whining beldam with lice in her matted hair.

"Pretty sir, give me something," she said.

He gave her all he had and ran on to Uncle's, through a world that did not matter much either way, and wished he had not seen the old crone.

By the door of Uncle's cot were leant two fowling-pieces and for a moment a dread came to Upcott that the wreckers running to their Domdaniel along the cliffs, had, in their demoniac mood, set on the old man. And then he heard a voice in the cot, high and resonant and masterful in a kind of wild glee. Then the voice stopped; and anon Upcott, as he came to the door, heard it begin again, the same voice, but now recognisable for Uncle's own, declaiming:

"Give me my scallop shell of quiet
My staff of Faith to walk upon."

And looking into the place—there was the old man buckling on "the Turk's sword" that had hung for ornament on his wall, a sword found on the Portledge shore.

Then the old man heard him and turned about, head thrown back, his mane flung from his brows as waves from a galleon prow, his whole sturdy and ageing figure squared and resolute.

"Ah," said he and having buckled his sword he lifted his musket, intent on his employ, and set about loading from his powder horn.

"What's this?" said Upcott.

"Rawleigh," answered the old man ramming home the charge, "would have gone down and stopped that," he indicated with a jerk of his head the trouble westwards. "Rawleigh was a poet. I have been talking over to myself some of his verses, the wonderful things he wrote. Poetry, sir, is not inimical to action but is the spring of every noble action, as it is

of every high renunciation. Fools live in a world of confused thoughts. They do not understand the secrets of life."

"You were going——?" began Upcott.

"I am going, sorr," said the old man, broadening his speech in the way he had that the Irish had taught him. And he shouldered his musket and at the door caught up in the other hand the two fowling-pieces.

"Alone?" said Upcott.

"As you please," said Uncle. "I had thought to go down and talk to them sanely and wisely; but what avail sanity and wisdom to men who have left their souls in the devil's closet till they come home a-Sunday. I am glad you are not with them," he added.

"I?" cried John.

The old man made an inclination of his head as of deference.

"I am old enough," said he, "to have lost all faiths. I live among their ruins."

Then Upcott in his quick, jerky way told his tale. The old man blinked his eyes of their moisture.

"I am glad," he said. "Oh, this has all happened before. It happens every winter. Last winter there were fifteen such wrecks, mostly Bristol ships and Barnstaple and Bideford, one Dutchman and one French, of the French trading people. It made no difference here. What are blood and country? The sea is more salt than blood." The old man flung up his head. "Last time I swore after it was over that I would go down and see if I could not help in the next disaster. I spoke to some afterwards, but what was that? The coward's way. Shebbeare came over from Northam once and stopped them and they railed on him—told him time was the gentry took the gentry's share. But he had his way. The sailors were rescued and he took them up and fed them and tended them. But still the spectacle of the grasping, to say no more, was bad—ah, bad sir, bad. The grasping spirit is to me a more repulsive sin than most of those we call the major sins. After all, you find that what men have called sins are the things that may hit back on them—things with a penalty. It won't do, sir. It won't do. Believe me—the clutching spirit, the grasp all we can and look for more is a hideous, repulsive sin. Now I am going down. I shall try talk, and if that fails, well, I shall use force—use force." He must have here felt the ridiculous side of it. "And I shall die at least and not live on ashamed. I swore last storm to do this with the first wreck that came ashore, English, or Scots trader, or French, or Dutch—aye, were it a rover of Salee. Come! I see you are armed with your pistols. Here is a fowling-piece. It is loaded with about twenty slugs."

They marched briskly along and athwart the slopes, the old man in a divine madness, the youth in a mortal coldness; and as they came in sight of the wreck threshing itself to death on Abbotsbury Reef and saw the moving concourse on the pebbles and the cliffs the old man whipped round.

"We shall have to use skilful tactics," said he. "We shall give them but one offer of peace else our case is lost. Once we show our hand we are lost if they get round us. We shall get upon this high point, which is, as you might say, a strategic position, one difficult on which to attempt the *escalada*. From thence we shall hail them; and if they meet our suggestions with derision we shall let them see our armament and inform them that if they do not make the saving of the seamen, instead of the salving of the wreckage, their main endeavour, we shall fire on the first man to touch so much as a hogshead."

A chance of peace! Two against five hundred! And give them a chance of peace! Still—that was Grenville's way. And who knows what may not be done with a rough crew when the right man comes on deck?

CHAPTER V

—AND A FULFILMENT

The din of the sea drowned their voices. From the top of the little pyramid of granite that juts up, sentinel (or sphinx-like observer) over the east end of the cove, Uncle strove to hail the wreckers. Upcott was anxious to know, but did not know, could not read on the old man's face, whether or no Uncle was afraid. There was a wild look on that Socrates-mask; the eyes were bright as eyes of one in a fever and shone with a red light in the very whites of them. But afraid? John could not tell. Afraid or unafraid they were to go through with the business.

Leaning against the wall of that little natural fort Uncle cried and halloed, but the wind snatched his words away with the sound of the wash and the roar and the explosion of the seas, and his cries were quenched in the foam-wet air. At last he was perceived, if not heard, by one, then by another. His wind-blown, gesticulating figure, once descried, became a source of curiosity. Up from the shingle came climbing one and then, on his heels, others. They were anxious to know the cause of the old dotterel's excitement and why he stood there like a lively scarecrow with fluttering arms. Even those who had recollection of his condemnation of these wreckings had no guess at the business that brought Uncle thither. They had no idea of the madness of the old man and the high folly of the youth by his side. Perhaps the old man had sighted other spoil elsewhere, other sea offerings, and had come to inform them: he was mad enough for that! He was the kind of man to do others a good turn! Half expectant of some such folly they clambered. The first man came within cry, through the sea's din.

"What's ado?" came up his voice, thin and quick and sharp, a kind of a pin-prick in the gale.

"I say," cried Uncle, "that if you do not lend a hand to assist these seamen we shall—open fire on you!"

"Eh?"

Uncle repeated. The man had not heard amiss, though there were grounds for him fancying he had done so. He stared. Then he laughed, bellowed, loosened hold of the wild, agitated bush to which he clung, and turned, slithering back to those who followed. And presently, dotted on the cliff side, were the discs of a score of gibbering faces turned up to the rock summit. The faces were a-grin, red tongues showing as the lusty throats bayed. Uncle was furious. He had a dislike of mocking laughter falling on his supremest moment, of his glory being greeted with derision. He raised his fowling-piece and pointed to the trigger, pointed to the breaking wreck where still could be seen three men clinging—assuredly between the devil and the deep sea. Then these two madmen, the young and the old, saw the seaman on the rock, torn away, clutching again, torn away. On the high verge of the pebbles was laughter, but only John Upcott saw its cause. The old man, in his pitch of excitement and fury, thought all the laughter was for him. The sound of it was inaudible; but the faces showed, the heads thrown back; in some places the bodies were a-sway with convulsive merriment.

"I shall go down," cried Uncle in John's wet face.

Then he saw where John's gaze was directed tensely, looked thence likewise and his ugly and lovable mouth puckered and bulged. He looked quick again to the throng on the beach. Yes; he was forgotten. The laughter was for the baffled seaman. So a new rage, a rage not of emotion but of mind, filled him.

All around that little amphitheatre there was a pause in the toil to laugh at a man's struggle with powers beyond him!

"I shall go down!" roared Uncle with new force, and made to clamber over his bastion.

"It would be the death of you," began John.

"I care not!" cried Uncle.

"And do no good," shouted Upcott.

Uncle frowned into the wind. "There is nothing left us but to fire a shot and let them see we mean what we say. Do you signal to them, point to the men there, signal to them to help. Let us both fire and then signal to them. That fellow who came up will understand. He will explain. If they laugh again—Ah, God! that other man is off. He is lost!"

For just then there was visible the lean man battling with the waves, borne on a crest, flung from the rock to which he had clung close as a limpet and so far unperceived from the cliff. Then he leapt shoreward, clutched a rock. The wave swung back and he leapt, in a wild endeavour, for the pebbles and ran tottering.

"Ah, my God!" cried Uncle, and his hand fumbled on his musket; for as he leant over his bastion, peering on the scene, he saw the newcomer thrust aside, saw him fall. In his eagerness, watching the man to see him rise, Uncle tarried. But John Upcott, who had been passing through all stages of distress, from cold fear to twitching resolution, from bravery with relapses to fear and fresh recoveries, and anon taken with a kind of hilarity as of the damned, so that he laughed to himself as they may, or as all might at a hideous dream, on awakening—John Upcott saw nothing but the pathetic and majestic now. He saw the broken man on the shingle drawn up in his supreme contempt, centre of the world. The crowd on the beach was a haze, the cliffs were but a scenic background. To his dying day he could picture that scene so; and always the sinking splendour of the sailor was centre of the scene.

He threw up his gun as steady as the rock against which he leant, laid his cheek to the damp stock, cuddled the butt to his shoulder. At that very moment he felt a glorious sense of the fitness of what he was doing, the manner in which it was being done. Was it not proper that the unwieldy wretch who felled the seaman should be shot in the back? It was there that John's shot entered. The smoke of the charge flew in a gust back in his face; but he saw only that his aim had been true. The hulking coward was down, sprawled on the beach in the attitude of death. John looked on the picture he had changed as one looks on the kaleidoscope that he turns. And it was good.

For a moment the picture had been magnificent, a brief moment; then it had been hideous; then it could not be magnificent again, the hideous having entered; but it was fitting. It was not hideous. Justice had been done. John Upcott, musket in hand on the high rock, had a thrill as of the angel at Eden's gate. The picture had been spoiled, but the sword was drawn. It was all that could be done, things being as they are.

Then the faces were again turned upward toward the two madmen, and now John Upcott surveyed the scene with impeccable clarity of vision. The flying spindrift was in his eyes but his brows were puckered in concentration. There was no thought of retreat in his mind. The first excitement also was gone, the excitement that had made his neck to twitch and the reins of his legs to quiver. He looked down on the faces with a great vindictive calm. Mind had taken control of will so that he even pictured himself and Uncle in the scene—it was beyond himself. The whole thing was a picture to him and the mind of John Upcott was busy planning and explaining to John Upcott's body how to conduct itself in this perilous pass.

He saw a fowling-piece aimed on him and stretched back, told himself to stretch a hand to Uncle for the musket and did so, taking it for granted somehow that Uncle was but as his lieutenant, or aged retainer! But Uncle had seen the danger and the crack of his piece sounded and was briskly killed on the wind and the man on the pebbles fell.

"They are coming," said John. "You load and I shall——"

"No! you load, lad, and I——"

Then John Upcott's mind ceased to observe. After all, one cannot perhaps expect a dignified calm in a youth at such a time. We never learn all our lessons, only a part.

"Do as I tell you!" he cried. "Is this a time for bickering? Load you and I'll fire. We cannot both fire, damn you!"

Uncle flashed up a look on the lad and did as he was told, his inscrutable face fallen again over his task.

It was a supreme moment for John. He gathered his whole consciousness again, as it were, into his eyes.

He showed but his shoulders above the rock's breast; and the way it mounted, with these two in the cup of it, he had its other and higher rim behind him, instead of sky. Besides, pistols were the main armament on the beach and the cliff.

Here was a good cause! Be slain? He be slain? He knew he should not be slain!

He fired again and then stretched back, as his man fell, for the loaded gun that was thrust in his hand. And then he fired again. He was doing his work with the precision, with the "dead-sure" hand of a consummate artist. The wreckers nevertheless came crowding upward. They gained the little platform below and just as they won so far a pistol ball grazed John's cheek. And then, beside him, he felt Uncle against the bastion and at his side was a flash—and another—

and a third, the three in quick succession: and three men staggered from the platform and lurched to the beach and the surf, and Uncle had ducked back again and then a pistol butt was in John's hand.

There was a pause then on the cliff.

Then again beside him leant Uncle. But no—it could not be; for into John's hands was thrust, from behind, the other pistol. He turned his head. And what was this? Who was this beside him? Beside him leant a man with the most set and callous face he had ever seen. It called for no more than a glance and was impressed on his mind like a brand. It flashed on him that the Devil had come to their aid—to claim his own—to pick them off, leering down on them with that awful countenance. And the Devil himself was ramming fresh charges into his long-nosed pistol and leaving Uncle to tend Upcott solely. The Devil fired again and then suddenly threw out his arm stiffly so that the back of it, at the biceps, took John in the face; and in the arm's sweep John was sent sprawling on the ground a-top of the busy Uncle, whose face was strained, though he slacked not in his toil. And then roaring fiercely, "All hands to repel boarders! Out cutlasses!" the Devil sprang erect from his leaning position against the rock face, drew his cutlass with a sweep and swung it so that Uncle and John, rising stiffly and amazed, ducked again, shrank back.

The newcomer was more mad than they were, for there was no room there for such play.

They shrank back, half an eye on him, amazed, and loaded all their arms against what might come, for when the Devil leant out and swung his blade down in air and came back to the recover there was a hail of blood flung from his blade into the flying scud.

Gingerly they rose to the rock face.

"Ugh!" said Uncle and sank down again and clapped his hand to his throat. At that John went mad.

"You have killed him!" he cried, "Killed him and I wouldn't have him killed!"

The Devil looked round on him at the cry, looked with a kind of a glee on his face, a mocking grin, a look as of jeering comprehension, as of one who knows men and what may move them.

John had snatched the "Turk's sword" which Uncle had leant on the rock, and evading their helper's cutlass, seeing a boarder's head over the bastion, he leapt bodily out over the rock face and with the force of his leap, sword in hand, he felt the point on the man's breast, and threw his weight home so that the broad end was buried and half the blade, and only his fear of the next comer's cutlass gave him strength to lunge back the cruel weapon.

It was all just like his boyhood's game of "Hold the Castle."

Then the besiegers shrank back. But it was not solely from fear of these two that they so shrank—paused.

"Shebbeare!" they cried. "Shebbeare! He's leading 'em! Us had better go down."

They fell on their knees. They crawled backwards. They scuttled on the loose stones. They went down over cliff like frightened crabs.

And then the Devil, who had but been playing his cut and thrust within the cup and had not, for all his madness, been lured over the verge, folded his arms on the rock, spat a torn quid of Virginia leaf from his jaws and mocked them in their disordered and precipitous flight; blood, his own and others, flecking his jaws like patches on a lady's face.

But Upcott turned about, and there on the rock stood, sure enough, Richard Shebbeare of Shebbeare Towne, in their own parish of Abbotsham. The position he had taken in the country meant much, but I wonder how much the fact that he was a legal man may have meant, for legal men know how to get one to the gallows if they are so minded! It was true that he was even then negotiating through his Bristol agents for the sale of Shebbeare Towne; but no one knew of that, and he was still a good deal of a king on that windy, sea-beat frontage of wild Devon.

The old gentry, it was said, had taken their share of wrecks. The later gentry had looked the other way; then they had looked on with doubt. Now they had come to denounce such things. Not so long after, as with wrecking, so with smuggling, would they first share, and then look the other way. And again a little while, and lights would be set up on the coast to guide ships on their way; to say with their flash and sweep through the night, "Beware, pass on!" Or if, battling with the sea and the race of Harty they lost the day, along the cliffs there would be watchers, day and night, on the look

out for such disaster, ready to succour the folk whom the sea scorned. The very descendants of these wreckers, two hundred years later, would risk their own lives in endeavour to save the shipwrecked, whatever flag fluttered and was torn to shreds at the tottering main.

The Devil stopped his jeering and looked around on Shebbeare. He did not straighten up, remained slouched against the rock; but he touched his hat jauntily in seaman fashion and, "Morning, cap'n," said he. "A brisk brush!"

But the fight was over and so Upcott sank to the aid of Uncle. Shebbeare knelt by his side and opened the old man's waistcoat. His hand was on the old man's heart. Upcott's madness ebbed from him as the sea ebbs from Torridge sands. He stared on Shebbeare; and then Shebbeare looked up and met his eyes, gazed directly in his a moment, nodded solemnly and raised his hat.

"A brave old man," said he.

So the old man had died as he would have wished to die, rather than in a bed between sheets striving to quiet his heart with brave lines, like passing bells, writ by the men whose gallant lives he loved.

"Oh, cruel time that takes in trust,
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,
And pays us but with earth and dust;
Who in the dark and silent grave
When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days."

So it reads in the Hart manuscript, but in Raleigh's Bible, to be sure, the first words are not, "Oh, cruel time," but "Even such is time," as with resignation or acceptance, and there are the two lines more:

"But from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust."

And Upcott leant back in the hollow and you could not say he wept in the active sense, as of giving oneself over to grief, but the tears welled and ran from his eyes.

"And my last word to him was an oath," he said huskily and brokenly. "And God knows I loved en."

"Sure it was spoke in the heat of the fight then, shipmate," said the callous and rugged seaman with the diabolic face, though his voice was full of compassion. "And a curse in the heat of the fight to a shipmate is like a word o' love. It brings you closer to en." He looked from the stripling to the dead man. "And I take it he understood," said he, "from the looks of en."

But Upcott sat staring, and when he had again the powers to face reality he found himself alone, Uncle's head upon his knee.

He rose, amazed at the stillness; for there is a stillness, a solitude, in the heart of a roaring and beating sea and volleying wind.

Beyond their natural fort the wild seaman was casting down into the sea the bodies of their slain assailants, spurning them with his foot. On the beach Richard Shebbeare had assisted one seaman to land and was now making signs to the other two on the wreck to leap into the waves and attempt a landing. Here and there, on the cliffs, the routed wreckers stood watching.

Shebbeare suddenly swung around and hailed them and they came scrambling in response to his imperious sign, circled about him, harkened to his words, and then Upcott looking on dully saw them join hands in two close ranks and march, two abreast, into the surf to be ready to aid the coming seamen.

Where the waves broke and then leapt, sprang, shouting, fifty feet, it was not easy to help. But in just that place it had been no easier to clutch wreckage! There was yet a difference. The right man had come on deck.

Upcott started then inertly out of his own broken world. There was no after glory from this fight. He was broken and

desolate. And then a voice said: "Which of you here was it that fired the first shot?"

He looked round; and there stood friend Ravenning. John had forgotten, he did not then recollect the witch's prophecy, how she had described Ravenning accurately and declared that he was gone over the seas.

"I did, Will," said he, crestfallen, as one acknowledging a sin; and then a new thought gripped him, triumphing over the emotion, a thought of the hideous scene they had ended. "And I'd do the same again," said he, doggedly, though with no pride. And then: "But—oh, if they had not killed Uncle."

"You think more of him than o' your father?" asked Ravenning, his small eyes puckering as he tried afresh to fathom his incomprehensible friend. "Well, I suppose it's no wonder, maybe," he said sagaciously. "But by God! John, I don't know you. Times I ha' thought I did, times I ha' thought I'd never know you. I don't know you."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you know, then?"

"Know what?"

"You don't mean you don't know—you didn't see——"

"What, then?"

"Why, God, John; that man you shot i' the back was——"

"Eh?"

"Your father."

John Upcott leant back on the rock, slid down, sat collapsed, staring again. And the sound that came from his lips, the long-drawn hideous cry, froze Ravenning's heart, chilled him as when one touches ice.

In one particular the witch had not erred. John had indeed been the death of one near to him.

Then he began to taste the first faint beginning of what this meant. He conjured up the picture of that form, that back, that he had seen with dilated eyes in the first flurry of fight—and he knew Ravenning made no mistake. That thing had been his father and he had slain it. He sat staring. And from his mouth that trembled came that cry, rising and falling: "Ah—ah—ah—ah—ah!" and over him, sheevoing and crying, were the discordant gulls, and the whole wet, windy, disconsolate wold was full of the eternal laughter of the sea.

CHAPTER VI

TELLING THE BEES

In the Abbotsham farm mother and daughter waited. They looked one to another, mother and daughter, and then they knelt in prayer, and when they rose from prayer they had somehow gained the power to face again the gray wind-blown day, to hold unwavering hands for its unsought offerings, to accept it in the necessary matter-of-fact manner.

They spoke a little of domestic matters, the plucking of the chicken, the saffron cake, the apple-batter—the ordinary things of the ordinary days—to drown the sound of the tickings of the clock that tip-toed through the house, and to fend off other speech, talking down the unheard voices of the silence with the sound of their own voices.

Suddenly they looked each to each and Mrs. Upcott's hand leapt to her heart and stayed there. But neither of them stepped to the door, though both had winced at the same moment; for they knew that the knock, the double knock and the faint, following blow, was of no mortal hand.

There were then no popular weeklies to which they could afterwards have written of the knocking, winning half-a-crown for that tale. Even had there been they would not have written. They had, you will remember, a touch of "gentrice." They never spoke of that occurrence; no, not even to each other. They but came closer together in spirit by reason of the knowledge that they both had heard it.

There were many bonds around them, and here was one more, a ghostly one; the others were of mutual doubts, fears, hopes, and ethereal joys. Laughter often rang in the Upcott yard, for all the mark of the beast on the place and the atmosphere he made like the odour of fabled dragons.

Then Mrs. Upcott rose and went away to get ready her husband's bed against his coming. There was a great brass warming-pan hung by the ingle and she made as though to prepare it also, then paused over it and her grey-blue eyes looked out blankly before her. She turned and sat down huddled in her chair. At that Sis went to her, laid a hand on her shoulder in passing, raked the fire, and filled the pan, a look as of wise old age on the face of her youth as she did so.

Then they heard feet going past in the lane and Mrs. Upcott, with a return of vigour, looked out and saw a young man posting by, going up toward the turnpike road. She saw his face turned toward the farm as he passed the gate, clearly there, then glimpsed again here and yonder where the hedgerow was low. It was Ravenning who went by, and his whole bearing was vocal of commiseration; for that riotous young man, who had moralised over John Upcott's attitude toward a father murdered and an old friend slain, had been known to tell John Upcott that Mrs. Upcott was a better mother than his own. And Ravenning, for all his young philanderings, could pity where he unselfishly loved.

Mrs. Upcott had drawn the curtain to look out, alert for what was to come; and as she turned her head again inwards, back in the subdued kitchen with its pale reflections of flickering firelight in the covers and dishes in the racks, she saw the oval of her daughter's twilight face; the girl had been as alert as she, gazing anxiously over the mother's shoulder through the low casement. And Mrs. Upcott caught the maiden's expression ere that expression vanished. Then their eyes just met and Sis's were focussed back; the dread went from them, they almost smiled.

But the ticking of the clock was then again in their ears, tripping flurried and furtive through the place. The mother sobbed, a great sob from the depths of her life that had been spent most part in suspense. And Sis came to her and put her arms about her and drew her down to the stool by the fire. And so youth comforted a prime already old ere age should have marked; and the mother resigned herself as a child a space, resting her head on the young shoulders of the woman she had borne.

So when they heard the sound of feet in the yard they were able to rise calmly and open the door, just in the most matter-of-fact way—as though they had never felt. But as they rose each sighed, or perhaps it was more an intake of breath with little breaks—they returning to the battle.

Mrs. Upcott opened the door ere John could gain the threshold, so that he might the easier say what had to be said. His face was ghastly. He had paused uncertain, at a standstill in the yard, gazing at the mute windows and the blank wall. Then his mother read his face and said:

"Where is he?"

And as they looked in each other's faces they did not find each other, did not desire so to do. There are times that one would not hear more than just what suffices for the moment's action.

"I came to tell you," he said in a dull voice. "They are bringing him up."

"The bed is ready," she said and then she looked the next question, only the one, and had her answer in his mien: Thomas Upcott was dead. She bowed her head and so lost what she really did not wish to discover yet. For on her son's face were now his questions: How much did she know? Who had told her? She was prepared; therefore she had received some notification. But how much did she know?

The mother turned away to her husband's room and Sis came toward John.

"How did it happen?" she asked. He looked at her sidewise and shrank from her.

"There was fighting," he said. "There was fighting for the wreckage. Shebbeare came down to protect the shipwrecked. There was fighting."

She was gazing on him horribly direct; her hot eyes were on him so that he sickened with the knowledge in his breast.

"Uncle——" he began partly because the breaking thought of Uncle was also with him, partly by way of a distracting remark.

"What?"

"Uncle is—Uncle was——"

Mrs. Upcott tottered into the kitchen again and looked on them.

"What is it?" she said.

"Uncle," said Sis, even as John tried to prevent her with a sign.

Mrs. Upcott looked to her son.

"No!" she gasped.

John nodded.

"Where is he?" she said coldly.

"They have carried him to his cot," said John, and heard his own voice like a stranger's.

Mrs. Upcott gave her son one quick look, for a moment penetrating, then blank, frightened.

"He has no one in the world," said she; "and he was good to you, John," she added. Then she turned aside and looked out into the storm.

"Oh God, give me strength in the day of tribulation," she said.

Then she turned to her children again and quite evenly said: "Do you go down, John, and inform Mr. Ogilby. You had better take the tail-cart. 'Tis likely he will have the wish to come at once. He was Uncle's nearest friend."

John went forth with a sense of relief, as one reprieved.

Mrs. Upcott had done the best for the old man of the bees, for this Ogilby (for whom John now went), the cheerful ex-chaplain to King Charles the Second, settled (or unsettled) in Bideford, was perhaps the only man in the countryside who had a measure of Uncle's worth. Mrs. Upcott did not understand Uncle's preoccupations; but she did know that when Ogilby and he foregathered they were the better for the meeting. That was enough for her. Ogilby's attitude, indeed, toward Uncle, was sometimes rather of sitting at his feet than of sitting cheek by jowl. The wisdom of his Socrates at times woke more than kinship, woke respect; and in such moments Ogilby would have faint fears that at other times the

old man "talked down" to him to put him at his ease. Then he would decide no, that it was only that the old man had exalted moments; and then Ogilby would re-charge his pipe and puff with a return of untroubled and flattered equality.

Once, long ago, when Uncle had been resident in Bideford, ere wandering along the northern cliffs he had found his promised land and come thither to live in the sunlight and the wind, Ogilby had met him on Allhalland Street, stopped him with his roguish, friendly leer, and questioned him in his waggish way on his neglect of church attendance.

"Faith," said Uncle, "I can read the prayers at home, and as to sermons, I have much better ones to read than you ever preach," returning him his canonical twinkle and his gruff friendliness.

So Ogilby had gone home with him that day, suspecting a man to his heart and, seeing his shelves, "You are in the right," said he, "and I wish all my parishioners were of the same opinion, for then I should have little or nothing to do."

That was the beginning of their friendship, and after Uncle moved westward Ogilby came frequently over Northam hill and along the windy ledges to the cot, cramming down his hat, breathing deep of the sea gusts. And there, above the clover lands they talked the sun out of the western sky many a day, or sat in smoke-wreathed silence from when the early moon like a white shell hung above the waning afternoon, alert for the day's end, till it glowed like a broken shield of gold in the rich blue of evening. And in the velvet nights Ogilby would go home through the scented lanes with a great calm in a corner of his jolly heart.

Within two hours the tail cart passed again into the Upcott yard. The drive had been in silence; for once John Upcott's sufficient, but by no means voluble, tale had been told, Ogilby had fallen hushed on his own thoughts. He was a man with the polish of the courts and with a vast deal of the milk of human kindness. From the Book he drew principally what we are apt to call "broad-mindedness." His religion was a kind of garb, sometimes heavy, burdensome as a winter's cloak in summer, sometimes worn proudly, as a robe of state. Had he been solely a scholar, or an educated land-owner, he would have been spared his own occasional self-condemnation, been spared these moments when he looked in his mirror of a morning and said: "You are a damned hypocrite, my friend." And also he would have been spared some aspersion from the straight-laced. The man's choice of texts was significant. "He who is not against us is for us,"—"Let him who is without sin amongst you cast the first stone,"—"And He called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst of them."

But, also, I fear his own weaknesses had something to do, as well as his kind heart, with his choice of such texts. His mouth, and as you know, men have the making of their mouths as they have of no other features, was wont to sadden Mrs. Upcott while she loved it. It was the mouth of a humorist and a kindly man but—the mouth of a man too human; and it had about it a suggestion as of being rounded to the tankard more frequently than necessary. He loved dogs, from his King Charles spaniels to "my 'Irishman'—he's the boy for the rats." He loved ale. He loved a French brandy with a dash of cream and, if he had the cream from the dairymaid, as like as not he would kiss her rosy cheeks—and bid her be a good maiden as he shot out, head stooping under the low door, a regretful and tender smile on his ruddy face and his elastic mouth pursing. But there was that in his presence that gave a feeling, a little from his hilarious bulk, much more from some real greatness, of strength. He gave a sense of something to lean on more than flesh, though something not ice-cold, but very kindly.

His hat was in his hand, his head slightly bowed as he entered the Upcott kitchen. He felt in the atmosphere that here was too great sanity for humbug, and he was glad. Humbug he could dispense, as a doctor, who cares not for them, can prescribe a chemical dose when he had rather prescribe a vegetable or herbal one, knowing that if he prescribed to some people a thing of a simple, everyday name the dose would be lightlied. So he said no unctuous word about knowing now where our dear departed was. But in his rich and human voice he spoke quietly, as though out of the open window where the clean curtain fluttered, or to the walls, of the infinite mercy of God—whose ways are past finding out. He said nothing about man. He thought it better not.

John had laid on the table the two woollen winding cloths, in which, as the law was, all dead should lie. These Mrs. Upcott had bidden him bring on his return. They made a splash of blue in the midst of the dusky chamber.

The father had been carried home. The bearers had gone. John, like one in a daze, his duties done and Ogilby there, moved to a corner and glanced toward his mother.

She was listening to the consoling murmur of Ogilby's voice. John searched her face.

How much did she know? What was the meaning of her apathy? Did she know all?

But no; she did not yet wish to know the story of her husband's passing. For the present she had her duties.

There stood Mrs. Upcott, in her ears the calming voice—and deep within, somewhere else, another voice, asking questions.

But here before her were the facts—two blue woollen winding cloths.

Ogilby, seeing her fingering the woollens, was moved as never before had he been moved at such times. He was more than cleric; and the woman's very form spoke to his human heart; it was broken, and helpless, and uncertain, and it was a woman's. That was the kind of man he was.

She marked, absently, that one of the cloths was flawed. When a man buys cloths the shopkeeper generally tries to foist some flawed thing on his ignorance. Yes, it was slightly flawed; she fingered it and fingered the other. Yes, it was flawed. Ah well, that was shopkeepers' way. And thinking then of Uncle dead and of how much he had meant to her son she took up the one without blemish—for Uncle. Then she remembered the faithfulness of a wife. But even as she laid down the flawless and took up again the faulty, to go over to Uncle's, she had a quick thought in her mind: Uncle had always had his bees to love, his sufficient thoughts, his balm in his books. For such a one as Uncle what matter a flaw in the garment? He would lie as well in the warped as in the whole. But of all this wavering thought she was herself about as unaware as the onlookers; only she fingered absently and they marked her fingering as absently.

Over at Hartland there was a tomb:

"Here I lie, at the chancel door,
Here I lie because I am poor,
The further in the more they pay;
Here I lie as warm as they."

It is all the same under the grass.

So they went out, Ogilby and Mrs. Upcott and the old woman who had come down from Abbotsham, hearing the news; she who helped at life's entrances and exits with a strange kind of fatty and solemn zest.

John followed behind stupidly, Sis staring after him, watching the broken procession—thinking.

John followed, haunted by one fear: would his mother hear the truth from anyone? And he was haunted by his own remorse. I think he was little better than a wandering idiot that day. Did she know? Did she know?

At the cot, by Shebbeare's order, sat the diabolic seaman, he who had fought so valiantly on the cliff. A musket was at his feet. He sat on the seat before the door, his hat at his side, with a stone flung in the crown of it, sat there smoking a West Indian cigarro. He looked up on the newcomers and inclined his head to Ogilby. For Mrs. Upcott he rose and made a bow to the best of his ability. It was like a curtsey.

She did not recognise him, only thought, and lost the thought at the instant, that he was a mighty ugly man with something very likeable in the midst of his ugliness. So also thought Ogilby. Later Mrs. Upcott was to recognise him, suddenly to remember who he was and have a new call upon her for her compassion.

They passed within, reverently. It is on record how Ogilby took the dead man's hand and wet it with two warm tears—but I prefer to leave much of that part untold.

She of the exits and entrances had gone. Ogilby sat by his friend. John Upcott, unseen, had flung himself down without, where he had followed, in the long, tangled grass. The seaman, looking inwards and hearing a low voice talking in a way that disturbed him, he being come fresh (as you shall hear) from out the blue and the red and the gold of the gorgeous Indies into the very drear climax of his life, had risen abruptly. He could not abide that voice talking, or as it seemed, almost chanting words that he did not hear but words with a sound like music; so he rose and stole away to the limit of the wall that Uncle had made of the great pebbles of that foreshore.

Upcott saw only his back now, the seaman being slung, in the way of seamen resting, over the wall, his cigarro smoke veering about him.

Then the sun broke out and lit the place, lit the hill-slopes, lit the sea in patches that changed and sped so that there were great sea-fields of rippling, dazzling, broken lights, and fields of dark green, fleeing and changing; and on the hills there were flying cloud-shadows and pursuing flights of golden light, for the dome was all aflutter with the rent clouds.

A kind of peace fell on the place, and Upcott, in the grass weeping (the last tears he was to weep, he being that day come to man's estate) and regaining his mental balance, saw his mother come forth of the cot with her pained, illumined face, and her broken grandeur that told of blighted "gentrice," and saw how she walked to the hives and then looked round quickly this way and that. And, seeing only the still back of the mariner, she bent to the first hive and he heard her voice:

"Thy wold man be gone, oh bees."

To each hive she spoke it, walking furtively along the rows, looking left and right between, and the youth, lying there, looked on and wondered at the scene that he was never to forget. And the ex-chaplain to King Charles the Second, who had been sitting by his friend's old dwelling-place, having risen, when left alone, to pace twice, meditative, the little room, paused, seeing through the creepered window, this scene.

He knew courts and he knew the people. He knew religions and he knew superstitions. He knew the eternal hopes in the human heart and he knew the faiths in God. Superstitions, old usages, the crossing of the hands, the oar upon the grave, the obol on the mouth: he knew, scholarly and human, many usages of mortals at the Gate. And here was "the telling of the bees." And his eyes moistened afresh as he saw the woman whose faith he knew, the woman he revered.

The memory he carried away of that day was a memory of the hushed friend within, and without the splashes of flying sunlight, and the woman, over whom they came and went, and her subdued voice: "Thy wold man be gone, oh bees."

So the cleric saw and the son saw. As for the devil of a seaman, he did not look round, only his head went lower in his shoulders. He lay against the wall looking out with blind eyes on the wavering sea.

CHAPTER VII

HOW THE FIRST MAN CAME HOME

After the Abbotsham wreck, with all its attendant occurrences, there came a spell of Indian summer, with its peace, to the north shore.

Mrs. Upcott had gone now into the sanctuary that she, and the gods, and the fates, had been so long preparing, whence she could look with a radiance that was never now a duty, never a mask now. The diabolic seaman had, by Shebbeare's request, remained on guard at the forsaken cot above the clover lands pending the discovery of Uncle's next of kin, a task which lawyer Shebbeare had undertaken *con amore*. Frequent visitors at the Upcott's farm were Cassandra Gifford and Thomasina Ravenning; and John was sure that he knew why Thomasina, at least, came thither. One of her reasons he did not discern; perhaps she herself was hardly aware of it; but I suspect she came partly thus often into the Upcott's close when she thought of her brother—to see her brother's closest friend. She had another stronger reason, of which she was certainly aware, the reason that Upcott divined. Not that she told him. But he felt it, in encountering her glances toward him at times; he recognised her intention in her turnings of the talk when the ribbon of it swerved like the high road and suggested a probable descent toward the cliff. At cross roads of the talk too, he, with his acute sensitiveness, because of his deed, perceived how Tomsie chose the turnpike way for all the company, as it were, and carried the party carefully forward past the lane running down seawards. That was her task at first, in the earlier dreads. Later she came but to provide the distraction that one not of a family and yet not an unwelcome visitor can give. For still, if Mrs. Upcott were to fall a-brooding, or were to have full liberty, entire solitude to think over the affair, above all, if there were to come to her ears any hint of the truth, how would she fall blanched before that gripping suspicion and go tottering to the full knowledge! "God spare her that," prayed John. With the dread of that calamity John fell asleep, and woke; and it attended him in all the duties of the day. So far his mother had seemed averse to hearing of the fight. She had seen so much of the sordid and the hideous in her day! She clearly thought that Thomas Upcott had been killed in just the usual fight that accompanied wreckings, in a hideous squabbling for the spoil. But John always had the fear that when they were alone one day the atmosphere should suddenly be charged with tense, vocal silence, and she should look up with her strange, blind, grey eyes, as they were in her most dire moments, and say, cold and calm:

"Now, John, I am ready to know the full story of that fight; and first—who killed your father?"

When she had asked some questions about the only part that was unusual in the wrecking—the stand taken against it—that being the only part she could not picture from knowledge or sight of similar scenes, John's heart had missed a beat.

"Did you have to fire on them?" she said.

"Yes," said John, "we had to, so as to let them know we meant what we said,"—followed the awful pause and then: "If Shebbeare had not come then, or if they had not listened to en——" he was flustered, you see.

"Yes?"

"—listened to him—then—Oh, it would have been—been a terrible business." And as he spoke he did not know of what he spoke, nor whether he hid his secret skilfully, or but spoke so as to arouse suspicion, because of his own picture ever before his eye, the picture of the gross back on which he had fired—and slain his father.

So he and she were saved again.

What Mrs. Upcott thought of her husband's immortal soul—and I take it she thought of that—no one can ever know. She was a woman of many reticences.

And so now comes Peace. Now we leave her more in the background of our picture. She recedes slowly, ere we leave her and Devon, leave her with her fair flower (of my incompetent speech) a flower so fair as to redeem the picture, I think, from the sordid. And here we have a group: mother, daughter, John; Cassandra resting against Mrs. Upcott's knees; Tomsie swaying against the wall, vigorous as always, springing back and forward from her palms that pressed the wall behind her. And back of them, and of the farm-close and the tilled furlongs, the oak woods mounting on the climbing hills; and, between the higher boles, inlay of gold sunset; and higher, mosaic of last sky-glow and silhouetted foliage and branches; and higher, over all, the sky already studded with pale stars in its blue and white like a veined marble.

Cassandra rose, thinking that she appropriated too much the blessedness of Mrs. Upcott's hand on her head as she sat there, and strolled in the close, rustling through the wind-cast leaves.

What the witch woman had said to John occurred to him then; for something, as she had said, had come between the fair-haired girl friend and him. Then, remembering how the witch woman had said that neither knew the reason for that aloofness, he went to her slowly. She was trying to break a staff from the hedge. Something, part heady, part airy, in the fading day filled him with the glamour and the pride of life. He saw Cassandra suddenly pluck back her hand from the hedge, with a little intake of breath, pricked by a thorn. A quick glance showed him the others, Thomasina, as Cassandra had expected, if not sitting at Mrs. Upcott's feet, at least appropriating her now in her own way, bending behind her, laying cheek to cheek, both arms around Mrs. Upcott's neck.

John turned to Cassandra in the dusky corner of the close.

"Let me cut en for you," said he and drew his jack-knife and thrust his hands recklessly into the heart of the thorny hedge, lacerating himself handsomely, of course. The action was full of the folly of quixotic youth: symbolic, and intended so. He would share her pain—bear it for her if he could, an hundred fold.

"Take care of your hands," she said. "The thorns are sharp and long."

He made no answer, cut the staff and trimmed it of side-issues, assiduously, with bleeding hands.

"You needn't have done that—so wild," she was saying, but he was trimming away the side-issues.

"Cassandra," he heard his voice as if there was a phlegm in his throat, it was low and husky, "we haven't seen so much of each other recently. Are we not as good friends as ever?"

"Yes—as good friends—sure," and her pensive eyes looked in his face, but he was not quite satisfied with them; they had a look as of his mother's when his mother would not know all. Her face was like ivory in the twilight, brown ivory. He saw it shine and was moved with a kind of sanctified passion.

"I—like you, Cassandra," he said, suddenly impulsive to speak; suddenly, on the other word that died in his throat, restrained, he knew not why.

"Us—us be young yet," she said. "I hope you may be a good man," she added quickly.

He thought then that she had been aloof, come less frequently to the farm, passed out of his way at church, because he was the son of his father;—"for your mother's sake," she added. He thought then that perhaps she considered him not as good a son as he might be, to his mother. Then followed a sense of rebellion against what were, after all, his self-created fancies, though they were so real that to him it was rebellion against the domination of woman—of Cassandra Gifford. "Why should she judge?" Then he bowed to his imagination of her, to her fancied thoughts, and felt that his bowing to her so was a mighty sign of his devotion—if she only knew!

And then into the yard, where was this group, in the sweet merging of day and dusk, before candle-time, came Hacker, the diabolic seaman, for Hacker was his name, though he had given it forth as Jones.

"Evening, ma'am; evening, all. Shebbeare is comin' up here, ma'am," said he. "He has some news for you."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Upcott—and here again is distraction of sympathy, and all the while time passing and wounds a-healing. "Has he found Uncle's friends?"

"The old man had no friends, ma'am, but we have found a will in the cot."

And then the gate opened and Shebbeare entered the gold-lit farm close. All came to their feet.

"This," said he, "is sure the happiest hour of the day. Don't stir—don't stir! Do not rise."

But Cassandra and Thomasina fell back a few deferential paces and then Shebbeare took from his pocket a crinkling parchment.

"Fetch a lamp, John," said he.

"Shall we go indoors, sir?" asked Mrs. Upcott, feeling perturbed, somewhat aflutter.

"As you please, ma'am," said Shebbeare, "but it is so peaceful out here on such a night. Indoors is stuffy on these warm autumn nights. Out here one can breathe deep; outdoors, in evenings such as this, a mortal feels that any kind of goodness can easily come to us."

Mrs. Upcott was looking on the aristocratic face, the clean-shaven, sharp-chiselled face. John had brought the lamp and, "Sit down, Mrs. Upcott, I beg of you," said Shebbeare. "In God's name, ma'am, why should you stand to me?" And as she sat down she took the paper from Shebbeare; and Shebbeare took the lamp from John and held it up so that she could read, he looking on her face in the glow. She read the top line, for the document was headed, so:

"There is Money in Bees!"

And then Shebbeare saw her eyes glisten with welling tears as she read. She sat reading, intent, thoughtful. She must have finished quite some little time before she raised her head.

"But has he no friends?" she asked.

"He had you and yours," said Shebbeare looking to her again, for he had looked away, still holding the lamp, when he perceived that she had finished her reading and yet did not look up.

"But 'tis blood-kin I mean," she said. "Oh, he was kind, kind and good, but we must not take advantage of his kind heart."

He shook his head. "No," said he, "he was quite alone. He was the last of his people."

"God bless him. God rest him," said Mrs. Upcott.

I need not tell you that the old man of the moon had left his all to Mrs. Upcott in that quaintly headed will. But she was more moved by the feeling that she should not take the beloved old man's savings than by any feeling of relief to herself, by any thought of what the financial aid meant. That was then but an afterthought; for, though she was in her prime and had known what it was to save and stint, she was not a typical Devon woman.

The diabolic seaman had been standing back behind his then commander, his evil face looking wondrous kindly on the scene. And now, Shebbeare having moved aside, the lamp rays smote on the seaman's face. And seen in that light, at that moment wearing a softer expression than its wonted, Mrs. Upcott's sense of knowing the face came again. And then, sudden, come recollection, recognition absolute; her gaze focussed keenly on him. She rose. She took a step, staring. The others wondered at her, they standing back out of earshot in deference to Shebbeare of Shebbeare Towne. And then the diabolic seaman bit on his lip and looked as though he were afraid.

"Sydney Hacker," said Mrs. Upcott. "Sydney Hacker."

"Iss. Sydney Hacker, sure 'nough," he said, "though how you knew beats me. No one else knows me." For the Spanish main had scarred him, changed him, branded him; and he knew. And it was also many and many a year since he had sailed from Bideford and gone out over bar to make his fortune in a "reprisal ship."

Mrs. Upcott looked keenly on the scarred face and gauged its lurking, unquenched kindness. She saw that he felt—and that he could bear, but that he found it hard to bear. There was an old owl lived in the Abbotsbury wood and he hooted then.

"I am sorry," she said, very low, very gently.

"Thank you," said Hacker; "it helps me, ma'am, for you to say that."

Shebbeare asked no question, though his expression did; and Hacker turned to him. "You see, sir," said he, "I ha' been gone a long woile from Devon and—human nature's human nature, sir—and—I've been gone long 'nough to be dead for sure. 'Tisn't like as if my woman down to Bideford had married again to once my back was turned, or to once she thought I was dead. 'Twasn't till after the news came to her as that the ship I was aboard was lost, so I hear, asking cautions down along."

Shebbeare bowed his head in sign of hearkening and sympathetic attention, comprehension.

"And what will you do now, Hacker?" he asked when Hacker paused.

"Oh, I go back to the Indies," said Hacker. He seemed to feel that an explanation was necessary. "I on'y came out along to see the ghas'ly shore we was so near a-coming on and us so near hoom. And—well, because I dursent stay to Bideford after I knew. No, sir, I couldn't stay so near her; not that any man knew me, but I was too near her; and by God!" he broke out with a thickness in his voice, "it's a terrible thing when once a man's known a woman, and her his wife, to——" and he broke off abruptly, ashamed.

"You are a brave man," said Mrs. Upcott, saying the best thing possible.

"Aye," said Shebbeare, his head inclined gravely.

Hacker threw up his head. Sympathy or aid from a woman, and skilful sympathy at that, was one thing; from a man quite another. "Oh, Hell!" he would have said to a man alone. Now he compromised.

"Oh," he said, "the ways of life calls for fortitude in man." And then he bowed backward clumsily, but with a certain dignity, from Shebbeare and Mrs. Upcott. "I suppose I can stay at the old man's cot sir, now, though you have settled the things there?" he asked. "You'll not be cleaning it out for a two-three days?"

"Yes, yes, my man," said Shebbeare. "You can stay there if you wish for——"

"On'y till I hears of a vessel for the Indies," said Hacker, "Good-night, all. Good-night, sir," he gave a seaman's salute.

"Good-night, ma'am;" he made a bow in a way that would have been ridiculous had it not been so wholly sincere an expression of respect. And then he turned back, as he went, weighted with the air of sympathy.

"Ain't it a beautiful night for time o' year?" he said, and then the gate clicked, his broad back merged with the shadows in the land; and the squelch of his feet in the mire, and the rustle in the banked leaves, passed away from hearing.

So now you have the story of how one man came home.

CHAPTER VIII

ONE MAIDEN'S HEART

Ravenning's sister strayed down the lane that ran by the Abbotsbury furlongs, on her plump thumb a ring that had been on the little finger of one of the sea-spurned mariners, in her ears his tiny golden ear-rings such as women wear firstly for adornment and men wear ostensibly to aid the eyesight. You could have told her on first glance for a Ravenning, for Will's sister, because of her build; but she was an improvement on Will. Her cheek-bones were of the family, but not sinister. She was altogether a bonnie and plump, white-teethed, rollicking maiden; and though I say rollicking I do not insinuate thoughtless. Of the same mould as her brother she had been more careful than he and so there was no accentuation of the mark of the beast, that stolid, serious, passionate beast that Will had carelessly cultivated; and with her there was a cultivation of the more radiant side. Her laughter saved her, even the boisterous laughter. You would still see the family traits in the way she would swing about impetuous in her wide gestures; in the impulsive way she had of, as it were, throwing herself at you in conversation. But in these dancing brown eyes, so full of wildness, there was a clearness and tenderness. The drowned man's ring on her thumb signifies nothing much amiss; it is but a sign of the times in which she lived.

These last two mornings she had frequented the lane with a kind enough intention. She was watching for the expected departure of her brother's best friend, to intercept him on his way to Hartland for Tom. And here he came, as expected, riding past the file of cots.

"Good-morning, John," she hailed him, and stopped in her sauntering.

"Good-morning, Tomsie," said he and looked his affection on her; for Will Ravenning's sister was to him different from other girls. His friendship for Will, I take it, put him on a different footing with her; he wore the air of a protector almost. On her side, she knew that Will would have been a more dissolute young rascal lacking John's friendship. Not but what John had spirit. She could read it in his eyes that sometimes frightened her; sometimes in the midst of a talk with him, he talking so frankly and easily, with so little of the usual bantering of their age—and all ages—between youth, she would feel her bosom leap up. And she would look solemn and frown on John and put him in a balance, as it were, much as her brother did; and she would understand him a little better than her brother could understand, and feel no fear for herself for all the fierce leap at her bosom, but feel a kind of sentimental pity for John Upcott and the way he had to go—a sisterly pity. For she had, at such moments, a woman's or maiden's quick intuition that John was not exactly different from other lads—but was just as other lads—only different! That was about the sum of her weighing. She divined the trouble in his eyes, eyes full of wilful fire and yet as tender as his mother's. She divined how John Upcott held a kind of restraint over Will Ravenning. And always she spoke to him as she spoke to no other lad.

"Where be off to, John?" she asked.

"To Hartland," he said.

"What for?"

"Why, sure for brother Tom."

"John——"

"Yes?"

"I have something to tell 'e."

Her face was suddenly heavy. You could then see more noticeably the face of Will—heavy, stolid. And at that solemn gaze John remembered the witch's prophecy about his brother, and only faintly was eased in the thought that the witch had been wrong in the matter of Will Ravenning.

"What is't?" he asked.

"Tom baint to Hartland now."

"No," said John, without any inflection in his voice.

"You know?" she said raising her brows. "Then why are you——"

"No; I know nothing. What is it?" he asked.

"Will came down along to tell 'e," she said, "but he couldn't—you see—with that—your other trouble. I'm sorry, John. He told me. That was all he came for—to tell about Tom. He told me and I've been awaiting a chance. Will wouldn't have risked comin' down along but for you, John." She broke off. "Will thought a heap o' you, John."

"What about it?"

"It's like this: Will went over to Hartland to see the bull-baiting, and your brother Tom, you zee, was there. The bull-baiting was o' Sunday mornin' and there was a gurt crowd a-gathered. But the bull was a game un, he was. First dog up he gored clean and slung up so as he was dead afore he fell in the women's aprons. An old witch-woman there spread her apron with the rest when they all ran to catch en. She caught en. 'He be dead,' says she, 'and out o' this troublesome world, poor dog.' Them paid no heed to her silly words, for puttin' another dog on. Next dog got the same and when the women spread to catch en falling, th' old witch got en again, and says she: 'Poor dog. May we all die as speedy and easy.' Third dog on tore the bull bad and kept to en. 'Twas a well plucked dog. And then church bells started ringing and away they all runs to wash for service and left but one or two to guard the gamey bull. Brother Will was took with pity for the bull the way they put stitches where it bled worse to save en till after service, and the bull gruntin' and lookin' round, not for men but for fear of another dog; and so brother Will, (he told me he thought you would ha' done it had you been up along,) sticks his knife clean in a-tween bull's shoulders. They was too much for Will. They caught en; and volks were so mad at having no baitin' after service 'at Will found hisself in the stocks. Then your brother Tom comes along and stands lookin' at en and watching the folkse a-spittin' at en and a-peltin' en. Three hours he had to set next Sunday mornin', the Sunday after the one when he killed the bull. Sat there by the lych-gate and volks goin' to service jeerin' at en. The old witch-woman—she seed how your Tom looked on, and came to en and said she: 'Why don't you get your friend out?'—'How can I?' he says. 'Why,' she says, 'there be plenty gamey lads to Hartland to help in that.'—"Tis a bad crime to break the stocks up,' says Tom, thinkin' over it all the same. She put a ribband round his neck with a silver cross to it. 'Wear you that,' she says, 'and you get through safe.'"

John stared. He had the sense of knowing all this of yore.

"So Tom went for two-three lads and after all was in church that Sunday, all but the guards and two-three others, they came at en. 'You get no shillin' this time for guardin' stocks,' says your Tom and hit first guard over the head. 'And you get no shillin',' says another of the lads and the other went down—not but what they made a fight. Then they smashed up the stocks and away——" she paused, relishing the thought of the fight.

"And where's Tom now?" asked John.

"Tom? Why Tom and Will by now——" she climbed to a stone and looked seaward over the slopes and John turned in the saddle.

Out in the sparkling bay were dotted three sails, one far off by Lundy, one near at hand, one east and tacking up channel.

"Shouldn't wonder if he's in that brig off the point," she said and just as they looked the brig put about on a fresh tack and as she did so her sails twinkled in the morning sun. She stood away on a long reach west through the seas, Lundy like a cloud over her.

John's mouth fell.

"But couldn't he come and say good-bye—to—my mother?" he said.

"Ah, John, my brother John—let me call you brother just this one day," and she leapt from the stone and put her hand on his knee where he sat on his pony. "Don't you see why he couldn't? The guard never rose again. They were dead and—and—'twould be a terrible thing for to dangle on Hartland gallows."

And John sat thinking of all that the old fortune-telling woman had said.

"Brother Will risked comin' down. 'Twas not him that struck the guard, you zee, and him sittin' in the stocks: so he risked

comin' down. There was a dozen of en, you zee; for they had to smash the stocks up. Not but what breakin' stocks or breakin' out o' stocks is bad enough trouble. Reckon it might be transportation, anyhow, for that."

"What can I tell mother?" said John, and one need not think this heartless toward the deed of his brother and his friend; for cracked skulls signified little then.

"You do have a wonderful mother," said Thomasina slowly. "I think I should tell her the truth," she added simply.

"Thank 'e, Tomsie," said John and took a long breath and turned his pony. Thomasina's grasp tightened on his knee. "Poor boy," she said. "Our Will," she added, "thought a heap o' you, John." She stood looking after him with frowning brows. And then he turned and rode back to her.

"Be you sure that they are away over the seas?"

"Iss, sure. Your Tom went aboard three days ago to Bideford and they've been hidin' en there for fear of en bein' hunted for. Our Will risked comin' back to tell 'e, you zee. She was to go out over bar wi' this morning's tide. Reckon that be she us saw there."

John, from his vantage on the saddle, saw over the hedgerows to the quivering acres of the sea and picked up again the white sails of a vessel, too far off to tell her rig now, eating up the space between her and Hartland Head, flying into the Atlantic, flying into the mystic west.

"Cheer up, John," said Tomsie. "They'm free of Hartland gallows."

There is always something to be thankful for if one would only cultivate a cheerful disposition.

John rode back, chin on chest, to tell his mother if he could. At the gate he sat still on the saddle a moment or two, staring on the tiny ship running towards Hartland Head. And Mrs. Upcott, in the yard, looking out to sea also, across the slopes, with the wistful look on her face, the look that moved him when he came upon her unexpected, turned, recalled by the sound of his approach. And again she read his face and desired to know—to know—she braced herself. Her husband was gone. There was now no broken reed to interpose between her and the viewless Unknown upon which we lean. The reed that she always had felt she could not lean on, but had things been otherwise should have leant on, ought to have leant on, had been plucked away, blown forth from the hill. She was alone. Here was immensity. And she raised her face to the glittering sky and found that her soul was strong enough now to know all. All that John had to tell to-day she could bear with calm; she was leaning upon no broken reed. And she could lean wholly where she now leant without feeling that she slighted her man. For thus at times had she felt of yore, such was her wondrous heart.

And as they looked each to each the sails passed beyond Hartland Head.

CHAPTER IX

OSCULATIONS

You will remember that when John Upcott was an imaginative child he once planned the annihilation of his father. Well, we know what he did eventually, unwittingly, and how the terrible deed affected him. Frequently, too, he had in later years been haunted by the ambition, sometimes faint as an idle idea, sometimes tormenting as a passion, to go across the seas. There were vessels constantly going out of Barnstaple and Bideford, here close at hand, and from Plymouth, to make empire, called letters of marque ships, or reprisal ships, or what you will; and there was money to be made in these vessels. Frequently then he had thought to go off in one of these craft, make a fortune, come home and, on the strength of his wealth, take over the government of the farm, be, as it were, the prince there, under the queen mother, and put the father, as it were, in a dungeon for the remainder of his life. And now, behold, he still desired, as did all Devon youth then, to go a-sailing over the rim of the sea; and yet the reason that he had before given to himself for the desire had no longer existence.

Now, also, thanks to Uncle, there was more of the very necessary coin of the realm to give its reassuring golden chink. Out of the late autumn day, as John autumn-ploughed the field there seemed to have gone something, the presence of which he had scarce remarked before. Perhaps it was that his nature required some balancing affliction. In the autumn nights there was a cold deadness. Still, it was good to come home at candle-time and see the lit faces and the leaping fire. But now his cooped-up energies demanded output; and one night when he had met Cassandra, in talking to her, suddenly, as she looked at him, he knew not how, some sparkle of her eye, smile of her face, set his head a-whirl. He remembered her words in the farm-close: "We are young yet," and in the dead autumn night in which their voices sounded hollow, or as though weighted by nature's quiescence, he had a sense of the end of things, of an end led up to by just such stolid, dormant months. She would never be close to him in the empty world. He flung his arms round her, gathered her to him, kissed her cheek. It may seem odd to many a young man of to-day, but he had never kissed a girl before, or woman, only Sis and mother. He was twenty-one. It was his first kiss. The feel of her shoulders in his hands, her cheek under his lips, intoxicated him.

"Cassandra," he said, "Cassandra, I love you. Oh Cassandra, some day——" and there she was standing off abruptly from him with a face, as he could see, in horror, even in that gloaming, flashing pale this moment, and darkening the next with blushes, and again pale.

"What do you mean?" cried she.

"Forgive me! Forgive me!" cried he, thickly.

She turned and fled and he ran a little way after her and then bethought him that in so doing he would terrify her. And so he stood still in the lane and stared at the lights that leapt to life and blinked from windows up and down the darkened and dead hill.

Now he had done it! She would never, never be his, however he were to work at home, or whatever fortune he were to make on the high seas.

He moved down the lane disconsolate and there came a girl swinging and singing, broad of beam against the sky-line as she came over the rise. Then the moon came out and sent its cold glamour over the slopes that smelt of dead leaves.

"It's John!" cried the girl. "O-ho, John, us are well met. I wanted some lad to walk me down to the shore and back, but most of them wants to pull un about—and I can't be troubled with that to-night."

There was something so cheery in Thomasina as she made her friendly request that John rejoiced at her coming. It was a relief to talk to her. To talk to anyone else would have been an ordeal. His mind would have gone straying. His mother would have thought him ill; Sis would have looked wide-eyed and wondering on him and he would have read suspicion in her gaze.

So Thomasina and he, under the flying silver clouds and the tilted moon, went gaily down the lane, its unevenness causing them to bump each other once, twice, and at the third time: "Look you here," cried Tomsie, laughing, "do you want to push me into the hedge and get me with prickles in my hand?" And she turned a roguish face on him and he

wondered just what she meant. You will perceive that he was always imagining things! "You need a staff, you do, if you stagger like that. Oh! nearly twisted my ankle in that rut. It's me needs a staff from the hedge, I think!" She did not look her banter now, but he looked at her and found her gazing straight ahead, but smiling. And then they came out on the clear roll of land above the cliff.

"Listen to the sea. It's wild these nights," said Tomsie.

They listened to the flinging of the pebbles under the cliff and the raking of them down by the swinging seas, walked slowly east to that harsh sound and came to where Uncle's demesne loomed above them.

"Is the old sailor to home, I wonder?" said Thomasina; and they climbed up and looked at the cot. There was no light in the window and as by mutual consent they wandered on, burst open the little gate, and entered the wild garden. Hacker was evidently still abroad.

They walked down to the end of the garden.

All the somewhat chill night was full of the voice of the sea and they leant against the wall there, looking down on the darkness to which their eyes were now becoming accustomed; and with the moon behind them they saw the black of the sea brighten slowly, reveal itself with its flashes of white, and here and there its tossing. And then John, his mind vacant, the sea in his ears, had a new experience. He was then perhaps a little stunned by his late encounter with Cassandra, though at the moment he was not thinking deeply of that encounter. He really could not. The thought of it was too gigantic. The affair was full of portents, calling for solitude to be lived over and considered in all its aspects and pondered on deeply to argue just what it would mean for his chances of ever again being even spoken to by Cassandra. Such was his frame of mind. One can hardly say he thought; his mind was practically vacant. And then he felt a tingling in his cheek. By the way, it was his left cheek and Thomasina was on his left. The tingling ran down to his heart. He wondered; and then he was aware that Thomasina was very close to him. Her thick fluffy hair was on his temple. Was it but the wind that sent it fluttering so against his face? She moved her head up and down, and then turned her face slowly and looked on him with her, I had almost said chubby, cheeks, puckered with roguish laughter; she laughed in his solemn face. And—and he flung his arm round her waist. She nestled plumply to him on the instant, laid her head against his shoulder.

What did this mean? She looked up at him. Her face was heavy, like brother Will's.

"Kiss me," she said.

He bent to her forehead, remembering Will. She threw her head back and took the kiss on the lips and John gathered her more closely and held her head still higher, amazed at his action, feeling her face in his hands, and kissed her on her plump, white throat, and felt how she strained back her head. Then she turned her face aside, stood stolid, chin on heaving bosom a space, while John wondered afresh at the world and what it contained. And then she looked up at him, her aspect radiant, and said she, softly:

"Brother John!"

He held her then with a difference, slight, yet enormous; and he felt happier, too. She put up her hand, her right hand, as she nestled to his left, and laid her fingers on his shoulder, and said she: "Forgive me. I don't want 'e to think me a forthy maiden, John. Forgive me."

He could say nothing; he thought suddenly of Cassandra. He felt he did not understand anything.

"Do you forgive me? Oh, John, forgive me!" she said.

"There is nothing to forgive! I don't understand 'e!" he said.

She looked frowning on him. "Well," she said, "it was my fault."

"What?" he said. "Me kissing 'e?"

She nodded and, "Um," she said, her lips closed on the sober, affirmative nod.

"No, it wasn't," he said sharply and yet he almost thought perhaps it was.

"Oh, but it was," she said.

"No, 'twasn't. I should liker ask you to forgive me for——"

"Will you shut up?" she said. "I tell 'e 'twas my fault!" And then she added, with what was now a kind of mock solemnity: "Brother John," and spoke the words with great weight, disengaged herself from his now slackening arm, laid a hand on each side of his face, kissed him squarely, and said she: "It was my fault."

"It was nobody's fault," said he.

"Us better leave it there, then," she said.

And then they both laughed, turned about, and sharing a feeling of sparkling amusement, walked homeward, meeting the returning Hacker, who stopped them with frowning face and a kindly hail; and the three stood chatting a space.

That night, after hours of maddening examination of his new position in relation to Cassandra, broken into by what grieved him as unfaithful, if ecstatic, remembrance of Tomsie's nearness, John felt he would give the world if only Cassandra had been in Tomsie's place. He had pictures of galleons, from Hacker's tales; of Devon dogs boarding them boldly; of the sharing of the trove on sun-bright, sandy shores, the brig anchored in the blue sea to lee of the yellow isle, doubloons and pieces of eight clattering at his feet. In a moment he had boarded a hundred Spanish ships, shared a hundred treasures, come home, kissed mother and Sis, clipped Cassandra to him, not then too young, craved forgiveness for to-night and told her he had lived for her alone. He did not remember the scarred face of Hacker, seared by the Carib seas, and the Spanish main, by Hispaniola and the Tortugas.

He did not perceive, lacking humour then, as one does in such times, that the solution of every difficulty was always—the Spanish seas. But he was not alone in that foible. He was but inspired by the air of his times and his land.

CHAPTER X

CAPTAIN——

"Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!"

"Ahoy! Ship ahoy!"

The mariner of piratical aspect, he of the long greatcoat with the loose gold buttons, stood on the bank of the pill with his hands in his breeches pockets and his stiff coat and his twist of hair sticking out absurdly behind him, shouting to the echo that has been spoiled these many years by excavations on the opposing shore of Torridge. The pill too, is gone, long gone like the piratical person himself. And the pill echo was one of the favourite echoes of old Bideford, place of many echoes; and the seaman of the gold buttons and the fantastic vocabulary had a great relish of hearing it.

"Ship ahoy!" he would shout and listen to the echo—and then the second echo that came about twice the length of time after the first that the first came on the cry. Sometimes he would vary his amusement by laughing mad laughter, and the echo bellowed back on him till the tears came to his eyes and he held his sides in maudlin merriment.

The citizens resented his monopolising of the echo. Who was he to go out there and roar and bellow at twilight to no ship that came in upon the homing tide? But he could hardly be fined as a common loiterer, for he had clearly means, as witness his gold buttons. Nor did he ever sit ignominious in the stocks as a drunkard, for he had always the use of his legs; and as for being mulcted for his oaths—well, a man had to swear a deal indeed and generally do other things to make himself objectionable before that law against swearing was brought to bear on him. If a man was fined for swearing you could have a guess that he was unpopular otherwise, in some way not within the law. "All right, sir," so to speak, "I can't have you there, but—let me catch you swearing!" A shilling an oath for the man in the street; two shillings for the man of position and three for the aristocrat—some of us would grow poor.

When the echo staled upon him he would go back to the sign of the Dolphin, steal in quietly, like a man suspect, or one who had made a vow of silence, take the shaded, secluded corner settle, have his liquor solitary. His end would be achieved: no one would observe him. And then, of a sudden, he would say farewell to his caution and his close-lipped discretion (whatever prompted these), clear his throat and grin upon the silence that that sound decreed, then smite his fist upon the table and cry out: "Devil take this place. Give me an ordinary of the Hispaniola or the Tortugas, where a man can hear the rattle of mugs and the clink of glasses, and a shuffle board in every ordinary and no word said, a pipe and tabour a-goin'; aye—and mugs a-walloping on the table and a dust raisin' and you can sit and shout to yourself and nobody take no heed, nobody hear you; sit and roar to yourself in the middle of it all till you goes black in the face. That's life! That's me! That's Captain——" and then he would pull himself together, cease abruptly on the word, call for drinks round (or at least he often did so formerly, though not of late) or start a stave of a song, as though to cover something that he feared he had let slip. And if any temerarious or idiotic tippler should question him on what he meant, with a leering curiosity regarding that hiatus, he would lay his forefinger to the right side of his nose, half close his red, right eye, and say: "You need not work the pump when the sucker ain't on." Or, if he was not more wary he would murmur: "Hearsay, only hearsay—not that I know o' them matters from personal observation," and so further puzzle the curious. Folk wondered what "them matters" might be.

If any man asked him his name he gave it as Mr. Rogers of Bristol, a retired merchant skipper. But he had a look on him that belied the word "merchant"—though that signified little in a seaman in Bideford in those days.

Shortly after his witnessing of John Upcott's youthful fight in Gunstone Lane, Rogers had disappeared abruptly from the Dolphin and from Devon, going out on the Irish packet from Barnstaple; and then, one evening, when his memory was quite forgot, under a young moon that sent the golden discs dancing in Torridge, he came back, having walked all the way from Plymouth, with his cutlass swinging against his leg and his hands thrust in his seaman's belt and his eyes bloodshot—and yet with a bearing still as of one who had curbed men and who could yet rule men of his own chartless breed: Captain Rogers, retired merchant skipper of Bristol!

He had still his former way of maligning the people and the modes around him, and if anyone spoke up in defence of the subject of his tirade he would smash on the table, and glare; and people fell silent, or even ate their words, rather than argue with him. But if any other person spoke (in the oracular manner of the tap-room politician or man-of-affairs)

against aught, usage or individual, and the piratical person chimed in at all, it would be to play the part of belligerent advocate of the usage or individual so maligned. There was no living with the man.

"Oh, don't talk to me!" he cried one day when a tap-room loafer had been reviling the eccentric Sir Lewis Stucley. "I tell you all great men are different to you; and you ain't fit to set up opinions on 'em. Why do you run down Stucley like this? I tell you you are jealous of him, that's what 'tis. You ain't got his wealth—but you've got his vermin! 'Tis jealousy. Why shouldn't he walk up and down his room through the gold and silver if he wants so to do? Why shouldn't he pick the grey lads off him and put 'em on a hot plate and wager his left ag'in' his right which is off first and him minded that way? You sit there carpin' against your betters and if he shows up here, why—what do you do? Why, knuckle your hats to him, bow to him, make a leg to him. And so you should do! Jealous, you be; and not only jealous, but—but—I forget the word that fits you, but it's a long word and it means you be only fit for removing of the throw-outs from the fore-door."

The landlord objected to this vituperative language, saying, in a voice that was a curious blending of the stern and the cringing, that he could not have such speech in his ordinary.

"Oh, can't you?" the so-called Rogers cried. "You take my money, don't you? Well, you can take me. Or if you don't like me," and he paused effectively, "why then I'll go somewheres else where I can be appreciated, sink me if I don't! I'll give my custom somewheres else—and my name. Yes, my name. You hear me," and the flat of his hand came on the table, "my name too, sir, so as when I die maybe they'll change the name of their house and have me on a sign above the door with a telescope i' one hand and a glass o' grog in t'other, and a cutlass in the nex'—what be you grinning at, you—? I'll larn you to grin at Captain——" and then a long, glaring silence.

But he was not always so. He had other moods towards the end. He had times when, after his bouts, the young blades would win his soft side and make him believe almost anything they chose, however ridiculous. One morning, for example, he called the landlord.

"Landlord," said he; "can you tell me if anything beyond the wonted took place here last night?"

"Why no, cap'n; just the usual, so far as I know;"—and with that in stepped a lad and touched his hat and "Good-morning, Sir John," he said and passed on solemnly.

"I knew it!" cried Rogers; and then he plucked the landlord by the button-hole. "Last night, sir," said he, "I received a knighthood for me deeds. A depytation came down a-purpose from London. Strange to me that you didn't know."

"I was away last night," said the astute landlord.

"Ah! that accounts! Well, after this you call me Sir John—eh—Rogers," said he, nodding and frowning; and then he added, as to himself, sadly: "'Tis nevertheless a pity now! 'Tis sure a pity! Still—Sir John Rogers is good enough, in its own way."

And explanation for all this was merely that the young blades had, finding him in the fitting key, made up a play to knight him with a wooden sword and performed the ceremony in the tap-room, ceremony through which the maudlin captain passed with drunken gravity and cock-eyed pomp. But a week later, when the mood had passed, it was as much as a man's life was worth to mention titles; and he who for seven days, or thereby, had refused to heed anyone who spoke to him unless the speaker fittingly addressed him as Sir John, now, at the slightest drift of talk toward titles or the aristocracy, would clear his throat and draw up his right sleeve so that the dirty lace showed on his iron and browned wrist.

Into the tap-room where he sat there came one day John Upcott, looking for the landlord, to request two beds for the night.

It was a haggard face that John presented, for he was now on his way to the Spanish seas. And here already, before leaving Devon soil, he was full of regrets and self-accusations. Now he knew that all things were to him but as excuses, not reasons, for going out to these romantic waters. One by one during these last years the excuses had been made invalid; and yet here he was, going. And the only reason now for his departure was one that he could not tell, for it was simply born of the situation that he had placed himself in towards his mother by the deed that he had done in the Abbotsham fight. There was always that between them of which the mother was unaware; but the closer they came, now that he was the man in the house, the more did that affair gnaw his heart, eat his vitality. Time passed, the days went by,

and he began to believe that the affair was well nigh forgotten by the people of the countryside. Indeed, he began to fancy that perhaps there were few (how madly he hoped there might be none!) who knew whose shot had laid low Thomas Upcott. But there hung over him his own knowledge. And at last the mother reasoned that the youth was fretting his life away with his old hunger for voyaging. It was accordingly she who prepared the way. For as she probed and wondered, seeking the cause of his strained reveries, of his look as of one haunted, of his falling-in cheeks, she bethought her that men were made for an up-and-doing life. It was the way God had made men.

"I sometimes wonder, John," said she, "if you never think now of what you so often used to—of being a sailor."

His jaw dropped.

"And leave you!" he cried. "Now that—that I'm the only man—leave you!"

"It might be you would see Tom overseas," said she, "and tell him that he could come home safe enough so be he wanted to"—for it had been discovered that the two guardians of the Hartland stocks had not died of the assault upon them by the young men, but—quaint times!—because they were evil-eyed by an old witch who came about the place just after the riot, as though she had directed it all by occult powers, and come in to see the fulfilment, to be in at the death. The men had been seen to move, one had flickered an eyelid; all had seen that, or imagined they had. The other had even sat up; but the witch woman, standing by scratching her head, had looked vindictively on both. So they had died. And she had been traced easily enough; for she had wandered from Hartland to Bideford, fortune-telling all the way. And at Bideford, being spurned by a certain woman, she had gone away muttering, and shortly afterwards the woman who had sent her packing was seized with stabbing pains over her body, and the old witch was seen by one, who reported the matter, sitting by a field side stabbing with a long pin in a piece of oak bark. The inference was clear, and the old witch woman, so far from denying the charges against her, had listened to all, and to every charge pled guilty, even giving light, of her own accord, on how she had connection with the Black Man, the Devil, and how they, he and she, did this and that thing hitherto inexplicable! So she had been haled off to Exeter and there duly burnt. Tom might come safely home.

Between Mrs. Upcott and her son there had been a deal of talk, this way and that, but at the back of it all mother and son felt that, whatever the reason, John was to go away. It was in the air, inevitable: they knew it.

Mrs. Upcott measured the depth of his love for her, as well as the depth of his roving hunger, in his emaciated cheeks, his despondent bearing, because he never spoke of his roving-hunger!

And now here he was in Bideford, going away—and only he knew why. And the reasons that his mother and he had tacitly decided were the reasons, when he thought over them—ah! what a position they put him in. God knew he was not that kind of son! And then again he thought how she must love him, to love him still, believing that he could leave her so readily for mere whims and only one at all weighty reason. For the only spoken, discussed reason for his going, that seemed to him at all weighty enough to bring down the balance against that other balance in which were her loneliness and her love, was that he might find Tom overseas, and tell him that all was well. But the truth was that John, loving his mother as he did and being loved by her as she loved him, was dying of the secret that he could not tell her.

The piratical person, sitting in his corner, suddenly observed John talking to the landlord, recognised him, and up he rose, swept his hat abroad magnificently, made a leg and: "Aha! The rat!" he said. "We have met again."

But John Upcott could not be offended at the piratical person, for clearly there was respect of a kind intended in his salutation. And then the captain, as John bowed doubtfully: "Might I have a word with you, sir?"

"Certainly," said John.

"Come you over here then. For quiet chats give me a corner where you can see who comes. Have a tot o' something?"

"No sir, thank you," said John. The captain seemed almost relieved on this occasion, instead of jeering at the refusal.

"Well, I don't blame you. If you do what I want you to do a clear sober head will be no hindrance to you—nor to me, sir—nor to me. Fact is, I ain't taking near so much myself now."

They sat on the corner bench whence they could see the door and those who went past in the street.

"And now, sir," said the captain, "I know your breed; and to show you my confidence in you, afore we say a word of

business I tell you what I have not told another soul in this town, drunk or sober; yes, drunk or sober, I keep my thumb on it. Upcott is your name, sir, John Upcott as I heard, making inquiries gentle like, and now, sir, I gives you mine. I present myself to you, Mr. John Upcott—Captain"—and here his voice was low but quite clear—"Avery."

"Eh?" said John.

"Even so, Mr. Upcott, as you remark—eh! But there you are. That's me in dealing with men. I'm no Bristol merchant, sir. I'm no pimping Bristol merchant. I come to business straight and show my hand at the word go. Sink me if I don't! 'Tisn't a Bristol merchant's way, but it's my way and then if one goes back on me I know how to deal with him." But from all tales of Captain Avery that were then current it struck John that the captain had a better opinion of his methods than the facts of his ongoings would bear out; for was it not known how Captain Avery had made himself rich by aid of other pirates and then, cleverly getting all their joint plunder aboard his own ship, had slipped his cable one night and gone off?

Upcott stared at the captain with a feeling of horror, and yet with a certain curious respect; for a man who can rule a shipload of cut-throats, tight packed at that, and take them helling through the great sea-valleys, must have some masterly capacity. And just as John recovered himself again after the shock of this introduction that old parrot in its melancholy voice drawled sharply: "Prepare to meet thy God—the ship's going down."

"Odd rot that bird!" said Avery. "'Tis an unchancy phrase it has; and the way I am now, in this place, makes me mislike it more. But to business, John Upcott, and no bones about it—that's me; that's Captain Avery."

CHAPTER XI

"IS YOUR DRUNKEN BOATSWAIN ABOARD?"

"Are you a business man?" asked Avery abruptly, settling the long tails of his coat behind him on the settle.

There was a flicker of a whimsical smile on John's face.

"No more am I," said Avery; "and that's the trouble. Them business men are too much for me. I see their games plain as the sun but they always do me brown for all I see through 'em. You see, they begin a-talking business with you and so long as they're having their way they keep on talking business; but when you chip in with your side they shore the talk off on to beer, or skittles, or play-actin', and have you seen this? and have you seen the other? till they gets on a subject as interests you. And then when you're in good key over the talk that ain't about business they slips in a bit of business sideways and says: 'By the way, I've been enjoyin' this talk so much I well nigh forgot'—and ten to one, you bein' still on the laugh over some story or some tale of a rencounter of old days, you lets 'em have their way. 'Here's a fine, affable cully,' says you, 'and I ain't goin' to argue too hard with en and be too close with en.' So he has his way. Then there ain't no more 'Good-day to you, Captain Avery,' after that; no more 'How's the captain this morning?' But they just swings round and says: 'Now, you idiot, we've settled the business and—my time's precious if yours ain't.' That's business men. Pimps, I call 'em, pimps!" Avery paused and breathed deep. "It's like this with me," he continued. "I came up to Bristol with a fortune—fortune!" and his voice went up in a cry, and then he looked round suddenly cautious, leant across the table and whispered the word; and the whisper was perhaps more forceful than the cry. "A fortune; yes, sir, a fortune. And it cost me a bit of planning and devising and o' blood, yes, sir, blood, my own and others, I tell you. There's diamonds I got from the Great Mogul, turquoises like his daughter's eyes and rubies like a drop of blood; and there's opals—them opals is wonderful stones. 'Tisn't that I'm what you would call a swipes of a man the like would sit toying with his lady's garters what he had in memory of her, or wearin' of a twist of her hair in a locket, or fondlin' of her kerchief, and sittin' dreamin' of her. No, sir; I'm one of these up and board 'em men, plunder and home again and no sittin' around dreamin.' That's me with everything—victuals and plunder. That's me! I take all my liquor neat, and my life too, and all my victuals underdone. But for all that—them opals I could sit a-fingering and turning over quite a while. With a ruby you see it all—just a drop o' blood, frozen like. Diamonds? Well, diamonds mean money, but they're cold, hard lookin' things and the best service of them is for some house-breaking cully to cut the glass out o' windows. But opals—opals—some o' them opals you think you've seen all as is to them and then you give en a bit of a turn and there you be seeing fresh in 'em. I've powdered one up, I mind once, to see what was to it, anyhow. But it ain't no good. All the powdered bits is just the same."

"But what do you want me to do to help you?" asked Upcott, for there was no end to this.

"Now you're talking," said Avery. "To do? Well, you see, them Bristol merchants has all my jewels, rubies, opals, diamonds. You'd think I could ha' sold 'em to Charleston or Boston maybe, but no; everybody there in the fence way was afeared of them. I comes to Ireland and there—I was afeared. Then I comes here, to Bideford, and sent up to Bristol two-three careful messages and down comes first one and then another merchant to see me. Well—I'm no merchant; I'm no pimping-minded Bristol merchant. First one I was wary of and didn't show him all I had by a long ways; but down came another of the same breed, but more sharp. First fellow took me for a fool. Second cully had been posted up on me. He fleeced me. I'll slit his weazand yet—here or hereafter. That's me—that's Captain Avery! The first man was what you might call a frigate, in a manner o' speaking, and the second was a sloop, in a way o' speaking. Made a dash up, came aboard, took the lot. There was me a rich man, rolling in wealth, and couldn't dispose o' me wealth; for it was too big. And the warrants was out for me you see, me and Kid. Kid! Who was Kid? A dam' swipes! Think o' Kid and me on the same proclamation! Why, I've ruled the toughest crews in all the seas; and I had what you call ideas. I was for doing new things. Cap'n Morgan had cleared the West, pretty near. Did I content meself turnin' over where he had been afore me, like an old beldam over a bucket at the fore-door? Not me—not Avery! I just steps down in the cabin one day and tells the skipper—'I'm cap'n now, and we're goin' to do summat. If you don't like it you can go ashore. If the idea likes you, you can come as me supercargo.' He didn't like it, so I put him on a sand-spit—that's me—Avery. I hear now as how I set a fashion like, with that; and many a smart young lad now does the same with a cap'n as has got too fat on the poop. That's me! And don't it seem a pity to you that a man with a mind like this 'ere mind o' mine should be bilked, sir, cozened, sir, by them pimps up to Bristol? Mind you, they scared me clean away once when I kep' on writin' 'em to settle up for the jewels they had took away from me. I ran for it to Ireland. Said they'd put the traps on me and I was scared. A

man what's kinged it on the poop don't hanker for the Triple Beam. And then I says to meself one day: 'Avery! What are you, a man what has diddled the best cap'n on the high seas and plundered the treasure ship o' the Great Mogul, what are you doin' here feared away from your lawful rights,'—for mark you, them things is mine!—'feared away by them grinnin', sleek, blinkin'-eyed, grey-faced, tubby Bristol fleecers?' Back I comes here by Plymouth. Some of them Dartmoor savages set on me and me walkin' over. I finished 'em! Me! But I didn't have a penny to me name—and me owns thousands—pearls and rubies and diamonds and silk stuffs. And now what I want is a likely partner; and then we go to Bristol and lay boldly aboard o' the offices o' them pimps—you at the door to keep anyone from goin' out or comin' in while I slits their weazands or gets me own back. Oh! damn 'em, damn 'em!" And then the notorious pirate collapsed on the table all quivering and broken.

Suddenly he looked up with a terrible face.

"Don't you think me a weakling," he said, his jaw twittering, "but I ain't had a bit to eat for a week. I had a little phial o' pearls left, and the landlord o' the Mariners, when I offered him one for a week's board, says: 'How did you come by these?' says he; and then he looked at me—and he recognized me from the proclamation and I'd to give him half the phial of pearls to shut his face. Me! Me—Cap'n Avery, feared o' a clodpoll in Bideford! Now I'm wary; and I've got no money. But once we get to Bristol, sir, and face them fellows we're safe—and we go shares, you and me——"

At this entered Hacker, in quest of Upcott, spied the two in the corner and came toward them. Then suddenly he stopped.

"Well, well," he said, "who'd have thought it?"

Avery's knowing eyes stared on Hacker like a wolf's.

"How's Captain Avery?" said Hacker, leering.

"You make a mistake, sir," said Avery. "Me name is Rogers."

"Oh, is it?" said Hacker.

"Sure," said Avery, "as this young man will inform you. I don't know you, sir. You have made some mistake."

"Prepare," said the parrot, "to meet thy God. The ship's going down!"

Hacker came closer, laid his hands on the ale-stained and burnished table, and looking directly on Avery, said he:

"Is your drunken boatswain aboard?"

Avery, it turned out, had been living on swipes with the last of his money and eating nothing. Besides he had led a wild life and now at that cryptic phrase he tottered to the floor, holding his head.

Hacker looked round, for the landlord came hastening.

"He is in a fit, I think," said Hacker. "He had better be carted home."

And so he was by two or three of the loafers who stood always outside the ordinary, leaning first on one leg and then on the other and always leaning against the wall. Bringing up the rear, each for his own reasons, came the landlord, Hacker, Upcott. But the widow woman with whom Avery lodged would allow no one to tarry after her lodger was laid on the bed. All with various expressions glanced round the room, elbowing together now, their task accomplished and Avery a-sprawl on the low, dishevelled bed. But it was a woe-begone apartment and clearly the home of one near his last pence.

"Come now—out with you," ordered the old dame, "and let the man be in peace. Out with you—out with you. You'm in the way now your work be done."

"What's all the haste? Do 'e want to be suspected o' doin' away with un?" asked the landlord of the Dolphin. "He be a dyin' man."

"Drunk, you mean," said she.

"No," said the landlord. "He ain't had no drink this two-three days. He be dyin'."

And at that the woman cried out to the dallying bearers to go for a doctor, to go for a parson. And Captain Avery struggled to a sitting posture on the low bed with its tangle of soiled blankets. "Give me a tot o' drink," he said harshly.

The widow hastened to her cupboard and brought forth a brandy flask and a broken cup. Avery took the cup with trembling hand, the widow helping him. He made a wry face, shook his head. "I don't like the smell," said he. He made another effort, puckering his nose over the cup as though the odour were repugnant, put his lips to it and then threw backward, blowing out his lips, just wet and no more, in loathing. The onlookers gazed one to another.

"I heard you askin' for a doctor," said Avery looking round with his red eyes. "I'm past doctorin'. I heard you askin' for a priest. I mind Captain Flint's quartermaster at Hispaniola when they brought him the priest. 'What's that you're carryin'?' he says. 'The host,' says the priest. Quarter-master grins and says he, 'Sure,' says he, 'and it comes again as of old upon an ass.' And then the priest comin' nearer he looks close to him. 'You!' he says. 'You! Why? You come to me? And now,' says he, 'what did you do with my sister?' Nobody ever knew what he meant, for he tried to get at the priest and that finished him. You know what priests and parsons is with women. Them not workin', you see, and always a-hearin' confessions and thinkin' about the seven sins all day. Pirates is cleaner—up and doin'. That's me! That's Captain Avery! Oh! I've seen some things in my ti——what's that? What's that?" He clapped his hands to his head and fell dead, back on his greasy pillow.

When I came this length I was filled with a hope that the captain might have had, somewhere in the chamber, hid perhaps in the wainscoting, perhaps even on his person, under his shirt, in a canvas bag, a chart preserved, showing some islet in the magic sea with whales spouting about it and dolphins curvetting, the islet where some other portion of his treasure lay. And thither, thought I, my John Upcott might go, and come home in the last chapter glorious and gemmed. But no. The affair was but an interlude in John's life, so far as worldly gear went. It was but an interlude so far as that kind of romance goes. But there is a deeper kind of romance, if only people would have it, a deeper romance than that which I scented at first and sought. Otherwise the affair was no interlude, but part of the very stuff that made him. "Now for my life it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable." Uncle had read him that passage once.

The part that Hacker had played in Avery's passing, Hacker's bearing showing clearly that no question was to be asked by John regarding it, did but serve as another hint to John, here, on the threshold of his new life, that there are more things than glamour and tinsel in the wide and windy world.

CHAPTER XII

WITH THE PACK

The *Torrige Maid*, with her hundred men and her twenty guns, went over bar and stood for Hartland Point. It was morning, and the bays swung open and disclosed themselves to the mariners. And here, already, began for John the testing of what is called manhood.

Upcott, looking landward, saw the mists rising in wavering grey pennons from the shingles, swinging athwart the cliffs. Fields of heather, and green lands, and ploughed lands suddenly leapt into the day where the mists dispersed and rose till the last grey scarf lay along the hill edges, thinned, was dissipated and Devon lay open to the new day and to the sea. And to look on his native land so, from the vantage of the waves, to survey it thus, as it was deliberately and particularly disclosed, moved Upcott deeply. He had not known his land was so kin with him; it seemed alive and he to be sharing its joy in this placid unveiling and rejuvenation in the autumn morning. But, if he were to be a wearer of the mask to hide his heart, he committed an error here, at the very off-going, in staring as he did wistful toward the shore. If he was hereafter to force men to take him as he was, then he committed no error.

But here is only the beginning of things.

He might yet prove himself greater than all those manly ones who cast no glances ashore—some lest their comrades might mock them; a few, because for this or that cause Devon really meant nothing to them, for them was surely dead. Strange faces these, marked with greed of gold, or with savagery, or with love of such brief, fierce spells as they knew in the ordinaries of the water-fronts of the American ports and the Caribbean Islands; or marked with all these things; and on their foreheads you might have surmised their destiny: the purple sea their place of pillage, the grey sea their winding sheet, with all the world for a headstone. Most were bleary with their farewell potations. One required no more fingers than his own to count those who were wholly sober. And they wrangled and argued, and talked of other ships in which they had sailed, as they drunkenly set things ship-shape, and showed one another how we did aboard the last ship, the so-and-so—that was the ship for you, no apple batter aboard her, no come and tuck me in, mother, but get a move on and let 'em see her paces.

For these mariners were little more than boys.

Out of the hundred there were fifty or so whose ages ran from eighteen to twenty-one; the other twenty-five, say, from twenty-one to twenty-seven, a score but turned thirty, which leaves you but a matter of five older than these. And so, Hacker, quartermaster, with his forty-two years was patriarchal. Some talk to-day of the youthfulness of our warriors and seamen, as though such youthfulness were a new thing; but our empire was made by boys.

Hacker smiled when he heard a wild youth say to the dreamy-eyed John:

"Thinking about the junket and the mazzard-pie ashore, be you?"

John did not smile, but yet he looked round on the jeering one.

"I'm thinking what a land is Devon," said John, staring expressionless.

"And wishing yourself safe ashore already by the looks of 'e," said the youth, still smiling with that smile that never deludes anyone into thinking it a sign of good-humour. But the youth was not invited by John's precise reply nor by his stare as of a man cut out of a stone, so he allowed that little interchange of word, and grin, and stare, to serve by way of introduction between them and rolled forward to another man who stood by the bulwark gazing on the foam-fringed shore, stole softly behind him, put a mocking arm round his neck and said, with rollicking insolence: "Kiss me good-bye, my maiden."

But he who was thus mocked looked round sharply and removed, with deliberation, the caressing and mocking arm.

"Don't do it! I've sailed afore wi' you, Scudamore. I'd 'a thought you'd 'a known I don't allow no man to stroke me."

The bully's face lost its mockery a moment and there shadowed in his eyes a kind of blent courage and fear, for he knew that there were onlookers. He glanced round. Yes, there were sinister eyes studying him to discover if he was a man to

sustain his insolence.

"Can't you take a bit o' fun?" said he and recaptured his lying smile. Those who have seen, in drawing-rooms, the meeting of ladies who happen to be enemies, or seen bullies on the high seas, or in barrack-rooms, will understand the kind of smile of which I write here.

But the bully's prey did not trouble to look round again; still gazing absently shoreward, he said gently, and evenly, and placidly: "Go to hell."

There was no lift in his voice; the order needs no exclamation point; to put one would spoil the idea of how deliciously deliberately he spoke.

Of course the men laughed; and the bully tapped the shore-gazer on the shoulder.

"See yur," he said, "what you mean talking to me like that? Do you think you'm a better man nor me? I'll gie ye a hat on t'nose. If you takes me for a gawkin you'm wrong."

The shore-gazer looked negligently over his shoulder, his head held so that the bully had the taunting glimpse of his curled nostril and the underside of his jeering jaw.

"Oh, go to hell," said he in a tired voice. And again the crew laughed.

The bully moved away. And then he saw that in doing so he made a mistake—for those near leered on him.

The rules of the pack are very simple.

One man pushed himself in the bully's way and then gave a look as of parodied astonishment, as though the collision had been accidental.

Bully Scudamore saw that he must recover himself, so he thrust aside the man with whom he had collided. True, it was a slight push he gave; but those who think women have the monopoly of perception of subtle shades of meaning have to see real swashbucklers on sordid forecastles.

I fear you may find this part rather tedious, but I shall cut it short.

"Don't you hit me!" said the man who had taken it upon himself to make jest of the bully.

"I didn't hat," said the bully, "I only shoved." It was a fatal remark. He was losing ground and the words were no sooner out than he knew his mistake and added, for recovery, "If I hat you'd know of it."

Then stepped forward the man who had been gazing shorewards. Talk of subtlety!

"See yur," said he, "this be all along o' me."

Up he stepped into the ring already forming for the other two and smashed his fist in Scudamore's face, sending the bully crashing to the deck.

Scudamore was up in a second and charged on his assailant. The two met, sparred, and bully Scudamore tried to come to grips, a believer in his weight and in the efficacy of his hug. But his opponent staved him off, smashed him to the deck again. "Good man, Ashplant!" cried the crew, admirers of the victorious.

Up rose Scudamore suddenly, or half rose, and even as he was in the act of rising caught Ashplant by the legs, tripped him, and had no sooner brought him thus to the deck than he knelt three times in his middle before a man could interfere, and so disordered Ashplant's wind, and that hero of the placid voice lay gulping for breath and gasping some words in an attempt to explain, in his pride and mortification, what was evident enough in all conscience, that Scudamore had not fought fair. But Scudamore did not rise, was still crouched by the side of his stuttering foe, because no one had hauled him off, perhaps all being too drunk.

And while some cried: "Good man, Ashplant!" others cried: "Go it, Scudamore."

So Ashplant accepted the conditions, swung up an arm and, still gasping to recover breath, but valiant, caught the bully

by the throat and plucked him to his breast even as he lay there—and followed the sound of Scudamore strangling. Then—this is life, not a story in which only pretty things happen, though I believe things do right themselves eventually—then the choking bully stuck his thumb in his enemy's eye and wriggled free at the moment of that assault.

"That for you!" he cried, thickly, from his choking.

And though the affair was hideous, bully Scudamore had evidently won the fight—and you know that interesting tendency of the public to huzza over victors.

But perhaps one should not be distressed by such things; there is always a higher court.

Into the ring dashed the quartermaster, a belaying-pin in hand and felled Scudamore to the deck as he might have felled a beast in a slaughter-house.

Says he: "W'm to sea now, lads. Us bain't on Bideford quay." And then to the man with the piteous optic: "You go aft there and I'll come and tend your eye."

Aft went Ashplant, his forehead in his hands and the thick blood between his fingers.

"Put Lord Goring there below," said the quartermaster, indicating the fallen bully: a phrase that was by way of being an antiquated witticism, or with a tinge of humour, it would appear—as a boy on the streets might to-day, belatedly for sure, and only to some minds wittily, call after a man with a goat-beard and soup on his shirt-front and a Wagner pipe in his paw: "Hullo, Kruger!"

"Get en out of the way," said the quartermaster, "and keep the decks clear. You take this ship for a bloody cock-pit? You mark me, you lads, you'm to sea. I'll teach ye different if ye think you'm to a Bristol bawdy-house. You'm out in the wide wurdle now. I'll make men o'you—not swabs."

John Upcott took some more notes. He had perceived all the *nuances* of the affair, had even seen that perhaps it was his duty—according to Cocker—to take up Ashplant's trouble as Ashplant had taken up another man's. But though he perceived these subtleties he did not act upon their suggestion. And he hung back, so, not so much from cowardice as because he was not quite satisfied with the usages of the pack.

Yet somehow he admired Hacker's way, for all his vocabulary. There was an air about Hacker as though he cried: "This is a cock-pit of a life, but I'll see some ideas of decency in it if I do have to crack a skull to get the ideas in."

And here it was that John burnt his boats in a spiritual sense. The cold of the sea-wind was in his heart, side by side with his regrets at leaving home and his sense of relief at having escaped from the lurking dread of his mother's sighting, pursuing, discovering his secret.

"Stand by to go about!" roared the skipper. And as they ran on the deck, "All ready about!"—"Raise tacks and sheets!"—"Mainsail haul!"—"Forebowline!"

And the chant of the helmsman, "Helm's a-lee!" vibrated in his heart. He thrilled with a wild joy and was brought in tune with the sea and the sea-wind at hearing that cry.

And then there struck him a simple truism: That his mother was older than he, and alone now, and his duty was at home, and that here he was leaving her. The refrain of the adventurous sea and the echoes of the voice that had talked to him in the darkness of the Abbotsham farm were both in his heart. Then it was that he burnt his boats, in the spiritual way, so difficult to tell in coarse words. He determined to listen ever for that quiet voice, that whisper under the wild lilt, even when he exulted as he did then, at that very moment, in the abandon and the wild concentrated joy of freedom.

Irony again! Irony again! Within the month his hands were to be dipped in blood.

But now he thought of his mother, and something of the clarity of her atmosphere was round him like a spell. He read her in the far receding depth of clearness between the tossing wave tops and the drooping ceiling of the sky. She was that clearness. That clearness was she. And the clearness was a greater thing than all the tormented ocean seething in itself, or than the clouds, great and terrible though they were, or than the wind that drove them. There was the infinite, receding, clearness between stooping cloud and smoking sea—an infinite clearness.

John, as he looked forth then, decided to adopt a policy of silence and aloofness.



CHAPTER XIII

THE ISLE PROVIDENCE

The *Torrige Maid* was running for the Isle Providence and all hands were looking forward to the landfall; for two days ago, very early, indeed ere the sea was lit, the look-out had sighted a ship on the port quarter, a ship that brought brave news.

"Sail O!" the cry had gone from the bleak masthead, and expectant hands had tumbled on deck; because they were now passed through the Windward and beyond the Leeward Islands and March being now well advanced, one might look to see, at any hour, the castled ships of Spain coming regal through the sea from Panama and Darien. But the ship picked up that morning was alone, and no galleon, but just such another brig as the *Torrige Maid*. And the two had come closer in the seas, like meeting ants, and had stretched antennæ, and touched, and passed on.

It was a memorable occasion. The hour was four of the morning and when Upcott leaped up the companion-way and took the first volley of wind into his lungs, stepping forth on the canted deck, he looked directly out on a star stationed low in the pallid sky near the verge of the world. And newly out of the forecastle's fetid air, into the gusts of that hour before daylight, not only his face tingled but his heart tingled with the sea. He found the *Torrige Maid* swinging along with the wind on her larboard, riding the slopes of the mounting and subsiding waves with a flutter of foam crisply breaking from her. All the tossing world was dark purple. The list the brig had on her was because she was under much canvas, Master Lang being a devil to drive her.

"God!" said John, "what a morning, what a world!"

I think it was rather an adoration than a blasphemy.

And over heeled the *Torrige Maid*. She swung, she rolled, she rolled farther, speeding and wavering. Her yards dipped and the star seem to swim upward. And John's heart leapt with a half fear, half mad love of the night, the wind, the purple sea, the hour before dawn under the amazing sky that was neither dark nor light. The Nirvanic idea was in his soul, but he had not the skill to express it nor the knowledge that others had felt it.

The sea and the sky and the wind were in his heart.

He saw the whole circle of his world of ocean as it were poised and wavering as the poised compass wavered there before the balancing, straddle-legged helmsman.

The ships drew closer, discovered themselves to each other in the bursting morning, lit their top sails at the rising sun, and anon their hulls at the risen sun, the black of them flashing into gold like mirrors as they rose on the rollers. They drew within sight of flag, within hail of voice.

"What ship is that?"

"The *Torrige Maid* of Bideford—Master Lang. Who are you?"

"*Three Half Moons* of Plymouth—Master Hands."

The vessels held on close and the *Torrige Maid* had latest news of the Gulf and the doings there.

"You should join the expedition if you be looking for rich pickings."

"What expedition?"

"De Pointis is going to make a landing somewhere on the Main. That's better than the high seas. The high seas are getting overwell watched."

"But that's a Frenchy."

"Never mind that! He knows his business, they say; and half the expedition will be English."

"Where are they to gather?"

"Hispaniola, the Tortugas, and the Isle Providence."

The words came fluttering across the windy space above the brightening sea and, for some reason, moved Upcott, fired him more than wine, delighted him more than songs of birds, thrilled him like love.

Then the ships held apart for sea-room, but all day were in sight each of each, with their sun-splashed and blue-shadowed canvass and their swinging hulls flashing back the golden suns. Then the wind died away and the *Three Half Moons* went from sight over the horizon with the last of it, leaving the *Torrige Maid* to flutter slower and more slow in an area of calm into which the dolphins came with their many hues, paused to look on her, and sported on.

Then came the wind again ere sunset, after much whistling; and three days later the *Torrige Maid*, having clapped upon the fortunate trade winds, picked up the Isle Providence and came safely into the bay, let go her anchor with a splash of silver foam and a rattle of chains, and lost way and swung at last at rest beside the *Three Half Moons*, whose crew welcomed their late acquaintance with gentle and profane banter, arms akimbo along the bulwarks. There were three other ships in the bay, all waiting the hour when De Pointis should come to these seas and lead them (for the hearts of youth and seamen are hopeful) to greater treasure hoards than ever Lolonois or Morgan led. And in the hour of waiting, to relieve its tedium, they disported themselves ashore in this, the latest lair of the sea-rovers, latest and safest now that their calling became more perilous—the Isle Providence. Now the Isle Providence was a hot spot.

CHAPTER XIV

CAPTAIN AVERY'S PARADISE

Here was the paradise of Captain Avery. In the middle of the curving bay, open to the blue of the sea and the humming or shouting of the reef, the tiny town lay, a freshness coming to it from seaward, a tropic freshness; and from backward, beyond where the coco-palms fanned the isle and made a wavering fringe against the sky, came stench of decaying vegetable matter in the swamps.

As for the town—a modern American would say that the Isle Providence was experiencing its *boom*. The ordinaries were rilled day and night with seamen and adventurers dicing and drinking—for to-morrow they might die. And for the same reason the Isle Providence inhabitants were reaping their harvest.

It was not everywhere that buccaneers could go now, since Morgan had turned from pirate captain to pirate slayer. It was advisable to take as many precautions as possible: a letter of marque with the San Domingo seal was worth having, in default of a better. Kid, by the way, knew what he was doing when he wheedled such a missive out of Colonel Fletcher of New York—though in the last pass for sure it did not save him from Execution Dock. The old haunts of the rovers were being made uninhabitable; so the islands of the gulf had turn about of providing for the rovers and of affording them space of land, amidst the sea they harried, whereon to riot.

John Upcott wandered on the beach, ploughing in the sand. He had that feeling of walking about in worlds not realised that one knows in new places: one looks on at the novel world and seems doubtful if all be real or but a dream. A voice hailed him:

"What cheer, John!"

He turned about, with his cloud of attendant flies, and there was Will Ravenning, his face, never handsome, now positively ugly, blotched, and a-gleam with sweat in its furrows. He had two pistols in his sash, a gaudy silk sling over his shoulder, velvet breeches of Spanish make, his shirt open at the breast for freshness, and a silk scarf wound around his neck to prevent blistering under the chin by the reflected heat of the burning isle. He went bare-foot, but wore a hat of broad brim, of finely woven straw.

"Hullo, Will!"

Upcott ploughed back to his old friend and took his proffered hand. He noticed that Will's eyes were bloodshot.

"What a life!" said Will. "What a life! This is sure like living. How do you come here?"

"On the *Torridge Maid*," said John. "Tell me——"

"*Torridge Maid*! Why then—'twas we told you of the gathering. Us saw each other and didn't——"

"Tell me—where's brother Tom? Is he ashore? He sailed with you, didn't he?"

"Eh?" And Will stared and sobered.

"Where's brother Tom? Is he ashore?"

Will stood blinking and sweating, his heavy jaw clenched, his lips twitching. He had the look as of a reprov'd truant brought to book.

"I can't tell 'e! I can't tell 'e! Seems I always bring 'e bad news." He looked into John's face and then, turning about, incontinently fled, Upcott at his heels gasping.

"What is it, Will? For God's sake, Will, what is it? Tell me—where's Tom?"

Will looked over his shoulder as he ran, the sand flying from his bare feet, and then a thought came to him how to escape and, gaining the houses, he fled into a place that was part ordinary, part brothel. But John followed on his heels—into the sound of raucous roaring of men and clinking of glasses ("and mugs a-walloping on the tables and a dust raisin' and you

can sit and shout to yourself"—you remember Avery's desire?) and rattling dice and high piping laughter of painted women.

"What's ado? What's ado? Trying a race for who pays shot?" cried one. But Will made for a corner and then turned about, at bay. It was no use—John was there.

"Sit down," said he, "and I'll tell 'e—if you must have it."

He turned to a negro and ordered two glasses of rum. John looked quickly round the hot chamber to take his bearings. Their entry had caused a head or two to be turned—but that was all; and now that they were seated they were ignored.

"Well?" said John.

"See she?" asked Will, indicating, with a lift of his brows and drift of his bloodshot eyes, a woman who lay back on cushions, entertaining, with flashing teeth and eyes and swings of her head and touchings of her hair with serpentine arms, half a dozen young men who swaggered before her like play-actors—as indeed they were.

"What of she?" asked John and then he saw, around her throat, a little black ribband, whence hung, between her breasts, of which she was inordinately proud, a silver crucifix. Something in the back of his mind, he knew not what, told him that the woman had some knowledge of his brother. He had never seen the crucifix and he did not recollect the words of the old witch then, unless subconsciously.

"Tell me," said he; "he is dead?"

Will looked on John as though afraid. Then he noted that John stared directly toward the woman on the cushions; noted that as he asked his question, quietly, he had his eyes on her.

"Yes," said Will.

John's gaze did not waver from the woman.

"How?" he asked.

"Her took a fancy to he."

"Her—who? She?"

"Iss; that woman, Marie of Spain, they call she."

"Took a fancy?" asked John. "How?"

Will drained his glass.

"Us came in here and got talking to she and her saw that your Tom did not take to she. Hands, our master, was to one side, close to she, a-stroking her neck, making love to she. Her had he round her little finger, as they say. Aye—zure 'nough—that ring on her little finger Hands gave she. Her turned to your Tom and never looked so much as if her felt Hands caressing she, and told your Tom to sit closer. He didn't do it just so as her liked, for her wanted he to be looking at she like them lads be looking now. And Tom was kind o' turning up his nose at she. Oh! I know women——"

"Well, well! What of it?" And still John's eyes were on the woman.

"Oh, Hands, he rose angry like and walked up and down a spell looking down on Tom now and then like as a lad's father might do: 'I'm your father, sir—I'm your skipper.' I think Tom was near makin' love to she, for spite, like. Her saw it all and was enjoying herself. One thing she saw zure 'nough, was as how Tom wasn't feared of Hands; and I reckon that made she angrier that he didn't make love to she—and him the best set-up man of the lot of them. Tom gives a look to her, seein' droo her, and kind o' smiles, as near friends wi' she as he had any taste to be, I reckon. I was close beside. 'You're makin' our master jealous, you be,' he said, quiet like and smiling over the fun. 'I don't care for your master,' says she; 'you'm a better man than he;' and she rolls her eye on him. Rot me if I could ha' gone on like Tom. I'd 'a clipped her and caressed her afore Hands right there—zure 'nough. He didn't. Then her bent across him as if she was going to speak to me and puts her hand on your Tom's knee and looked up in's face. Her didn't look to me at all. 'I want you,' she says. Aye—just as she be doin' there with thicky lads then. But your Tom he looked down and kind o' sniffed on she and stretched

acrost and took up his drink. Speak! Him didn't say a word. She'm a liard, too. But her stares at him then—I see her eyes—I see how she looked—and her cries, 'You call me that! You call me that!' And her jumps back from he. Women, I tell ye, comes out a-top someways. The only way is never to see 'em, never to look to 'em. If all men did that, reckon they'd die off and something better come along. But there! I for one don't have no intention to let 'em alone. 'What did him call you?' says Hands. And her looked back to Tom again but Tom was looking at she with his eyes just a little bit shut like and his head to one side, sizin' her and kind o' interested like, and nothing else. 'I can't tell you what he called me,' she says. Hands made at your Tom then. 'I'll teach ye!' he says."

"Killed him?" asked John huskily.

"Iss. So quick as that," and Will flicked his hand in the air. "Struck en on the neck."

John sat still staring on the woman. Then he rose. Will clutched him, and "What be you about?" he asked.

"I'm a-going to kill she," said John.

"Eh? No! God! Oh my God! no. You can't kill a woman."

John sat helpless.

"Where's Hands to?" he asked suddenly. "Is he ashore?"

"Iss, somewheres; I don't know."

"Come and point en out to me."

"No, man; no, man. It won't do no good."

"Very well. I'll get someone else to point en out to me. 'Tisn't like he was a nobody. A master everybody knows." And John rose and went from the place without another word.

Out in the stagnant day he saw a man with a Spanish morion on his head and wearing a long cloak that caused him to sweat the more in that heat, but which he needs must wear for the swagger.

"Who's that?" he asked a man by the door.

"I don't know his name, but he be master of that brig out there—the *Three Half Moons*."

"I thank you," said John and stepped across to the gorgeous master. He saluted him and, "Captain Hands?" he said.

"That's my name, young man," said Hands. "What can I do for you?"

"You can draw your sword, sir," said John. "I am the brother of the man you killed in that place and I have come to kill you."

Something he did not know he possessed woke in John's soul. He had not been taught the grand manner, though he had learnt to fence; but when he drew he saluted with just the perfect dignity.

"Who are you?" asked Hands staring.

"John Upcott is my name. We come from Abbotsbury, in Devon," said John.

"Well, John Upcott, if you must die you must. I'm sorry for you doing this, all for the sake of a trull."

John answered nothing. He thought to say: "You do not understand." Then he considered that to say aught would be but vanity and vexation of spirit. He himself was against the dead wall. At any rate he knew that from an outlook even far beyond the outlook of Master Hands the thing was ridiculous. To kill Hands was not to get to the root of the matter. But John thought that, as life was, to kill Hands was the only thing left him to do.

The captain cast aside his gorgeous, shimmering, velvet cloak and drew, and they looked eye to eye, unwavering.

At the first clash of steel there was a pushing back of chairs in the ordinary and flying of sand from the feet of the curious

congregating without.

The two fell to it; and the crowd thronged and circled.

John had the sun in his eyes. But that was consistent. That was but a part with the terms life offered him always. And he rejoiced in the sun in his eyes, he coming more and more not only to expect, but proudly to desire, handicappings. He bolstered himself up by telling himself that these were life's tributes to him.

His lips were locked; his wrist was easy, his grasp sure; his eyes never wavered from the stare of his antagonist.

Perhaps, after all, the glitter of the sun in his eyes gave fear to his foe. Will said afterwards, telling the tale, that his eyes shone like lamps. I think they were hard, yet elusive as opals. And they did not waver, as a good swordsman's eyes should not; but they advertised no coming cut or thrust. And there were cut, and thrust, and guard, and parry, and pauses, and again the terrific play; and then a quick running rasp of steel, clash of hilt on blade; for as John parried a thrust he ran the deflected vigour of it off on the length of his own steel. And then he lunged on, just continuing the parry, with a concentrated, calm fierceness. There was the sound of the steel going through, his hilt smote next on the second gold button of Hands' gaudy vest. Hands went down dead and twitched John after him at the end of his triumphant blade.

Then John wheeled about to the throng and picked out Will's face in the circle and glared at him, standing there a little trembling and dazed and short-breathed in his cock-pit with the onlookers round about.

"Will Ravenning," said he, indicating the throng with a wave of his hand, which was red, because in hauling forth his blade he had been splashed, "if there be any *Three Half Moon* men here you can tell 'em why I have done this."

Will was straightway besieged by the throng, those who were *Three Half Moon* men in haste to hear by what right this youth had challenged their master, the others in admiration of the youth's fierce ease in sword play. And John Upcott, turning aside, saw, in the doorway of the ordinary, Marie of Spain, blowing a wreath of cigarro smoke and smiling, showing her white teeth.

CHAPTER XV

AT THE SPANISH GALLEON

John Upcott had won his spurs and would accordingly now be spared much "evil-eyeing."

Had it been in his nature so to do he might now even have set up as a bit of a ruffler. For the slaying of Master Hands, when the story of that affair was told, made him appear in a somewhat romantic light, and as a bit of a hero.

But still you have John Upcott, just John Upcott, with his luck.

At least he could now, though he would not ruffle, go his own aloof ways unmolested by such characters as Scudamore. Yet now, when he had won the very condition for which he had longed, immunity from suspicions of weakness, effeminacy, cowardice, from attempts to bully him, he must suddenly lose hold of himself. The whole affair of his brother and Marie of Spain and Master Hands preyed upon his mind. He must go about morosely arguing to himself that affair, thrashing out its significance.

He passed on the yellow beach, trampling his small blue shadow in the sand under the tropic noon, and something drew his gaze upwards to the houses—and there was Marie of Spain, not looking at him, though it was to her his head had jerked about unconsciously; no, not looking at him, but looking past him, her eyelids drooping meditatively, she blowing languid blue smoke.

He marked her fierce beauty—and had a sense of fear.

How, he asked himself, how to tame her? And then, walking on, he thought that perhaps he had better leave her alone, that perhaps only so could the evil of the evil woman be ineffectual. What was done was done, but the world was not yet ended.

It struck him, considering Marie of Spain, that perhaps, if men never looked to women at all, ignored them (women, of course, he surmised, in their pride of the powers wherewith they gather men, would never believe such aloofness possible) ignored them, ignored them, continued to ignore them through all the instinctive clinging wiles of their adaptive natures, let them show teeth, and lips, and limbs in vain, they would die off for lack of caress, like famished flowers.

Then he thought of Cassandra, of Sis, of his mother—and discarded his tormenting thoughts.

He had been directed to the place where his brother was buried on the verge of the swamps and he stood beside the nameless mound. That took him back home again. And thinking of his mother in his mood then, he esteemed her life a cruel futility, and looking up to the glittering tropic sky he blew a sneer through his nostrils. Then came a desolation to his heart—his mother had never sneered—came a desolation to his heart and he turned to retrace his steps from the mangrove swamp to the bay—and passed into the most reputable ordinary! It was kept by an old buccaneer, one of Morgan's men who had settled here, fearful of what his old chief might do to him; for since Morgan had turned honest man his war against unauthorised rovers was most relentless when the rovers chanced to be men who knew too much about his own past. Old buccaneer Thomas Wren kept his ordinary with a tight hand. It was not everyone who could have board in his house. But though it was this so highly respectable ordinary that John selected in his dull, defeated mood, he yet called for a rum and put it over his throat like the driest buccaneer that ever sailed the seas. He had a feeling as of another mortal, not himself, directing his doings then; he was but a mute, paralysed observer.

And now he who had held off from the convivial bottle sat down to the solitary. He was aware of walls, of bars, barriers, constrictions. Life seemed to him to have been conceived in a taunting or ironic spirit and the rules of the game he thought too subtle: play as you would, evil scored—and all this, alas! just at the moment when he might have stepped forward in his life.

Instead he sat drinking. It was as though he had trained to the top pitch, touched, and then could not hold. And as he drank he floated into an airy world. He sat smiling over his cups and then looking up, said he to those who lounged there:

"It is not so bad a world, after all."

They looked to him and smiled on his tone of grave enjoyment.

"And I can see," he went on, "that a man can very well live his own life if he be minded so."

"Why, sure," said one to aid him; "live and let live," and winked to a crony and they waited developments and the unfolding of the heads of John's expected discourse.

"That is the word," said John. "Live and let live. There be different ways of looking at life. There be different ways of looking at most things; but I don't see why, because a man sometimes comes down, he should tell himself he's always down. Now, look at me, I live up in the air most times. My mate at home used to say he couldn't live the way I lived. I could spend a whole day lying on the cliff top, listening to the gulls and the sea. He could find naught in that. Give him a bottle, or a maiden in the dark, he said; and I mind once he said to me: 'O-ho!' he says, 'it's all very fine for you to say you like lying on the cliffs a-thinking and a-thinking and seeing the gulls a-wheeling; but you'm sure to come back, you've got to come back into the thick just like everyone else. Don't you take yourself for better than others!' John paused and smote the table before him. "Better!" he cried, "me take myself for better than others! I don't! I don't say I'm better. If there's any man here says I think myself better I'll show en! Why can't a man listen to the gulls without——" he paused and looked moodily at his glass and emptied it and signed for it to be replenished by the stinking nigger with the dirty napkin on his arm. "And why, because a man takes a glass once in a while, has that to be made the measure of him and he to be told that—that there bain't anything in listening to the gulls? Tell me that!" he cried. But no one had anything to tell. His disdainful smile faded and he leapt to his feet.

"Tell me that!" he cried.

They thought that rum and sun were working havoc with John Upcott.

Then in the silence and amidst the curious scrutiny, he collected himself. He drew erect and passed stiffly from the place. In the doorway he met Will Ravenning.

"Now I know you!" said Will, staring at him both exultant and contemptuous.

John caught Will by the coat. "Sir," said he, gravely, "if your brain is fit to hear my argument, listen: if you had known me drunk all my life and found me one day sober you would show as much sense in saying: 'Now I know you.' Believe me, my dear" (this style of addressing is not in Devon kept at all rigidly for use between the opposite sexes. Devon men "my dear" each other, especially when in liquor) "believe me, my dear, you are not fit to think about anything. Any little sense you have, you learnt from me, just through coming in contact with me. When you'm left alone and try to keep on a-thinking you'm worse than if you didn't try to think at all. Uncle taught me a deal because I had it in me already. But you'm only a poll parrot. When you'm left alone you get mazed. You try to talk and go back to squeaking. You'm funny then." He looked sadly at Will. "I'm sorry for you, Will, I am." And he passed on, while Will entered the tap-room uncertain whether to be angry or no.

But somehow the house puzzled John. He wandered into the interior of it and found himself looking out on the court to rearward. And then came a soft step after him; and, looking round, he saw a damsel at his heels.

It was the daughter of the proprietor of *The Spanish Galleon*—Jenny Wren—who followed quietly in the wake of the slightly divagating John.

The place was built Spanish fashion, with a *patio* in the heart of it; and John continued his lurching rearward, toward the *patio* instead of turning to his right. The wench came after him. She had been listening to his talk within, from the doorway, and measuring him and wondering just how much there was in his phrases.

"You should go to sleep, sir. You are not accustomed to so much rum, I fear."

He turned about, contracting his brows, attempting to get her in focus—for something had gone amiss with his eyes.

"I? Oh, I can stand anything," he said poignantly. Then he turned full on her and stared in her eyes. He thought hers met him quite open and frank; he saw kindness in them.

"Thank you," he said, "but I require no one to come to me and help me. I can look after myself, face any man—do without any woman."

"You should go and have a sleep," she said. "I thought perhaps you were looking for some place to sleep. There's one or

two hammocks out there. Go under the awnings. You certainly shouldn't go out in the noon sun in the Isle Providence, like that."

He turned to obey her, seek the hammock, and making his exit to the *patio* he crashed his shoulder on the wall.

"'Tis only that I have not got my land-legs yet," he explained to the girl as she caught his arm. But she conveyed him to a low-slung hammock under the pale shadow of a stretched sail.

"There," said she, he subsiding. "Now, sir, you're all well." She stood looking down on him, he sitting on the hammock; and she gathered he was none so drunk, but more excited. "You're different from most men," she said, searching his face, "and you shouldn't get like this."

"I am," he said. "Oh, I say it without conceit. 'Tis the way I see things that makes me different. There's my father. He was a—well—no matter. I learnt some things about life from him, seeing what a man could come to. There's my mother—" he touched his hat that was askew on his head. "By God! she's the finest woman on earth!" The girl frowned on him.

John slacked back in the hammock and Jenny Wren took up a fan.

"You're hot," she said. "You are not accustomed to drinking rum. What made you do this?"

"I don't know," he said.

"You do," said she; "you had some reason."

"It was just for a diversion," he said.

"True?" she asked. "Come now—true?"

"My brother—I was thinking of him."

"Oh, that should not have made you do this."

"No, it shouldn't, perhaps," and he hiccupped and apologised.

"Life is so different, when you come to know it, from listening to the gulls," he said, staring.

She had no word for that. That was beyond her. She moved in another way.

"You were wanting to forget something perhaps?" she said and her voice rang sympathetic to the ears of the rummy John.

He drew a deep breath, trying to clear himself of the fumes, feeling now a little fearful that he was being assailed by something else, more meshing than rum fumes.

He looked at her and thought her eyes were kindly, wished he had never bemused himself so. He thought a moment to cry out at her that he had only taken the rum because he was sick of the rules of the game. There were so many agonizing things, and the sum was excessive; the things grew until, at last——

Instead: "Yes," he said, "it is lonely. If one had someone to tell who understood it would be easier," and then he stopped, hearing his own words and calling himself a puling child. Women, thought he, do not want puling' children, thus falling between two stools; on the one hand aware that there was something weak in thus declaring the necessity for confirmation of his own feelings, on the other aware that to make a woman's opinion his touchstone was the last thing that he desired to do. He was drunk.

The woman captured him.

"Lonely?" she said. "I am sorry for you," and she stooped over him, close, closer. Her breath came on his cheek.

His arm swung up even as he felt that he had rather thrust her away, and he gathered her to him. Then he looked round the *patio* and there being no one there that he could see, and her body in his arms, telling him that this, the breath of a woman, the warmth of her close to a man, was the solace of a life whose enigma could not be solved, he dragged her unresisting down beside him. And then she cried, gasping: "Sir, after all you said in there! Oh! fie!"

He slackened his hold then a little, but she, feeling him slacken and aware that he required but provocatives, made as to remove from him. At that he clipped her to him again.

"What would your mother say?" she asked in a gasping voice.

He fell chill, the fumes of passion passed; he thrust her wholly from the swinging hammock, recovered his hat that had fallen in the fray and, struggling to a sitting posture on the hammock edge, glared up at her where she stood like a ruffled hen.

She read his face and was before him with a speech.

"That's a way to treat me when I was doing all I could for you," she said. "You are just like all men, after all."

He was crestfallen.

"I didn't mean it. 'Twas the drink," he said.

"Oh, was it?" she said and tossed her head.

"If only I hadn't touched it——"

He sat disconsolate, and with singing head, conjured up—or had flashed before him by the John Upcott of other days—a picture of Cassandra Gifford.

"And I expect you have a girl at home?" said Jenny.

"God forgive me, yes," said John, without looking up—and so missing the anger that showed then on this girl's face.

He was assuredly too naïf. Truly he was, he was different, after all, from most men; others would have sworn "No," but he cried, "God forgive me."

She turned from him.

He rose, and "I don't know what you'm thinking of me," he said to her back which he thought vocal of wounded kindness.

She looked over her shoulder.

"Oh!" said she. "You are the worse o' drink."

Strange how some women make the John Upcotts petty: he had a thought to say: "Well, it's your father's ordinary, is it not?" Fie, John! Instead, he said, thinking what a mean, despicable creature he was, and noting the girl's beauty: "Forgive me."

"I forgive you," she said and was gone, with a flash of lace at her ankles across the sand of the *patio* and a flash of her hand, her arm up like a swan's neck and the fingers putting her hair back into the lesser disorder, the merely sufficient disorder of her wonted coiffing. And as John looked at her going he felt somehow, in her back, as it was tautened in the pride of her going, in the swing of her draperies, in the tossing of her head, a something that struck him as being a kind of feminine taunt, a "That for you!"

And then came Ravenning to him, springing who knows whence?

"See yere, Mr. John Upcott," said he, "I see you then. And I want you to know that thicky maiden is mine. The *Three Half Moons* was in yere ahaid of your tub and I'm ahaid o' you with this maiden. I told you often enough you'd go back on your canting, Anabaptist, spoil-sport ways; but when you do 'tis a pity you don't look for something that's disengaged."

"Oh!" said John and sat up erect.

He had been grovelling in spirit; and here was hope. He laughed. He saw the possible humour of the thing.

"All right, Will," he said. "I didn't know."

"Well, you know now," said Will, and somewhat mollified, "of course I know she throws herself at plenty o' lads. The

lads I can manage well enough, mostly. She's a tricky piece, sure 'nough. I'd a bit o' trouble over her myself, but I bain't goin' to share her while I'm here."

John seemed to be pondering some speech. Then he apparently thought better of it and rose abruptly with a slight lurch. The fumes were falling stagnant.

"Enough said," he said sharply. "I don't want, for old times, to have trouble with you, Will." Then he paused, and thoughtfully added, as though speaking to himself: "I shouldn't be surprised if, after all, my brother did call Marie of Spain what she hinted he did."

"What's that to do wi' this?"

"Easy all!" said John. "I am beginning to see how women cause trouble; they have a gift for it. But this wench ain't good enough for you and me to fall out over, Will."

"Not she!" cried Will, winked, leered and took his old friend's hand in a hearty, sordid grasp.

Then off he went in search of Jenny Wren, leaving John to think.

So you see how John did not get the world's prizes, tenderly guarded and held away as he was, even in the moment when he thought the prizes worth obtaining.

Well! he had learnt something. Stale from his drink that had so quickly taken his head and, in the excitements following, been so quickly nullified, he stood, uncouth, in the *patio*. He had learnt something more about life—not without a wound.

And then he behaved in Adam's fashion. He blamed a woman.

"I wish," he said to himself, "that my mother had told me to beware of women, instead of to be tender to en. But then perhaps she did not know. She's different."

He was feeling pretty small, for though he had had the true measure of the girl granted him at the end he had been humbled himself.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RENDEZVOUS

The heat was oppressive and it was a good thing for John to be free of the woods and down on the beach at Tiburon where the sea wind could be felt.

Of course he knew now who de Pointis was, for the Isle Providence had discussed him well: a soldier of France who had had emissaries in the islands these many months to inform all men of filibustering trend that he was coming, as soon as France would give her authority, to pick up a little army, it mattered not of what nationalities its units might be, and go against the seaboard cities of the Don for plunder. This was all to John Upcott's mind, as it was to the mind of every man aboard the *Torridge Maid*.

De Pointis was late of coming, and when he did come he was unconscionably haughty. Men like Hacker, who had known the other leaders of expeditions against the Don, felt that they were ageing, that they had lapsed over into new times with other manners.

Whether from aboard ship, looking to the land, or on the beach among the buccaneers, Upcott felt that old sense of a froth on life, but was haunted by the idea that far below the froth was a calm. He would lean on the bulwark looking down into the water and see the coral there and forests of seaweed stretching up like trees; then his eyes would rove shoreward and mark the heat-haze along the land among the palms, their tufted tops soaring out of it above the blue, and the dotted houses looking through between the boles, and the land looked very low under the immense sky. There was medley of colour on the yellow beach, where were some scattered tents and stretched awnings; the filibusters moving there like spots in a kaleidoscope; the picture gripped him somehow. And then he would go ashore and draw near the inner circle where de Pointis sat nonchalant, and sober, and expressionless, under his yellow awning with the purple tassels, with his rapid, nipping talk and his refined gestures and air as of cultured swagger.

Upcott's first sight of him was from the landward side, and he saw him sitting in a great chair under the awning that cast more a mitigated light than a shadow on him. And back of him, through the awning, were the shining sea and the glittering horizon and the white line of the bursting breakers.

In the offing lay his ships, and the ships of the filibusters come from the Tortugas, Hispaniola, and the Isle Providence. And the high twinkling gulls veered over all, now drawing together, now bursting apart.

When Morgan recruited for his descent on Porto Bello he lay in a hammock, fanned by a negress, having his gold cup replenished when it was quaffed, as deliberately as one turns the sandglass.

De Pointis was abstemious. Kid and Avery and Tew and Hoare and Roberts and all the rest of the infamous rovers, before or since, had a way of making themselves more kin with their crews than had de Pointis. True they all took the lion's share; but they unbent, they were at one, somehow, with their men, though they did often keep order with a belaying pin or the brass-bound edge of a bucket.

De Pointis was a man with an air of being sufficient to himself. He had no curiosity to know the usages of other leaders, either as regarded their care or neglect of themselves, or their attitude toward their followers.

De Pointis did not unbend; and there were times that he would sit with his head flung back and eyelids drooping languidly like a beauty: and the buccaneers, come to talk over the expedition with him, would think him a fop, until they discovered that he was weighing them so, damn him! with his Nancy ways, and his poise like a rapier, and his delicate waist and supple wrists with the fine lace on them, and the way he had of yawning and putting his hand to his mouth when he talked!

But all this Upcott relished. He measured de Pointis for a rogue; but, with the pack, a clean rogue was something. He saw something to admire and yet felt he would come to hate de Pointis.

Sometimes after sitting so a space and the discussion going on, up would go de Pointis's eyelids, and his chin, and his nostrils would sneer on the captains, and he would rasp suavely on them his proposals, and turn to look a question on Du Casse, in such a way as would make one think that if Governor Du Casse seconded him it was always a seconding—and

if he did not it was a matter of moonshine.

Upcott, among the soldiers and seamen awaiting events, came closer where the captains sat in their barbaric attire; for they seemed to vie with each other in vulgar magnificence that ceased to be vulgar because all the colours around were so bright. They sat about on cushions, under their awnings of spread mainsails, gold-hilted daggers of Spanish make in their sashes, great ear-rings in their ears. Many had impressed some negress to stand behind and fan them. The whole scene was suddenly colour-etched on Upcott's mind when, as he looked on, some straying wind from the woods brought a scent of orchises to blend with the smell of seaweed. And often after the scent of a quiet flower would flash the whole scene on him again.

De Pointis held his position and had his way; at last the terms were agreed upon: of the first million (they were about to do big things) a thirtieth part was to go to those who did the work. The rest was for those who sat at home, who gave de Pointis his ships and his stores and his munitions—and legality for the venture! But the main thing was that those who came with de Pointis, and the buccaneers who met him here, were to share and share alike. Had there been any attempt to suggest that they got less than de Pointis's men they might have more fiercely objected to the excessive amount that those who sat at home in France were to reap.

But they might as well have accepted any terms offered, because of what was to befall so soon.

From the beginning de Pointis gave the filibusters a chance to show their ruggedness.

They cursed him severely when, Cartagena before them, he ordered them, not his own men, to the first landing. And Upcott shared the general feeling—hatred of their leader: and yet they fought well! They cursed him when he ordered them to the stiffest part of the fight.

"We'll show him," one cried. "He wants to see us crack his nut for him. He wants us to pluck his orange. He wants us to get him what he wants with our blood and save his own men. We see his game!" And then, "Oh well! We'll show him we can do it!" And so they did not mutiny, but fiercely, with a fierceness really against de Pointis in their hearts, already fired with freely-served rum, they went to do his work, and a little of their own, according to the contract. Their first task was to take the hill east the town, and somehow they did it without the loss of a man.

The sense of things being all wrong was still strong with John Upcott. He had been morose all through the sea voyage down to Cartagena. Everything was ridiculous. For what had his brother died? For what had he slain Hands? For what were they here? John Upcott saw, in common with almost all the filibusters, that the terms offered them for their share in the taking of the city were comparatively paltry. And now de Pointis's keeping of his own Frenchmen safe aboard and landing these Englishmen to bear the brunt of the attack, was clearly a new injustice, an injustice with an insult a-top of it: for de Pointis sent ashore with them a force of eighty negroes, stinking, sweating savages who had the effrontery to leer familiarly upon the filibusters, as though they were equals be—of de Pointis cause making them so!

This finished the madness of John Upcott. But now he did not argue over his position, did not continue to tell himself that he was venting his rage upon the wrong heads, when he went for instance charging up to the Bocca Chica castle, with a frenzy against—de Pointis!

At first Upcott stayed by Hacker; but soon in the advance on the castle, with the guns of the ship sending their screaming death over their heads, beyond them and beyond the walls, the party spread out. They began to spread even as they ran from the beach upward to the hill where was scant cover, the Spaniards having hewn all the trees that once stood there, not only that they might have timber, but that an enemy coming on that side should have less cover.

Round the walls was a little hell as the filibusters firing and running came to close quarters. Here and there the ladders that they planted were heaved bodily backward before the weight of the climbing men could ballast them. But most were planted so quickly and mounted upon so fleetly that the weight of men on them prevented their overthrow from above.

"Up, lads!" cried Upcott and was amazed to hear the voice was his and to find that he was clambering a ladder, knife in teeth, with but one thought—to get at these Spaniards that seemed miles above. A falling body struck him and well-nigh threw him down in the impact. He steadied himself and then got back again fiercely to the climb.

Sloppy with blood and sweat and stinking with rum, the filibusters went over the walls; and within the Spaniards ran from them; and they, cheering, pursued.

CHAPTER XVII

THE OCCUPANCY

"By the way," said de Pointis and paused, and interrupted himself, turning aside to attend some other matter that called for immediate surveillance. But he would not forget. There was a warning, for those who knew him, in his tone. He turned his head again and recovered the dropped remark.

He sat—that you may picture him better do I now audaciously interrupt him—under his yellow awning at the north end of the Plaza, looking out on it, its fountains and flowers (the former broken in the bombardment, one spraying out from its side a disconsolate jet of water; the later dying from lack of attention in the occupancy), with the court-house behind him, from the exquisite wrought-iron verandah-rail of which was draped, he glorious in the midst of it, as in a picture, for the eyes of those who passed in the Plaza, the tricolour flag of France. He sat there under his awning, in a great oaken arm-chair brought from the court-house, backed by the flag, King of Cartagena, for a day—to speak symbolically; for twenty-two days, to speak by the calendar of the historian. On the ground before him and on either hand sails had been spread, broad mainsails whereon those coming from the looting of the city poured forth, or piled, their trove. M. du Casse sat there also. Near by, and to left and right, were the valutors and recorders, with their scales great and small, their impressive tomes, quills and ink-horns. All around them was the distressful city with the soldiers and cut-throats pillaging.

"Apropos," said de Pointis again, returning from the interruption, "at the taking of the Bocca Chica fort some of your men, Captain Lang, fought with the negroes. I cannot permit feuds among our own people."

Captain Lang had been standing, mopping his hot brow, watching with puckered face the departure, for the quay, of another string of laden mules, with their file of guarding soldiers. The look he gave de Pointis, turning then to him, was one of a man not at all perturbed. He knew to what de Pointis referred.

It was the affair begun by that odd fish, Upcott, that had come to the ears of de Pointis. Upcott did not seem to know when a fight was over and, glaring-eyed, seemed always seeking further conflict. One of the negroes had jostled him and Upcott had struck at him. Then several of the blacks made at Upcott in a cluster and he swung his cutlass and slew them, his fellows crying: "The fight's over! The fight's over!" Lean, thoughtful men often behave like that after a fight, while the fat men are fanning themselves and thinking of a smoke. There had come "bad blood," as the phrase is, because of Upcott. But Lang did not object. He had seen many fights.

"My men," said he, "did all to my satisfaction;" and having mopped his forehead he mopped slowly around the inside of his broad-brimmed hat.

"Not wholly to mine," said de Pointis.

The court-house was behind him, with his soldiers sitting within at their gaming from which they were ready to turn at a word from the guards. But though everyone knew this, what cared Lang? What, for that matter, cared any of the buccaneers now? They had no hope of redress from their own flag if de Pointis should fail them; and he knew that; nor did he seek to disguise signs of his knowledge. But he recognised that in dealing with men who were fully aware that they had no hope of redress, in event of being dealt with dishonourably, with men who, because of their position, had accepted comparatively trivial terms, he was dealing with the desperate who might seek redress for themselves with their own red hands.

De Pointis smiled at this show of rebellion on Lang's part. He was really talking so to Lang simply as part of his game; he was really feeling for information on his own position. He had been top dog in this expedition long enough for his purpose; all was well so far. The more frequent evidences of a rebellious spirit merely showed him that he must not dally in the playing of his game. He knew himself now as one moving backwards, fronting his pursuers, with drawn sword in right hand and bullion in left, to a door that stood open rearward; but he was not flurried, for he believed that he could leap backwards anon and slam his door on the noses of the plucked ones, he safe on the other side.

Master Lang put his hat on his head. The gentle tip-tapping of the mules' feet went by amidst the hum. Another load was going down under escort to the jetty, thence to be taken aboard de Pointis's ships. He had already, in his own lazarette, the cream of Cartagena; in his holds, what he considered must be the great part of the city's wealth.

The buccaneers had complained of this method of dealing with the spoil, as Lang did now; but de Pointis always met such complaints as he did now.

"I'd like to see where we come in," said Lang. "Where's our share of the booty?"

"My dear friend," said de Pointis, with callous suavity, "if I mention your lack of discipline it is but that I believe that without discipline, and without leaders, no cause can prosper. For me—I act up to this belief. That is why everything goes aboard my own ship. When all is gathered—then the division." He pointed to the copy of the regulations that blistered on the court-house wall. "When all is gathered for the expedition then it will be to inquire if any man has made a private hoard. If he has"—he gave a flip of his hand toward the regulations—"there are the rules. He shall be punished and his private hoard added to that of the expedition. Then, and then only, shall we be in a position to compute, and divide, the spoil. I," and he frowned on Lang, "am the head of the expedition."

At that du Casse turned with elevated brows; for du Casse did not love this man that France had sent, who made him so little of a colleague.

"There," said de Pointis, "are the valuers. There are the recorders. There are their books." He waved here, there, with an open hand, sitting with one leg flung across the other, elbow on knee. "Every item is entered, even as everything is weighed or valued. You can see." He turned to du Casse. "Is not this correct, M. du Casse?" he said, ignoring the open stare of the governor.

Du Casse shrugged. "Yes," he said, "it is all in black and white for our allies to see. For me—I am a Frenchman and a man of honour."

De Pointis bowed, his face a little dark; then he too shrugged; and with a tilt of his head reclined again and looked back on Lang, who had noted du Casse's attitude as a warning, a confirmation of his own opinions, noted it with respect; noted also, with a certain admiration, the phases of de Pointis's daring attitude. But there could be no more dust in the eyes of Master Lang.

"We run no further risks," said he. "Your terms are too small, so small that we cannot run risks. We have asked for, if not a division, at least a less suspicious way of storing——"

"*Sacre!*" cried de Pointis. "I am leader!"

Master Lang nodded his head.

"My men are mostly now," said he, "protecting the citizens from the expedition——"

"How?" cried de Pointis.

"For a consideration," explained Lang.

"What?"

"As I say," said Lang.

"And you are a master, a *capitaine de vaisseau*?"

"Something of the kind," said Lang, "so I put it to them—the position: Cartagena here being skinned, sucked dry. Where is the booty? Is there any on board an English ship?" De Pointis gave his grim, debonair smile. He thought to say that the ships were hardly English, but outcasts of England. But he did not speak; he merely cleared his throat and looked on Lang for the rest. "So my men have chosen their own leaders. Some stay by me—and you; I am still risking."

"I thank you for the confidence," de Pointis bowed.

"Others are pillaging for themselves and storing for themselves," said Lang.

De Pointis glanced round easily in the direction of the placard, with its clauses covering such a contingency.

"Others are protecting the citizens for a consideration: so much a day, or a certain proportion of what treasure may be in the houses that they protect."

"Traitors!" said de Pointis.

"M. de Pointis," said Master Lang; "'tis a word best left alone."

It was even as Lang had said. And so it is that it is possible to have such a picture as this of Hacker, Upcott, Ashplant, and three others, in the *patio* of a great house in Cartagena, as in a barrack-square, the family living in the upper rooms of the house, their protectors in the lower.

The windows were all barricaded; the door barricaded; a guard on watch, front and rear; the place silent save the house's centre, the *patio*, where the sun flooded down as into a well, smiting on stretched awnings here and there, and casting on the red-bricked court their shadows in which the protectors spent the day for such air as could come there, though indoors, for a fact, there was less heat.

A cat appeared in the *patio* and serpentinaely walking across the bricks leapt to Upcott's lap, he sitting cross-legged, gloomy, chin in hand. He had been, only yesterday, intoxicated with the joy of fighting and now he was raging at himself that he could have been so delighted—with pictures of the Abbotsham farm in his mind, and Abbotsham evenings, with feathery clouds and a slip of moon in the quiet sky; pictures forming and dissolving, as white clouds form and dissolve; and the calm of his mother haunting him. What did she know of this world! For the sacking was so sordid as to disgust his sober part. He had seen women quailing, white-faced, in corners, with their great eyes unforgettable in their frightened faces, half hid by the nervously gathered mantillas. He had seen in these eyes the glaze and stare and rolling of imbecility, women's minds having been unhinged at sight of their men-folk slain and at sound of clattering feet of invaders hammering through the house.

He stroked the cat absently.

A voice rambled on near him, one of his fellows speaking:

"... and then, be God, I took another look at them and them firing on us and I says: 'Boys, the longer we count the chances, the fewer there will be to count. To ut!' I says and up we goes and five minutes after by Saint Patrick Oi was wiping the blood from me cutlass and saying: 'We're there!' It's a quare thing, a fight."

They ate and drank well there, these buccaneers; they would not stint themselves food and liquor; if either lacked they would but have to go out into the city. They were no prisoners! But so far, in the house, there was a sufficiency of food and liquor for both protectors and protected. One of the men drew a cork and passed the bottle. Hacker shook his head. "Enough," he said. Upcott shook his head and pursed his lips closer.

"What's the matter?" asked Ashplant. "You'm brooding again, Upcott."

Upcott raised a sick face.

"What be us doing here, anyhow?" he asked.

"Well," said Ashplant, "'twas your idea, wasn't it?' We'm done over by de Pointis,' says you. 'Us'll never see so much as a silver piece from him.' You was one of the first to say that, when old Lang put it to us. You was for offering to protect houses instead of going on our own. And now we'm here you'm wanting to get to the pillaging."

But it was not so. Upcott would have fled away after the attack was over, and its fire had failed in the blood, fled away from that hideous victory, would have fled from that most hideous sacking. But whither?

Hacker read him more acutely, read him also leniently.

"Upcott's all right," he growled, "when you see a cat go up to a man like that you can take it from me—you can take it from the cat—that the man be all right. A dog will keep along with the scurviest knave on earth; but a cat's a judge. If you see a cat go up to a man and rub against his legs you know that if the man has a fault 'tis that if you went to him and asked him the loan of a shilling you'd have it in your hand right there—and never a question o' when he was to be paid back."

"Kind o' a simple sort you'm making him out," suggested Scudamore, who was of the party.

"Eh?" said Hacker. "Oh, 'tis as you see it. You want to see this cat's friend when he's fighting. I've seen en!" and then he looked at the quiet, apparently heedless Upcott. "'You load and I'll fire, damn ye!'" he said. "Eh, Upcott?"

Upcott did not look up from his reverie into which all the talk came as from far off, yet with effect; only he frowned as in anger, and then the frown faded. He could have wept at the flood of memories that Hacker brought to him with that reminiscent phrase, remembering then the quieter life of Devon when events and their emotions came to him peaceful, not terrific. He sought peace, and life gave him only cataclysm on cataclysm.

"Never mind," said Hacker. "You'm a good man, Upcott."

In the depths of self-condemnation that has atrophied the powers a word of praise suffices to rally them, even though the praise may seem, to the repentant one, fulsome. Upcott felt that Hacker had wakened again in him the flickering something that had seemed to him at one time the very soul of life, the light of life. Yes, he would still believe it was in his breast. But how to live by its light in the world as it was around him, the world into which he had come?

"Hark!" said Hacker, raising a hand. "What's that?" And all listened.

The guard at the door was crying to those in the *patio* to come to him and they hastened in response, expecting another attack; but there were only two men without, Spaniards, citizens, desiring to see the master of the house.

Hacker opened the door wide and met them on the step.

"We wish to see the señor," they said.

"Your message?" said Hacker. "We occupy here."

"We cannot give it. We must see the señor."

Hacker bade them enter, but he would not permit them to pass beyond the entrance, bidding them wait there—with a word to Scudamore to see that his order was obeyed—while he informed the master. The señor came forth on the verandah, in answer to Hacker's hail, he looking down suavely, Hacker blinking up, devilish in the sun. There was some talk between them and then Hacker cried out that the two visitors might be brought to the *patio*. But when they came there, with Scudamore at their heels, their eyes, glimpsing the confusion of arms strewed in the place, showed, for a moment, a cringing fear. Then they spied the señor on the verandah and advanced to beneath him, half defiant, half timid.

Upcott, with his smattering of Spanish and his faculty of observation, had a gleaning of the talk that followed.

First the two desired private speech, but that was denied them, not, as Upcott could see, because the señor feared to have them come up to him, but because he had a lofty contempt for them. Upcott gathered so much and looked to Hacker's face, to read there a verification of his surmise. Hacker told them all, after, just what had been said.

"M. de Pointis," said the spokesman of the two, "has made rules for his occupancy."

The señor bowed amiably. "All of which," said he, "have not been kept," and he looked and smiled to Hacker.

The two scowled. But they had not expected to be met with open arms. The spokesman went on:

"We are aware that you have your plate hid under the *patio*——"

"Naturally," said the señor, "seeing that you helped to store it there." He was sneering on the two, consumed with disgust.

"If we disclose the place where your wealth lies de Pointis will give us our share, to the amount of a tenth—and that is no small amount."

The señor swore softly, and said: "And is this offer of de Pointis's then enough to turn fellow-citizens into traitors? What can de Pointis think of Spain, to make such an offer to us?" Then he turned his gaze on Hacker; and for all the diabolic face of that seaman he found a kindness there. The señor and the seaman could meet on some common ground. "If I do not give these wretches something," said the señor, "they will report to de Pointis and he may think an attack here more desirable. He may send a large force against you. I jeopardize you the more if I do not buy off these fellows."

"You told us the truth," said Hacker. "We know," and he turned to the two, "where this wealth lies," and he stamped his heel on the red bricks with which the place was paved. "As for de Pointis——" he broke off and looked to his fellows, translating the talk that had passed; and then said he, looking with a leering smile on them, noting by their glances toward

the two how the wind blew: "What's it to be, boys?"

"Keep one of them as a hostage," suggested Scudamore, "and chuck t'other out."

"Yes, let en go to de Pointis," said Ashplant, "if he cares to then; but if they come we kill his partner."

The señor on the verandah had the English, for he said: "The idea would be of value were either of these men able to understand the meaning of honour, but no matter which you keep as a hostage, the other would think nothing of it, he would not be deterred."

One O'Neal, at that (he was never rightly sober and always on the verge of quarrelling with everyone) rose from his reclining in a hammock, and lurching towards the two, said he: "Let's hang 'em both." And though they had no English they moved back from his face that told them of their peril.

Hacker raised his hand in protest.

"That'll do," he said. "Put 'em out. That'll do. Let 'em go. We ain't afeard o' de Pointis. I tell 'e there's going to be some fun in Cartagena afore this business is droo."

O'Neal spidered on toward the two, they falling back pace for pace. The gold chain of some high Spanish official hung dangling from his neck in a bombastic loop. He wore a scarf about his middle with two double-barrelled pistols thrust in it, and as he bent forward the gold chain fell over the silver-mounted butt of one of the pistols; and as he straightened the pistol was pulled up a little way. As his hand readjusted the chain the face of the man nearest lengthened in terror. But O'Neal had no thought of killing the wretches thus. Suddenly he leapt forward and catching an ear of each, proceeded to lead them out like cowed schoolboys, amidst banter.

But they were no sooner gone from the brightness of the court into the shadow of the entrance that was lit up suddenly with an interior light, telling of the outer door being opened for their exit, than there sounded two shots in quick succession.

Hacker, Upcott, all in the *patio*, ran for the front. But there was no attack.

O'Neal turned to them, framed in the doorway, with the oblong of sunlit, cobbled street without and part of a prone man visible there in melancholy and suggestive foreshortening.

In O'Neal's hand was his double-barrelled pistol smoking. They moved closer and gazed out in the then quiet street where the two men were sprawled, dead.

"Thought they was off free," said O'Neal lightly, in condescending explanation, "and so they turned about and spanned their noses to me."

"Oh!" said Hacker, and nothing more. Perhaps he thought that this was just as well. All the houses occupied by the filibusters who had rebelled must by this time be marked down by de Pointis. But none had exactly an anxiety to be singled out for special attention. No man knew, in a sacking, to what end it might come. It was that, as much as the bloodiness, that gave the look of madness to those who adventured on the Spanish main.

Then arose a cry in the city. They heard it far off, mounting, coming nearer, swelling, fierce, fearsome in its advance, seeing that they knew not what it meant. Upcott felt that he must get to the front and see the cause of this approaching din, otherwise his courage would fail him. He must see. He must meet. He must be face to face. It was just as once, on cliff top in Devon, he had heard, as a child, so mad a crying of sea that he had been struck with terror and turned to flee from the sound. Then he had, instead, gone forward, shuddering, but nevertheless gone forward, till he could look down through a cleft, whence the sound came, and see the actual waves that made the fearsome clamour, the actual toothed rock and declivity of tossed shingle in a cranny of the slope.

But he had company to-day as he hastened to the front and the loop-holes. The approaching din was too significant for any to let it go, for any to be content to leave the men on watch to tell its meaning.

Then as they hastened to their stations they heard a cry in English and French: "The Indians! The Indians!"

Through the loop-holes in the front they saw the street, along which came French, English, negroes. What a crowd! What

a medley of colour, of arms, of clothing, and of nakedness. And as the army passed, for indeed the tramping throng was nearly an army, the shouts went up and the faces were turned left and right to the houses, the more insistently in these places where the barricades told of a company of rebel filibusters being in possession: "The Indians! The Indians are coming with Spanish leaders. Turn out and help to hold the city!"

Also they kept shouting, "Fifty thousand! Fifty thousand! Fifty thousand!" They were giving the numbers of the rescuing force advancing on the city.

Upcott had a sense of joy. Here was the end of it all. He felt that it would be a fitting climax to this expedition if the town should be rushed by the fifty thousand, with their Spanish leaders, and French and English wiped out to a man. He felt he deserved it. He almost desired it, to clear him of his remorse. His fellows, at all this shouting, were in a quandary.

Hacker turned and leered. "Here's a nice business!" he said. "We may not even touch what we were to get here, if thicky Indians gets in. Come, lads!" They had no thought to tell the people of the house that they were going; they merely gathered together their arms, and some food, and flooded out into the street, a-foam with the ragged army, another tiny tributary. But the people of the house heard all from above. It was but another phase of the hideous business.

So they all went swinging through the streets, past the broken doors, with the Moorish lamps above them smashed in the assaults of the last days and showing ragged edges of dusky blue and green and purple glass, swinging a-clatter on cobbles red with blood spilt in the lesser, sanguinary fights, of which every sacking knows and history tells so little.

One of the crew of the *Three Half Moons*, recognising Upcott,

"Hullo," he said. "What have you been doing? Gathering gear for de Pointis or for yourself?"

"Oh! protecting a house," said Upcott.

The fellow laughed.

"So you got on to that too! So have we," said he; "three of us; one of the wealthiest houses o' them all. Put up a fight, they did, against a lot of Frenchies till we came past; and then they hailed us and asked if we'd protect 'em. 'What?' we says. I've got Spanish, you know. I asked 'em what they meant and they told us plenty was doing the same. We stood outside there in the bloody sun arguing like a woman over fish, and they offered us a fortune—there's money in Cartagena—and so we made a few more widows in France and in we goes and they barricaded up again. They'd ha' held the place themselves the way the house was built, but they couldn't keep awake. So in we goes—to protect them. Then they went to sleep—never wakened."

Upcott looked sidewise on the man. He was about to say "How? Did they have fever? Did they die of exhaustion? Did they——" he was wondering. And then it dawned on him.

"It's a great ruse," said the fellow. "We've got the stuff they had planted safe enough, where only we can get it when we come back."

The man next him laughed.

"Yes," said he, "and I hope two of the three o' us get a finish from holding off these Indians, so as only one goes back that knows where that booty is—and that one me!"

The two looked at each other and laughed over the pleasantry (you cannot say there was no comradeship among the rovers), and he who had been telling the affair said to his jocular comrade, with a waggle of his head toward Upcott: "He's been on it too—defending the Spanish! Oh, my God! 'Tis a funny business." And as he marched he drew from his wallet a bottle of rum, almost empty, took the dregs of it and flung the bottle against the gate-house—for they were now come to the south gate, and were soon up on the rolling slopes, driving with them a herd of cattle for provisions.

At one house by the way, quite clear of the city, Upcott noticed that many among the filibusters turned their heads and, looking through between the mesh of green, waved their hands and cheered.

"Who's there?" he asked; but the first he asked did not know, evidently did not desire to know, merely heedlessly shaking his head; but another told him: "Du Casse."

"Is he a favourite?" asked Upcott.

"Well—he's for us. That's why he's come out of the city to live there. He don't agree with the way de Pointis is going on with the treasure. He's a civil man, is du Casse, and he said our demands were right enough, to have our share o' treasure apart. When de Pointis told him as he was master, du Casse says: 'All right,' he says, 'then I shan't serve under you.'—'You can't resign in time of war,' said de Pointis. But du Casse thought he could, and he did, to show him."

"And what's de Pointis doing then?"

"Why, still at his old game of it."

"Then du Casse did no good."

"Oh, I don't know. You see, de Pointis can go on the way he's doing; but du Casse is a governor. When he told de Pointis that, de Pointis said: 'A fig for that. At sea I am of higher rank than you and I am given this expedition to command.' But he's a governor, nevertheless, and of consequence, and he can write to France about the business—a treaty is a treaty. He's an honourable man, that's something."

Upcott waved his hand to the house that showed its yellow walls through the green leaves of the garden—and felt a lighter heart then.

But soon the men began looking around them questioningly. They were trudging through the woods, alert for what might be ahead, some with their kerchiefs under their hat-brims and hanging down as a screen against the flies; others hatless, kerchiefs bound about their heads and over their ear-ringed ears. Their shirts were of all colours, most gaudy. Some wore no shirt, but a great scarf around the neck falling shawl-fashion over their shoulders, their arms bare, save for bracelets of gold, silver, plain or jewelled. Some wore short breeches with bowed garters, some flapping canvas drawers. There were faces and complexions that told of many races—but here, deep in the woods, it began to dawn on them that none were French. One by one the French had dropped behind.

"It is a ruse!"

"There's no French here."

"Where's the French that came with us?"

"Dropped behind, maybe, coming along with the goats and beeves." They halted murmuring, their voices hailing and crying through the woods that gave back only the dull forest echoes, or jabber of monkeys and scream of parrots.

They had been "diddled." They killed the last beeves, drank the last rum, sharpened their cutlasses, their knives, saw to the cleaning of their firelocks and their muskets, heedless of their own cleanliness; turned about.

One wet his finger and held it aloft. Upcott looked, wondering for what he wished to know the direction of the wind; there seemed none then in the forest.

"Wind from the north!" cried the man suddenly.

The others took the idea at once.

"Fire the forest! Fire the forest! If there be any coming down on us let *that* fight them!" The woods were dry. The fire rose; they left it roaring, with a hoarse cheer in key. They required no leader. Every man, there and then, knew what he was to do, where he was going.

A diabolic thrill, infectious, unanimous, terrible, moved through the horde, black and white. They came lower down from the hills where the air was quaking with heat, all the tree-bereft slopes trembling in it. The army was lean from heat, callous from liquor, an army of outcasts—an army of units all going to hell, unsparing of themselves.

The glamour and the sun and the frenzy swept through them, instantaneous as light; and they all cried out in one voice: "To Cartagena! Back to Cartagena!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE AFTERMATH

The returning filibusters reached the city and, finding the gates' closed and the place defended against them, sat down without to consider their plan of campaign. Some were for assaulting the city, others for circling about it to the seaboard and attacking the French ships in the harbour. They were ripe for either deed, and competent. Parties that went down to the shore, spying, returned to say that the ships were still lying at anchor, the boats coming and going.

"They've sucked the place dry," said some.

"What matter? Let us rush the city and drive them out, lay aboard them and scoop the lot for ourselves," was the tenor of other proposals.

"Think of their number," said the doubtful.

"What are numbers!" cried others, recollecting many a dash from the Tortuga or Santo Domingo shore; or earlier, from the Jamaica shore before that shore ceased to provide them sanctuary; in low, lean pinnace, toward the great galleons that looked so redoubtable in the seas, high as cliffs, formidable as castles, and yet taken, pillaged, and scuttled or fired, their end but eddy, or flame, smoke, a sizzling in the heedless ocean, charred wood.

Upcott, with his eyes like spots of fire, and his jaws set, moved among the rovers seeking the least inhuman suggestion.

"This is hell!" he thought. He had a vision of his mother, of Devon evenings, and was filled with trembling: the sweat ran from him in the jostling crowd, not because of the heat alone, but because of the sudden comparison in his mind. The emotion came sudden and terrific. Well, he was here. That was all that could be said. And the sweat that broke on him then was cold.

"Have we to die here of pestilence?" cried one man who sat hunched up so that the back of the brim of his great chip-hat touched on his shoulder blades. He smashed fiercely at a mosquito on the back of his left hand and then stretched out for a lemon, bit into it savagely, took the half in his hand, squeezed the juice into his mouth and then rubbed himself over neck and naked breast with the rind. Upcott thought he looked like an ape, a beast. He had got over such thoughts, but something in the man's movements now brought back his old attitude of mind. And then he thought how he was a match now for beasts; and he laughed, throwing up his head.

"What are you laughing at?" cried he of the lemon.

Upcott gave him the leer. That was all.

"Here's du Casse!"

"Here's the mounseer!"

Yes, here was du Casse among them.

"What's he here for?"

"To lead us, like enough—get his own back out of that de Pointis."

They clustered around him.

"Lead us, monsieur! We're ready!"

"Lead us! Lead us! We'll get your own for you."

"I've come here to——" du Casse began.

"Lead us! Lead us!"

Du Casse shook his head and waved them off, held up his hand for silence.

"I shall appeal, you may be sure," he said, "to the French Courts. An alliance is an alliance. I shall appeal; but I cannot fight against my own people. You know me. I am a governor; I am at least a governor," he said bitterly. "I shall appeal on your behalf and it is my belief that I shall yet have the pleasure of passing over to you your share. De Pointis is not France, though he is here in the name of France."

"Dirty skulker! He's playing a game on us!"

"He's sure as dirty as de Pointis; in league with him!"

"He's here to cover de Pointis's retirement!" cried another.

Du Casse heard this and his face paled a little. Upcott felt alert now and saw all keenly. He had a vast admiration of du Casse here in their camp. Perhaps none other saw du Casse's momentary sign of quite natural fear, so quickly did his jaw set and he wheel towards the speaker. His head went up and his face had that expression of the faces of men who stand alone and misunderstood, misjudged. Then he saw the one who spoke and gave him a look of scorn.

"Lead us, mounseer! Never mind he!"

"Lead us! 'Tis all right, mounseer!"

"I cannot do that," said du Casse; "what I have come to say is that I have withdrawn because of de Pointis's treachery, but I believe in the ultimate value of the protest I am sending to the Home Government."

"Good man, du Casse! But we want our own now!"

"Take it!" said du Casse, with something of the air of a Pilate letting the mob have its way.

And just then a party came with fresh news. One of the gates that they had been watching was undefended. The lean, and now again disintegrated army rushed for the city.

But M. le Baron de Pointis was slipping away from Cartagena, his guns firing a derisive salute.

And then through the unhappy place the filibusters passed. The French were gone. It was against reason that there could be a doubloon anywhere.

But now came the aftermath!

The first thought was food, the next drink, the next women, the next plunder. I leave it to you to imagine Cartagena of the next two days; to imagine speedily, in one fearsome, breath-taking picture, and speedily dismiss. Upcott could not, in the thick of it, as you can in the light reading, make these days brief. He remembered, afterwards, the screams of women in the hardly-lit night; remembered groups of his fellows standing around men who hanged by thumbs, great toes, anything, by way of torture, waiting till the unhappy wretches might recollect some store of wealth not already discovered by the expedition. He had the temerity to expostulate over more than one such scene.

At one place a man with a red, sun-blistered neck was lashing the naked back of a Spaniard who had been spread-eagled at his own door. The blood splashed in the eyes of the scourger. He stepped back and cursed and drew the back of his hand across his face. Upcott wondered why the man being tortured did not cry out. He had fainted perhaps, Nature giving him ease. Another snatched the whip and laid on. Upcott, coming like a lean jackal down the street, got his head up.

"What's the good of this?" he cried. "The man has no more to give up."

The new scourger wheeled on him and swung the wet cords to smite him on the face, but slipped in the blood at his feet with his vehemence. The bloated one thrust John aside with an oath. Upcott clapped hands to the sword in his great sash. The two leapt on him simultaneously, cursing him; but with his long sword he slew them both, and stepping to the door found it was a dead man that hung there.

"No! no! Take away those faces!" So he cried out afterwards, in the delirium of fever.

He remembered a stair at top of which he stood sword in hand with blood trickling in his left eye from some wound, and men, of his own race, were coming up to him, hunched, bent, sinister, with red blades and eyes; and then he remembered, it seemed to be a long while afterwards, coming down between dead men on the stair and slinking out, tiptoeing, looking

left and right for fresh assault and finding only the vacant, staring day in the bloody street.

Through the oppressive noon he had wandered and seen in the graveyard some of his fellows, sweating and cursing, digging there. They were taking turn about because of the heat; they were too crazy to give over their toil in the hot hours. A man shovelled a space and then got back into the shadows of the trees and another fell to work.

John Upcott did not understand the significance of this toil.

"Who's dead?" he asked.

They laughed simultaneously, an outburst of wild laughter. They had not known him for a wit, only for a quiet man who seemed not to be eager for blood, yet when a fight came did not know when to stop, a man for the last ditch.

"A great scheme this," one said, "to hide their goods in a graveyard; these Spaniards are none so foolish."

The rollicking notes of a chanty caused them to turn; and here came a man Upcott remembered. He had found water close at hand, it appeared, for about his head, under his hat, he had wrapped a great dripping sash, and the steam came out from under the brim.

"——! It's hot," he said, breaking in on his chanty and then: "What are you fellows a-doing yere? This grave is mine."

"What do you mean, man?" he who was then digging replied, looking round and resting his hands on the shovel. "We were here first."

"But I tell 'e I buried that stuff there myself. I——" he recognised Upcott as he looked round the group. "Ah!" he said, "you know! You mind my mate telling you how three of us had buried our haul where we reckoned 'twould be safe?"

There was a feeling in the air that something was going to happen.

"I remember your face," Upcott said. "Where's your partners?" His head went down, his jaw out, he advanced, staring into the man's eyes.

"They're dead," said the man and looked nonplussed on John. "Many a true word be spoken in jest," he added. "You mind what I said to my mate; how I hoped but one of us would live——"

"Who killed them?" asked Upcott.

"What do you mean?" cried the man as Upcott advanced, still with that puckering stare, brows drawn, looking in the man's face as though to read there the fate of his fellows.

"Hold back!" screamed the other. "Damn 'e, hold back! You're mad! He's mad, boys! I tell 'e I'll knife 'e! Hold him off, boys! Hold him off and I'll say nought about—oh——"

Upcott remembered staring down on a black face in which the eyes bulged like a fish's. That was all. But it was all nightmare; all was unreal. The whole period had a feel of unreality as though life is a nightmare and when one dies one may awake with a sigh and know it so.

By the end of the third day the scattered filibusters had bethought them that they were in a dangerous position. Upcott knew that something beyond the wonted was afoot that day, because of the massing of the various crews and their marching through the city, firing in the air, firing through doorways and casements, chanting their ungodly chanties as they tramped. This was their method of intimidating the inhabitants, word having come, by a brig then newly arrived at the dishevelled port, of a fleet of Dutch and English off the coast.

The filibusters knew they must decamp; but they put a price upon their going, without payment of which, in departing, they would leave the city in flames. They got their price, as Upcott saw on the morrow, attracted to the plaza by the centralisation there of the city's uproar and curious to know what was to happen. What he had eaten during these days he had won as the prowling dogs of the city won their food.

In the plaza he found raiders and citizens gathered, for the moment at peace, while the haggard town's officers came to the court-house to discuss with the pirate captains. And anon the sum was paid over to the buccaneer chiefs, they sitting where de Pointis had sat, the plaza all agog with the mad freebooters and the imbecile citizens—for such days and nights

as Cartagena and they had known of late unhinged men. De Pointis had gone away pretty well content, imagining that he had sucked Cartagena as dry as it could be sucked. But it could evidently still be squeezed; there was evidently treasure still not found by either de Pointis's horde or by the ragged army of outcasts. Where the five thousand livres came from, that the buccaneers demanded—and got—as the price of their going, who knows!

Next morning the filibusters were aboard their ships, whether they knew it or not, the less drunken helping the more drunken.

Someone found John Upcott wandering alone, one of the *Torridge Maid* lads.

"Hullo, Upcott—come along," he said. "Mad—mad—and there's more like him," he muttered in an aside.

"I'm not mad. I'm—I'm——"

"Well, well. That's all well. Come along then. We're going off. We're going home. Coming home, Upcott? Coming out of this hell of a place?"

The last boat put off, the last devil climbed on board and the filibusters set sail. But outside the harbour, bearing down on the coast, came the English men-o'-war and the Dutch, seeking not the Spaniard, but the freebooter: as de Pointis knew, these filibusters had no hope from their own land, or from any. And then each pirate ship had to think but of itself and its own preservation.

Little cared Upcott. He lay below with the drunkest, lay with closed eyes that burned, and the excited antennae-waving cockroaches ran on the walls and over the sprawled men's out-flung hands. He tossed. He talked in his unrest, that no one heeded, where so many were delirious for one cause or the other. Of that part he had no recollection, only a dulled recollection of babblings of voices of the dead and the living, which he could not disentangle; echoes of unforgotten cries of women in the clutches of men; oaths of men striving with men, a rat running over him—and then a voice shouting repeatedly: "Tumble up! Tumble up, all hands!" and a howl of profanity. "There's a Dutchy close aboard."

Doubtless he bore a hand; for in striving to remember that day—it was like him to try to reconstruct the illegible and to try to banish the too clear—he remembered carrying a hot iron from the galley to a gun—perhaps he burnt himself and so had consciousness for a moment of his life; remembered a splinter of the smashed bulwark in his cheek, and how someone pulled it out for him—with the pain again perhaps brought to a half knowledge of his surroundings. And then he was in water, and struck out and was aided by a wave so that, with a few strokes, he touched bottom and, stumbling forward and upward, flicking his hair from his eyes and looking into the new world like a tired retriever, he found a scorching shore and, staring round, saw men running on the shingle and, looking seaward, beheld the tattered ship of his delirium, on her beam ends, close in shore in the spray of the reef, and a high man-o'-war with a broken mast, and sails through which the sky showed, standing by in the fairway.

He gathered that they had, in the fight, driven on the rocks, perhaps rudderless. Turning again he found himself, unarmed, hair in his eyes, a pounding in his head so that the skull might have been visibly swelling and contracting at every leap of blood, surrounded by—he did not care much what they were, who they were; but he had an idea that the faces in the mist, up and down which globules of light danced like a juggling of beads, were Spanish faces. But when he heard a voice from far off, ordering someone to move, and then felt a hand on his arm, neither kindly nor rough, neither one thing nor another (his arm might have been of wood and his knowledge the knowledge of a tree) he turned his head, and "Where?" he asked.

"To Cartagena!"

"Ah, my God!" he cried. "Not there!"

Perhaps his cry was taken for a cry of fear; or perhaps his captors had an idea of the truth. It mattered little. Falling down an abyss, walking on air, he knew not precisely what he was doing; moving in some manner—yes, he was walking—he heard the voices, far off, all dancing like a haze of flies around a carcase:

"To Cartagena! Back to Cartagena!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE EXILE

John Upcott plodded down the mountain side. Had you been there on the baking road you would hardly have seen him, swathed as he was in the billows of dust sent up by the trudging hoofs of the reluctant, complaining oxen, and by the screaming wooden wheels of the low car they pulled, bearing great hewn stones for the building of the Cartagena breakwater. John Upcott was glad in his work. He performed it with a positive relish. One day he raised his hat to the blue vault, and "Thank God," he murmured, "I thank Thee, God."

True, perhaps he was broken down, nervy, from his recent distracted life, and much more than rationally sensitive, perhaps abnormally sensitive. But, "I am glad," he thought, "that I am here helping at the building of the city in whose desecration I assisted."

There was a fellow-prisoner, whose mind, it would appear, was unhinged. "I'm the man," he would say, "who dam' nearly put an end to the expedition afore it started. I'm the man that killed the French cook at Tiburon and they was going to hang."

"You're the man, by that," said one, "who brought bad feeling into the expedition from the start. You killed the cook and when they was going to shoot you for it, what could we do but tell 'em not to be so hasty? And when they said you'd killed, and you'd be shot, and told us to get off, what could we do but rescue you and tell 'em there was two parties to consider? Yes; that's what you did—you began the bad feelings. You've got naught to brag about. Jonah, you be."

The Spanish guard ordered that the bickering stop.

"You be working," said one of John's fellows one day, "as if you was paid for it"—that was when he was on the first duty to which he had been sent, labouring for the masons on the breakwater.

"Paid?" said another. "More like as if he was building his own house."

"I am," thought Upcott; but he said: "Well, why shouldn't I work? Aren't we prisoners and aren't we here to work?"

"You're afeard of them," said one. "I'm afeard o' none o' them. I ain't afeared o' them. I do as little as I can."

After that Upcott was removed from the breakwater gang, became a driver of oxen, and armed with his long nail-tipped pole, plodded and prodded from and to the quarries all day. There were two men to a team and the teams generally went in threes, with a mounted guard, one in advance and one in rear. For choice of those positions they spun a coin, as the chances of assault from the teamsters behind were infinitesimal, while to ride behind the teams was to be covered with grit and to breathe grit and to find it in one's teeth at meal-time. The teamsters were all picked men from among the prisoners and all of the better sort. And they had soon arranged for them, for convenience in the mornings, quarters of their own near the cattle-sheds. They were prisoners who had shown themselves not only quiet, but willing; and as time went on they were allowed to go forth into the city on evenings and on fête-days.

It shamed Upcott to see how well, on the whole, they were treated. Few of the citizens called out insolencies or gibes to them, and these only of the baser sort. And on most of the occasions when they were so treated the mockers were not left unreprieved, some more debonair citizen with incisive words silencing the scoffers in shame.

"They are our prisoners of war," Upcott heard one corrected mocker expostulate.

"We are Spanish gentlemen," said his corrector, while—

"Pirates they are," said one of the scoffers, "pirates! Think how they treated us!"

And then he heard a piece of what was news to him, and heard another point of view.

"Did they not shoot two of their own men in the plaza, during their occupancy, because these two had been found assaulting our women? They are an honourable foe."

"Um-m-m!" said one who had paused to listen to the bickering and at that passed on with an air of a man drawn into

futilities and returning again to his own place. Upcott noted the man, lean, deep-browed, with eyes that had in them both a fire and a weariness.

"Yes; they did that, we know," said a voice and the hooting died down while the silent one walked away more quickly, his head suddenly bent as though from a blow, out of the picture, cuddling his books under his arm.

This news amazed Upcott. He wondered at the fact, and fact it was, clearly; for others assented, saying: "Shame! Let them pass unremarked."

He could not understand. He had seen so much of hideous killing of men and of ugly assault on women. He had a guess that, if the truth were known, these two who had been shot had been trying to filch away some women fancied by their leaders.

It was in his second year that Upcott was promoted to the oxen-driving and that the woman of whom we shall hear anon looked from her high lattice in Calle Papuda, one beflagged fête-day; and between the flutter of the flags his gaze went up, and his heart was stirred. It was like the falling of a golden petal from so high to a pool below.

Once or twice he saw her and then saw her no more; the house in Calle Papuda was tenantless. But about that time also his circumstances changed again. As he had been marked by the warders at the breakwater, so he had been observed by the guards of the teams, and now was discovered by Don Alfonso Bene, the collector and seller of Indian curios in Calle Centura; and that dilettante, who seemed so out of place in the great new city, spoke of the unusual prisoner (with whom he had fallen in talk one day at his door) to some of his exalted patrons: the result being that Upcott was put on his feet, given a house of his own in Calle Abtao on condition that he taught the English language to three youths, sons of three of these exalted persons.

He came without swagger to his new duties. It was noted, therefore, that he was not a vainglorious man; but really Upcott was subdued by the reflection that he was hardly paying the price he should have paid for his share in the late horrors.

And then there came the next step, when one of his patrons called to thank him for his work and handed him a written permit, with the city seal, according to the terms of which he could set up as a teacher of the English language if he cared so to do. And this without asking!

He had a curious thrill at his heart many times, a thrill of novelty and wonder (and he thought how various is life) on going forth from his house and glancing, as he did on his every exit, at the legend "Señor John Upcott, teacher of English." And when he returned to the door there was a kind of thankful tittering in his heart as he read his description there. But he felt that he was getting off too lightly.

For the coaching of all save the first three pupils he had a fee, and as Cartagena was neither mean nor poor, he did well.

Then came a letter to him, requesting the favour of his presence, to discuss the question of teaching a child at the Casa Blanca beyond the city wall, that stood shining white in the yellow hill, in its oasis of garden, with the blue sky above it.

He saw the Señorita (for none called her Señora; it was the Spanish courtesy not to; also perhaps a tribute to her rare beauty) on his visit, in reply to her note, and recognised her, and wondered if she recognised him: for she was the lady whose eyes had called him—no, not so, the lady he had been insolent enough to gaze on once, to look for again, when his way had led him through Calle Papuda. But she showed no sign of recognition.

The Señorita, he understood, was a widow; and the husband, he suspected, had been a man of substance, not only because of the house in Calle Papuda, but because of this one. And though the Calle Papuda house had been sacked it mattered little; the resources of the Señorita were far beyond the city; the springs of wealth had not been touched, but only so much as was gathered here. And Casa Blanca, when John Upcott came to it, wore the air of comfort to the verge of luxuriance. It was arranged that the child's lessons be given not at his own house, but here; and remembering his own youth, and how the things that he had ever really learnt had come to him not ostensibly as lessons, he made no parade of being schoolmaster. This was his youngest pupil, and he feared that he would have difficulties; but he played with the child, told her tales that interested her so that she asked questions galore, which he answered, giving cause for other questions, further explanations, and she would wag her head and say: "Now I understand."

And the child helped to heal him of the bitterness of the Spanish seas and to take its salt from his soul.

He was restless to recapture a sense of his own rightness in the world. He had gone so far from the life he had desired on coming out of Bristol Channel into the smoking Atlantic!

"I have lost something," he thought, "which I can never find." Yet, talking to the little girl, he almost surprised it in her innocent eyes—and then feared to snatch it to him lest, after all, he robbed her!

Of the mother he had now and then glimpses, on the balcony or on other terraces of the garden, for it was in the garden that almost all his lessons were given, on the stone seat of the terrace over which the bignonia subtly adventured, or under the tall oil-palm to whose smooth stem the orchids clung caressing.

Then she came to him one day, smiling on the picture the child and he made, and Upcott rose and bowed and remained standing before her. She begged him to be seated, and "Anita interests me in her teacher," she said.

"Teacher? What is teacher?" asked Anita.

"I forgot," said the Señorita, "I beg pardon; I forgot your methods, Señor Upcott. A teacher is——"

"Is Señor Upcott a teacher?" asked Anita.

"Yes," said he.

"Then that means an old friend who plays with me and tells me stories. I did not know that before."

Upcott and the mother delayed a little, so to speak, in digesting the smile they shared there beside innocence.

Then John looked at the Señorita and could not reconcile her widowhood with her attire; for she had the face of one who had deep feeling for love, large eyes of what is called the "melting" order, soft gestures, tender hands clasping her child as she subsided, like a falling, fluttering petal for grace, on the stone seat. She was dressed in some white stuff that spread and ruffled as she sat, spread, too, a little as she walked, adding to her innocent allure, her charm. And over her head was cast a white mantilla of rare, delicate weaving.

"I was going to leave you alone," she said, "thinking you would prefer to be left alone; but I am curious to come nearer to you—Anita speaks so sweetly of you."

"It is kind of Anita. Her tea—old friend"—and they shared again the echo of the former ripple—"has to admit that he is devoted to her."

"Has to admit?" she replied. "Anita does not admit. Anita states, declares her partiality. She looks upon her—on you as an old friend."

Then she rose.

"May I bring Señor Upcott with me when the gong sounds?" asked Anita.

"If Señor Upcott would care to come."

Upcott looked up and found that her eyes rested ever so kindly on him. He wondered that she did not remember him, as he looked up so: for to him there flashed, then, a picture of her, as he had first seen her when his gaze had leapt up and found her at her lattice in the old city house, between the flags, that fête-day.

"It is too great an honour for one who is, after all, a prisoner—a slave," he suggested.

"I had thought," she said, "that you could never be a slave, were you manacled."

And when she went, leaving that in the air, among the orchid-scent, Anita said: "Why are you so quiet?"

"I was thinking," said Upcott and then: "But to our lessons—our play, I mean."

He had a sense of ease. The house and garden lay very quiet to the sun, so that one could hear the ruffle of a leaf where a lizard peeped among the purple bignonia near by and, backward, the subdued tinkle of the fountain in the court.

It seemed to him that his rest was here. Suddenly he emerged, as at the end of a briared lane, into the open and delightful

world of spaces, rolling slopes with vastness of sea beyond. And a little silver thread crept into the gold of his thoughts, with the tinkle of the fountain's silver thread; he remembered that there was said to be Spanish blood in North Devon. He left the thought like that in the air, thinking himself too far from foolish youth to allow such tinselly threads in his weavings.

But he had come against an enemy and found friends. He had seen his own fellows as grasping, uncouth desecraters. He did not see that it was with the ways of mankind he was at variance, nor consider that he had come here with his own people's basest on a base errand and was now living among the Spaniards in their quiet homes. Nor did it occur to him to consider how the Spaniard gained his wealth; though these thoughts, of course, need not, however settled, have prevented him from considering his years here as a period in which to recapture his lost self. Surely it was blessed unktion to think that he was recompensing those he had wronged. The sensitive have their unktions as well as their wounds. At any rate, he found that he loved New Spain. And so, sincerely enough, he told the Señorita, over the white table with its bright silver ware in which were the twinkling miniatures of the room, showing the table, and the sun-rays drifting through shaded windows and floating in subdued pools on the floor. That was when she talked with him on his experiences in the city. Of the sacking there was no word. She spoke to him as though he were some visitor, guest. The young duenna sat also at the table—her face, by the way, seeming to Upcott as though not then beheld for the first time, but as though dreamt of, as it were; he could not fix it. He thought she looked, once or twice, wonderingly at the Señorita; but her eyes were set far apart, her air wistful, pensive. She had the motions of—Upcott remembered his readings of Uncle's books and considered she had the motions of—the nymphs rising before Hylas from the pool. But the duenna and he did not exchange a word, she being always occupied, when there chanced a pause in which she might be expected to speak, on attending Anita's wants. If she was brought into the conversation at all she spoke to air, or turned toward her mistress; but all this as if it were her manner, and not ever rudely. It was her way and a fascinating way. And never during the months that followed, though to begin with now and then, and later frequently, Upcott was similarly invited, did her manner change.

Now and then, in his talks with the Señorita, he was brought up sharp by the thought that the talk was of himself and, perceiving as we have his curious mixture of egoistic individualism, if so one can call his way of setting his own particular seal on those pages of life that he touched, and of, at the same time, humility, we can understand how he tried at such times of self-consciousness to change the theme. But it had come to be either that theme or silence. So he told himself that, after all, he had but indicated lightly, much more lightly than he felt then, his impressions of the New World, and that when he spoke about things in general he spoke merely of them.

Somewhat thus, breaking in upon them on a sunny terrace one day, we hear: "What a curious idea. I should have thought you would be hungry for home."

He had been talking of New Spain and she had asked him, to test the depth of his enthusiasm, if he did not long for his own land.

"No," he said, "I feel—it is of course, odd, but apart from the fact that I am a prisoner here—I feel that after the cruelties we practised on your people it is a boon to be able to do a very little in return. We are helping to rebuild Cartagena, we slaves, prisoners."

She looked at him steadily, perhaps did not say the first thing that leaped in her mind, but something else.

"And Cartagena itself, how of that? When your helping is sufficient you will feel then that you can go, the debt is paid? No, no! it is not Cartagena you love, not this new land. It is only your idea you cherish. And I pride myself I understand your idea," she said quickly with a haze in those melting eyes, and then, as she ended: "when you feel you have assuaged that, Cartagena will fall from you," they looked deep in his with a strange keenness. And as he, self-centred, probed inward on himself, seriously to see if her suggestion that he had indeed that idea, but *with a difference*, was an acute suggestion, her eyes suddenly danced with merriment on the truthful man. And the serious John Upcott smiled in reply. But at that she was grave again, her face strangely shining.

"You think you could live on in Cartagena?" she asked. She lay back in her chair suddenly, lissome, wonderful. Then, "You have impossible ideas, Señor Upcott," she said and as she crossed her hands on a knee the flicker of her hands so, moving quickly, ivory hands in the yellow of the shaded room, and then the way she leant forward and, as it were, peered on him, gave him a sudden horrifying thought that she held a contempt for him in her heart.

"You may find me foolish," he said and thought that perhaps he had already nearly worked off his debt to Cartagena, that at the end of the six years, his term as prisoner, it would be assuredly worked off.

"Oh, no," she said. "I can understand your ideas;" her voice changed: "I respect you for them;" and then Anita entered with the duenna at her heels. And Anita ran to her mother and kissed her and thence turned to Upcott; and that day, for the first time, held up her face, meaningful enough to cause Upcott not to refrain from observing the child's intention. He stooped his head to her and there was a quick little fiasco of a kiss. Then raising his head, he bowed in reply to the duenna's bow, she waiting for his salute. And, as she bowed, her eyes looked on him with more of friendliness in their wide wistfulness. She seemed more at ease.

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH THE VEIL IS RENT

One night of tropic blue and stars, John Upcott, wandering on the hills, came down the *arroyo* that flanked the knoll behind Casa Blanca, and found himself suddenly, like a child, imagining.

He transformed the *arroyo* into a Devon *mouth*. Instead of grisly, creeping, sharp-leaved and piny low bushes, there grew in it nettle, blackberry, hawthorn. He wandered slowly down its darkness and then he saw, against the velvet blue above, the silhouette of a man and woman.

They stood monumental even as he glimpsed them and then touched lips, came closer; then turned abruptly each from each, and he thought he recognised the retreating woman. But she was lost to sight over the ridge, going down without a backward glance, at least till she had dwindled on the ridge against the sky, pliant swinging form, erect shoulders, upcast head—and then only the ridge; and the man was gone from sight along the slope.

Then his heart beat wildly; it was as though it had stopped while he had looked on that picture, picture so brief as hardly to have interrupted his stride. It was just as though he had paused, seen—and then all his blood was afire.

On the instant he began to walk quickly, not asking himself why. Was it she, or had his eyes deceived him? If it were not she ... then he must find her indeed, wherever she was, and tell her that he could not live with the thought of her going away from him; she must be his—his only.

Stumbling down the *arroyo* he sought certainty.

He reached the *arroyo's* mouth and came out on the level and so along the hill's foot. He went quickly; and though he had thus taken two sides of a triangle and the woman but one, she cutting across the slope directly toward the Casa Blanca—that is, if it was she—then would they arrive there, to rear of the house, together. He saw the housetop over the wall, the shadow of the wall flung toward him by the moon; and then the garden-door creaked, opened, and in the oblong of it, against the glimmer of the inner garden, he saw a woman. But the door did not close; the woman stood there, and as he came nearer he saw her, dimly, one with the shadow a space, and then clear in the moonlight, walking slowly away from the house—the *Señorita*. She strayed a little way up hill; then slowly, listlessly, as one dallies after the day, she came toward him and he knew then that he had stopped as he stared upon the house. He walked on again. Perhaps she had not seen him, walking as she did looking up to the hill. Slowly he advanced, she wheeling about then and straying toward the door.

Then she turned, quite near the wall and—perhaps the moonlight had blinded her—she called: "Is that you, Manuela?"

His heart leaped. He went down to her, she backing slowly, not in a fear-prompted haste, to the door.

"Ah!" she said, "Señor Upcott! You are walking on your hills."

He spoke—"words, words," as Hamlet said.

"I love the stars and the night," said he, of course with the personal note, when what was in his heart was for otherwise. But before her languid ease he felt doubtful, ashamed. Yet he tried to discover her eyes. If he could but have seen her eyes!

But he and she were in the shadow of the wall.

"Have you been far?" she asked.

"Only wandering on the hills," he said.

There was a little pause as though both desired to say something and neither could.

"You have by no chance seen my Manuela?" she asked.

"No, I have not," said Upcott.

"Poor girl! It may be none of my affair. Some think a mistress should not meddle with her servants, should see little. But poor Manuela has so big a heart for love. Her lover was killed in the French attack. She sorrowed—of course she sorrowed; but one is only human and she has many admirers and the years pass. I fear for her. She has so many admirers. And she has no one to look after her—— Why do you look so?"

"How do you mean?"

"I believe you have seen her, but that sense of honour of yours is so strong. 'Tis as a vice, almost."

"I did see," said he, slowly, "I did see two lovers when I came down the *arroyo*." He was scrutinizing her form beside him.

It was light enough, after all, in the deep blue shadow of that star-blinded night to see her eyes. His brows puckered on her. He told himself that this was not the form he had seen blotted on the ridge. "But I paid no heed. The woman, I noticed, came down this way, but I went on—by the *arroyo*. I was just coming thence when—when I saw you," he thought his voice trembled as he ended.

At the sound of footsteps in the garden they turned their heads and saw the fragile *duenna* come forth.

"Can I do anything for the *Señorita*?" she asked. "Would you care for me to play—ah! I beg pardon. I did not see——" and she paused.

"Is Manuela come in?" asked the *Señorita*.

"Yes, Manuela is in. Do you wish her?"

"I shall see her later. What a night! What stars! New Spain is better than old. Oh! what an exultation comes over me in this land at times. Walk with me, *Señor Upcott*—unless you are in haste home."

"I have nothing to take me home," he said.

"Walk with me," she said; and with a curious sense of treading in an unreal world he fell in step with her and they strayed up the slope, turning about now and then to look down on the twinkling lights of Cartagena, strayed round and returned to the knoll above the *arroyo* down which *Upcott* had come and seen thence, looking up thither——

She had stopped, looking pensive into the dark with its lamps low, and its stars low and high. His breath caught; his heart seemed to knot like a constricted muscle, and looking on her he felt his eyes burn. But she—she stood impassive, gazing on the jewelled night, came perhaps ever so little closer to him, gently swaying; or was it the blood surging again from his heart that made the world seem to reel, and she toward him? He flung an arm round her and gathered her to him. He kissed her cheek and she did not resent; and he kissed her mouth. He did not know how long they had stood, when, sighing, she said: "We had better go home."

They went down the slope abruptly and as they came to the level they saw the *duenna* seated by the door, the wall high above her, moonlit now, for the world had been turning.

"I have at least a faithful *duenna del casa*," said the *Señorita* to *Upcott*. "Why—*Isabella*!" (to the *duenna*) "why did you not come? I thought you were going back or I would have asked you to come."

"One must take care of the house," said the *duenna*, "and the gate was opened, and the gardener is away to-night—there was no one else."

Upcott had no memory of the good-night, how they looked, how they parted; he only knew they had gone in and he was drawing erect from his bow, sweeping his hat to his head again.

And now he lived for the morrow. He refused himself to dwell on the night just dying. He fell asleep in its glory as one can fall asleep looking on a bright light and caring not what manner of illuminant it is that makes the hypnotic point. There was a tangle of thoughts in his mind, but he could not disentangle them. He was as one who, knotting a cord in nervous fingers, tossing it down, finds that it has formed a wondrous decorative design of lines and spaces. He knew there were thoughts that were suspicions—either founded, or hideous. If he was wrong, what sort of mind had he?

"God forgive me my suspicions," he thought—and then he had only the sense of the woman in his arms. He could not think even of that. He fell asleep knowing that there would come a morrow. And on the morrow, when he saw her, her eyes, as they met his, were so full of candour that he was ashamed. Of course she made no reference to the night before. But she was as wondrous as ever. They were lovers. Love had lent daring to this prisoner and he had won his desire. She was called away from him that day before much had been said, but at least he had seen her and found that he had not lost her by his action of the night before. The day passed like sweet music and night fell gently like the silence after a perfect song.

He woke to the sound of the church bells clanging, reverberating, setting the air dancing; and wakened so from sleep he waked joyful, leaping again radiantly into life. The bells might have been ringing for him.

He thought over his life; thought of his mother in Devon. That brought regret. That brought in an alien, if exquisite, thread into the weavings of that morning: he had no news of her; but then, in his day, no news for years could be borne more easily than now can no news for months—that of course; and pardon me if I seem to insult you by the reminder.

Still—he longed to see her again. But after all he was making more money here than he could make at home; and if he were to support her in her age, here he could gather wealth to help toward the fulfilment of that desire; here was the place to stay. All this apart from the fact that his six years had not yet expired.

But then, you see, he had found his balance again My John Upcott may be unusual, but he is not improbable; he is really delightfully human here.

And then he thought of the Señorita, at the same moment, it would seem, as he remembered that his time as a prisoner was not yet gone, and that to take advantage of all this extra licence given him and endeavour to slip away ... he thought of the Señorita, in her resignation, in his arms! Passion confused his thoughts. Then for a moment, when his heart stopped again as it had done on seeing the picture, he recollected it—two silhouetted forms on the night-hushed hill.

And in the flush that he felt spread then on his cheek he knew that he was tampering with something dubious. Why did he flush, why did he flush so, sitting alone, half dressed in his little Calle Abtao house? He was a prurient-minded wretch! He would think such thoughts no more! He decided to love with no foolish thoughts born of jealousy. He banished the suspicion—and felt better, more like the man he desired to be. At the same place, too, she had stood with him! Hideous! Hideous! He breathed an unworded prayer to be kept in the fairness and not in the fire of love; and he remembered Uncle, who knew so much, translating to him some fragment of Sappho, "Now Love is master of my limbs and shakes me, fatal creature, bitter-sweet." Why bitter-sweet? thought he; and then it occurred to him that he dallied with life, who should go indomitable, head held high, making his own world.

There were to be no lessons that day; for the galleons had been off the coast yesterday, to-day would be in harbour. The *tiempo muerto* was at an end. Hence the bells; and hence, when Upcott, this again new Upcott, head erect, thrown back, air a little magnificent, went into the streets, the sight he saw there:—new arrivals to the colony, just come ashore, looking about them with eyes, some almost afraid, one might be excused for thinking; troubled, at any rate, with strangeness; young men, with quick, roving glances, who had that odd air of trying to walk as though they knew the town, were aware of their route; also, nearer the water, soldiers and sailors, with their sea-going gait and vagabond ease; and a great number of mule teams stepping down shoreward. But Upcott knew, from the previous years of his sojourn here, that this incidental stir was only a promise of the premeditated conviviality and uproar that would come later, after a lull, when the ships, having passed on westward, returned again to Cartagena.

In Calle Papuda, as he passed the old house where the Señorita had lived, he experienced the now familiar emotion; for always now as he passed and looked up to it, it seemed somehow silently vocal, as though its adobe and strawless brick, made out of earth like himself, had, like himself, life, an unknown, incomprehensible life, a life quite mute; but it seemed to know things; it had participated in the lives of two, one who looked downward, one who looked upward there. The house had that odd, poignant friendliness of inanimate things that have been with us, or around us, in the few eternal moments of our fading life. Quiet in the sun, brooding in the moon, what did it think? Did it not think, perhaps, how men come and go upon their passionate, or God-seeking business, and how now the cobbled street is thronged and anon emptied? Fantasy! All fantasy! It was he who gave the dead house-front its air of thought, the latticed, deep-set windows their magic. Fantasy! And then he saw a man of military bearing, standing back from the door and looking up frowning on the house and just as Upcott came by his side the man turned and their eyes met.

"Pardon me, señor," and the stranger touched his thin morion that shone in the sun. "You appear to be a citizen, not a stranger here. Cartagena is changed. Can you inform me where the people of this house have gone—Don Tristan Peyrens?"

"Don Tristan is—he is dead, señor," said John, returning the salute.

"Dead?" and the stranger raised his brows.

"Some years," said Upcott.

The stranger's face clouded, expressionless. Then:

"Ah!" he said, "ah! And the Señorita—do you know the affairs of the house?"

"I believe," said Upcott—though why he put it thus who knows? Perhaps because he was speaking to a stranger and the stranger had suddenly, after his first shining and gallant manner, seemed to have drawn a silence round him as one might draw a cloak—"I believe she is now resident at the Casa Blanca—a house beyond the wall. You come to it on the hill road—under the second hill with the cactus on its side—*Cerro Alegre*—"

"Ah! I know. A house by itself in a garden—just before one comes to the narrow *quebrada*? No?"

"Yes, señor. That is the house."

"Bueno! I thank you, señor."

"I am glad to have been of service, señor."

"Good-day, señor."

"Good-day, señor."

And so Upcott went on to see the galleons in the harbour and the boats coming and going under the gulls that swept and cried over the shipping; and he felt the old unrest in his heart looking on these castellated craft and thinking of their far journey. So he was sent into a day-dream and held in it as long as the sun lasted, gathering impressions of the day without thinking he did so, so that afterwards he could picture it all—the sailors on the quays (those specially privileged to come ashore on the day of arrival) squatted against the wine-shops with the water melons between their knees, slicing with their great knives and looking up bantering on the passing people of the world in which they had just landed; negroes bringing ashore the belongings of the new colonists in the great bluff floats, proud slaves, childishly proud, shining black fellows with brawny arms pulling on their long sweeps, and they looking up quick and furtive to shore in anxiety to know if their muscles were admired; boats coming landward with soldiers to guard the treasure already gathered and the remaining treasure that should come during the next two months over the inland trails. But in the late afternoon he turned away from the city, and on the *Camina Cintura*, that skirted the sand-hills and the *quebradas* (where often he had seen bands of his own race, with shackled ankles, road-making) he met his lady and her child and the duenna. And his lady's face was radiant.

She talked of the stir in the city and of the sense of being again in touch with home.

"I expect we shall see some of our old friends," she said. Upcott was on the point of telling her of the gentleman whom he had directed from the old Calle Papuda house; but the day was a dilatory day, a day in which the spirit said *poco tiempo*, and made no haste; murmured *manana*, and was content in the sunshine, so her pause was not long enough for another to speak. "I suppose one cannot expect visits from them the first day they are here. But if they knew how long our 'dead-time' seems they would come at once. What can that 'dead-time' have been years ago when there were but a quarter the number of us here that are here to-day, and nothing but wooden houses to live in? To-morrow we shall see them, some of them, doubtless. They have their duties to attend to on arrival."

He noticed that the duenna looked strangely at her mistress; and his heart was again visited by doubt. Then said the duenna:

"Yes; they will come later. You must not feel ignored if they do not come at once. Their first day here is always full for them. They may even come to-night."

Her eyes were wide and calm. She was as though perfectly, sweetly friendly with her mistress. But the brows of her mistress frowned a moment. And then "Let us hope so," she said. "I should like to renew some old friendship. I should like to think that I was remembered well enough to be sought out soon."

"You are at least sought for. I can relieve you so far," said Upcott. "I saw a gentleman to-day who inquired if I knew your address."

"Oh?" Her head lifted and then the languid air came, as was natural to the day. "What was his name?"

"I do not know. It was on the street he asked me, at your old house."

"Bueno! Then we may hope for one visitor, at least, with the latest gossip of Madrid. Perhaps, as you directed him, he is now awaiting our arrival."

"Unless the gentleman that Señor Upcott directed," suggested the duenna, "was Francisco de Avila."

The Señorita looked at her with a quick turn of head.

"Ah!" she said, and "Why not?" That was her pet phrase, serving often, its meaning varying by her mutable voice. "*Como no?* Why not? I had not thought of him. How was he attired—how did he look—this nameless gentleman you directed?"

But she asked the question after a pause, and in what, for such as she, was a voice almost flurried. It seemed not her voice, but had the staccato the voice has when it speaks because speech is demanded when silence is craved.

The pleasant languor seemed to have ebbed from the day. It was all the difference between being leisurely, and tired.

Upcott conjured up the man and described him somewhat.

"That would be he," said the Señorita, and seemed tired of the subject before he had spoken two phrases. Either, it would appear, he had the gift of quick description, or the lady was wearied of a trivial matter.

Anita piped up: "But Don Francisco had a feather in his hat. You did not tell he had a feather, a great one."

There was a little silence.

"Yes," said Upcott and his hand just touched on the child's shoulder. "Yes, *cara mia*, the gentleman wore a feather. I forgot that in describing him."

He spoke to air, but he saw both the Señorita and the duenna turn a glance on his face. And then he talked airily, gaily. He held them in talk to the gate.

"Will you come in and rest?" asked the Señorita. "The day is heavy."

"It has fallen heavy," said Upcott; "but no—I had not intended to come so far, only meeting you—I must return."

He sought her eyes for love, his yearning a question; she looked at him; he had his wish; he saw her eyes, two pools of trouble. He did not know what they said. He saw terror in them, but he saw also questions. It was as if they said: "What is wrong? Do you not love me?"

He went home haunted by these eyes, and thinking how this Francisco de Avila had worn not one of the new-world broad hats, not one of the high feathered hats of the Spanish grandees, but one of these light, thin morions, such as still were worn by many.

He could not rest. He paced his chamber and then sat down again feverishly to recall words, phrases, glances of the Señorita, to remember what might be considered contradictions. But he could not think sanely.

Then the door opened. Perhaps his housekeeper had knocked and he had not heard. Perhaps she had not. But the door opened and he looked up with a distracted face that suddenly wore a false calm, a distracted calm—for the Señorita stood before him. He heard a chink of gold, and then the feet of the old woman, his housekeeper, shuffling away; and the Señorita advanced on him with lustrous eyes, casting back her black mantilla with a wonderful gesture.

"Juan," she said, "Juan, I love you." He held out his arms but to ward her off.

"God knows," said he, "I love you. I could go to the ends of the earth for you. For you I am strong."

"I am proud of you," she said; and her face changed, her gesture too, changed; and she leant to him. He embraced her ever so tenderly, subduing his passion.

"Kiss me," she said; "I had to come to you."

He held her face between his hands, she pliant before him, he bending to her; and reverently he kissed her forehead.

"I love you," he said. "But do you remember—ah, my God! do you remember that night when I was on the hill——"

"And I came out to the hill?" she interjected.

"I was wandering there, thinking of you," he said.

"And I—*que lastima!*" she said in a whisper that seemed to pierce more than a cry—"I lied to you."

It flashed through John Upcott's heart that at least she was about to confess—for love's sake. So might all be well.

"I told you that I came looking for my Manuela," she said. "It was not so——"

"No; do not tell me," he said: "it is too much for you."

"I shall tell: it was you I came out to see. Something told me you were there. I came looking for you. I felt you were there. Do you know that? Can you understand that?"

He held her close, tenderly. How he had wronged her!

She looked into his eyes and said: "I love you."

"It is a sacred word," said he solemnly, and thought what a canting dog he had been, but how now in a new life beginning with this woman he would be a man. He stood with her there, not in his shadowing room at all, as it felt, but in Eternity. "It is a sacred word," said he solemnly, trembling. "I love you. I shall love you for ever." Ah! the wonderful spirit he held in his hands—the spirit he had wronged, the spirit so wonderfully clothed in perfect form.

"A passionate word," she corrected him. "I give you my love for ever, but also now."

He looked on her wildly, though, as she spoke, he gathered her to him. He looked at her wildly. In his mind were two spirits at conflict: that spirit that had breathed deep in lonely crystal mornings on the Devon cliffs, where the white gulls wavered up and down, and another spirit. And the spirit that had lived on the flying of the gulls, and the voice of the sea, and the remote light in his mother's eyes that saw the things that few see, had its ascendancy a moment; and in that moment he caught the woman's shoulders in his hands and held himself a little backward and looked, searching in her eyes. And her face changed. She was pale and she smiled on him as he looked. But one thing then suddenly riveted his attention: the moment before she had been beautiful beyond words; now, in the next moment, as she smiled, he found her utterly evil. As some of the lizards of that land affected him with repugnance, as certain snakes did, as even some forms of rock on his old home's coast had affected him—so was he affected then. He noted, as she smiled, how, after all, she was not beautiful, the most beautiful woman in Cartagena. As she smiled he saw a tooth that seemed no tooth, but a fang. Till that moment he had not seen it, that terrible fang-like tooth, so far back, so well hid by the amazing coral bow of her lips. But as he looked on her so, with searching eyes, she smiled thus horribly, the fang-like tooth showed, her one blemish that spoiled all and put her in the world of flat-headed things and things with warted backs and low, dust-touching bellies.

And then *deliberately* he grasped her and drew her to him. He felt as though he could crush her in his arms, and as he did so her face swam up to meet him, the eyes closed, the lips almost closed, the fang-tooth was hidden, the face was that of a sphinx, an eidolon swimming up to him out of the nether darkness, out of the shadow of the world. He looked again and holding her snake-like body he made again a choice. For at that moment he felt that a choice must be made. It was one thing or another with him. He blotted out, with a gesture, the whole chronicle of crystal things, lights of sunrises, sad-sweet twilights; he was then far beyond thought of duties. And in a tortured abandon he chose for the things that perish.

As suddenly as she had come, she went, after the brief tropic twilight. Nay; it was night; and her white face had gone.

She had fled again and left him alone in the dark. And the dark was full of whispering voices. But it was no dream, no hallucination. She had come and gone.

"Oh woman!" he cried. "It should not have been! We do not stand alone, she and I. We are only units." Up out of the past came memories, not of the words, but of the sense of words of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius that Uncle had read to him, translating to him. He knew the duties of men, there being others in the world besides ourselves. "For the sake of all, these things should not be, John Upcott. You hear me?" It was his own voice now, talking on to himself in the darkness. "Nature says no. Conscience says no. All things say no. Only the selfish and those who need not the welfare of others dare defend to-night. It is not that you have sinned, John Upcott, as your mother, with her Book, would tell you; it is that you have done a thing for passion's sake ... And I love her."

He thought suddenly of the manner of her coming, thought of the clink of gold in the old woman's hand and for a moment that which he lacked so greatly despite all his egotism, namely a sense of *amour propre*, sprang fiercely to life. He could have cursed the woman he had loved. The stuffiness of the chamber was oppressive and he went out into the streets, out beyond the walls. He was in a ferment. And then passing away by the Camina Centura he found the silence of the climbing slopes, wandered athwart the hill and then sat down to grope in the vastness to discover if anywhere there was yet to be found an indication that he might still, one day, find again a sense of going well, going rightly. Already he was frantic to *get back*. Then he laughed strangely, a laugh of bitter mockery, he jeering at himself, for he was on the knoll above the Casa Blanca: Cerro Alegre it was called—"happy hill."

He did not fling himself down madly, melodramatic. He merely seated himself, with a forced calm, and then, broken, slipped to earth, lay prone, with the smell of the hot sandy soil in his nostrils and the feel of it in his hands for his only possible consolations. He lay there trying to calm himself; and, calming himself, he got outside the man he had been in the last days, looked on at himself, as once or twice already in his life we have known him look.

He was critical enough then to remember—in that frame of mind then, looking on at himself—of Socrates on the Volga's ice standing night-long to settle some haunting question in his mind; but he bethought him that the argument that held Socrates there would be no matter of personal fever, of fightings with self, but some matter of wide import. He thought too how he lay, while Socrates stood. He found himself altogether contemptible. And then, with almost a moan, he turned his head, writhed almost then, and behold, the unnumbered stars in the roofless night!

He saw them with awe and wonder; he felt that he had forgotten the stars: that was the secret of his fall that had brought this anguish.

And then as he lay he saw two shadows coming down the hill; but he paid no heed. He had just this moment seen where calm dwelt, had his spirit jogged, as it were, by the silent stars. Living people, who must die, passing on the hill, were hardly even intruders. He merely turned his head again from them and lay staring, looking along the hill, through the tangle of bushes, out into starry space.

"Should I flee to forget her?" he moaned. "Should I remain and try, by a great love, to hold her to me? I love her well enough for that."

A sound behind him caused him again to turn. The two shadows that he had seen drifting higher on the hill had come close—a man and woman. And he knew the woman: how could he fail to know her now even in the darkness? And there was no mistaking her pose of surrender to the man who came with her.

The surging of blood in his ears made him that he never knew whether the words of love he heard were spoken, or imagined, or remembered. He could not believe that these words he heard, among the sound of the blood throbbing roughly through his veins, were spoken to another. It could not be! They were the very words that had been spoken to his own ear, sighed there, so lately. His temples throbbed. And then she was alone, coming almost upon him and the man going away. And then suddenly, near him, following on a quick rustle in the scrub, he saw the duenna. There he lay, the duenna so close that he could have touched her feet by stretching forth his hand; and beyond her, her mistress. And the picture, to his eyes at least, he being now at home in the starry dark, was perfectly clear.

The Señorita started, whipped erect. "Well?" she said; and her head went back with a toss that let fall her mantilla on her shoulders. It was strange that she, so daring, so langorously brazen in her life, should then wear the air of a creature at bay. Perhaps she knew, keenly quick, that indeed she was almost at bay. It was but a matter of moments.

"The Señor has come home," said the duenna.

"What?" And then, as though perhaps after all she was not at bay, but could still carry things through in the face of all, "*Como no?*" But it was overdone, that air of "Well, why this rushing out to seek for me and tell me that?"

"I only came to find you," said the duenna.

"How—why did you come here? Have you been far looking for me? Have you—told him—that I was out for a walk on the hill?"

"Do I look as if I had told him? I have not seen him." Suddenly the pensive, deer-like duenna drew erect. "Do I look like a woman to mix myself in your world? I knew where to find you: that is all."

"Spy! Spy! Spy! And how did you know where to find me?"

"I am no spy. I have only seen things. One cannot help seeing. I look for nothing. It is not my affair. That is perhaps why one sees so much. You—you—oh, you make me ashamed of my womanhood, my sex, the very function of my sex. Do not call me spy! You will say next that my mind is evil. That is the way of women such as you. You use all truths and all lies but to aid you in your evil ways. Do not call me spy. Why could you not hide from me what you are? I—I—I had no desire to see——"

"How dare you talk so! I have done nothing. I am not what you think. Your mind is debauched! I do not understand you!"

"Your husband is waiting. He is home. I came to tell you—that is all," said the duenna and half turned to go.

"Caramba! You——" began the Señorita with the oath of a beldame, then choked on her words. And then close at hand, coming up hill, taking them unawares, they being plunged in this private eddy, came a man out of his own world. He was on them before Upcott, at any rate, was aware of his coming. It was some exquisite movement of the Señorita, simultaneous with a drawing aside of the duenna, that caused Upcott to look round, from the woman who had witched him, to look round to discover why her manner so suddenly changed.

"*Mehito mio!*" cried the man already beside them. "It is you!"

She tottered to him and he gathered her in his arms and she drooped toward him and broke into weeping on his breast.

"Who is that?" asked the man presently.

"Who?" she quavered. "Whom do you mean?"

"That woman who was here; that woman there."

"Ah!" Upcott heard her gasping breath. "That is my duenna. She is of a good family ruined in the French attack. That is all. She—she walks with me when I come out here."

The trustful egotism of the man aided her.

"You come often here then—to our *Cerro Alegre?*" he asked and held her again, caressing.

"Yes—when I am lonely." And she looked up with her head sidewise—Upcott knew how the moonlight would be in her eyes, they gazing upward lustroously.

"You are lonely?" asked her husband.

She nestled to him.

"I have thought you—thought you dead," she said and shook upon him.

"*Mehito mio,*" he said and gathered her close. "I will tell you after, tell you all my wanderings. But here we are together. To think of you coming here—to this house just under our hill! Was it——"

"It was cheaper; several of us are here who were impoverished in the sacking," she said. "And it was under the hill," her voice was atune to her eyes, melting and moving.

All this that Upcott had seen and heard had occupied but a short space of time, yet long enough to cause him to think many a conflicting thought. He was an unintentional eavesdropper—he should turn and flee away too quickly for recognition. With the first man he had had murder in his heart; he could have leapt up and drawn sword on him on the instant. Then had come the duenna on the scene and he had fallen atrophied, helpless. And this man—her husband—he had no anger for him; but as for the woman—how could he feel toward her? Feelings mattered nothing. She was a woman. There was nothing could be done.

But he was not the only one who had seen this meeting. Down hill, clattering, came the man from whom the Señorita had parted, or at least Upcott thought it was the same man. The sequence of pictures went on before his eyes like some disordered dream.

"Draw! Draw!" cried the man who now broke through the scrub.

"What is this?" cried the husband. "Madman! What do you want?"

"Draw! Draw!" And the man leaped toward the two, naked blade in hand. And Upcott recognised him as the man he had directed in Calle Papuda.

The Señorita cringed backward.

"He is mad!" she cried. "Sancta Maria, he is mad!"

Her husband drew her aside, sanctuarised her in his holding left arm—and as the madman lunged on him he evaded the thrust with an agile sidewise movement, still shielding his wife. And then he boldly leaped forward. He must have been unarmed, for he leapt as though to catch the madman's arm, ducking low and sidewise from the thrust. But, doing so, he stumbled, and the second thrust passed over his falling body and ran on—through the heart of the Señorita. She fell, gurgling "Holy Mary, Mother of God." She gave a great gasp as the horrified swordsman leapt back. She sank down spluttering from her lips. As she fell dead thus and the madman recoiled, crying a wordless, demented cry, he had his legs clutched by the fallen husband, struggling to his feet. But as the madman tottered, gripped so, he raised his sword arm, crooked and vindictive, and thrust down into the man at his feet and drew forth and thrust again and again and then turned and fled like a disjointed shadow flung along the hill.

Upcott lay shuddering, how long he knew not, and then he heard a voice:

"Señor Upcott! Señor Upcott!"

He raised a white face. It was the duenna, more pale than he.

"Señor Upcott, I do not ask what you do here. I heard you speak as I stood there waiting. You did not see me when you came up here. I expected you to pass on and did not show myself. From your words I do not judge you are evil. Ah, you men! How you allow beauty to——" she suddenly sobbed. Upcott half rose and she moved away. He saw her in the twilight of the night more beautiful than his dreams. "Señor Upcott, I shall not say I saw you here: I would advise you to be gone. I shall not say, because I believe this is the end here. Oh, God, what I have suffered in that house."

She looked down and shuddered, and Upcott, unconsciously looking down likewise, thought the house had a diabolic, sinister aspect, standing in its walled garden in the moonlight with its yellow-lit windows and its great shadows.

"I would never go back if it were not for the child. One must think of the children. Good-bye, Señor Upcott;" and she moved down from him, looking round in her farewell so wondrously that he rose, abashed, as in the Presence.

"God bless you," he said.

"God help you," said she.

CHAPTER XXI

HOW JOHN UPCOTT STOOD IN THOUGHT

John Upcott was aboard the *Pearl* of Plymouth, Richard Proust, master: and this change affected him as a shock, left him a little stunned.

He felt the precipitancy, as, in a way, we feel it in the reading: yesterday in Cartagena, in the midst of a maze at the end of a tangle; to-day, all the past over, he plucked out of it. So he was a little stunned.

But how, and why, had he come here? One thing haunted him, difficult though I, for one, find it to understand his infatuation; and that was his love for the lady of the Casa Blanca. He knew her now, through and through; and yet he loved her—he loathed her! But the thing he had imagined her, the thing she was not—his adoration of which had led him at last to the same end as came those others who had presumably recognised her for what she was, desired her as she was, and won their share in her—the thing she was not, he still had in his mind's eye. So a medley of conflicting thoughts was in John's mind: disgust at being of that company; tellings of himself that he was not really of that company; tellings of himself that he assuredly was: for who was he to judge by what ways they too had travelled, to bow before her and be swine as the voyagers before Circe? The thought smote him with horror, as he jeered at this leniency toward them, that no one could think his adoration aught but as theirs, a kind of canine dalliance. His soul was sick.

He was, after that, less haunted by the linked memories of the clean hours in the terraced garden with the child and her, and crystal-clear visits in the house, when he found her worshipable, when she was to him but the thing he made her, ere, having loved her for what she was not and gathered her, she gave him herself. A hundred thoughts of her, loves of what she was not, loathings of what she was, hatreds of those who had nurtured that thing which, alas, she was, that woman whom he had not desired, imagining some other woman there, possible at least of cultivation: a hundred thoughts of her smoked in his mind. When Upcott took an idea he clung to it. He remembered, with maddening anguish, his landlady's manner on the morning after the visit, her mixture of a new deference and a familiar banter. He had fled the sight of his landlady and gone half way to the shop of his friend the antiquary, Don Alfonso Rene. There were the two poles: the old woman, who could never have believed that he had done aught but "made a conquest" of the lady of the Casa Blanca: the ascetic Don Alfonso, who could have understood a love for one to whom one might even never so much as speak, the love for a spirit, real or imagined, that passed one by, or sat nigh one daily, robed about with the vanquishing flesh so soon to be vanquished and fade like roses. He had heard Don Alfonso talk of Helen of Troy in the way of a scholar who loves her as a name that has lived through the ages, loving not Helen, but Eternity.

But he had stopped half way and turned back—alone.

For the first time in life he felt utterly alone. He had thought himself so before, many times. But now he knew he had never been so. He turned about and went home again and gathered his wealth, the savings of these four years, a fair sum. Something sustaining, almost healing, was with him then, as he prepared for departure. He felt that somewhere in the world there was a fount of sympathy. A thought of the duenna flashed in his mind and then he remembered, thinking of her face as he had seen it on the hill last night—she had been in the Cartagena house that Hacker, Ashplant, O'Neil and he had held. He recalled the time of horror of the sacking. Yes; he was sure. Now he had fixed her: the duenna was the girl in that house, seen once on the upper balcony. He stood comparing the faces in his mind's eye: the terrified face of the house, the pained face of the hill. So that was why he had seemed to know the duenna; that was why she, recognising him, was so reserved! He thought of his behaviour at the house they had held. Could it be because they had behaved there, after all, as the occupancy went, with decency, that she had at the end spoken to him so wondrously? He allowed himself that belief and took its balm.

His landlady entered with a note. There was no answer desired. The negro who had delivered it was gone. And John, breaking the seal, read:

"Are you aware that English vessels are often to be found off the coast to westward? Especially at this time of year when many Government officials from the lesser places are in Cartagena and Porto Bello, do these vessels come to shore with merchandise which they sell to our villagers."

Yes: Upcott knew that such a traffic went on successfully, thanks to the duties of New Spain; and he had no doubt who

had penned the note, though it lacked signature. Folding it reverently he placed it in his breast pocket. And then, with a stronger sense of support, as though he had now a blessing on his departure, he paid his landlady, called a porter and bade him bring mules. He did not tell his landlady that he would not return; and he took so little luggage that she must have imagined him only going for a change of air. He did not tell her, merely suggested, that he might be gone some days; and her knowing leer was a new goad to urge him onward. But as he departed he looked once, long, at the sign by his door: "Señor Upcott—teacher of English."

He went by the Camina Burbacoas and then through the varied forests, now burnt by sun, now drenched by tropic rain that dragged him as his spirits were dragged and brought out a following of stinging mosquitos. At last he came over against Baru Island on the seaboard and so on to Viña del Mar, that little cluster of adobe huts under the high palms fronting the trembling air, set agog by the trembling surges. The place reminded him of the clustering cob-walled cots of the close-packed Devon hamlets where the labourers thronged of winter nights and heard the bombardment of his northern and greyer sea.

You will have noticed that so far there has always been a woman in Upcott's life, or his image of some woman. In this, his worst pass, the eidolon was of the dimmest. He had no real proof of whose hand had written the note that he carried in his breast, but the presence of the duenna was with him, before him—for his pillar of cloud and fire. Again he was taking strength from the eternal feminine, finding, as poets find in brooks, in dawns, in sunsets, solitary twilights, echoes of their cries, confirmation of their beliefs; or imagine they so find, though they know the story of Narcissus and how he, looking in the water, saw there his own face.

His entrance into the village, he perceived, was frowned upon. Clearly a Don from Cartagena was not welcome at the moment. And the reason for this lack of welcome was not far to seek; for over the promontory to west of the village, between the tree stems and through the lianae, John saw an English brig close in shore; and here at his side, as he and his peon, passing, scattered the lean chickens in the dust, heard: "Looks like some government Don; slit his weazand if he meddles."

"Whose weazand would you slit?" he cried, reining up sharp, so that his negro rode into him and he cursed him. Next moment he was surrounded by his countrymen, for the garb was the garb of Spain but the voice was of Devon. So he came again to an English deck, an English cabin, for Proust had him rowed aboard and below with him to crack a bottle of Alcianté and then one of rum in the way of an English mariner. "This Don's Alcianté," said he, "is swipes for a seaman's stomach." Proust was in high fettle; for his little 140-ton *Pearl* with its ten guns—four to starboard, one on the poop, one on the forecastle, and its twenty men—was making money.

They slipped down the coast with their contraband to two other villages and it was then, his main business fortunately ended, that Proust bethought him of coming to some agreement with his passenger.

Upcott was in the cabin, plumped down in this new life, the life of yesterday seeming curiously far off, as though a tale, like that of Jason's rovings, broken like the fragmentary half-myths of Modoc of Wales and his wanderings. And as he sat in the tiny cabin, a cigarro smoking in his fingers and he looking vacant through the low ports on the scintillating shore and hearing the familiar plucking of the little waves all about the ship, there fell a shadow in the oblong of barred light from the skylight and delayed there. And into the vacant mind of Upcott came something like a warning. He did not look up; but when the shadow passed he rose lightly and, stepping immediately to the table where lay the charts of the coast, he took from the half-open drawer a pistol, on the butt of which, as he sat there, his eyes had rested; and withdrawing the charge he replaced it, ran his hand in the drawer lest another pistol lay there, and, finding one, served it similarly; and then back again to his apparently listless loafing. When the vessel again was under weigh down came Proust.

"That's the end of that," said he, cheerily.

"Done well?" asked Upcott without looking up.

"Sure I have. This is the best trip since the sacking by de Pointis. He spoiled the coast a bit for us." He was not certain of Upcott, did not know what to make of this scowling man who had asked a passage with him to some English port. He produced a bottle, and the slip of a cabin boy, some runaway apprentice from London town, set the glasses.

"Where do you head for now?" asked John.

"'Twas in my mind to run home a cargo from Virginia for Bideford. Bideford is coming on these days, running the port of

London close for tobacco and West Indy trade generally—" West Indian, by the way, meaning, in those days, any place from New York south to the Carib Seas.

His old acquaintances would have failed to recognise John as he sat there in the cabin. He was not the Upcott of old, a new man with two perpendicular furrows on his forehead and a mouth puckered. Proust had asked him of the Dons, of life in Cartagena; for Upcott's attire alone told its tale. But Proust had difficulty in believing that this man was an escaping prisoner; his figure did not fit with the tales of Spanish treatment of their captives. He filled the glasses and John congratulated him on his trip and wished him a better still, next time, taking the first glass like the "half-gentry" man he was, holding it up to the dim light from the brightening and anon dim ports along which the tops of the long, green and sliding waves went glittering and sending their wavering arabesque along the tiny cabin. His second glass was replenished by the master. To the third he helped himself; and then a new light came in his eye. Now he felt himself of the world. When he blew through his nostrils he was blowing from him all his past. When he stretched his legs abroad and canted up his head he was coming into the bitter world, as he esteemed it, to meet it with its own bitterness. And then Proust felt more at ease with him. Before, he had found Upcott overawing; now, he was with a man to whom he could talk straight, of business, so he thought.

"By the way, Mr. Upcott," said he, "touching the question of your voyage with me, now that we be clear for the homeward spin."

Upcott freshened. He looked on Proust keenly, replenished his glass.

"Yes?" said he.

"You make tolerable free with the liquor," said Proust. Tut! he had begun the wrong way with his refugee; he laughed and added: "No offence—my jest, I will have my jest."

Upcott waited.

"Touching the matter of the voyage?" he asked.

"Yes; where do you want to get, Mr. Upcott?"

"Any English port you like," said Upcott. "Put me ashore at Port Royal if you be going there. Or if you be running on for the Atlantic seaboard good and well." Then he smiled, seeing the look that told of calculation on Proust's face. "Or for that matter," said he as though placing a card that sets back a gay opponent even before the game's end, "or for the matter of that, the Isle Providence would serve, or the Tortugas, or the Isle of Pines."

"Eh?" said Proust—for the three last names had a smack of bloody cutlasses.

"Touching the matter of the voyage?" said Upcott. "You were about to say something?"

Proust scowled over a thought; and then, "See here," said he, heavily, "you come to me very like a man running away from something, though you don't look like a prisoner. I've asked no questions. I don't ask them now. By your clothes, and by your black servant, and your mules, and your tin box, you were no small jo in Cartagena. You've got money; you can pay your way."

"Which was even my intention," said Upcott in a voice dangerously debonair.

"'Tis usual to discuss terms for a voyage before coming aboard," said Proust and took a sip of his rum.

"I'd have thought it usual, finding a man of one's own country stranded in an enemy's, to help him," said Upcott.

"So we did," said Proust, grinning; "took you to our arms like a lost brother found again and no questions asked. You wanted to get aboard? Aboard you come. Here you be."

Upcott's face went heavy and his mouth pursed and bulged.

Proust leant across the table.

"And *stranded*, you say; you weren't stranded!"

"Well, well!" said Upcott. "What do you want to carry me to Port Royal?"

But the heavy Proust failed to see that now was his time, if ever: he was about to make a higher bid and ignored this lesser.

"Do you think it safe," said he, "for a man that would as lightly land in the Isle Providence, or the Tortugas, or the Isle of Pines," speaking slow and stolid, "to go to Port Royal?"

Proust had a great belief in his penetration and had considerable conceit of himself in his present role of strategist.

"Carracho!" swore John in his Spanish. "Do I look like a man that's afraid of anything—or any man that was ever littered? Do you take me for some knee-trembling, lackeying custrel?" The allocutions of Upcott acting were vigorous.

"Well, sir," said Proust, staring on this new man disclosed to him, "I'm not talking of what you look like—I'm talking of passage money. I'll put you ashore to Port Royal for half of what you've got in your tin box that you brought along on your mule with your black servant."

Upcott frowned, and then laughed quietly; and he said: "You have not the cut of a gambler, Master Proust. I see you haggling over ha'pence but I don't see you gambling. How do you know there's anything of value in my boxes?"

Proust grinned on him and did not answer, which irritated Upcott more than speech. He yanked his chair forward suddenly with his left hand between his legs and put his right elbow on the table and held up a forefinger in Proust's face, shook it at him; then, leaning forward, he stared in the red face of the cod-fish-eyed merchant skipper.

"'Tis not what can I give you, but what's fair." "Oh, is it?" said Proust. "There's where you be wrong. 'Tis a case of you coming to me and here you be. You're in a hole and you pay to get out—that's life, Mr. Upcott."

Upcott closed an eye.

"Iss," he drawled. "That's life. Well! What if I don't pay you?"

Proust swelled in his chair.

"Did you ever," said he, leering, "hear of marooning?"

Upcott's eyes danced blithesome.

"Why, yes," said he; "you'll have heard of Captain Avery? I knew him well! Great friends we were, old Avery and I—here's to him—in hell!" and he quaffed his glass and saw Proust's eye show a quaver of something very like fear at the vigour with which John spoke out his afterthought. "Do you mind the story of how he marooned his skipper? Mate he was then and sitting in the cabin with the heavy-jowled old cully of a master" (Upcott tasted the words over, rejoicing, and Proust blinked). "Says he: 'I'm captain of this ship now and you've your choice of sailing under me or going ashore on that key, with a keg of biscuit and a keg of water.'" Upcott paused and then: "And the captain chose the key." Upcott's voice had a hardness; but Proust was not intimidated by his voice.

"Well—that's your choice, Mr. Upcott," he said heavily, and his bull-neck came down in his shoulders as he nodded his head once on John. "I'm making an offer and it's still open. I can understand you feeling bad about it, but this is life, sir; and life's hard. You pay as you go—according as you can pay. Hark ye!" and Proust slapped the table with his palm, for Upcott was still leaning forward, chin in hand now, was staring in the master's face blankly as though waiting for him to make an end. "An' I was so minded I could do the maroon business with you now—and keep your box. D'ye see where we are now?"

"Why, yes," said Upcott and laughed again. "Mr. Proust," said he and rose to his feet and stood between Proust and the companion-way, "I'm captain of this ship and I give you no choice. Life, Mr. Proust, is hard."

"What do you mean?" cried Proust and snatching his pistol from the drawer he rose. "Are you mazed or what?"

"You can pack your belongings," said Upcott quietly, his chin squared, his eyes puckering, smiling grimly. "Come!" he stepped forward and stretched out a hand as though to clutch Proust's shoulder.

"What d'ye mean?" said Proust thickly, and redder than ever in the face.

"What I say," said Upcott. "This is life, sir. You pay as you go and the man with the whip hand rules——"

"Rot you!" cried Proust and up with his pistol that had been at half cock—and clicked it to full—and pressed trigger. But there was just the flash in the pan—and then Upcott leapt on him, smashing him to the deck, and tearing the master's neckchief from about his bull throat he thrust it in the half-stunned man's mouth. Proust's teeth bit on his finger and Upcott gave a snarl, stretched out as he crouched above the mariner for the fallen pistol, caught it by the barrel and rapped Proust over the skull with the bossed butt. "That's life," he snarled; and then, casting about for a rope's end he trussed Proust, hands and heels. He listened. The regular pace of feet went on on the poop above. He heard an order shouted as the vessel went about on a fresh tack. Then he opened the table drawer and drew forth the other pistol, priming it and the one which Proust had used in vain; poured out another noggin, but thought better of it, let it stand; and then went gaily and triumphantly on deck, having first rifled the lazarette and cabin keys that Proust carried.

The captain's mate was by the companion-way and nodded to Upcott who cast a quick eye over him as he returned the nod and, seeing that that officer had a pistol in his sash, a swaggering go-ashore sash of silk, he suddenly plucked it forth and flung it out into the joggling sea.

"I'm captain of this ship," said he. "Call the men aft."

And then he stepped back with that swagger that always, so far, had been his when he came out of his shell into what he, at the moments of his coming out called bitterly "the world," his shoulders flung back, his weight on his right foot, the left leg a little forward; and as he did so he jerked his left hip so that his jewel-hilted Spanish sword swung forward and the hilt glittered. He did not deceive himself with his acting but it was effectual with his audience. Yet the captain's mate was more calm than Upcott desired to see him; and so he was alert for any ruse, and his mind agile when the mate said: "What's the game?" and stood back, it would appear neither offensive nor defensive, but interested.

Upcott looked very keenly in his eyes.

"We're going to take some prizes, sir," said he. "That's the game. This smuggling is no good, 'tis too slow; and Mr. Proust is going ashore and leaving me in command."

"I've always wanted the old man to do that," said the mate grimly. "I've sometimes thought of doing what you've done. How did you do it? What have you done with him?"

"Oh, we had a talk about my passage money and he gave me a stiffish choice—so I gave him one. He's going ashore."

"Well, Mr. Upcott, this is something sudden. You're a bold man, you are—but I'm with you if you want a mate that can navigate and keep order."

"Oh, I can keep order," said Upcott. "Still—what's your name, sir? It was mentioned by Mr. Proust but I forget it," for Upcott bellicose had skill in fine insult as in coarse invective.

"Turner."

"Ah yes; so I remember—a Devon name?"

"From Bideford," said Turner, unconsciously easier at the recognition of the name's locality.

"Same as I be," said Upcott. "Well, if you'm Devon you look to see where the money is to be got."

"I do that—and I know a captain when I see him, though this is a bit sudden." He wiped his face with his red silk handkerchief.

"What do you make of my offer?" said Upcott, precipitately. He paused and scrutinized his man and then: "Two thirds to the crew; and you and I split the other third of all we come by on this cruise."

Turner stood frowning. His eyes looked away and Upcott following their drift noticed how he looked on the helmsman, who cast a glance of puzzled curiosity on them. "It's a different thing doing such things in these seas now," Turner mused aloud. "Oh! Not but what I've thought of it often enough. But they call it piracy now. You don't even get a letter of marque to protect you if you be caught at it." He pondered again and then gave a snort, and "Shall I call the men aft?" he asked.

Upcott laughed.

"Call them aft," he replied.

And the reason for all this, as he told himself (Upcott had always his reasons) was—what think you?

All through these years, ever and again, memory had served him with the picture of a Devon maiden, slender, pensive, wide-eyed, looking on his ways, as some dim picture of a gentle lady of old years looks on us from the master's bewitched canvas. But while he was engaged upon his dalliance—he had now no better word for that—with the lady of the Casa Blanca, he growing more familiar with her image and at last finding it necessary for him, when that picture intervened it required no great sophistry to wave it aside. Almost as lightly as with a flick of the hand one waves away a smoke he waved aside that dim and ghostly picture. For had not Cassandra, of all the maidens he knew in the homeland, been the least demonstrative? Why, Will Ravenning's sister came nearer to him!

And yet thoughts of Cassandra had often aided him; perhaps as the poets already mentioned are healed, in cities, by the thought of some far lake-water's plashing. Yes; in that terrible pillaging, when he with his fellows had chosen the less ensanguined course, he had thought: "This would please Cassandra." Yet, of course, after all, Cassandra did not know, any more than the lake knows of how its plashing on the reedy shore has been put to rime to right the rimer's heart and sustain the exile's.

Now he had suddenly bethought him that he was going home; and was he—was he?—to go home with little wealth from the lands and seas whence came homeward less able men, no more to be labourers vexing their lives for others in the red fields of Devon and living close and cramped in the red farm-houses, but able to live in Bideford, strut on the quay looking knowing on the shipping and then cross to the ordinaries to quaff ale and be called "captain" by the lads who came in from these close-packed cots on market days?

Cassandra would be his. He would be able to claim her. He would be able, getting out of the thick of this world overseas, of which the folks at home knew nothing, to possess—to possess; as did others. He would have, at least, his own farm, his own respected wife, in the teeth of all, won from the world, in the world, accepting the conditions of the game.

And after all, these smugglers were but pirates in embryo and needed no coaxing.

Turner called them aft—but Upcott did the talking, and he knew his audience and how to reach them, not as he would be reached; and even as he spoke to them, and moved them, his pride made him feel, for all the fumes seething in his head, that he could halt in the midst of his talk and say: "I don't argue things this way for myself—but that's the kind of talk that moves you." For he took them on the point of gathering gear, of getting rich quick, and dismissed any possible honourable qualms of theirs as a kind of cowardice, fear of consequences.

"See here, boys," said he, "I've taken over this ship for you. I'm going to make your fortunes—and my own." He cast his eye over the two rows drawn up athwart the deck. "You're a likely lot of lads. Lads like you don't want to be wasting your pluck in paltry smuggling when there be better fish to fry."

He laughed with an upcast of his chin, and paused. He knew the breed. One or two faces amidst these turned up to him stabbed him with their youth and he deliberately regretted not having quaffed that last noggin of rum. Thought he, "If the drink fades in me I can't do it;" for these one or two faces were as the face of his own lost youth. "Life—they must know life," he urged. That was when his face gloomed on them—you could not tell it for Upcott's—and he said: "Is there any here with a white liver who's afraid of a little blood-letting and smell of powder when there's ships on the sea for the taking?"

But it was not the most innocent who replied. One hang-dog fellow spoke up: "Times is changed, captain, since the Treaty. We hain't at war now with Spain; and France, ye know, is trying to get in with Spain again, making up to her, like."

Upcott knew this, having heard in Cartagena how the holy vessels of gold and silver, taken from the churches, had been sent back by France. Yes; he was going a-pirating late in the day. Even the great Morgan had now to walk circumspectly. But the Upcotts, when they "come into the world" never take up a "safe thing."

Another spoke: "We hear as how you've been in Cartagena for years, sir. Maybe you don't know how them seas is now."

"What! Afraid?"

"Tain't that. But you can't run to the old ports now. Isle Providence ain't scarce comfortable with the new governor. He'll maybe close an eye here and there, but he ain't going to run the risk of answering for another man's capers."

"Well! You know the safe spots. You tell me them and I'll get you the prizes."

"There's Darien," suggested Turner.

"Darien?" asked Upcott and then he recollected news he had heard of how the Spaniards had had trouble with the Indians there.

"Yes, that's right," said the young sailor with the evil face. "I know the Darien coast. Any of them Mosquito Indian bays is safe for us and there's nat'ral harbours there where you can careen if you wants and all safe."

So they thrashed out the matter and clearly the majority were in favour of quick returns. But Upcott perceived as they talked that he had a difficult task. Conditions had changed with the years; and the rovers had now four imminent dooms: the Spanish prisons and work in the mines or at the Pearl Islands; the French yard-arms; or the Dutch; or Gibbet-hill outside Port Royal.

Upcott, when the affair seemed nearly, but not quite, settled, looked on the seaman who had first spoken.

"What's your name?" he asked, and the shaggy youth who was so well posted for his years replied: "Teach, sir."

"Good! I make you my quartermaster—what are you scowling at, sir? I see you scowl—you there. Don't you scowl when I say what I want. Teach, eh? Well, you can teach the rest of the lads how to work. You look as if you've seen some bloody combs yourself."

"I know a thing or two, cap'n," replied Teach, while the others grinned, at some witticism perhaps, as they thought it, in their new master's words.

"What's your name?" asked Upcott, glaring on the man whose face seemed to show resentment of Teach's rank.

"Tracy."

"All the Tracys
Have the wind in their faces,"

quoted Upcott. "Well! Men with the wind in their faces know where they are. They mostly can fight. Can you fight?"

"Yes, sir; I know gunnery too."

"Oh do ye? All right! You're master gunner then and may we soon have proof of your mettle."

Upcott turned to the mate.

"Tell them the shares," he said and Turner made the suggestion and then the men talked among themselves and as they talked Upcott turned to the steersman. "Take her in shore," he said.

"What's this for?" asked Turner.

"To land Mr. Proust," said Upcott.

Teach spoke then for the crew.

"All right, cap'n," he said.

"All right," replied Upcott. "Teach, lower away there and take a couple of lads with you. Mr. Proust is going ashore. Tracy! You and another there can come and carry up Mr. Proust. He's lying down waiting for the shove ashore. He's taking what they call a *siesta* in the Don's lingo."

So Upcott strutted. He might have been taking the leading part in one of the plays writ about the life of Captain Avery for

the delectation of the groundlings in some London play-house. He lay over the rail and passed a vulgarism to the departing Proust, the *Pearl* hove-to the while. And the boat was no sooner back and inboard, Proust visible only as a melancholy dot on the yellow shore of the main, where he had been left with a musket, a bag of biscuit, and a flask of rum, than Upcott called Teach aft and bade him see to it that there was always a man in the cross-trees keeping a sharp look-out. And so three days later came their first fight. Talks on the *Torridge Maid* were now found of service to Upcott. He remembered those of the crew who had gone a-privateering and a-buccaneering telling their tales, the side-issues of which were so illuminating; remembered how it is best to draw close to a ship from windward, especially if the wind be shepherding clouds before it; for then the clouds are your back-cloth and the shadowed sea; and if your ship be without topsails to take the light, only the lower sails drawing, so much the better. Even in the desert of the ocean cunning can aid one. Upcott remembered hearing a tale of Avery (was it Hacker who had told him?) how he had his ship hung about with chains so that it was, as it were, clad in a suit of mail.

It was afternoon and a storm promising light and shadow fleeing on the sea. The men were mostly against the fore-castle for'ard engaged in a slipper hunt to relieve the tedium of waiting for a prey. Upcott, sitting on the poop, looking lazy on his own drunken sea, could hear the shrieks of laughter rising from the wild game and the slaps when the slipper was found and the loser had to turn about and take his punishment. Now it happened that, with much use, the slipper had fallen dilapidated and a nail protruded from the sole; and this nail was suddenly felt.

The game was ended.

"Fair play!" shouted the man who had been taking his punishment. "What you doing with that slipper?" and snatching it from the gleeful finder he discovered the nail and then—the game was over—slapped it against the face of the last finder who had belaboured him as the rules of the game go. It happened to be Teach who had been the finder and at the flack of the slipper in his face he plucked forth his knife (he an adept, it would seem, in the use of a knife), laid it on the palm of his hand which went back and forward like a shuttle—and the knife was in his enemy's jugular. In after years he was to rule his own ships and haze his crews after this fashion. But it was such experiences as this that brought about, as piracy developed and became more complex, rules such as the notorious Captain Bartholomew Roberts brought to a fine completion. That pirate came to see that—one smiles—gambling for money, for instance, on a pirate ship could not be tolerated. It was dangerous, and so on his table of rules was a clause: "No playing cards or dicing for money or stakes while aboard ship."

Upcott came out of his scowling listlessness with an unholy joy and went elated down the steps and for'ard.

"Here's life," thought he. "This Teach should swing; but he's a good man for me."

Teach was already surrounded by his fellows, holding them off. Upcott snatched a brass-bound bucket and smote into the throng.

"No fighting among yourselves," said he. "Next time there's trouble like this we hold a court—and somebody hangs."

The sighting of a ship by the man in the cross-trees was opportune, though I dare say that Upcott could have held his way without the aid of any distractions. As it was the dead man was hove over with weighted heels and went down in the green.

The *Pearl* was running east on a fair wind, the ship sighted beating into it, running from horizon to horizon; and anon her colours could be seen, and they being French her business was guessed at and she surmised to be a trader from French Guiana, like enough, winging up to the French Indies. Upcott had his guns loaded, all cleared for action, and hardly an order given, because of the young rogue Teach, whose schooling had been that of a half-soldier, half-seaman in the Jamaica privateers.

Tracy it was who sent, zipping across her bows, the signal for the Frenchman to heave to. But the Frenchman held on.

"Again!" cried Upcott, for the two were rapidly drawing closer. "Give her a nearer shave."

Again the gun spoke. But the Frenchman at that, with his starboard tacks aboard, stood toward them boldly, he having the weather gauge.

Upcott called the runaway apprentice and gave him the keys of the lazarette. "Fetch up rum and serve out to all hands," said he. "Turner! About ship!" The *Pearl* went round upon her heel, hung in stays a moment, and then surged along

parallel with the advancing Frenchman. "Haul up that mainsail in the brails! Ready there, Tracy. Ready all!"

Teach's voice rose thickly amidships, he wiping his mouth with the back of his hand after his cup of rum: "Easy, lads! The fun ain't started yet! Easy all. We be all right!"

The Frenchman bore down on them and then Upcott rose. He had sat all this while, after returning to his poop, on his stool, understanding how to general his men, observing their glances ever and again toward him but ignoring them, or perceiving them only to look away lazily on the Frenchman.

Turner suspected him then of having seen a deal of this kind of sea-traffic, and respected him, and kept cool. But now Upcott rose and his voice held a relentless *timbre* when he stepped to the wheel—had he not learnt well the art of steering on the *Torridge Maid* under Hacker?

"Fenders ready!" he cried and the strips of cork were swung over. Then he ordered the yards to be swung, clapt the foretopsail to the mast and then: "Tracy!"

Tracy, quivering but eager, and no whit afraid, roared an "Aye, aye!"

"Give her a broadside! Aim true!"

The guns went like a tattoo; and then while the smoke drifted, Upcott filled his foretopsail and kept under weigh as the Frenchman's mainmast came down with a chaos of cordage.

At that Teach roared: "Let's board her, cap'n! That did it. Board her now, cap'n."

"Will you lead on?" cried Upcott.

"Aye, aye!"

Upcott ran the *Pearl* close, and board and board came French and English; and then the Frenchman let go with her guns. The splinters flew on the *Pearl*, two men reeled and reddened the deck; but the Frenchman, calm enough to hold his fire till he came to what doubtless he thought to be sure range, had at the last perhaps been flurried. If he had fired ere coming to quite such close quarters he might have done more execution. Upcott, at the wheel, brought the ships board and board. Perhaps the Frenchman had not looked for that.

"Sink me for a clodpole," yelled Teach, "if she don't turn on her heel, this Pearl, like—" and then "Up lads!" he broke in on his simile. But as Upcott brought the *Pearl* alongside thus neatly, and you could have tossed a biscuit from deck to deck, a hail of musketry swept on them from the Frenchman and two more fell and others cried out. What Teach cried was, "That warms you! Nothing like it! Oh, we'll have our own back!"

The intervening space lessened. The ships ran close so that the fenders screamed as in agony. And then Teach led the assault with cutlass and pistol, leaping with his followers aboard the Frenchman.

"Make fast there, Turner," cried Upcott.

The helmsman, who had relinquished the wheel to John, was still by his side. Upcott turned on him with murder in his eye.

"Make fast for'ard you!" he shrieked. "D'ye think I can hold board and board like this?"

But the fight was a short one and soon Teach was hauling down the French flag and the two craft joggled there amidst the wrestling waves under the sky that was like a smoked ceiling with its smoothed and rushing clouds, and under these clouds, flying away like things distressed or demented, were the smoke clouds from the firing.

Turner remained on the poop and Upcott went aboard the Frenchman to overhaul the spoil.

Here was no romance, for all that he thought of Drake and Dampier, masters on enemies' decks, and had a feeling of insolent pride, with the French master before him unarmed, and Teach and the lads already unbattering batches, the crew all trussed up along the bulwark. This was what his countrymen had been about for centuries, in one way or another—and here was he, a captain, a victor. But it all had to be done deliberately and against what was his real self. When the lees only of rum was in him he had no stomach for the job. He must replenish constantly. And now, behold him acting the

part, strutting the deck of his prize, hearing some wounded men moaning, seeing the fear on the faces of the prisoners, the pathetic broken look of the master with whom he went below to the cabin; and seeing a bottle of wine there in the racks he knocked the head off and drank the contents while the Frenchman stared stupidly. The young rogue Teach was on deck, with distinct initiative for such undertakings, seeing to the disembowelling of the ship, and all hands working like 'longshore men, while Upcott was taking over the ship's monies and casting an eye over the trade books. When Upcott came on deck again he saw how the clouds lowered, heard how the wind cried in the cordage, while over to leeward the wreckage of the mainmast set up a pothor of foam and the two ships joggled uncouthly. Turner came anxiously to Upcott, the navigator in him in the ascendancy. "I tell 'e, cap'n, we'll have to let her go, and stand by, if there's to be more pickings. See yere!"

Upcott looked.

"All right," he said. "All right!" and looked contemptuously at the stormy lights and the stormy darkness.

They took as much as the rising gale would allow them to take.

At last all hands saw their danger and away back to their brig went the pillagers and stood away from their prey, and none too soon. But Teach was fierce. He came aft to the poop.

"See yere, cap'n," he said. "You run our heads in the noose, like this. Times is changed now. When you take a ship now 'tis a choice to every man aboard—walk the plank or join us."

The ships were already sundering, and the rising of the wind and coming of the night would make it the more doubtful if the *Pearl* could keep within sight of her prey. But Upcott leant over the rail.

"Go for'ard," he said. "I'm cap'n here."

And Teach scowled, but went forward.

Then Upcott laughed, and to Turner—

"That's life," he said; "Teach took that ship, you may say. Teach is in the right now. Yet Teach gets sent for'ard with hell in his heart. That's right! That's life! Cabin boy—fetch up the rum."

In the storm before which they ran they lost the Frenchman; but what trouble Teach could make among the others by grumbling over the affair was forgotten on sighting a Spanish ship. True, the Spanish glory waned. Dampier, Morgan, de Pointis, all the rest, great and lesser, had seen to that. But still there were pearls in the South Sea, gold in Peru. Still Indian, and half-caste Indian, and negro, toiled across the isthmus with the treasure of the seas beyond and it was shipped for old Spain. But there is scarce need in this late day to picture the boarding of that treasure ship. History and fiction are full of such accounts or pictures and one grows more interested in Upcott than in sea-fights. The Spaniard was taken in boats, Upcott himself coxswaining one with five men, Teach in the other with a like number. They took her suddenly, attacking from starboard and larboard, throwing up their grappling lines and swarming aboard like spiders, for it was night and the *Pearl* showed no lights after picking up the twinkle of the high Spanish lantern. The English ran on the decks, smiting down all the watch with hideous celerity, so that the Spanish ship took aback with a crackling of sails that, as much as the cries of the men on deck, brought up the watch below. But these came to their doom. They fought, to be sure, some of them, but they were taken suddenly, and in the dark, and had no knowledge of the number of the foe.

But after the capture of that prize, which made Upcott undoubted leader and made the matter of the escape of the Frenchman ancient history, Upcott fell morose. He went to the charts, studied them scowlingly, came on deck—it was the morning after the taking of the Spaniard and he had spent the night roaring and babbling incoherently in his bunk, all his clothes on—and sharply he asked Turner to come below for a minute. Turner followed him wondering; but immediately they were below Upcott came to his point.

"Mr. Turner," said he, "I've shown you I can master a rough crew, but I'm not what you might call a navigator. You've seen that, belike. I'm mazed with charts and the like; but I want you to get this ship on a course for the Isle Providence."

"Isle Providence?" cried Turner.

"That's it!" said Upcott. "You pick up the Isle Providence and——"

"Is it safe?" said Turner.

"Rot me!" cried Upcott. "Don't I know the Isle Providence well enough? You do as I tell you and when we pick up the island I'll give you an offer that will sure tickle you."

Turner had a fear of questioning him; but after noon he ventured, in the soothing voice that Devon men know so well, when they approach an unknown, as it were, "feeling for grips," to say: "What's the idea in this course you want me to hold, might I ask?"

Upcott looked on him and his mouth twisted insolently.

"You'll see," said he.

Turner's eyes blinked. His face had a defeated air. As for the men, they had no heed of where they were going, for Upcott had let them have a sufficiency of the Spaniard's wines. There was really not a wholly sober man on deck. The London apprentice was lying dead drunk in the scuppers. Upcott noticed him.

It was like him to muster the whole crew aft when to order one man would have served. They came with red eyes and stood under the poop.

"Take that lad below!" he ordered. "Throw a bucket of water on him first. If we get more seas he might be overboard."

They did not move, expecting some further words.

"That's all," he said. "Get for'ard."

Teach laughed.

"What be you laughing at?" roared Upcott.

"Sure 'tis admiration," said Teach.

Upcott was pacified.

Turner kept an eye on him. "You've had no sleep these two days and nights," said he gently with the cooing "oos." But then Upcott was "Devon" too.

"I'm not sleeping to-night either," said he. "I'm staying on deck, Turner, now that I know the course; so you can get drunker if you like, for I'll look after the brig myself."

"Drunker? I ain't drunk!"

"Mr. Turner," said Upcott solemnly, "'twould vex me to have trouble with you. We've pulled pretty well so far."

"What's your game?" asked Turner.

"It's no harm to you, anyhow," said Upcott. "You'll see that; and Turner, first thing in the morning we'll make a computation of the shares of that last prize."

And so it was done in the morning, so far as the monies were concerned, amidships, the sails brailed up, all hands clustered together there; and when that business was over, Turner, who had been searching the horizon, handed his perspective glass to Upcott and pointed a finger. Upcott looked through on the circle of tossing waves and sky that came and went and then caught the far blue of the land.

"That's your Isle Providence," said Turner grimly, "and now I'm going to ask you—are you going to run our heads in the noose?"

"You come below with me and I'll tell you what I'm going to do," said Upcott, so down they went again together, Upcott grim, Turner suspicious. "Mr. Turner," said Upcott, "sober up."

"I'm sober enough," said Turner. "I'm sober enough to want to know what you're running there for."

"I'll tell you," said Upcott. "Sit down." And they sat down at the table, one on either side.

"I'm going to give you the ship."

"Eh?"

"I'm going ashore to the Isle Providence."

"Ashore! 'Sblood! They'll——"

"They'll know naught of us there yet."

"'Tis not safe."

"Safe enough."

"But I tell 'e there's a governor there now who——"

"Ain't I Captain Proust? Haven't I kept a log? Look at it! It's all right; I wrote it up yesterday. We'll tell them the truth at Providence."

"The truth?"

"Why, sure. We'll make no bones about that. We've been smuggling on the Spanish main and we've done well, not only in monies but in cargo. The larboard bulwarks be a bit splintered. Well—smuggling ain't all calm water, is it?"

"And what after that?" asked Turner. The hope that leapt in his brain helped to sober him.

"That's your affair," said Upcott. "I go ashore; that's all. The men understand that I know the Isle Providence and I am going belike for recruits on the quiet, for we can't go pirating long with a matter of fifteen men."

"I'd like to know your story," said Turner. "There's something behind this all—when I think of the way you came aboard and then——" he broke off, musing.

"You'll never know that," said Upcott. "But, for sure, this I'm telling you of my intention is straight enough."

"I can see that," said Turner, looking on Upcott's face oddly and he held out his hand and shook Upcott's and winked. Then, "What about your share?" he asked. "How's it to go ashore without the men getting to suspect you're leaving us?"

"Oh, the men! I'm captain. They can think what they like. They can think I've got some friend here. I don't want to count my share of the cargo and argubargy over that. I'll take my monies—that'll suffice for me. They'll not miss me. The like of that Teach now, if he thought I had left for good, would make a bid for the ship before you could say knife."

Turner swelled in his chair, tilted his head, stretched his legs. Upcott had a picture of himself presented to him then.

"I'll *teach* him," said Turner.

The men were of course a trifle timid when they saw to what land they came, but when Upcott called them aft and began: "Boys! my name is Proust—Richard Proust—and don't you forget it when we run into the bay, whoever comes aboard," they stared and then they laughed. After all they were not in so bad a plight.

And when they ran into the bay and swung at anchor, a boat put out, a sign that the Isle Providence was in the period of regeneration. But Upcott, alias Proust, met the governor's representative with ease. That the ship was a smuggler mattered little to that functionary. He could but congratulate Proust on a good voyage and take, bowing, a handsome gift of Spanish wines.

And that very night Upcott stood by the swamp's edge where lay the creepered cemetery, so quickly filling, of that little island town. His boxes were already aboard *The Three Castles* of Bristol and he had taken his passage aboard her, for at the *Spanish Galleon* he had fortunately encountered, on his arrival, the master of that ship which was to sail on the morrow.

An island is not reformed in a day, though governors may come to it, representatives of the home land. Their coming is

always a step in the right direction. They may perhaps fall at times into the ways of the islanders, or learn to look aside. They may perhaps even be really hoodwinked now and then, and unconsciously aid in lawlessness those whom they have been sent to keep in the fear of the law. But Upcott had no difficulties; fortune favoured him. Wren had clearly no recollection of him, nor had Wren's daughter. For him, he looked on both with a cold eye; but finding some ship captains in the ordinary, and hearing their talk and how that *The Three Castles* was to sail on the morrow, he had made his arrangements at once. Perhaps Wren, who was present when Upcott approached the master of *The Three Castles*, took him not for the master of the *Pearl* but for a passenger fortunate enough to arrive thus timely to find another ship at his immediate service. But that is side-issue—Wren was inn-keeper enough to meddle in no man's life.

So after nightfall John went out to the creepered burial place. It had been stretching since John was there before and its increased area smote him with a thought of the fleeting years and the faces dropping out of sight. The only sounds heard there, where his brother lay, were the singing of frogs and chattering of lizards and the low hum of mosquitos as they alighted to sting. From farther came occasional louder voices of the taverns, sounds of pipe or tabor.

He bowed his head and stood in the insect-haunted night—stood for hours. The sound of revelry at the ordinaries, that hardly came so far, dwindled; the stars glowed brighter. Upcott remained motionless on that uncertain islet, the life of which had been so full of vicissitude in the midst of the Spanish seas that were now more the seas of all nations.

There are various ways in which men say: "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me."

But with John Upcott there were always reservations. The thought of his recently acquired gains kept jarring in on the other thoughts, discordantly. He thought of the men slain. He thought how these monies were stolen, stolen with violence and murder. Then he got back to the murmurous night and its stars again; but the dissonance returned. He told himself that the old adventurers had done even as he; then told himself that they had not: they had fought with enemies of their country. Bah! Yes, for gain! And back he went to his yearning in the night. Always he had felt outwards for something above, beyond the meannesses of life, beyond its sordidness. And sometimes, feeling for that, would come a sudden consciousness of it as though it were already in his possession—as one lights a taper at a fire. But there was always something that he retained deliberately, which seemed inimical to that light, something that extinguished, like sand flung on flame.

Yet he gained a certain measure of peace from the solitary watch he kept with the stars. The passenger who was rowed aboard *The Three Castles* in the morning, even as the anchor was weighing, was not the same man who had come ashore from the *Pearl*, assuredly not the man who had taken Proust's place. Yet though his face was less flushed, his head was held as high. His lips were firm, though not puckered. He was more of a man than of a bravo.

CHAPTER XXII

DISSERTATIONS IN DEVON

"What! John Upcott! Home again! Thought you was lost out in the wide wurdle."

"No, home again."

"And for out again, like all the rest of them that's once tasted, eh?"

"'Tis not likely."

"What? Well, 'tain't for want o' ships. Harbour-master tells me not a tide comes in, not a tide goes out, without he has a couple of dozen arrivals and sailings to enter in his books."

"Ah, so! Well, you see, Devon's Devon—and I'm home."

"Sure. I'd ha' thought a man better out in the windy wurdle instead of home in Bideford listening to the townsfolk grumbling at the assessments!"

But no; John could close an ear to the grumblings and the small talk and the foolish talk. He had seen the world. He had lived. True, at home there was this tedious small talk, dementing sometimes in its smallness if one gave ear to it. But here one need not join in the trivialities, could slip out of them. Overseas there were no recluses, no escapers; one had to join in there—in deeds, not talk, in deeds that were terrible. He was of no use there.

On the way home he had had no peace till his savings from the two captures made during his brief command on the *Pearl* had been cast in the deep. I think quite a tragi-comedy could be written, by the capable hand, on the casting away of that spoil, telling how it was handled, to be thrown—and then put back; how a part was cast away and then a halt called and the pros and cons considered anew; and how, when the last went glittering to the deep with a final tiny splash, Upcott drew a deep breath and lost an anguish.

Yes; he was indubitably in Devon, with ever and again stabs of joy in his heart at some keener sense of being there, awakened by familiar blending of colour or sudden new relish of the tufted ridges of the grey-blue woods lying low along the blue-grey sky at end of his vistas; or at accents of voices heard at doors or in the fields; or at sight of the full rippling Torridge, his own Torridge, sifting the stars in the summer evenings.

But not at once, on coming home, did he come into his own. For not only he, overseas, had changed, but at home there had been changes; changes wrought slowly and surely, while his had been volcanic and sudden. He could not find his mother, and that was his worst trouble. Of course he found her in a sense, embraced her, kissed her (and Sis) and was welcomed; but that is not exactly what I mean. He could not find her eyes. Even when he looked directly he could not find her there, the mother of his youth. He looked in their grey-blue where mists hazed and lights dwindled and knew in his heart a poignant sense of not meeting her. He thought how, on winter evenings, when one sits staring long in the reverie-awakening fire the eyes are changed strangely. The eyes of his mother had beheld the beatific vision. Once, after he had been home some days, he came in from the fields and finding her opportunely at rest, as he had hoped, he sat at her feet; for out in the fields he had felt the anguish of not finding her strong in him and had come home hoping to find an opportunity to draw nearer her, to wander back, a man, not to childhood, but to the spirit of the lost yesterdays, and forget what lay between. He was a man grown, but a man hungering to come close to the spirit that his knowledge of the world had taught him was the rarest he knew. Absence and years rendered it possible for him, though a son, to look on her as a worshipper. But she had gone farther back into her Sanctuary. Yet who was he to desire her to come forth, to solace him? When her hand fell on his shoulder, gentle as an autumn leaf, his spirit fled to her; she came not far to him. He felt a self-consciousness, a childishness, sitting there. Yet he sat awhile. Love even has to be protected. Was it not love, a pure love, that had laid him, in Cartagena, a sacrifice on the clotted altar of lust? But he, too, grew away from others. He could understand in some manner his mother's centralization; and he found it good. In his life were meetings when he could not give himself to those to whom he had once given almost all. Ravenning was one such. He had, for instance, met Ravenning in Bideford, the old shouldering, swaggering Ravenning, but bloated now, just home from a Virginia trip.

"Hullo!" said Will. "Upcott again!"

They shook hands, but it was mostly for the sake of the days that had been that their grasp was mutually warm. Ravenning was for the sea again.

"I heard you was held in Cartagena," said Will.

"Yes, I was that. Were you there? I didn't see you in the place."

"Me? No; us didn't go after all but us heard about it. Us met some of the ships that got away. 'Twas at the Isle Avache. Ever get your share out o' the attack?"

Upcott shook his head and gave a pucker to his lips. "Don't want it," he said.

"God! You'm queer. Du Casse stumped up, sure enough. But I reckon there was lots didn't get their share, though Du Casse did his best. Sure he didn't need to be so keen to pay over. He got the monies from France all right and was eager too, by all accounts, to meet all the English masters and see all that had been in the sacking, and come to a settlement."

"What of yourself?" asked John.

"Me? Oh!" Will flung up his head and swaggered. Then suddenly, "See her?"

Upcott looked and saw a woman who had once been considered "powerful thick wi' Will." She passed grandly.

"I axed her," said Will, "when I came home, if her would settle me. Put it to her straight. I've got a bit o' money, reckon I could go partners in some shipping venture, part owner and master maybe. Says she: 'I know too much about you,' she says; 'I've heard of your doings overseas.' Says I: 'Drink? Oh, they all drink in the Indies.' Says she: 'No, worse than drink. I know 'e! And you come to a respectable woman after that!'—somebody had been telling her about me in the Tortugas or elsewheres; there was no denying it. 'Tain't as if they was girls to home,' she says; 'but you never know what's come to a man as keeps company such as you keep in your Indy ports.'"

Upcott had no interest in this, wanted to turn and flee away. He saw that what Ravenning imagined he spoke of was but a refusal of an offer of marriage. What John saw was that—and other things; and among these other things he perceived this woman's outlook; it was not the evil, but the possible consequences of which she thought. Ravenning's ill taste, not his morals, barred him. You remember how Hacker came home. This tale, apart from what else it is, is also, in a way, a tale of how three men came home.

And that was how another man was met when he came home. Also that was perhaps another formative influence for John—the hearing of this talk, meeting Will there.

Upcott was glad to get away from Ravenning again. He shook his hand with the old warm grasp, as warm in parting as in meeting, what might have been lost in warmth by finding how much Will was different from him being balanced by the thought that they were parting; let them part friends for old time's sake. But somehow he resented the way Will's eyes looked deep in his as he said: "Sure, I'm glad to see you again, John. I'll see you about, like enough, afore I sail again."

Upcott was depressed all that day and was not in sweeter frame of mind till the next day's sunrise, which he saw, waking just as the summer night tip-toed silently hence. He lay in his bed looking through the little casement, suddenly wide awake with a thought of how fresh and clean all was, and saw the dawn.

It was like an inaudible explosion beyond the eastern hill; it was like the tossing up of the pigments wherewith rainbows are made in a fountain. Some formation of the clouds on which the rising, but not yet risen, sun shone gave first the appearance of a wavering gold plume behind the hill, a great plume with the trembling quill set in the unknown world beyond; and then came these other colours. The tiny clouds higher up, tiny clouds sailing solitary in the blue, were lit on their lower verges with the hues of that splendid jet, fountain, plume of gold, orange, red. And then suddenly that all dissolved, and the day was all golden; and even as Upcott breathed long and deep the sun swam up, blinding. It would have pleased Jeremy Taylor to know how that sunrise inspired this home-come wanderer and lit him on the way that he was still to travel, a way not of seas and far islands; for it was Jeremy Taylor who said: "In the morning, when you wake, accustom yourself to think first upon God, or something in order to His service; and at night also, let Him close thine eyes, and let your sleep be necessary and healthful, not idle and expensive of time, beyond the needs and

conveniences of nature; and sometimes be curious to see the preparation which the sun makes when he is coming forth from his chambers of the east."

That day, when John returned from working in the fields, said Mrs. Upcott to him: "I wonder what's come to Cassandra. 'Tis odd that she has not been down along these three weeks."

"And her coming so often before," said Sis and went on with laying the table.

"She comes down along still?" asked John.

Sis flung him a look; and he thought she set the dishes with a defiant clatter. He could not understand Sis: often he saw her radiant enough at her work, alert, blithesome. When he spoke with her she fell listless. If he talked she seemed to pay little heed. Perhaps a neighbour would drop in and draw out John in chat about the Indies. Sis would break in with talk of the crops.

Cassandra! The name moved his heart. It beat quicker at the sound. But he had not dared to speak of her. He could not even hope. The episode of the "Señorita" of Casa Blanca had put the pure Cassandra for ever from him—Señora Sara Peyrens, the most beautiful woman in Cartagena, she of the melting eyes that looked so straight in one's. When the cat in the midst of the kitchen sat once elegantly erect, admirable tail curled about its toes and he sat moody, he suddenly found himself staring in the cat's eyes. "A cat can look at a king," he remembered. And then, because he was thinking of Cassandra and of what he considered a bar to his ever loving her now, he muttered: "*She* could look straight as a cat at me always. God! What a woman to care for! That's how she could look so—she had but the cat's sleek, licking nature."

"How is Cassandra?" he asked after a pause.

"Quite the same as ever," said Sis. "Sweet as ever; but there's something at times seems wrong with her."

"Yes; I don't like her looks at times," said Mrs. Upcott.

"She's not got married then, like Tomsie Ravenning?"

"No—not yet," said Sis.

"Oh—is there talk of it?"

Sis turned and looked on her brother with that inscrutable face of hers; and he was angry; because he did not understand it.

There were some fading roses in a bowl in the window.

"She left these roses last time she was here," said Mrs. Upcott.

John looked at them, remembering how Gifford had a turn for horticulture. He thought how roses fade, and thought the thoughts that fading roses bring to life in us.

There were all sorts of persons to see, acquaintanceships to renew. People kept dropping in, were encountered, as they are in a play where the least interesting come first and then—crash! your leading character; hush!

Cassandra! Cassandra! Cassandra! She was here, under these very skies, seeing these very clouds. She had come often in his absence but came not now. What was she thinking? But he could not see her, dared not see her, and then again—he must see her and she so near. Then he thought how he came to her, tainted from a woman she would loathe.

Still, there were distractions; also Upcott had it shown him that even among the moral were those who were as far away from him as were now the selfish evil—their morality their only saving grace, while the evil had their gaiety; a dangerous thought—but after all one to bear little consideration.

There was one Mrs. Babbacombe, an uncouth, great woman, with flashing eyes and strident voice, who considered herself of some consequence, she being wed to a small farmer. She was no mere labourer's wife—though a labourer's daughter. One wonders if there was not perhaps a shock of surprise when Babbacombe discovered where his condescensions had led him. She told the tale herself for the guidance of maidens.

"See yere, Babbacombe,' I says. 'I've put up with 'e a deal, but what do 'e mean?' and I came close to en and put my face to hisn. Says he, 'Lord bless 'e Sal, mean? Why I mean it all. What be thinkin' of?'—'That's all right then,' I says. 'You've been coming and going some while and I'm not that kind. I'm an honest maiden and willing to look after you to the end o' my days.' I kept en to it. Men tries to slip away from responsibility. A woman's got to put her fist down."

It was this lady who now entered, following her quick knock on the partly open door which she left wide open.

Yes; John was indubitably in Devon.

"Good-day to 'e. I likes seein' you volks—just pazzin' and dropped in. You'm homely here, you be." She ruffled from some recent affront. "Mrs. Ackland wasn't in to zee you—no? Oh! I just passed she going up along; high and mighty she be, goes by me with her nose in the air. Who do she think she be, anyhow?" A snort. "Married over twelve-month too, and never a sign!"

Sis, as the phrase is, looked daggers, then drew erect. The mother, one might have been excused for thinking, from her expression, had not heard.

Then entered our old friend, Tomsie Ravenning, now Tomsie Sellick.

"Oh Mrs. Sellick," cried Mrs. Babbacombe, "I've just been saying as how I met——"

"I heard 'e," said Tomsie. "I heard 'e wi' you leaving the door wide. Do 'e have the door shut, Mrs. Upcott?" and she closed it. "There ain't no harm in Liz Ackland. 'Tis better when all's said and done as it is instead of a case of bein' in a t'rr'ble hurry to get passon to tie the knot—same's it is wi' some——" and she turned from the bridling face of Mrs. Babbacombe to kiss Sis and Mrs. Upcott.

"Well, I'll be going, Mrs. Upcott," said Mrs. Babbacombe. "I wasn't goin' to sit down—just pazzin' and I looked in. Not but what all's well to home. I told him" (her husband) "to see to things, and what I says goes, but still it's a woman's place to be in her own home."

Tomsie's eyes fell on the roses and she looked on them and smelt their passing fragrance. Mrs. Babbacombe had turned to go, but saw an opportunity to monopolise again the conversation, and turning to Sis, said she: "Well, you keep a fine tidy house, cleanest house I go into. A good wife you'll make to some man. Have 'e not zingled en out yet?"

Tomsie wheeled about, looked over her shoulder at Mrs. Babbacombe, and then to Sis, to change the conversation, remarked: "They roses be dabbered now; but they be sweet."

Sis was willing!

"Yes," she said turning to Tomsie. "They do smell sweet still, but they be fading."

"Aye," said Mrs. Babbacombe, "that's it. We all do fade, same as roses" (John had a pang with one thought and then smiled to himself at the simile, for he had another, a thought that Mrs. Babbacombe would fade more like a bladder of lard, grown spotty) "and when a woman fades—well, well, there yu be."

"Sure," said Tomsie. "Dabbered roses is sweet," and she smelt again. "I have a bowl full of old rose leaves up along. Faded roses is one thing but dabbered poppies in the rain is another. The roses you can always love. But a poppy? Just all a-hang and a-slop and nothing left to it. And yet I suppose roses and poppies is both flowers, so to speak, and the good God made 'em both—and there ye be."

"Well, I'll be going," said Mrs. Babbacombe. "Good-night all."

"And now she's gone," sighed Tomsie. "You dear, dear woman," and she turned to Mrs. Upcott, "you get all kinds a-dropping in to see you. Impudent woman, that. Young Ashplant—ye mind Ashplant, John, maybe ye saw him to abroad."

"Yes, I saw him. He sailed with us."

"Ah, iss, sure, so him did. I hear he was to Cartagena. He was asking for word o'you. He'd heard as how your ship had been captured by the Dons. But what I was going to say was what that Babbacombe woman did. Young Ashplant met me up along talking to some volks and says he: 'Why, here's Tomsie Ravenning,' and that Babbacombe woman cried out

from her door: 'Easy, young man—that be Mrs Sellick. You'm behind the times. She's Tomsie Sellick now, wi' three brats, two boys and a cheeld. She's been busy. A fine, healthy, busy woman,' shouts out like that. I'm proud of my childer, I am, but there's ways and ways of looking on life, Mrs. Upcott; there's ways and ways, as you know, and I don't like that Mrs. Babbacombe."

Mrs. Upcott clapped Tomsie's plump shoulder and seemed to calm her flutter; though John noticed in the mother's face then, too, a something that seemed to indicate that she lived elsewhere, in another world; there was still the barrier in the sweet, understanding eyes. And he revered his mother then. He loved her. He understood how it was possible for so many differing types of people to come to see her, to care to "drop in, pazzing."

But this is only our old friend Tomsie, so far. We have not yet come to Cassandra.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW THE THROSTLE SANG AT EVENING

Because I have a certain pity for John Upcott I do not wish his to be a kind of Marsyas fate; I would not tell quite word for word what he said that evening to Tomsie Sellick, not narrate with excessive particularity of detail how he felt, the moment after the words were said, as though he had again, not sinfully, but weakly, lost the lordship of his soul; not only that but, somehow, wronged Cassandra. You can surmise all that.

For the pirate captain of the *Pearl* was weak enough to seek a confidant, a moral counsellor, and that counsellor a woman—Tomsie.

Still, if he had to seek a confidant I suppose she was the best possible. His mother besides, I take it, required no fresh anguish to aid her.

He strayed out with Tomsie, as though with the intention to go a little way homeward with her across the fields; but once out of earshot of the house, though she was already deep in a cheerful prattle of talk, to which he paid no heed, said he, "Tomsie," with that in his voice that caused her to stare.

"Tomsie, if a man has always, first along and last along, had a terrible liking for a maid and been away from her and come back not as he went, not clean as he would be, should he tell her?"

Tomsie gasped and "John!" she ejaculated. "Oh! John!"

Even in the dark he saw her go white and then her face darkened, presumably suffused with blood.

"What do you just mean?" she said.

"'Tis Cassandra," he said. "I can't stay away from her and yet I dursent go to see her. There was a woman—in the Indies."

"And you were trysted to Cassandra?"

"Oh no, my God! no. If only I had been 'twould never have happened—that other."

Tomsie had a sense of relief. "But you, John," she said, and stood stock still. "You, John? I always thought you was the last man," and then tears glistened in her eyes and her bosom heaved as she understood that she was being made a confidant. "How can I help 'e?" she said. "My God, John! What a woman she must have been. When I think of you——"

"Tell me," he said; "tell me—you're a woman. Have I to tell Cassandra *that*? That be the question, Tomsie. Do 'e think a man should tell the like o' that if it's happened, to the woman he comes to wi' love?"

Tomsie walked on slowly with downcast head. Huskily she said: "Don't you tell her. 'Tis done and can't be undone and there ye be. And once she's told, well then she knows. Even if a woman suspected—when she knows she knows and she can't delude herself no more and say: 'Maybe 'tis not so.'"

And then Tomsie looked up and cried out:

"No no, John. I'm bad, I'm wrong to talk to 'e so. 'Tain't the help you want, I know. I know, brother John, I know the help you want," and then she gathered herself and then composed herself and spoke in a matter-of-fact voice:

"'Tis strange to speak to a man like this yere and a man like you above all, John. I feel mazed like. I can't kind o' believe I be talking at all. I never thought as how you were—could——" she halted as though horrified while John was saying:

"Nor had I—nor had I. That's it. I ain't a man like that. And—my God! That makes it all the worse."

"Aye," said Tomsie, but speaking as though another thought lurked unspoken, "you'm different from most. No, I was wrong, John. You'm different; and Cassandra—she's different."

But Tomsie stood where she had halted. She was thinking of this John Upcott and the John Upcott she had known—and

of Cassandra.

"Seeing 'tis you and seeing 'tis Cassandra," she said, and delayed, and then: "There be all kinds in the world. There's even some in Devon here would think you a fool to worry so—I know that. They'd think 'twas a terr'ble store to make o' nothing. They don't count. 'Tisn't what they think. I said to 'e just now 'don't 'e tell'; but that don't count. 'Twasn't right. You tell her. You tell her and God help you. If she takes it like me," and she sighed, "'twill be all well wi' 'e. But you, John! You!" There was still a thought held unspoken; and then: "I'm doing no wrong to Sellick by asking you, John, by telling you like; but was it" she hesitated and began her thought again elsewhere: "You always, when I was with 'e, made me feel content like, safe like. 'Twas as if I could come to you and be happy. 'Twasn't like that—oh tell me 'twasn't like that with her, to the Indies?"

"My God, no!" said John.

Tomsie had another sense of relief.

"'Tis what's right you want to do," said she sighing.

"Iss."

"You tell her—go now. She's alone. Gifford's over to Bideford and it's afore his time. Good-night, John—no—don't 'e thank me."

As she went home, blinded ever and again with tears, Tomsie said to her heart: "It doo seem like's the happiest things and the best things is come at through pain." Then she paused. "But that ain't excusing him!" she said. "And John Upcott, too! But what a terr'ble thing for he, oh, what a terr'ble thing for he! I wonder—I wonder if he wanted me to tell Cassie for him?" And again thought she: "Lor! if anyone was to know us had talked about it what would they think? The likes o' Mrs. Babbacombe would be saying: 'Nobody ever talked to me like that.' No, sure, you couldn't talk to her like that. That's just it. She'd carry any bad tale in the country, but no one could ever go to her wi' trouble. God help him."

That would perhaps be about the time that Cassandra heard the steps without and the knock on the door that stood part open to the summer evening all full of scents of grass and flowers and all aglow with the amazing end of the day, with throistles in the tree-tops trembling their songs into the sunset.

"John!" she said.

But he did not salute her so much as petition her, hat in hand; yet she found him a very self-reliant figure to look at, clean-limbed, clean-skinned, tanned, glitter of the last sun-rays in his dark hair. Looking at him she saw him a man with a grip on himself, a man who was strong. He saw Cassandra, lissome, slender, her hair going back in smooth gold from a forehead such as one calls open, above candid, undefended eyes, their sweetness and kind candour their defence; eyes that touched one often with their great gentleness and peace. Cassandra had a leap of joy at her heart that John looked as he did. John had but a wonder for her, and a numb regret for himself that she was so far beyond him. She was glad, because she had seen others come home from overseas. Only that day she had seen Will Ravenning again, with his drink-hazed, dancing eyes, his pugnacious swagger.

"Cassandra," said John, "can I come in?"

"Come in over, John. Come in over;" and she caught his hand. For a moment it was as if she was going to kiss him. He had kissed Tomsie when he saw her again after coming home, kissed her smack before the husband. Still, as they say here—there ye be!

But when he entered and was seated neither spoke. It would' have looked the foolishhest affair imaginable to anyone who might have seen—just these two sitting tongue-tied. John, feeling this embarrassment, broke it, for her sake, to relieve her.

"And how have you been, Cassandra, all this while?"

"Nicely, nicely, thankee. Things just go on as usual here. So you'm really home! Well, you'm changed." And then she captured the attitude of old friend. "You'm changed for the better, John. You'm quite the man now. And when did you get home?"

"Two-three weeks back," he said. "I've been——"

"Oh! Just new back, as you might say. After being gone so long you can't hardly feel to home yet."

"That's it," he said grasping at what he thought a chance remark. "I'd have been over afore this but——"

"I know," she said. "It must take quite a bit o' shaking down after being gone so long. How's all to home? I haven't been hardly over the door one way and another myself these last days."

"Nicely," he said, "nicely, thankee," and then came again that embarrassing and foolish silence; but Cassandra was now looking at him with a curious kind of keenness and he noted, looking up from his plucking of his hat like a very clodpole, her sharp gaze, the bright eyes piercing him; but he noted also how her cheeks were drawn as of one who suffered pain. Ah! If he could only have her always near, to cheer her, to smooth away from her heart whatever it was that wrought that something of pathetic in the cheeks, that made that something, a little on the sad side of pensive, to dwell in the eyes.

"Zounds!" cried a hearty voice in the doorway. "Coampany! Ye've got coampany. The wandering sailor. Eh, lad! You'm twice the breadth you were afore you went out to the abroad. Eh! And a big hand too and the heartiest grip. Give a Don's bow now, lad. Or is it a Don's oaths you've brought back with 'e to astonish quiet volkses?—How's the maiden?"

"Nicely—nicely."

"Supper ready?"

"Iss, all ready."

"Set a plaat for John then. 'Taint every day we get the coampany of a gurt captain that's taken ships and cities and fought duels wi' the Dons. You have work afore ye, lad, to give we the rights and the wrongs and the ins and the outs of the stories that us gets now and then of you and other Devon lads out there. You bain't too gurt a man now to eat laver wi' bubble and squeak off humble cloam, be ye, after supping off gold plate?" And then he turned to his daughter. "Another stitch?"

"Naught, 'tis naught," she said.

John saw how pale she was.

"What is it?" he asked her.

"'Tis naught," she said.

"What is it?" he asked Gifford.

"'Tis a pain she takes. No physic seems any use to aid her and it do get worse."

"Have you had this long—has she had it long?"

"Two-three years, for all I know," said Gifford. "She's like her mother that was. She's summat like your mother and the rest of the best o' them, a heap different from them kind that's always talking of their own pains and all the pains they hear tell of."

But Cassandra smiled again, was gay; and then Gifford had a score of questions to ask regarding the ways of the Dons. But as John answered these he had often an anxious eye for Cassandra.

As for loving her—that was changed somehow. He could not say "I love her." He could but say: "I dare not love her." The whole woman was sacred to him. But that pallor when she had been pained, and what Gifford had told him of her sufferings, distressed him. He wished he could take her pain and bear it for her. As he went homeward he not so much thought of her as was accompanied by her spirit. And half way down the slope, in the red loam by the stile, he stood still, heaved a sigh in his reveries and softly to the dim slopes that he tilled, the smell of the earth in his nostrils, the tranquillity of night around him, said he: "Love bain't all billing and cooing. Love is holding the wife's head and her ratching." He had a sense of the greatness and sanctity of life in its meanest circumstance, in its every circumstance. Here, at home, he had at last stepped into the verges of the land he had sought oversea. Here, at home, came to him a whisper of the voices he had hearkened for elsewhere.

It was as if he had never lived before.

And next day he felt as if he had only then come home. Mother and Sis both seemed to look on him with new eyes. He could not understand. One gnawing thought persisted in intruding itself, one worrying thought of self, apart from his thought of Cassandra's unnamed trouble: he regretted speaking to Tomsie. Only between himself and the Silence should that matter have been settled. If ever spoken, only to Cassandra. But he guarded himself that day; he would not allow his face to show these stabbing thoughts—why should others be dulled by his concerns? That day, too, Mrs. Upcott said: "We've news for you, John."

"What news?" asked he and did not think of himself.

"Good news," said Mrs. Upcott.

He looked from one to the other.

"'Tis something about Sis?" he said eagerly.

"She going to be married."

It had never occurred to him that Sis would be married! But he looked at her and was amazed that she should have been so long by the mother's side.

"Ah!" said he, "things have been moving while I've been away wasting life. Who is the happy man, Sis? God bless ye."

"'Tis Walter Shebbeare," said Mrs. Upcott. "So she won't be going very far, only to Putford."

"God bless ye," said John and stepped across and kissed his sister on the cheek. There were others in the world besides himself, with their loves and longings and hopes.

So there was a little stir of preparation in the farm, sewings, and quiet flutterings, and the taking out of the bottom drawer, and when Sis drove away by Walter's side, three weeks later, she went feeling that all was well at the home whence she departed. When Mrs. Upcott waved farewell to the happy pair John stepped back behind her suddenly, feeling that the last glimpse should be of the mother. Going back indoors with her he had a sense of something to live up to; and he was ready. His mother put a hand on his shoulder: "I have a son," she said, "a good, strong son, a man like what I prayed for."

Mother and son pictured Sis's home-going, each in their own way. Both saw the witching gold and green of the valley whither she now journeyed over the purple moor, through the azure and wind-sweet day; the mother's eyes dwelling longest on that part of the picture where the steeple stood sanctifying the valley and all day the cawing rooks wavered in the immemorial trees that almost hid it, that might have hidden it save from eyes that sought it; John's eyes, roving on his picture, saw the rising and settling rooks above the tufted hill, the steeple peeping through, saw the dotted farms in the valley, the purple of the moor; but lingered where the river ran tessellated with magic pebbles, and the illusive, wavering gleams of sun and shade intertwined their baffling mosaic on its wind-ruffled and dancing surface.

And the summer bloomed on, resplendent, with the old friends coming and going. But Cassandra was not of these. She had taken to bed, after long, brave fightings against the unknown malady, succumbing at last, about the end of summer; and in the golden August and the gorgeous Septembrals days there was always someone, this one or that one who had loved her, of an afternoon or of an evening finding old Gifford to ask: "Is she sleeping?" or "Is she minded for coampany?"

Always after John had a sense of her presence near when he heard a thrush sing, whether in the first sun-splashes of spring or in the golden tree-tops of later summers; for—in her deepest pain, as he sat by her, holding her hand for solace and yearning to endue her with strength to bear, should it sap his life, she turned her pale face to him and the thin lips puckered in a smile, and said she:

"'Tis sweet to hear the drishel in the hedge."

She went with the falling leaves and was carried up to lie in that quiet place where Silence has his sanctuary (the old square steeple locates it for you as you come over the hill and look along the slopes); where, when rain comes, the green of the grass shines through, the birds criss-cross from wall to wall.

Next day, after breakfast, John took down a book, one of Uncle's gift, and tried to read. It was a book of sermons of a Welsh divine. Suddenly he thought of his mother. She too had loved Cassandra. He turned and looked at her. She had her eyes on him, the dear grey-blue eyes that had looked upon the beatific vision.

"There bain't much to do to-day, John," she said. "Why don't 'e go for one o' your rambles. I'm sure ye can neither read nor work to-day."

"Oh yes," said he; "there's work to be done."

"That can stand," she said. "You go for one of your long rambles like you used in the old days when you'd come home and tell of the way the gulls went up and down."

He stood a moment staring.

"Just to-day," he said. "Just one day, then. I'll be back come sunset."

"Very good, my dear. You go 'long. Take you something to eat with 'e."

And when he was gone she said, according to her lights (and considering what she had achieved I cannot just mock her ingenuous thoughts), looking at the books in which he read: "There be only one Book for me; but God would not have allowed a man to think o' printing if there weren't good in it. The older I get the more I do think the one Book is enough for us. But after all, John does seem somehow bettered for these books. Still, the cliffs and the moors will do en more service to-day. Our blessed Saviour when he was distressed did go apart into a mountain. Why should not a mortal man do the like? And John was always terrible taken up with gulls, and cliffs, and the sea breaking and the winds."

A robin alighted and flicked on a tree stump as John went forth. The clipping of some early labourer, hedge-trimming, smote crisply on the air. Up the course of Torridge that twined hidden yonder beyond the hill a gull went high in air, winding there as the river swung, following its course above its reflection, dipped, and veered from sight and left the hill ridge clear and lonely. Here gulls came and went, from sea-side to land-side of the cliffs, dipping and veering too and returning on their plaintive cries that left the day silent. There was a slight whiteness of frost, a dreamy blue of distance, and the other blue of morning smoke rising here and there among the woods from hidden, quiet homes that lay in hollows whence rose the slopes of green field—the fields are always green in Devon—and dappled wood, a little way under the great sweep of the sky; and above again were mountains of cloud with white summits over which the rays of sunlight shot, their higher brightness making it appear as though below there were shafts of darkness. But of course it was not so.

And under that sky, into the rising south-west wind, John journeyed by the old, familiar routes.

He noted absently, as he walked, the building up and the dissolving of the clouds that were blown eastwards. He trudged on and on. The thick leggings that he wore, he being yet somewhat unaccustomed to them, galled his ankles. Each step was a pain; but he did not heed the pain. The pain seemed right. Without that pain he would have sunk in a stupor. The pain gave him the sense of being indeed there—at every step. He did not even trouble to slacken these unwonted bindings. Subconsciously he knew whither he was going but did not ask why. He was going to the west shore to look out, out where the wings of gulls went and were lost in the sun, and where the waves came in these thousand miles.

The day was colder on the higher lands. South were dimly seen the tors of Dartmoor in the cold azure distance. North, far out, was Lundy, clear and blue. The wind buffeted him, but he breasted into it. Higher here the leaves were strewn more widely. He evaded Hartland, going over the slopes to north with the steeple of Stoke standing lonely, almost terrible in the wind-blown day.

At length he came to the last slopes, where the depopulated squat trees were all whipped back from the sea-side by the force of many a gale; marched on and heard the roar of the sea (that echoes ever through that corner of North Devon) grow louder.

On Hartland cliffs he stayed. The foam was coming from under, flung straight up, as if blown up a chimney; then, broken, it sped over the fields. The great Atlantic leaped far below, smote and seethed up the trembling cliffs. With puckered eyes he gazed into the nothingness far off beyond the verge of the climbing sea, beneath the lowering sky, and the keen wind made his eyes to water.

There was one long ceaseless roar, the tide too high now for the rattle of the back-drawn pebbles; the yelling of the sea

and the smashing on the awesome cliff; and flying upward, high in air, were great clots of foam that burst there and flew asunder.

There he stood, looking out into Infinity.

THE END

Transcriber's Note

Obvious punctuation errors were corrected.

The following printers errors were addressed.

Page 19 'nozed' to 'nosed'
(But the short-nosed man)

Page 24 'everheard' to 'ever heard'
(Uppcott had ever heard)

Page 28 'nozing' to 'nosing'
(and he went nosing and looking on)

Page 72 'der' to 'her'
(huddled in her chair)

Page 139 'preceived' to 'perceived'
(Though he perceived)

Page 174 'causemaking' to 'cause making'
(of de Pointis cause making them so)

Page 308 'unacustomed' to 'unaccustomed'
(yet somewhat unaccustomed to them)

[The end of *The Island Providence* by Frederick Niven]

[End of *The Island Providence* by Frederick Niven]