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in the days of  
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# RIVER OF ROGUES

A. R. BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS



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## RIVER OF ROGUES

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THIS BOOK is affectionately dedicated to  
my Highland-Scots mother who will like, I  
think, young David Innes and his adventures.





**RIVER. OF ROGUES**





IT was in the year 1816, two days before Christmas, that I, David Innes, being at that time seventeen and well-grown for my age, stood shivering at the tiller of my small sloop. The wind blew cold out of the northwest, driving small, hard flakes of snow before it. The flakes seemed sparse and spaced to the eye, yet I noticed that the low banks on either side of the salt creek were beginning to whiten.

That year had been a dour one; it was to go down in history as the one without a summer. In the states north of us snow had fallen during every month of the year. Even in our district—the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland, and ordinarily a sun-filled land—we had had a predominance all summer long of days with cold winds and bleak skies, strongly reminiscent of February and early March.

It had been, I assure you, an unusual sight to see the houses, great and small, with plumes of smoke ascending copiously from all their chimneys amidst the lush foliage of July. But, so unpredictable are the ways of Nature, our crops suffered little from this outlandish weather and my father had often remarked that never had our apples and pears been so firm, juicy and delicious. I agreed, though I thought sadly that his extravagant pleasure in them came largely from the thirst created by the dreadful fever which was consuming him.

The broad Annemessex River, whence I had come a quarter hour earlier, was now out of sight due to a bend in the creek. And presently the creek began to narrow, its bank on my right hand to rise out of the marsh. I called to Martin

who was in the cubby cabin, his coat being more threadbare than my own and his resistance to cold far less. He came at once in answer to my shout, a light-skinned Negro boy of sixteen dressed very much as I was, in a coat of our own Somerset County homespun which had once been my father's, rough trousers of sailcloth, and sea boots. The cabin had been dark and he stood a moment blinking at me through the falling snow.

Martin had grown up with me, had been educated—as I had been largely—by my father, a Highland-Scotsman by birth. Learning came moderately hard to me. Not so to Martin; he absorbed it as a sponge does water. He was something of a wonder to us all by reason of his quick mind, his unusual degree of thoughtful intelligence, and his avidity for higher education. My scholarly father gave him every encouragement, as did other friends of liberal thought and intellectual leaning. But my uncle, Richard Neville of Fairhope Manor, said that we made a fool of the boy and that we would live to regret it.

It was toward the manor house of this uncle that we were now sailing in this afternoon of snow and gloom. The landing lay just ahead of us now, a substantial wharf to which were tied a big sloop, a barge, and several small craft. I motioned Martin forward, then lowered the mainsail and ran in under the jib. We found a clear space and tied up, then stood for a moment looking at each other and at the seven brent geese lying in the bottom of the craft.

A week ago Mr. Neville had ridden to our house on one of his blooded hunters—I thought of him as Mister Neville, rather than as Uncle Richard—and finding Martin and me engaged on the wood pile, had drawn up. He eyed me with that peculiar distaste he always showed for me; whether for my rough clothing or my red and roughened face and hands or the low estate I had fallen to, I could not determine. He was a big man, handsome in a florid way, richly dressed on that occasion in a plum-colored coat, buff breeches, and London-made boots. "David," he said perfunctorily, in the manner of a man performing a duty, and not bothering



to remove the scowl from his face, "how is your father?"

"Poorly, sir," I said soberly, which was indeed the truth.

"I suppose I shall have to stop and see him," he said reluctantly. "And now, David, I would have you do me a favor. I am having guests for the Christmas season and I require a dozen brent geese."

"I have seen a few this season," I admitted, and proceeded to tell him where, thinking he wanted the information for his slave, Cato, who secured much of the game for the manor. But my uncle stopped me in a moment with an impatient wave of his hand. "No, no!" he said. "I want *you* to get the brent for me. Cato has tried for a week now and has not been able to come to terms with them."

"Sir," I answered, "I can't promise you a dozen brent geese. You know how unpredictable they are."

His scowl deepened. "You refuse me this favor?"

"It is not that," I replied patiently. "In a day's shooting I couldn't promise you two brent geese, let alone twelve."

He hated opposition to his wishes. He tossed his head in the wilful manner so characteristic of him and exclaimed with childish petulance, "I will have those fowl, David. I have a distinguished company coming for Christmas."

My old flintlock fowling piece was leaning against the wood pile, for Martin and I had just come in from partridge shooting. I picked it up and held it toward him, smiling. The stock was bound with wire; one hammer was gone so that only one barrel was serviceable, and that, due to the weakness of the ancient lock, productive of many a misfire. He looked at it and then at me, and presently his eyes became calculating. He said in a moment, "You would like a new gun?"

I answered, laughing, "I would indeed like a new gun, for soon now I'll have no gun at all."

"You shall have one of mine to shoot those geese for me," he said. "And on delivery of the twelve brent that gun shall be yours. That should be worth a week, if necessary, of early morning rising and all-day shooting. What say you, David?"



The offer was a handsome one and I readily admitted it, but warned that I could not promise all the fowl. I would do what I could, naturally, to earn so fine a prize.

"Cato shall bring you the gun tonight," he returned. "But mark you, David, I said *twelve* geese. Any less will not serve me adequately. I have calculated the number to a portion. Not ten, not eleven, but twelve—or you get nothing save my anger."

My spirit rose in me. "Twelve brent or no gun," I answered shortly.

He nodded and rode back to the house, beckoning Martin to go along and hold his horse.

So began, on the following morning, five days of what should have been sport but which soon resolved themselves into days of toil and keen discomfort. The weather, which had certainly been cool enough, turned bitter. We were off long before daylight, sometimes in driving sleet, in flurries of snow, sometimes with the stars bright and frosty above us and a skim of ice on the foreshore of the creek. Not a light showed in the manor when we passed it or in the slave quarters. Never were fowl so obstinate! Of ducks, of the big gray geese, we could have had hundreds, for the cold weather had sent them down to the Annemessex in great abundance. But the brent (or brant as the Baymen call them) were so scarce that in three long days I had bagged precisely five.

The fourth day we got none at all, though it was dark before we reached home. We were late for our chores, but they had to be done and we did them in the dark, taking turns holding a ship's lantern to the tasks. There was little lingering before the fire that night. We were in bed by eight.

How we came to have the seven brent geese which now reposed in the bottom of the sloop is something only a wild-fowler can appreciate, familiar as he is with cold and fatigue, with continued disappointment, and then with the sudden, surprising shift of luck which wipes out the memory of a dozen disappointments. In a flurry of snow a great gaggle of brent swung over our blind, and getting them on the flank,

I knocked down five to my two barrels. That was soon after dawn. Noon came without another chance, but an hour or so later a flock landed some distance out. They would not come in to our decoys, so we got in the sloop and sailed down on them—a maneuver often used by the Baymen—and had the luck to bag a pair.

We had been jubilant then; we were not so now, Martin because he was bone-weary, I because of weariness and a deep feeling of depression which not even the beautiful fowling piece in my hand could allay. I had taken time from my father which I felt I could not spare. He had looked shockingly ill the night before and his coughing had been incessant. Furthermore, I dreaded the coming interview with my uncle. I was never at ease at Fairhope Manor since the death of my grandfather, though in truth I visited it seldom enough. Mr. Massingale would be there, no doubt, and perhaps the foppish Mr. Forbes, neither of whom minded making me the butt of their nimble wit. I felt that I would pay twice for the fowling piece: once in labor and once in loss of dignity. The latter comes hard to a youth of seventeen who has some conceit of himself.

Yet there was no dodging the interview, for I must have his final word that the gun was mine, that he was satisfied that I had fulfilled my part of the bargain. So motioning Martin to help me with the geese, we went together along the wharf and up the lane. Fairhope Manor was on a rise of ground facing not the creek but the wide river, though some distance back from it. Notwithstanding the fact I disliked my uncle heartily and that, as I have said, I had not felt at home there in recent years, I rarely came upon the house itself without a thrill of pleasure. It was an exquisite brick mansion, extended on both ends by curtains and wings, sitting in a wide expanse of beautiful lawn, shaded in summer by great elms, maples, and sycamores. My great-grandfather had built it in 1754 for his young, heiress bride. Well to the rear of the mansion the outbuildings were grouped: the stables; the barns; quarters for the house servants, the grooms, and artisans; a fairly large building of brick for the wheelwright.



and blacksmith; a smaller one for the carpenter and joiner; two sheds for coaches and farm implements, and others. Immediately behind the great house were the detached kitchen, a bakehouse, a bathhouse.

It was a sight to savor, even on that gray afternoon, with the smoke curling up from many chimneys and the movement and sounds of domestic activity on every hand. The gristmill, driven by wind, was turning—grinding, as it happened, meal for our Quaker neighbor, Mr. Foxall. Our way lay quite near to the mill and I, seeing him, turned aside in the hope that his daughter, Prudence, was with him. Perhaps I hoped for alleviation of my low feeling, which had returned in full force, through sight of her pretty face. But Mr. Foxall was alone.

I had a word with him, then rejoined Martin and we went on toward the house. Cato had evidently been watching for us; he came out of the kitchen and down the lane and took the brent geese from us. "You done it sho' nuff, Marse Davy," he said and touched his hat, mainly, I thought, as a mark of respect to my sporting prowess. "Seben heah an' five already a-hangin' on de game ring. Dat mek twelve."

He wanted to hear the details of the day from me, but I had no time for that so left Martin with him and walked to the side entrance of the house along a path bordered by box. There was a gargoye knocker on the door which had been a source of gruesome fascination to me as a small boy: a hideous face, twisted in a cruel leer. My grandfather had once told me that it provoked one to loud knocking, which was an advantage in a house of that great size. I thought of his remark as I smashed the heavy ring against the thick-lipped mouth.

The butler, old Jonas, admitted me, and when I asked to see my uncle he led me at once over polished floors to the library, though not without an apprehensive glance or two at my heavy boots. But he could not make me feel like a clod, despite my rough clothing, for I had been born in that house when it had been my grandfather's and had been welcome there so long as he lived. Not a corner of it, not a cranny,



which I had not explored; not a portrait on the wall or a piece of furniture with which I was not familiar. He had passed on a year after my mother's death and the manor had gone to his only living son. Thereafter I was not wanted there, nor my father, save on special invitation, a fact which Richard Neville made plain enough.

My uncle was in the library, seated with Mr. Massingale and Mr. Forbes at a mahogany card table which they had pulled in front of the fire. They had evidently finished their game for they were leaning back in their chairs, drinking Madeira from lovely, fragile glasses shaped like a tulip. Much of the affectation and folderol which had characterized the society of the later Colonial period had gone with the war which had put an end to that age; the second war, of 1812, finished what remained. The wars had brought liberalization of thought, greater freedom for the plain people, slimmer purses to the aristocracy, and a changing way of life. Though still in its infancy, the shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy was fully apparent. Clothing and thought, speech and living were more straightforward.

Yet to look at the three seated before me was to realize that there were, in quiet backwaters like our own, men who in thought, desire, and action were throwbacks to that earlier age. The fine broadcloth in rich colors, the ruffled shirt bosom, the ruffles at wrist, the intense love of high living and self-indulgence, the mincing, almost feminine refinement of speech and manners were all evidence of that fact. It was Mr. Forbes who spoke first, waving a soft white hand at me. "David," he said, his tone a mixture of petulance and languor, "I beg of you to close the door behind you."

Privately I thought that a breath of fresh air would do them and the room a world of good, but I restrained myself and merely closed the door. I said to my uncle, "I managed to get the twelve brent geese for you. Cato has them."

He looked at me, frowning a little, and then beckoned me to the table. "And, of course, you have come for your pay," he said.

"For this gun, which you promised me," I returned.

He took a purse of gold from one pocket and threw a piece of five on the table, at the same time reaching out with one hand and plucking the fowling piece from me. "Take it," he said, pointing at the coin. "That's your pay."

I looked at him in wild disbelief. "But the gun!" I stut-tered. "You said the gun! Twelve brent geese for the—"

"David," he returned coldly, "have you any idea what that gun cost me? A hundred guineas in London."

"But you said—"

"Ah, that was to give you incentive, David. Otherwise, I should not have had my brent. You will remember that you were reluctant." His eyes were sly and amused.

Mr. Massingale put his glass on the table and gathered up the scattered deck of cards. My uncle said, "Take your gold, boy, and be off."

"Sir," I answered angrily. "You can keep your money. And I'll take back my geese. I swear that neither you nor your guests shall put teeth in them."

"I think we shall," my uncle said. He arose and pulled the bell cord. Jonas appeared so promptly that he must have been at the keyhole. My uncle said, "Jonas, show this boy out. And see to it that he does not take the geese he brought with him. . . . Now, David, take that gold or leave it, as you will. It gives me pleasure to get the better of you. You are singularly distasteful to me."

I raised my head. "And you, sir," I answered quietly, "to me. It is worth the loss of the gun, and the geese, to realize that you are a cheat."

His face grew black and he raised his hand as though he were about to strike me. But he thought better of that. I was young, large for my age, and strong from an active outdoor life. He was middle-aged, flabby, and gouty. Mr. Massingale looked up at me, seeing the defensive position I had taken. He said contemptuously to my uncle, "Take a whip to the lout, Dick."

"You would care to try?" I asked him.

"Get out!" my uncle shouted. "Get him out, Jonas!"

"Come, Marse Davy," Jonas said, and after a moment I



went. But I was not so old that I could prevent hot tears from stinging my eyes, more from the indignity put upon me than from the loss of the handsome fowling piece.

## 2

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WE made a glum thing, Martin and I, of the short journey up the creek to our farm. He had suffered a loss, too; I had said he could have my old fowling piece on condition of my getting the one promised me. Yet I think his glumness arose more from my disappointment than his own, for he was not a keen sportsman. Dusk was deepening as we tied up to our dock and lowered the sails, taking time to secure them well, for they were old and sadly patched. Up the dim road we went, past the rows of corn shocks standing like ghosts in the fields, and then into the home lane, bordered with somber cedars.

Our kitchen was a big square room, floored with red brick. The fireplace was in the north wall and of a size in which a tall man could stand upright. Kate—Martin's mother—sat on a low stool, broiling a squab for my father's supper on a long-handled, four-footed broiler which sat in a bed of coals. There were grooves in the broiler to catch the gravy which ran from the plump-breasted bird.

I had a special fondness for our kitchen quite apart from its constant promise of culinary abundance. For it was no ordinary farm kitchen. Our place, known now as Brendonridge Farm, had once been Brendon Ridge Plantation, owned by my maternal grandmother. There had been twelve hundred acres in it then. Long before my mother had inherited it, the great house, of frame construction, had burned to the ground. But the detached brick kitchen had survived: old-fashioned, comfortable, and peculiarly pleasing.



The year of his marriage to my mother, my father had built in front of the kitchen a brick house. It was a small house, of only seven rooms originally, but of great beauty: a tall, narrow house, almost of three full stories, with spacious halls upstairs and down, and lovely stairways, and floors of wide, white-pine boards. A triangular fireplace served both drawing room and back parlor and also two of the bedrooms on the second floor. It was a jewel of a little house, which probably accounted for the fact that our farm was referred to by all our neighbors as the "Little Manor." Little in point of acreage it really was because we had scarcely more than a hundred left to us, much having been sold off when the mansion burned. In fact, the village of Fairhope now sat upon a portion of what had been my grandmother's manor.

I moved to the fire and held my hands out to the blaze. Kate lifted her kind, brown face and, seeing from my expression that all had not gone well, said nothing beyond a low, "Marse Davy," and moved her skirts to make more room for me. I asked her how my father had been that day; in reply she shook her head and looked distressed. "I'll take his tray to him when it is ready," I said.

Lina, Kate's fourteen-year-old daughter, prepared the tray for me: the squab on a square of toast with a dab of crab-apple jelly beside it, a pot of China tea, a pear, dishes, a napkin and silver, all covered with a cloth to keep the squab from the chill of the passageway. Lina went before me with a candle to light my way. I thought to find my father downstairs on the couch in the small back parlor which was the room he liked best. But Lina went past it and on toward the stairs and up them, and my heart sank with every step as I followed her. "He was not down today at all?" I asked at last.

She answered, "No, Marse Davy."

My father lay in the big, high tester bed which had provided me, as a small boy, with hour upon hour of entertainment by reason mainly of the movable steps which led up to it. The bed had been in turn my castle and my ship; the steps my drawbridge and my Jacob's ladder. Why those

memories should come to me now as I looked down on the wasted face of my father I do not know. He was sleeping. I drew back, placed the tray gently on the table, and sat down. Presently, he awoke, feeling through his sleep, in that strange way we have all experienced, the presence of another in the room. I helped him to a sitting position and put the tray in his lap. He ate little and that listlessly, but drank all the tea. He seemed a little stronger then, and smiled at me and asked how the day had gone. I had meant to keep from him any mention of my uncle's shabby behavior. But he sensed my disappointment and soon had the tale from me. A cloud passed over his face and he sighed.

"You would not think," I said vehemently, "that any man would behave so to his only sister's son! Had he disliked her it might be understandable. But she was a great favorite with him."

My father said nothing and in a moment I added bitterly, "We have never been good enough for him, Father. Are we so below him in family?"

"We are well enough, David, as ye ken," my father answered quietly. "No Neville was ever better in birth than an Innes. His dislike is compounded of many things, chief among them being, perhaps, that I could not give your mother what she would have had if she had married Mr. Massingale. And then, of course, it has never sat well with him that you are his heir."

"His heir!" I repeated derisively. "If he doesn't marry; if he hasn't children; if I survive him."

"You are not quite accurate, lad," my father said. "There is every chance that you will survive him. If he marries, dies, and leaves a widow, you merely lose a lump sum to her in cash. But, of course, if he has children from the marriage, then you are no longer his heir."

"What matter!" I retorted impatiently. "I want nothing from him!"

"It is not his—" my father began, but was interrupted by a paroxysm of coughing which shook and racked him pitifully. When it ceased, he wiped his lips. I gave him a glass



of water. He went on, then, "It is not his to give. He has contributed nothing, rather the reverse. He holds it in trust for his next of kin, as you will, David, if you inherit. In such manner your grandfather received the estate. He added to it greatly because he was not only a planter but a canny business man. Ay, he was shrewd."

He turned his face from me and looked at the window, hearing the tick-tick of driven snow against it. "The ground," he asked at last, "will be white, David?"

"By now," I returned.

He did not speak. I thought that he was tired and that we had talked enough. But as I started to arise he checked me with a motion of his hand. I poured more water; he refused it and gestured toward the bottle of port wine hard by the water pitcher. He took but a quarter of a glass; it moistened his throat and seemed to give him strength. He said after a long moment, "I am failing, David. We can no longer blink the fact, ye ken. Ah, no—" as I broke into bitter protest—"let us not dissemble. Tomorrow Mr. MacPherson comes from Princess Anne to look over the will I made some years ago. I leave you little beyond the farm, lad," he finished sadly.

"It is enough," I said. "All I want, all I ask or need."

"Your grandfather failed to make written provision for you in case of my death before you come of age. He did, however, on his deathbed instruct Richard Neville in that matter. The witnesses were Mr. MacPherson and Mr. Timothy Quigg, formerly of Princess Anne, but now of Snow Hill. Ye ken him, David?"

"Yes," I replied. "A miserly, lowering man who did business years ago for Grandfather; a miserable, whining, hypocritical scoundrel if ever I saw one."

My father returned with a flash of his old-time dry humor, "Ye can scarcely afford those sentiments, considering we may need him badly."

"Why?" I demanded. "I want nothing from Richard Neville."

He was patient with my immature cocksureness. "There are advantages which your grandfather intended you should



have. One of them is college. You do not lack learning, I confess. College will do little more for you in that respect than I have done. But it will contribute largely to your social education and will make friends of the kind you should have. Furthermore, I have a fancy that ye would do well at the law."

"Father," I said unsteadily, "I want nothing save that you get better."

"Aweel, David," he said. "We will talk again."

He closed his eyes from weakness and soon he was asleep. I sat with him until the supper bell sounded.

How the chores were done that night I do not know to this day. They were not precisely my chores, I acting more in the capacity of overseer on the farm than fellow laborer. It was understood, however, that when I took Martin away from his work on sporting expeditions, I would assist him on our return, for the tasks could not be neglected. This night there was such a sinking upon me that I hardly touched my supper and thereafter would speak with no one, but sat in the back parlor gazing into the fire, as spiritless as stagnant water. At last I could no longer endure my own thoughts so stole upstairs, changed to boots, breeches and my best coat, then came down to the stables and threw a saddle on Brown Jill.

Soon I was at the village, for it was no distance, and found pleasure in the close-grouped houses, all alight and cheerful. Some boys were at snowballing in front of the store as I drew near. I was not so dull—nor so far removed from boyhood—that I did not recognize the portent of the sudden cessation of hostilities among them. I went by at a canter, giving them jeer for jeer, and counted myself lucky that only two snowballs found me.

My destination was the forge at the village edge, where then a road from the Manokin River joined the village street which was also the road to Princess Anne. One of the big double doors of the forge stood ajar and through the opening a flickering light came, illuminating a space in which

snowflakes spun, lifting and falling. I leaned from the saddle, pulled the door wider open, and rode inside.

Nobby Parks was at his anvil, intent on a piece of iron grille he had promised for delivery by Christmas Eve. He gave me greeting in his cheerful, Cockney voice and commanded me to close the door because the candles were guttering. I dismounted, tied Brown Jill to a hook in the wall, and did his bidding while he hammered away and orange sparks flew about like miniature rockets. When the iron cooled, he laid down his hammer, wiped that hand on his leathern apron, and remarked, "Davy, me lad, 'ow are you?"

He was a small man for a blacksmith: a full four inches under my own authentic, if somewhat gangling, six feet; a tight-built man of perhaps five-and-thirty, weighing not more than a hundred and sixty-five pounds. In his time he had been many things: a street waif in London, a stable boy in Surrey, a groom, underkeeper to a nobleman, apprentice to a blacksmith, a soldier, a coach driver, a blacksmith and ironworker. He was also a locksmith, a brewer, something of a farmer and veterinarian, and perhaps less of a waterman, though he did well enough in that. Being so knowledgeable, he was in great demand in the district and was well on his way to accumulating a very fair competence.

It was Nobby who had taught me the art of wing shooting, who had taught me to sit a horse correctly, whether hacking or riding to Mr. Carroll's hounds. And though it may seem odd to you, he being so plain a person and of no birth, my instruction in sportsmanship came from him. The admiration and affection I had conceived for him as a boy of twelve had never wavered. I thought him, barring my father, the finest man I knew.

I answered his question by saying I was well enough and forestalled the next one by telling him that my uncle had failed to live up to his part of the bargain. Nobby made no comment, just took off his apron and threw it over the anvil, then came to me, clapped me on the shoulder, and asked, "Have you supped, Davy? Blow me, I'm famishin'."



"Finished for the night, Nobby?"

He flexed his arms, yawned and smiled at me. "Yes," he answered and made the word sound like "Yus." He pinched out the candles and took my arm. "Come along," he said. "We'll see what Jeremy 'as for us. Leave the mare 'ere." He ran a fond hand over her smooth flank, for he loved a good horse.

### 3

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Nobby's cottage was to the left and rear of the forge. We walked to it through the snow-flecked night and found Jeremy Pell in a snug corner of the chimney piece, toasting his shins before a bright fire of pine. He had his big, bulbous nose immersed in a pewter pot of rum toddy, painting that prominent feature, no doubt, an even livelier scarlet. Above the rim of the pot, a pair of green and glassy eyes swung in our direction; the pot was lowered reluctantly and as reluctantly Jeremy got to his feet.

He was a tremendous humbug, was Jeremy, with his hints of decayed gentility, his misuse of Latin tags, and his assumption of great learning which any Academy boy of fourteen could label as spurious in a quarter hour. Four years ago he had arrived in the village, a homeless and masterless man. Where he had come from no one knew, but it was thought he had deserted from a Yankee brig which had been at anchor, just before his appearance, in the Manokin. Nobby had taken him up, as he took up all the friendless, whether human, canine, or feline.

I thought it a weakness on the part of Nobby that he should allow himself to be sponged on by this palpable fraud. I never said so because I realized that Nobby had developed a queer affection for him. And it is true that the villagers



liked Jeremy. He had a fond and foolish heart toward the maidens and comely matrons; if it could be said that he ever worked, it was in their service. He would fiddle half the night at some social function and take his reward—and be happy about it—in amorous ogling of the pretty girls present and a sly pinch or two of a rounded hip where its possessor was known to be amiable.

He looked at me now and said, "Ah, David," in his booming and unctuous voice. He was never unfriendly to me; on the other hand, he was never really cordial—less, I think, because of my closeness to Nobby than the fact that I curbed his excursions into the show of humbug erudition which was his principal means of impressing his listeners. He had a profound respect for my father as a scholar and perhaps a trifle of that feeling extended to me.

Nobby filled a basin from a pot of warm water on the hearth, carried it to a stand in the corner of the room, and washed, keeping up humorously all through his ablutions that hissing with which a groom accompanies the plying of a body brush to a horse. He emerged from the coarse towel with jolly, rubicund face and, having put on a jacket, came toward us rubbing his hands briskly. "Wot cheer, Jeremy?" he asked, and went on without waiting for a reply, "'Tis a night for a bowl of mulled wine. We shall 'ave it before we sup. Proper it is in this 'oliday season, wot? Blow me, the snow 'as put me in the mood. Davy, get some crab apples from Susan. She's in the back kitchen. Jeremy, the cinnamon, limmons, cloves, nutmeg, sugar, and wine. Look sharp, me lads."

I needed no urging, having a fondness for mulled wine and knowing that Nobby had a way with it, equal to that of mine host at the Washington Tavern in Princess Anne who was famous in our county for this punch. I got the apples from Susan, slid a thin skewer through them, and set them to roast before the fire. Nobby put water, sugar, lemon peel, cloves, and cinnamon sticks in a pot and simmered all slowly over the coals. In another pot Jeremy heated two quarts of claret. The apples began their spluttering before the clear,

hot flame, adding their own aroma to that of the pungent spices, lemon, and wine.

Soon Nobby strained his concoction into the warm wine, then added lemon juice; Jeremy in turn emptied his pot into a pewter bowl. When the jackets of the crabs had split open in half a hundred small cracks, each oozing sugared juice, I swept them off the skewer and into the wine.

"Put it back on the 'earth awhile to steep the crabs," Nobby said, handing me the bowl. "Jeremy, warm the mugs and get me the castor of nutmeg."

Susan came in, reproachful that supper had been delayed so long and fearing for her roast. "It 'as kept this long," Nobby told her, "it will keep another quarter hour. Lay a place for Master Davy, Susan, and be hoff to Nero. There'll be a noggin o' this mull for you both when you come back to clean hup."

Jeremy had filled the mugs and I was dusting my wine with nutmeg when a loud knocking fell on the door. There was a quality to that knocking which none of us liked: impatient, demanding. We looked at each other, and while we hesitated, the knocking began again, sharper this time, as though with the head of a cane.

"Whoever it is," I commented, "lacks manners."

"Best open the door," Nobby said.

Being closest to it, I threw it open. Without asking permission, a man stepped in and closed the door behind him against the rush of snowflakes. He stood there, leaning with one hand on a long, silver-mounted cane—a young man of not more than four-and-twenty, I thought, insolent and handsome, his bright, bold, black eyes stabbing at each of our faces in turn. When he spoke, it was to me, in a petulant voice, "Is there anywhere, in this cursed backwoods, a place called Cranbrook Hall? And don't tell me that I have passed it because my coachman has scrutinized every driveway in the last five miles."

"Yet you have passed it," I told him. "Cranbrook Hall is Mr. Massingale's plantation. It is marked by two brick columns and a gate; it will be on your right going back."



He said, "Hm-m-m," and looked at our bright fire and then at the steaming mugs in our hands. "Warm yourself, sir," Nobby said at once, "and 'ave a mug of mulled wine with us before you take hup your journey again. It is not a night for comfortable travel. I am Parks, the blacksmith. This is my friend, Jeremy Pell. And the young man wot admitted you is David Innes, nephew of Richard Neville who is master of Fairhope Manor and close friend to Mr. Mas-singale."

The stranger's eyes swung to me, mocking and amused. "Mr. Innes," he said and bowed. "I have heard of Mr. Neville and of you. I am nephew to Mr. George Gervaise of Princess Anne and, with my sister, newly up from New Orleans."

"We all know Mr. Gervaise," I returned. "My grandfather had an interest in his shipbuilding yards on the Manokin."

He nodded at that and spoke to Nobby. "Mr. Blacksmith," he said, "I am of a mind to accept your kind invitation, for I am chilled to the bone. But more so because my sister is in the coach outside." He turned to me. "Mr. Innes," he added, "you are how old?"

"Seventeen, sir," I replied.

"A big young man for seventeen," he said, appraising me as he would a horse. He loosened the rich dark cloak he wore, which fitted him very differently from the fashion of our tailors, and draped it across a chair. He removed his hat, shook the melting snow from it, and handed it to Jeremy. If Jeremy resented the role of servant thus thrust upon him, he made no sign but took the hat and carefully placed it on a small table.

"Your sister, sir—" Nobby reminded the young man.

"Ah." His bold eyes danced to me again. "Mr. Innes, that is a pleasure I give you, for she is more your age, being fifteen. Will you be kind enough to bring her in?"

"Certainly, sir," I answered, then stammered, "I have not her name. Is she Miss Gervaise or—?"

"Your pardon," he put in. "She is Jeanne Gervaise. I am Paul Gervaise."



The coach was drawn up on the side of the road in front of the cottage and the Negro coachman, with a blanket wrapped around him, sat on his seat, hunched, miserable, and white from the snow. "I am taking Miss Gervaise into the house for a short time," I told him. "When I have done so, drive to the lee of the forge and tie up there. Susan, in the back kitchen, will give you something warming."

I opened the coach door, not without some diffidence I assure you, which was not at all allayed by the breath of some rich and exotic perfume which stole out to me. I was so long gawking and peering into the vehicle, having trouble in finding my voice, that the small, shadowy figure within said sharply, "What is it? Where is my brother?"

"He is inside, Miss Gervaise," I stammered, "and he begs that you will join him for a few minutes to get warm and to have a warming drink."

Whether she would have come or not on my word I do not know, but at that moment the door of the cottage was swung wide and her brother stood in the square of light beckoning to her. I said belatedly, "I am David Innes, Miss Gervaise."

She made some acknowledgment, then gave me her hand, and I assisted her from the coach and along the path to the house.

A learned man, whose works I read recently, would have me believe that because all things are full of flaws, the strength of all things is in shortness. It may be that if Jeanne and Paul Gervaise had paid us a longer visit that snowy night, we might have found some flaws in them to offset the tremendous fascination they exercised over us—particularly over me. I cannot say as to that. I will admit fully the strength of their short visit and its great impact on me.

I had never seen so handsome a pair as this brother and sister. Jeanne, at fifteen, had come to her full growth—a *petite* maiden, not being more than two inches over five feet, but so beautifully shaped in a restrained, chiseled way, though rich and distracting to the eye, that she seemed much taller.

She was dark, in the manner of the aristocratic Creole women: black hair, great flashing black eyes, and skin that was neither olive nor magnolia-white but something in between—something warm, glowing, alive. That same aliveness was part of her personality.

She irradiated that humble room. There was a sharp excitement in watching her movements, in the quick shift of expression on her face to match her feeling of the moment, in the curving of her lovely mouth as she talked with us. I was curiously aware that I at seventeen was far more immature than she at fifteen. She was a woman; I needed some years to be a man. I felt the more warmly toward her that she made no capital of the fact, though her brother did, yet in a light-enough way and not offensive to me.

He sat before the fire, sipping elegantly from a pewter mug and regarding us derisively as we hung on his sister's words and laughter. The long cloak had given him an appearance of slenderness; with it doffed, he was noticeably wide-shouldered and deep of chest. An unusually strong man, I thought with respect—lithe, active, without a flabby ounce on him. A good man to have at your back; a bad man to oppose.

His face was deeply bronzed—from a sun hotter than Maryland, or even Louisiana, could furnish. Privateering had attracted a number of young gentlemen during the war just past; he had a little of the swagger and mannerisms of a letter-of-marque captain. I could not be sure of that, but one thing I knew positively: he was no stranger to the sea. Nor, for that matter, to the tropic sun.

He took little part in the conversation. When his restless gaze was not flicking from one face to another, he was looking into the flames. Only there and on his sister's face would his eyes rest for any length of time. That he was unusually fond of her, and she of him, was obvious. There was not only a bond of blood but one of spirit between them. We spoke of that when they left and of how closely attuned they were.

I was regretful to the point of mild panic when he arose, placed his mug on the mantelpiece, and said that they must



go. I recovered my wits in time to suggest that I show them the way to Cranbrook Hall. He said it was kind of me but not necessary; they could scarcely miss the entrance now, knowing that it was less than a half mile distant. However, I was permitted to put on my lady's overshoes, a task from which I arose with high color and slightly shaking hands. She smiled at me and thanked me, and when she had been assisted into her cloak by her brother, turned again to me and gave me her hand.

He looked at me over her shoulder. "How is it, Mr. Innes," he asked, "that you are not attending the ball?"

"Sir," I answered, "I have not been asked."

He grinned briefly at that and said, "May I ask why?"

"Neither Mr. Massingale nor my uncle have any fondness for me," I replied.

"Yet you are your uncle's heir, are you not?"

"At present, yes, though much against his will."

"I fear," he said, "that you do not play your cards well. A little diplomacy is indicated when the reward is great."

"It goes beyond any matter of diplomacy," I returned.

"As bad as that," he said and gave me another quick, sharp look. With that he dropped the subject, thanked Nobby for his hospitality, bowed to Jeremy and me. The coachman had evidently been keeping an eye on our movements from the back kitchen, for scarcely had we opened the door than the vehicle rolled out from the lee of the forge into the road.

Jeremy had procured a ship's lantern and now thrust it at me. I took it gratefully and lit the way. The snow continued to fall—more thickly now, the flakes larger and with a keener wind behind them. I said again to Paul Gervaise, "Perhaps it would be well for me—for one of us—to show you the way to Mr. Massingale's. This snow is blinding."

But apparently he had tired of us. He gave me a curt, "We shall find the drive without trouble," and handed his sister into the carriage. He followed, the door slammed, the coach moved off. I stood there watching until it was hidden by night and driving snow.

Supper was on the table when I returned to the cottage.



Nobby motioned me to a seat beside him. I sat down though I was not hungry. Jeremy looked up from his plate, his expression thoughtful, and said presently, "I have seen that young man somewhere. In Jamaica or San Domingo or Fort de France—perhaps in Savannah. I don't remember where but I know that I have seen him. And in connection with a ship or shipping."

"He has something of the look of a seafaring man," I commented, "though those soft hands of his have never hauled on a rope."

Jeremy agreed with a short nod of his head and went back to racking his memory. Nobby said, "The little maid is a beauty, Davy. She will 'ave the bachelors at Mr. Massingale's all agog this night."

I said, "Yes," wryly and, not liking the thought his words brought up, got away from that tack and back into a discussion of Paul Gervaise.

## 4

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Two days after Christmas I was at work in a copse of young hardwood trees, cutting a dozen small saplings for use as rake and hoe handles and a half dozen of the tallest ones to serve as supports for my fyke net. This copse lay along the main road and just cater-corner to the two brick pillars which marked the main lane to our house. The afternoon, while gray and lowering, was nevertheless the warmest in weeks, and I thought that there was a threat of rain in the humid, southwest wind. Little snow was left in the fields, save where it had piled up in drifts along the hedgerows, and even in the thick wood there were patches of bare ground.

I worked leisurely, just inside the copse, with an eye on

the road and its traffic. An occasional cart went by, a gig or two, and a chaise driven by a young Negro I knew, with Mrs. Foxall and Prudence in it. I did not hail them, though I had a good view of Prudence with her red-gold hair and pink-and-white beauty and that sweet, kind, quiet look of hers which was a true index to her character. I did not hail her because my foolish head was still full of Jeanne Gervaise: of her vividness and the way her rich mouth curved when she laughed and the manner in which her great black eyes assailed mine with almost physical impact and then dropped demurely and maidenly away. In fact, I had thought of little else save her since the night I had met her and mooned so that Martin thought I had contracted some obscure illness and had his mother attempt to dose me with herb tea.

It was getting on toward evening and I, at the edge of the copse, was tying the small saplings in a bundle against the coming of our cart, when I heard the clip-clop of hoofs on the shell road. Looking up, I saw two mounted men coming toward me. I drew back a step for I recognized them both: one was my uncle and the other our man of law, Mr. MacPherson. In a moment I realized that they were having high and hard words. My uncle's face was congested with blood and wrath; the lawyer was thin-lipped and tight in his anger and openly contemptuous. In the brief time it took to pass me, I could make no sense of their bitter conversation but I knew well enough that I was the subject of it. They turned into the lane and rode on to the house.

I found this wrangling over me both grievous and distasteful: grievous because it indicated that the men felt my father had not long to live; distasteful because I had the conviction that I could carve out my own fortune without help from relatives—reluctant help at that. It was this distaste which kept me in the copse though I had finished my work. The cart came and went and still I lingered. Finally, my uncle came down the lane and cantered past me in the gray dusk. I went home then and found Mr. MacPherson in our back sitting room, seated at the desk, a pile of papers before him.



He looked up as I entered and I saw, in the candlelight, that he was still angry.

"David," he said, "ye ken old Quigg, formerly of Princess Anne?"

"Yes," I replied.

"He lives now on the Pocomoke River just below Snow Hill, a property he inherited from a brother. I want him as a witness, David. Ye must go for him."

"I can go for him," I said reasonably, "but how do I know he'll come back with me?"

"Ye'll bring him back with you," he shot out fiercely, "if it be by the scruff of the neck, ye ken."

"I'll try—" I began, but he cut in with a scowl, "Ye'll bring him back by persuasion *or* force. I care not how. But ye'll bring him back."

There being nothing else to say, I answered, "All right, Mr. MacPherson. I'll bring him."

He nodded and looked less fierce. "Whiles ye are gone I shall stay with your father, lad, so ye may gang with an easy mind."

"I can't make the round trip in one day," I said.

"That is not expected. Ye couldna get old Quigg to journey at night, save with a pistol clapped to his head. A black heart does not make a black night congenial, lad. I think yon sinful man thinks the de'il presses him harder when the shadows close in. I mind that when he lived in Princess Anne he was rarely aboot after dark. Ye can say, David, if he brings up the question, that he will be paid for his trip. Now, lad, ye will start first thing in the morn. The distance must be close to thirty miles."

"It is that," I said. I looked out the window and added, "I think it will rain tomorrow."

"Aweel," he said testily, "ye are not sugar that ye will melt in it," and turned back to his papers.

I grinned and went to the kitchen looking for Martin. Kate said he was at the stables. I would have gone after him had I not been distracted by the appearance on a griddle of some scones that Kate was making for Mr. MacPherson, ac-



cordova, she told me, to his receipt. I lingered to sample one of them which I found very much to my taste when spread with butter and crab-apple jelly. Martin came in presently and received the news of our journey to Snow Hill in the morning with his usual equanimity, merely remarking, as I had, that he thought rain was likely.

And, sure enough, it was raining when I awoke. Not hard—a drizzle, rather, and warm, like the rain we have in late March. I packed my saddlebags with a shirt, a nightshirt, and some toilet articles, and added, after some thought, a double-barreled pistol belonging to my father. Kate had breakfast ready, and soon we were in the saddle, I riding my mare and Martin mounted on my father's bay gelding.

It was almost nine miles from our farm to the junction of our road with the Princess Anne road to Snow Hill. We rode sometimes at a walk, sometimes at a trot, and again at an easy canter. In two hours we had turned into the Snow Hill road and abruptly the character of the country changed. Now the soil was poor, sandy, grown to scrub pine. Here and there a forester's one-room hut was centered in a small clearing and barefoot women braved the weather to draw water from their shallow wells. The sandy road, its pock-marks now puddles, led on interminably through this flat, desolate terrain. Even our youthful spirits could not survive the combination of cheerless land and weeping skies. Conversation stopped. We sat bowed forward in our saddles, watching the ground pass below us or our horses' heads jerking up and down. So we rode for hours.

It was well after one o'clock when we reached the ferry across the Pocomoke to Snow Hill. I had been quite often in the past few years to this neat little town, due to the fact that Nobby was courting—though in a rather long-winded fashion—a widow, one Mrs. Swann, who appropriately kept the Swan Tavern. We came upon it presently, a whitewashed house of one-and-a-half stories, prim and neat, overlooking the tall-masted boats, the splutter docks and brown reeds of the river.

Now it is no secret that most of the ordinaries and taverns of the Eastern Shore are villainous and unfit for the patron-

age of a man who has any conceit of himself. Nevertheless, I can name you four which are as snug and cozy as any that you could find in old England: the Washington Tavern at Princess Anne, the Ship's Inn at Cambridge, Mr. Chayne's Inn at Chester Town, and the Swan Inn at Snow Hill. And though I have put the Swan last, it is not least in my estimation. And never did it look better to me, more cheerful, more comfortable, than on this wet and gloomy day as I drew rein in front of it.

In one window I could see a red, flickering light, one moment hardly seen, the next, leaping and gleaming strongly, which told of a blazing hearth fire within. I counted warmth and rest, at the moment, the chief of my needs though my appetite was sharp; I was wet to the skin, cold and cramped from my long ride. Martin was in even worse straits so I sent him immediately to the back kitchen and led his horse to the stable. I knew the Negro ostler; I knew I could trust him to see to the well-being of the horses.

"Unsaddle and rub the horses down, Tom," I told him. "Make sure you dry their ears. Feed and water them. Look lively, for I must be gone in an hour."

Two minutes later I was in the house and Mrs. Swann was saying, "Is that you, Davy? And wet to the skin, I declare. What's Nobby Parks thinking about to make a journey on such a day?"

Her face fell when I told her that Nobby had not made the journey. But she was a motherly soul and forgot her disappointment in a survey of my plight. She took me upstairs and made me change into a suit of the deceased Mr. Swann's, then took my own clothes to the back kitchen for drying. When I got downstairs, a table had been set for me near to the fire. I dined on oyster pie, loin of pork with dressing, and an apple dumpling in a sauce the taste of which I have not forgotten to this day.

The maidservant removed the cloth and brought me a glass of Madeira. "To drive out the cold," Mrs. Swann said, seating herself across from me. She was a plump and pretty woman of about five-and-thirty. So pleasing a woman and



the owner of an equally pleasing property certainly did not lack pressing suitors, and I often wondered if Nobby's dilatory tactics might not result in Mrs. Swann's marrying someone else. He seemed, however, unworried and so did she, though I suspected she was tiring of her widowhood.

Now she looked me over and commented that I was beginning to fill out, asked me if I had a sweetheart, and laughed at my embarrassment. And, having had her fun, asked me what I did in Snow Hill. I told her I had come for Timothy Quigg.

"Quigg?" she repeated. "Quigg, the miser? What on earth do you want with him, Davy?"

I told her.

She said very quickly, "Your uncle was down here not long ago and met Quigg in this very room. They were cheek to jowl for over an hour."

"How long ago?" I asked.

"A week—perhaps ten days."

"Then it could not be on this business," I said, "for it was only yesterday that he was broached on the subject by Mr. MacPherson. Yet—wait—he might have anticipated it, knowing that my father is desperately ill."

"Whatever it was, it was devilment," she retorted. "I could see it in their faces."

"Well," I said presently, "all that their conniving could do would be to make it harder for me to persuade Quigg into the journey. But back he will go—if by the ear. . . . Where does he live?"

"Three or four miles down the river—on this side. In a house that was once lovely but has gone to rack and ruin under his hands. He will not spend a cent on upkeep, living, it is said, in two rooms only. He keeps one slave who is a better man than he ever was or will be."

"That would be Jim London," I said.

"You know Jim, then?"

"Jim," I answered, "is first cousin to Kate, our cook. Quigg got him from Captain Forbes of Princess Anne in settlement

of a debt. You know, of course, that Quigg comes from Princess Anne. He was a moneylender."

"'Tis said," she commented darkly, "that he was in a shadier business than that."

"A slaver? I've heard that, but no one has proved it. He had ventures with ship owners in the Indies trade. That I know because my grandfather took shares with him at times. But the ventures were in merchandise, not black men."

"I would put nothing past him," she retorted, and then went on to talk about Nobby and when she could expect him.

I arranged with Mrs. Swann to put Martin up in the Quarters for the night and rode on alone down-river. The time was nigh to four o'clock when I came to Timothy Quigg's house. The trees may have hidden it from the road in summer but now it was in plain sight. I rode into the grounds through an imposing entrance of brick, marred by a broken gate which hung by one hinge. The great frame house stood fronting the river, a picture of ruin and desolation. Like the broken gate, shutters hung crazily by one hinge, paint had flaked from the walls and had left scabrous patches, the grounds were overrun with weeds and honeysuckle. There were four great chimneys to the house, but in only one was smoke and that a faint curl. A more depressing, sinister, inhospitable-looking house I had never seen. It took all the courage I had not to turn tail and bolt.

But taking myself in hand, I rode up to the door nearest the smoking chimney and, dismounting, tied my horse to the limb of a honey-locust tree. At supper the night before, Mr. MacPherson had given me a letter to present to Quigg. I took it from an inside pocket and holding it in my hand ascended the steps. I stood for a full minute with my ear against the door, listening intently. I heard nothing, not a sound. Drawing back then, I lifted my hand and knocked three times on the door.

But the great house remained silent—more silent, if possible, than ever, as though it were holding its breath. Only the beat of the rain and the drip from the roof broke the



silence. Though desperately against my inclination, I knocked again, and again, and again. And now apprehension began to give place to anger. I would draw this fox if I had to beat down the door. I saw half a brick, evidently fallen from the chimney, on the ground to the right of the steps. This I secured and returned to the attack, filling that grim house with furious echoes.

A window went up high above me and a head appeared in the opening. Though dusk was thickening, I recognized Quigg at once. Before I could speak, he bawled out angrily, "Be gone before I set the dogs on you!"

That was an empty threat. If there had been dogs, I would have heard from them already. I shouted, "Mr. Quigg, I am David Innes of Fairhope."

He cried, "Be gone!" again and shook a fist at me.

I tried once more. "I am David Innes of Fairhope and I bring you a letter from Mr. MacPherson, the lawyer, of Princess Anne. Come down so that I may explain!"

He showed some sign of interest and finally said, "What's that? A letter from MacPherson, the lawyer?"

"I am David Innes," I returned patiently, "the son of Peter Innes of Fairhope, and nephew to Richard Neville. I have a letter to you from Mr. MacPherson."

"Shove it beneath the door, then," he shouted, "and take yourself off!"

I held up the brickbat so he could see it. "Come down," I cried furiously, "or I'll break in your door! I was sent to have speech with you and that I will have!"

He considered my threat so long that I lost patience and dealt the door a heavy blow. "Stop it!" he screamed then. "Have you no thought of the value of property? You say you are David Innes, son of Peter Innes?"

I assured him that I was.

"Well," he said at last, "I'll come down and let you in."

And soon I heard him at the door, sliding back the bolts, top and bottom. Then a key turned in the lock and the door opened a crack. I put my shoulder against it with such vigor that I swung him aside and down on one knee. Before he

could arise, I was inside and standing over him. And now his bluster went from him and he looked up at me with frightened eyes.

## 5

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MR. QUIGG," I said, "get up. I intend no harm." He arose, dusting one knee as he did so, a small, mean, slope-shouldered man dressed in a threadbare black coat and matching trousers of a style that might have been in favor twenty years ago. The frilled shirt he wore was grimy, its collar was grimy, his black stock was raveled and rusty from age. He had himself aged considerably since I had last seen him: his face was pinched, his eyes sunken, he had lost two front teeth. But most repellent to me was his furtive air, coupled with a half-bold slyness, and the glint in his eye which came and went and made you wonder if he was secretly deriding you.

"The letter," he said.

I gave it to him. He held it a moment in his hand, peering at it. Then he motioned me to follow him. The passage we were in led to a broad hall which ran through the house from front to rear. On the east side of the hall there was a door. This he opened and stood there holding it ajar until I had passed inside. A small fire burned on the hearth. From it Quigg lit a candle which he placed in a battered tin holder on the mantelpiece.

The room had once been a fine one; even callous neglect could not disguise its noble proportions. The furniture, too, had been of the best. All was battered now—torn, scratched, disfigured. Along the far wall were two big chests of common pine with heavy locks and brass-bound edges, and near them, in a corner, a rude cupboard containing a few kitchen



utensils, plates, cups, and the like. Cobwebs were in every corner of the ceiling; lath showed in a dozen places through the plaster. The floor, however, was clean enough, and some attempt had been made at dusting.

While I was looking around me, Quigg had been reading the letter, holding it close to the candle's light. He read it twice, both times with great care. He folded it then with deliberation and laid it on the mantel, meanwhile regarding me with his sly and furtive eyes.

"I presume," he said at last, "that your instructions are to take me back with you, whether or not."

"Precisely, Mr. Quigg," I replied, not thinking it advisable to be more politic about the matter. All that could be said in the way of persuasiveness was no doubt written in Mr. MacPherson's letter.

He gave a dry little cough and said: "I will not ride at night."

"I am prepared," I replied, "to wait until morning," and added significantly, "here."

To my surprise he did not argue the point but merely said in a dry way, "Mine is a frugal household, Mr. Innes. I keep no table such as you are accustomed to. Furthermore, I have but one bed which is serviceable."

"Whatever food you have is ample for me," I assured him. "As for a bed, a blanket and the floor will be sufficient."

"Very well," he returned.

"I should like to put up my horse," I said. "Where will I find Jim London?"

"Ah," he said, "that is right—you know Jim London. I had forgotten." His eyes slid away from me and he was thoughtful for a time. Finally he said, "Sit down, Mr. Innes. I will summon Jim." He walked to one window, threw it up. Just outside was a triangle of steel suspended from a bracket. Upon this he beat with another piece of steel tied to it by a cord. I will say that he produced much sound from that crude apparatus. My ears rang from it.

Jim came soon, not to the door, but to the window and

tapped upon it. Quigg threw it up again. Before he could speak, I said, "Jim! Jim, it's David Innes."

He gave a little cry. "Marse Davy! Is it you, Marse Davy?"

"Jim," I said, "move away. I'm coming out." I crawled through the window and dropped by his side. Quigg said angrily, "I direct my servant, Mr. Innes—not you."

"I have no wish to direct your servant or servants, Mr. Quigg," I answered. "I merely wish to have a word with Jim, to tell him, in fact, that our Kate's son, Martin, is at the Swan in Snow Hill, where Jim can see him tonight or in the morning."

He was not appeased. "I give no permission for Jim to leave the place this night. Take Mr. Innes' horse to the stables, Jim. And you, Mr. Innes, please return to this room. I don't want you roaming about my grounds."

Because I did not wish to antagonize him further, I said, "Very well, Mr. Quigg. Would you ask him to bring my saddlebags from the mare?"

He said, "Do so, Jim," and I climbed back into the room.

When Jim had brought the saddlebags, Quigg lowered the window, fastened it with a bolt, and shut out the scant light of the dying day by dropping a heavy curtain. I had moved to the fire—a poor, anemic thing—and was standing with my hands extended toward the single point of flame which had crept out from the reluctant logs. He came up and stood beside me. Presently he said, "You have had a long journey, Mr. Innes. Doubtless, you are sharp set."

I told him I had eaten late at the Swan.

"Ah, then," he said, "I will wait for my usual hour of dining which is six. . . . Sit down, Mr. Innes." I complied and he went on, "We shall leave here very early in the morning and breakfast at the Swan." He looked at me and added sharply, "At your expense."

I smiled and answered, "Of course, Mr. Quigg. And it is most kind of you to go back with me."

"MacPherson," he said cryptically, "is not as sharp as he sometimes thinks he is. He is a violent man. I do not like violent men, Mr. Innes."



"It is to my father and me that you grant this favor," I reminded him, "not to Mr. MacPherson."

He said slowly, "I have nothing against your father. I am distressed to learn that he is so ill. It is the lung fever?"

I nodded.

"A scourge," he said and gave his dry cough.

With the fall of night, the room became cold and clammy, yet he made no move to mend the fire. From time to time he emitted his annoying dry cough. I said at last, "You have a cough, Mr. Quigg. Perhaps the room is too cold."

"No, no!" he expostulated as I kicked at one of the logs. "I do not care for a warm room." His eyes lifted to an old clock on the mantel. "It is time for supper," he added.

He dipped water from a pail, filled a pot, and hung it on the crane. Then he set two places. From the corner cupboard he brought a square of cold corn pone, a meager lump of butter, a pot of what proved to be rather rank wild honey. That, with unsweetened tea, was our supper.

I was shocked at this mean repast. He sensed my distaste and eyed me with grim humor but said nothing. I noticed that he ate a great deal of the honey—apparently it helped his cough; also that he disposed of three quarters of the corn pone plus a small piece I had left on my plate.

Though he went to bed early in an adjoining room, I felt that I had never spent a longer or more dreary evening. In due course, through cracks in the warped door, I heard his rasping snores. I wrapped myself in the blanket he had provided and lay in front of the fire.

I slept poorly and intermittently, due to a sense of strangeness and to the hardness of my bed. My weariness would overpower me, I'd drop off to sleep, but shortly I would awaken from sheer discomfort, groan, turn over on my other side, and again fall into restless slumber.

It was past midnight, I think, when I came out of a sleep of longer duration than the others—and this time with a sense of apprehension. I lay there, my eyes wide open, listening intently. And presently I caught the faint sound of carefully lowered voices coming from the next room. I could catch

only an occasional word, so made no sense of the conversation. Yet I had not listened long before I drew my saddlebags to me, found my pistol, cocked and primed it.

For perhaps a quarter of an hour longer the talk went on, then I heard the sound of flint against steel. Soon a splinter of light crept under the door. It lay there only briefly; in a moment I heard the careful shuffle of feet in the hall. It was not until I heard the snick of a bolt being drawn that I realized I had been holding my breath. The exhalation went from me in a long gasp and the pistol in my hand shook so violently that I could not have then hit a barn door at ten paces.

I was frightened, but not so frightened that I was going to permit the escape of Quigg, for such I considered his intent. Carrying my boots in one hand, the pistol in the other, I opened the door with great caution and slipped into the hall. Immediately I felt the night wind on my cheek and saw that the outside door stood open.

On the small porch I paused to pull on my top boots. To the left, perhaps two hundred feet away, a lantern jogged to the steps of him who carried it. The river lay in that direction.

The night was dark though the rain had ceased. A few stars were showing through rents in the clouds. There was no moon. I set out across the tangled area which had once been rich, smooth lawn, being careful to keep a discreet distance behind and to the right of the journeying light.

Soon I made out the masts and spars of a ship lying in the narrow river. No vessel had been there when I had arrived; obviously it had come up with the flowing tide. Presently I could make out its hull. Not a light showed. The brig lay there—dark, silent and sinister.

I had come to the water about a hundred and fifty feet to the right of the lantern which now was stationary. The river at this point was bordered by a thick growth of saplings. I judged I could with safety work some yards toward the light, and this I proceeded to do. So, with great caution and by degrees, I stole up to within twenty-five feet of the lantern.



I saw that it was hung on one of the piles which supported a rather large wharf.

And now, my eyes being used to the outside darkness and aided by the light which any body of water seems to hold within itself no matter how thick the night or murk, I could make out the figures of three men on the wharf. Also large piles of bales, boxes, and barrels. Presently, I heard Quigg's squealing voice, followed by a bass rumble which I knew belonged to Jim London, and presently a hard, rough, incisive voice, yet of peculiarly rich timbre. An educated voice, I thought, but overlaid with a certain unconsciously imitative harshness and crude phrases which could only have come from years of rough living with rough men.

It was not long before this man and Quigg drew away from Jim and walked to the edge of the wharf nearest me. Now I could hear their conversation distinctly. Quigg was saying, "I would have to give it further consideration, captain. While I agree that we must shift our base of operations, I feel that the plan as suggested is on too elaborate a scale."

The captain grunted and answered, "I was not instructed to haggle with you. I was told to present a proposition. Which I have done. Take it or leave it."

Quigg replied, "Come, sir! Twenty thousand dollars is no small sum of money and not to be passed out like a peppermint!"

"You will have it back—and double—in a year," the captain said. "Man alive—the real traffic has just begun! With the cotton states clamoring for help, with Louisiana's sugar industry expanding enormously—"

"Hist!" Quigg warned him. "Jim is neither deaf nor dumb." He went on musingly in a moment, "I confess I like that particular Nanticoke region for our purposes. It is isolated and lawless; it is on the border of Delaware—a good source of supply. But must we have so elaborate a property? And must we acquire the inn?"

"That we have decided upon," the captain said, "as a necessary part of our plan if we are to expand. And expand

we shall, by God, with or without your help, Mr. Quigg. There are great—even fantastic—profits to be made.”

“Profits,” Quigg said, his voice quickening. “Great profits—fantastic profits! Yes, yes, Captain Marchand, I agree on that point. Now look—tomorrow I ride at dawn for Fairhope on the Big Annemessex. From there I’ll proceed to the Nanticoke.”

“Good,” the captain said. “Take the Vienna ferry and inquire in that town for the house of one Perelle—Henry Perelle. He will put you in touch with us. I hope you will decide to come in with us on that part of our business which so far you have ignored. We need not only your money but your brains.”

Quigg laughed softly. “I thought you would make that admission in time,” he said. “Your need for additional administrative brains is even greater than your need for money.” He laughed that soft laugh again and added, “I am glad to see that you do not underrate me, Captain Marchand. Some do.”

“I have never underrated you,” Marchand returned, “either from the standpoint of brains or ruthlessness.”

“Well,” Quigg said, “I will see you then at the Nanticoke and that soon.”

I had heard enough; Quigg did not contemplate escape. I wormed myself back through the thicket until I felt I was safe, then got to my feet and returned to my room. A few minutes later I heard Quigg come into the house.

Long I lay awake pondering the conversation I had overheard, but not being able to make complete sense of it, gave it up and fell asleep.



OF the ride back home there is little to tell save that it took us all day and that Quigg had the better of it. For rain came on again by ten o'clock which soon soaked Martin and me but left Quigg dry because he rode in a gig which had ingenious rain curtains.

We came at dusk to the Little Manor and it was Mr. MacPherson himself who opened the door to us. "Mr. Quigg," he said formally, extending his hand, "it is unco good of ye to interrupt your business and make this tedious journey. We will not detain ye a moment longer than necessary. After supper we shall send over for Mr. Neville and settle the matter. That way ye will get an early start in the morn."

Quigg put in with haste, "That is not necessary. I have had a strenuous journey; tonight I would sup and sleep, nothing else. Business can be done in the morning."

"As you wish," Mr. MacPherson returned and showed him upstairs to his room. As my father was asleep, I did not disturb him. I went to my room, stripped off my wet clothing, washed and dressed. When I came again into the upper hall, Mr. MacPherson was just leaving Quigg. He took me by the arm, walked me downstairs and into the back parlor. I noticed then that there was a puzzled look in his face. "David," he said at last, "did yon tricky mon come with but little protest?"

I told him the circumstances.

He listened, eying me sharply. "I'm no saying," he commented, "that he is without a spark o' humanity. I say only that I doobt it." He waved me off, sat down at the desk, and was soon absorbed in a set of figures. Seeing that no more talk was forthcoming from him, I left and went to the kitchen.

Kate, to my great satisfaction, was braising a cured goose—pot-roasting, as we called it then. I have never seen this dish prepared anywhere but on our Neck—by our Neck I mean that strip of land which lies between the Manokin and the Big Annemessex Rivers. There is a story to it. Thirty years ago there came to Fairhope a sea captain, a great, rough, bearded man of retirement age who bought from one of our Quaker neighbors a small cottage and a few acres of land. He had a manner of treating geese and ducks, whether wild or tame, the like of which none in the neighborhood had ever seen before. He said he had learned it in Egypt, where it was common.

At any rate, the fowl were first cured. That process the sea captain never did divulge. My father arrived at it through hints, through brief glances of the captain at this work, and through experimentation. Once the cure had struck through, the fowl were ready for cooking; there was no smoking process. Furthermore, the meat had not the salty taste of cured ham, though it had the virtue of keeping, if not quite so long as a ham. When pot-roasted with carrots and cubes of turnips and a judicious amount of onion, it made a dish so savory, so tender and delicious that I never tired of it. Even canvasback duck, celery-fed and roasted or broiled, cloyed on me after a while so that I cannot look one in the face for a fortnight. But duck or goose, cured and braised, spicy and melting, with haunting flavors one cannot quite trace, and served with the brown gravy from it, is ever-welcome to all of us and as wholesome as a cottage loaf.

You may be sure that Quigg did full justice to the goose, accompanying his mastication with various coarse sounds indicative of much gustatory pleasure. Mr. MacPherson was an equally valiant trencherman, though better mannered; between the two of them, surprisingly little of the fowl fell to my share. And what went back to the kitchen would not have made a meal for one of our kittens.

Both men got a little disputatious over political subjects as the port went around. I deserted them at last; on looking into the dining room an hour later, I found Quigg asleep in



his chair and Mr. MacPherson nodding over the dregs of his glass. I roused Quigg, who was more overcome by weariness than by the wine, and got him to his room. Suddenly greatly wearied myself, I went to bed and left Mr. MacPherson to his own devices. He had been tolerably mellow, I discovered next morning, for he had treated Kate and her husband, Judah, to a long and learned discourse on matters political before retiring.

Yet he was brisk enough when I belatedly got up in the morning, and he had already dispatched Judah to request the presence of Mr. Neville at ten of the clock. I was with my father when Richard Neville arrived. Soon thereafter, Mr. MacPherson sent for me. My father said as I left the room, "I am not asking ye, David, to be servile toward your uncle. But no point is to be gained by being hostile."

I thought that I was to be admitted at once to the meeting, but Mr. MacPherson had other ideas. He told me, "Sit ye in the hall, David, until I call ye." He, with the other two men, passed into the small parlor; I heard the door close. I sat down on the old white-pine settle in the hall. Three quarters of an hour passed and no call came for me. The long wait doubtless cooled my heels, but it also served to heat my temper. Being the one primarily concerned, I felt that I should have a full part in the meeting. I did not like being ignored. Presently my resentment became sulkiness and from that state I went on to rebellion.

At that precise moment I became aware of turmoil within the room. Voices were lifted, became louder, became angry, became vituperative. Then there was a loud crash, a furious oath, and a cry of pain from someone. I rushed into the room.

Mr. MacPherson had his hands at Quigg's neck and was shaking him with venom and savage enthusiasm. I thought any minute to see the rogue's head snap from his shoulders. My uncle, his face scarlet and congested, was plucking at his full lower lip with nervous fingers, but made no move to separate the combatants. I managed to break the lawyer's hold and step between him and Quigg.

"The lying scoundrell!" Mr. MacPherson shouted. "I'll haul him into court! I'll put him under oath! Let him perjure himself if he dare! Ye ken my intentions, Quigg? Ye ken their significance?"

"What did you expect from him but lies?" I asked. "He being, doubtless, well-paid to lie. Mrs. Swann said she saw him cheek by jowl with Mr. Neville at the inn only a week or so ago. They were not discussing the price of sheep or hogs."

Exultance blazed on the lawyer's face. "Say ye so, David?" he said. He righted the overturned chair, sat on it, and regarded Quigg blithely. "Ay," he said to me at last, "little escapes Mrs. Swann at the Swan Inn. I fancy that we'll get an interesting tale from her."

My uncle spoke suddenly. "Mr. MacPherson," he said, "you do not intimidate us. However, a suit of this nature would cause some scandal. Therefore, I will see to David's education and will guarantee that he lacks nothing until his twenty-first birthday. Beyond that I will not go, suit or no suit."

Before the lawyer could answer, I said, "Mr. Neville, if you will tell my father that, I shall be grateful. It will ease his mind and give him comfort in these last days left to him. Beyond that mere statement, I want nothing. I have not the faintest intention of accepting one cent from you."

Mr. MacPherson cried, "Ye are daft, lad!" Quigg looked at me as if he, too, thought I had lost my senses. My uncle regarded me with a faintly malicious smile. "Well, David," he said, "I will do as you ask, the more readily as it costs me nothing but words."

My father died on the last day of February. He was buried in the churchyard beside my mother. I remember the afternoon well, and though the year was still young, the sun shone warmly. I saw a bluebird on a twig and there was much green in the grass. Almost every man and woman of the district—white and colored, rich and poor—was at the committal ceremony, for my father was greatly loved, being a



man of good will toward everyone, with kindness and understanding and without discrimination.

There is no need to do other than dwell lightly on the next few years and so hasten on to events of importance and drama. With such good friends behind me as Mr. MacPherson, Mr. Foxall, Prudence, and Nobby—and with the full, loyal, and warm-hearted support of the colored members of my household—the farm very soon became reasonably profitable. A venture with Mr. Foxall and Nobby in hogs, which we turned into hams, bacon, and salt pork and sold to cotton planters in Georgia, proved remunerative and I was able with the proceeds to put my land and buildings into first-class order and also to buy a team of mules and other equipment.

I would not have you believe that this period was one of unending toil for me. Back-breaking labor is not necessary in our gracious region and on such fertile land as mine, where, Nobby says, one must not leave a thumb too long in the ground when planting garden seed or it will itself burst into leaf. There was time for sport, for a moderate social life; time for leisurely daily chats with Nobby and Jeremy; time to spend with pretty Prudence.

Rumor was frequently concerned with the speculation that my uncle was about to marry. I have often wondered why he did not take a wife and have a family, disliking, as he did so intensely, the fact that I was his heir. Tales had come to me that he could not long abide women, that when they had served his brief and infrequent desire, he found no other pleasure in them—indeed, found them irritating. Whether this gossip had elements of truth in it, I had no way of telling, nor was I concerned one way or the other.

At the beginning of his nineteenth year, Martin, who had always had a strong religious bent, began to study for the ministry under our own parson, Mr. Eames. Martin would become free automatically on his twenty-first birthday. My father had freed all our adult slaves years earlier. It was Martin's intention to go north to the state of Massachusetts; he hoped there to find some means of being ordained as a

minister. He intended then to settle in New Bedford where there was a large Negro colony. He was in many ways, and regardless of race, remarkable. I never knew a man with so fervent a desire for higher education, or one more tireless in his pursuit of it. Mr. Eames found him, as my father had, an apt pupil—highly intelligent, zealous, and thorough.

And though he grew away from me and Nobby, caring no longer for wild-fowling, sailing, or fishing, or for our talk which dealt so much with race horses and hunters and kindred subjects, we had for him a genuine affection and a sincere pride in his progress.

## 7

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NO ONE could have been less prepared than I was for the event which was to make so profound a change in my life.

It occurred on or near the 10th of June, in the year 1820. I remember that I had come to my twenty-first birthday just a few days previously. I stood within the stable door and leisurely watched a thunderstorm die away. The roar of rain became a patter, the high swish of the violent wind a murmur in the treetops, the detonations of the thunder a distant rumble. And presently the rain ceased altogether; the sun shone brightly through a patch of blue. A partridge sounded his mellow "bob-white" from the top rail of a fence; the sleek and glistening cattle resumed their feeding in the pasture. All Nature was calm and pleased.

Soon from the places where they had taken shelter, the farm help began to issue. Martin drove the cart from beneath the shed; Judah, Simon, and Saul left the barn and, deep in amiable conversation, strolled toward the fields; Lina came from the kitchen, a basket on her arm. She went to the



garden, doubtless to gather a salad for supper. Nobby, who had been repairing the crane in the chimneypiece for Kate, stood awhile on the kitchen steps, stretching his arms and savoring the freshness and fragrance of the late afternoon.

And now come the ducks in single file, dabbling their bills in the puddles along the way and rejoicing in the watery earth. Chanticleer himself emerges from shelter and hastens to give his flock assurance that all is well. The hens walk forth meekly in answer to his summons, stepping daintily, yet on sharp lookout for the worms the shower has called to the surface. The foals and yearlings in the paddock kick up their heels and frisk around the mares.

I stood a few minutes longer in the doorway looking out over the fields. The wheat was tall and almost ripe, the young corn sturdy and green. The newly planted tobacco (we still grew a fair amount of it) made a pleasant geometrical pattern against the brown soil. Order and neatness were everywhere, and a look of well-being and prosperity. I was suddenly conscious of a satisfaction so intense that it was almost exaltation. There was more to the feeling than the mere knowledge that we had restored the farm to its former great productivity. Contentment, hope, and pride of achievement were blended to create for me a few moments of complete happiness. I felt that I had received, as someone has written, a deep, delicious draught from the strong, sweet cup of life.

Though there was an hour left in the working day, I did not go back to my tasks. I walked across the grass, still wet and shining with rain, to the kitchen. Nobby had completed his work on the great black crane, with its multiplicity of pot hooks and trammels, and was now standing off regarding his handiwork. Kate, in another corner, was rhythmically pounding dough with a broad-headed hammer. Good would come of that, I had no doubt, in the form of our famous Maryland beaten biscuits. Any Marylander will tell you that beaten biscuits come to their perfection only in the kitchens of Tidewater Maryland. We have other claims to culinary fame, such as Terrapin Maryland and the fact that both

*hominy* and *pone* are Maryland Indian names, but these I will not go into now.

Kate said suddenly, "Miss Prudence comin'—"

I glanced out the window and saw Prudence walking up the front lane. She was nineteen now and possessed of a sweet, blonde beauty which was not only unusual in its flawlessness but peculiarly moving. At times, when looking at her and listening to her, I wondered what lack was in me that I did not respond as did all the young men who besieged her—gentry and plainer folk. I was ever sensitive to beauty: in sky, in field and woodland, in waters, and in her. But as I appreciated natural phenomena without wishing ownership, in like manner I appreciated her.

Not that I was indifferent. I had for her a genuine affection. Her presence never failed to warm me or to make me happier. And there was no insipidity about her. She had temper, when temper was indicated; she was high-spirited, mischievous at times, and at times a little bit of a coquette despite her demureness and Quaker training. She was intelligent and educated beyond the times. I knew that all my friends thought her the right and proper wife for me, would she have me, which none of us could tell. I knew that I disappointed Nobby and Kate in particular, both of whom were devoted to Prudence, by my attitude toward her which they thought lackadaisical.

Yet I also knew in my heart of hearts what held me back, though I could not tell them. There was within me a memory that the years had not blunted. I admit I thought it strange, even a little fantastic, that one whom I had seen so briefly should seize on my imagination with such tenacious strength. But it was true, nevertheless, that after almost four years, I could summon at will Jeanne Gervaise's face before my mind's eye just as I had last seen her, clear in every detail. I remembered every gesture, the immense vitality of her, the way her smile, so sudden and flashing, lit up her face; I remembered the full but maidenly swell of her breasts, the sweet contours of hip and thigh, her delicate ankles and dainty arched feet.



I was long past that adolescent stage I had undergone of moping and sighing over her. Perhaps I thought no longer in terms of her but rather in terms of someone like her, as though she were a pattern set up for my guidance.

"David," Prudence said, "I have never seen thee so satisfied. Thee has the look of the cat which has devoured the cream."

I laughed and waved a hand at the fair fields in front of me, but made no comment save to say that things were going well.

We sat beneath an old oak on our front lawn, Prudence, Nobby, and I. The sun was lowering to the great Bay and the birds were thinking about their vespers. Martin rumbled past in the cart and took off his hat and said, "Good evening, Miss Prudence," in his precise voice. Prudence said to me, "He will soon be free, David."

"In eleven months," I answered. "Lina will be freed in August. I think she will marry then. Nobby's freedman is courting her."

"Peter," Nobby said, "is a good smith. I find 'im steady and dependable. Lina could do worse."

"I'll miss Lina," I said. "But so long as I have Kate I shan't worry."

"'Ear 'im," Nobby commented. "'E should be thinkin' of a wife, not of 'is dependence on Kate. A bachelor's life is no life, Davy."

"You seem happy enough," I pointed out.

"Still it is no life," Nobby insisted.

"You'll be making, then, an offer sometime soon to Mrs. Swann, I take it."

He grinned. "A perishin' fine woman, Mrs. Swann. I admit I toy with the idea."

"You'd better do more than toy with it," I advised him. "From what I saw at the tavern, its handsome proprietress is not without admirers."

"There is still time," he said with a certain smugness.

"Think you so?" Prudence said. "Think you she will stay

put for thee, Nobby? When thee are ready, friend, it may be too late."

She turned her eyes from his to mine and let them dwell there a long moment, then smiled secretively and looked away. I said, to cover a sudden sense of unease, "I marvel, Prudence, you have held out so long. Is there no merit in the dashing Mr. Percival from Easton? Or in any of the young bloods from Princess Anne? And what of the rich and well-born Mr. Dennis of Accomac? I saw his coach at your door not a week gone."

"Be assured, I am thinking, David," she answered.

"There are others who could use thinking to advantage," Nobby said, looking at me and speaking with some acerbity.

Caught between this crossfire I was grateful for the sound of trotting hooves along the lane. We turned our heads and Prudence said, "Why, it is Mr. Massingale, David."

"Eh!" I returned in some astonishment. "So it is! And what do you think the fine Mr. Massingale would be wanting with so plain a person as myself?"

"Thee does not like him?" Prudence asked.

"I have never liked him," I retorted.

"Thee would not greet a guest with a scowl?"

"Well," I conceded, "perhaps not. Let us see what errand he is on." So, smoothing my face, I walked toward the gate, followed by her and Nobby. Massingale drew up, dismounted, and threw his reins over a picket on the fence. Whatever his reason for coming, I could see at once he was not in a belligerent mood. I thought his heavy face looked frightened.

He did not come in, but stood there, awaiting us, one hand on the gate. As we drew near, he raised his hat and bowed to Prudence. Then his eyes came back to me. He seemed to be studying me, marking what the years had done since last he had seen me. And then his head moved in an almost imperceptible nod.

"David," he said abruptly, "I bring you news—good or bad as it may appear to you. Your uncle is dead, struck down not an hour ago by the Thundering Apoplexy."



"Dead!" said Prudence in a shocked voice and I echoed the word and her tone. We could not say more; we just stood there, the three of us, looking at him, unable to realize the fact. The shock of the death was evidently still on him, for he was not impatient with us nor seemed to find us stupid.

He said after a time, "It was sudden. I was with him as were Mr. Carroll and Mr. Forbes. He had just risen from the dinner table. And then, as he was turning away, he put his hand to his heart, tottered and fell. Like a tree falls." He paused, took a handkerchief from his pocket and drew it across his brow. Presently, he added, "He was dead when we reached him. . . . So sudden. He had been particularly well of late."

"I am sorry," I said, and meant it. "That I did not get along with him does not matter. I could not wish him that which overtook him. Is there anything I can do, Mr. Massingale?"

"Do?" he repeated and looked at me strangely. "There is much you can do. You are his heir; save for a few minor bequests, you inherit all his property."

"Oh, David!" Prudence said, and gave me a look which I did not understand, save that there was a sort of sorrow in it. She turned away and Nobby went to her, taking her arm.

"His heir!" I said.

"Were you not aware of it?" he asked. "Come, David, get hold of yourself."

"I have hold of myself, sir," I said. "And I wish to the good God that I was heir to no one if it takes me from the Little Manor and into a new life."

"It will do both those things," he replied. I was amazed to see the understanding in his face, for I had thought him particularly insensitive. He turned from me and looked out over the fields, then swung a little to view the quarters, the stable, the barn, and the house. And, finally, his eyes rested for a moment on Prudence's face. In the eventide silence I heard the murmur of doves coming from the tall pines across the fields where they had built their nests. He said

at last softly, almost absently, "It is best to want little if there is peace with that little." Then he shook his shoulders as if to put the thought from him and remarked in a different tone, "I ride now to Princess Anne to see Mr. Pierce, the lawyer for the estate, and to deal with other matters. If you wish, I will send MacPherson to you."

"Please do that," I said. "Will there be need of me at the manor tonight?"

"The morning will do," he returned. He swung in the saddle and sat there a brief time looking down at me. "Have no fear," he said at last, "of your new position." He turned his horse and rode off.

Prudence said, "I must go, David; I am very late."

We walked with her down the lane and into the road and none of us found words until we were at the Foxall gate. I said then, a little angrily, "Are you both mourning for me as someone departing forever? It is but a mile additional you have to come to see me or I to see you. What nonsense is this?"

"It is not that I thought thee would desert us, David," Prudence replied. "I know thee too well for that. But life will be different for thee, different in its interests and responsibilities. It is not the manor alone that your uncle has left to thee but a fine house in Annapolis and wide business interests in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Thy uncle was much from home and so will thee be, David."

"I will be from home," I retorted, "as little as possible. I cannot conceive of any business which would keep me in Philadelphia or Baltimore long."

She did not press the subject, just smiled and presently bade us good-by. Nobby and I parted at the lane, he to go on to his forge, I to return to the house and give the news to Kate and the others. They, however, already had the news, and the kitchen seethed with excitement and speculation. Kate had it settled that she and the younger children would go with me; the rest would remain and Lina would cook for them. I shook my head at that though I did not know what I would do without Kate. "Judah will run the



farm now," I told her, "and I would not separate you from him. No, Kate, you will stay and help Judah and the others make the farm even more profitable. From now on most of the profits will go to you who work here."

"Kate don't like dat," Judah said, "I kin see."

"I don't like it either," I confessed. "But it's the sensible thing to do."

"Dat Annabel oveh dere ain't no cook," Kate put in. "Cookin' ain't even run in her family. Cain't make cakes, cain't make pies. An' you knows how you loves 'em, Marse Davy. Didn't matteh to yo' oncle; he didn't care foh sweets. It goin' matteh to you."

"You will not be so far from me that I can't come to you for sweets," I said. "Judah needs you more than I do."

"Suah need her," Judah said, "if I goin' make dis place a success."

"I'll be in and out," I added. "I'll be here almost every day."

"I knows dat," Judah said gently. "Dis place is and will be your real home. We ain't losin' you, Marse Davy."

"You'll never lose me," I said.

That calm and lovely evening I walked to the forge just as twilight was blurring the landscape. I stopped for a moment at Mr. Niles' big store in the village which, according to a handbill he had recently published, contained:

General Merchandise, consisting in part of a full and complete stock of Dry Goods, Groceries, Hardware, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, Fancy Articles, Clothing, Cloths, Cassimeres, Shirts, Stocks, Bows, Gloves and Suspenders, and other articles to complete a gentleman's dress for all seasons of the year. Also Medicines, Articles of the Toilet, Soaps, Brushes, Perfumery, Garden Seeds, etc., and all goods suitable for a first-class country store.

Niles himself came forward to wait on me though his clerk was idling behind the counter. Solemnly he shook my hand, his demeanor a nice balance between respect for the deceased and a neighborly interest in my inheritance, not, you may be sure, without thought of some profit to himself. I

had made my small purchases and was turning away when Dr. Ballard entered. He was a long, lean fellow with grizzled hair, slightly bowlegged from constant riding of the barrel-bellied cobs he favored. He was kindly and jovial and a little salty in his talk, a fine sporting companion, whether on the duck points or behind hounds, and a first-class man in his profession as, indeed, the great extent of his practice indicated. The light was poor in the store. He squinted at me, then grinned. "Davy," he said, "your fortunes have altered considerably since you got up this morning. Will you take your sport gilded in the future, as your late uncle did?"

"Only in the sense that there may be a little gilt on the gun I use. Otherwise I'll be content to sit with you in the same cold and wet duck blinds."

He nodded at that and then his face grew sober. "I had no liking for Mr. Neville," he said. "Yet it is a sad thing to see a big and vigorous man cut down in his prime."

"You were there, Doctor?"

"An hour after he died."

"Mr. Massingale gave me the news. He was deeply affected."

"Mr. Massingale," the doctor returned dryly, "was frightened. Every twinge of gout will give him pause from now on. Among our gentry, Davy, as in the last century, the prevailing ailment is still gout."

"I think I will live to see the end of that ailment," Niles put in. "Tobacco is gone, leaving much of our land exhausted. Grains will soon be going to the big cities from the rich new lands in the West, Missouri and such, taking the place of ours. Slave labor is becoming more and more unprofitable. This will remain a good land and most of the things we've had will still come to our tables. But few will eat them in idleness. And there's nothing like honest sweat to counteract the gout."

"So you're still on that tack," the doctor said. "You've been seeing the end of the plantation aristocracy ever since I was knee-high to our big red rooster. Yet I think you are right. Few will get rich from farming alone in the future."



"Your grandfather knew that," Niles said to me. "He was a far-seeing man. He bought city property; he went into shipping; he went into trade. I was in several ventures with him. Today you are a wealthy man because of his vision. It is his philosophy I follow."

"Um-m-m," the doctor said, not so much in doubt as in distaste over Niles' pontifical manner. He made a cut at one boot with his riding crop as though putting a period to the subject. Niles went back to his counter and the doctor accompanied me to the street. Presently he said, "You'll go to MacPherson for advice, Davy?"

"Yes," I answered. "He'll be down in the morning."

"Go to him on one hand, to Mr. Foxall on the other. Between the two you can scarcely go wrong, if you heed. Which I think you will do." He mounted his cob and, with a lift of his crop to me, rode off.

I spent the rest of the evening with Nobby and Jeremy. It seemed that the change in my prospects had worked a great change in Jeremy. I had, in one bound, so to speak, ascended to a place of high importance in his estimation. He discovered in me certain symptoms of greatness and gave me virtues I had not known I possessed. All this with an air of half-sly obsequiousness and an eye to see how I was taking it.

He was a great humbug, was Jeremy.

## 8

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I HAD been at Fairhope Manor a few days more than two months when I received a note from MacPherson instructing me to ride to Princess Anne in the morning. There I was to pick him up; from thence we were to proceed to White Haven and take the evening steamboat for Baltimore,

then from Baltimore by stage to Philadelphia, where we would meet my late uncle's man of business, Mr. Samuels. I took the news calmly enough, having been expecting it, and immediately set Jonas, the butler, to packing for me.

It would be downright untruthful of me to say that the term in which I had been master of the manor had worked no change in me. I was acutely conscious of the change as I watched Jonas fold my fine, new clothes—made by a Baltimore tailor and his assistant who danced attendance on me the second week of my occupancy. The alteration in my daily life, even in the little things, had been profound. I breakfasted now between eight and nine; dined at three, with Jonas standing sedately behind my chair and little Jonas, his page, stationed at the dining room door to relay the hot dishes from passage to sideboard; supped at eight, often with Mr. Massingale, Mr. Forbes, and Mr. Carroll, or with younger gentlemen from Princess Anne or Revell's Neck. For it seemed that I had a thing called "position" to maintain. And I must admit that once I got into the way of entertaining and being entertained I liked it well enough. It was not the season of balls and my company was largely masculine. I learned to play cards in a moderate way, drink as moderately, and master the other social amenities of the times.

Once a week Nobby supped with me and once a week I with him. Prudence and Mr. Foxall I saw almost as frequently. Daily I rode to the Little Manor for a chat, however brief, with Kate, Martin, Judah, and the others. The rest of my day was largely devoted to assisting Tom Hixon, my capable overseer, at Fairhope. I wanted to be no master in name only where the plantation was concerned, as my uncle had been. There was a little resentment on Hixon's part until he discovered I knew what I was about, and after that we got along amicably, even pleasantly.

The plantation was no longer a very large one. We had some sixty slaves and five freedmen artisans. We grew tobacco, large quantities of wheat, corn, and oats, raised many hogs and beef cattle. Much of our wheat we milled



and baked into ship's biscuits, all of which we exported by our own brig, *Annemessex*, to England and France. This was a very profitable operation and Hixon, who had been overseer in my grandfather's day also, gave me to understand it was originally proposed by Mr. Samuels, our agent in Philadelphia, whom I was to meet for the first time within the next few days. Mr. Samuels, it seems, was responsible also for the many investments in city property my grandfather had made and which added so largely to the income of the manor.

I was, MacPherson had informed me after a thorough and prolonged examination of my assets and liabilities, a man of very considerable property—far more so than either he or I had thought. He accompanied this information with a lecture on the obligations of the rich to their fellow men. That was an idea new to me—new in its implication of systematic philanthropy outside one's dependents, relatives, and friends. MacPherson contended that wealth was not so much due to individual effort as to fortuitous circumstances—luck, to use a plain word—plus the efforts of others on one's behalf. Thus wealth was a sort of trust and not to be used merely for one's own pleasures and ambitions. He was a great liberal, was Mr. MacPherson, but canny and close enough, I noticed, in the business he conducted for me. I thought some considerable latitude for my deserving debtors would be a form of philanthropy, but he could not see it that way and was a little put out when I insisted.

One might think from the foregoing that my days and nights were pleasantly filled and that I never had a moment of dullness. Yet the truth is that my large ménage was often a lonesome place. The Little Manor had a quality which Fairhope did not possess, a quality which combined sunlight, laughter, bustling cheerfulness, and a general jollity. The great manor seemed often very quiet to me, and I would catch myself, when seated in the library, straining my ears for the pleasant domestic sounds to which I was accustomed. I was conscious, of course, of the efficiency of Jonas and his staff—how matters moved with a precision and quietness

quite absent at the Little Manor—and that I was more comfortable in many ways than I had ever been in my life. Yet I longed for noisy feet in the passages and halls, bursts of round laughter from the kitchen, and the shrill voices of children in the back yard. I missed Kate, Lina, Martin, and the others profoundly, even though I saw them daily. I found myself often selfishly calculating ways and means to move them over. So far I had risen above that.

Certain things at Fairhope, however, gave me keen pleasure. My uncle had left me a really fine stable of hunters and race horses; I had three stallions, two of them English thoroughbreds, and at least a dozen excellent brood mares. I had several promising yearlings and two-year-olds, and three thoroughbreds which had been consistent winners in Chester Town and elsewhere; I had five hunters which were the envy of the neighborhood—a region, then, of fine horses. The stables had been my uncle's prime interest and there was no laxity in evidence, I assure you; no stricter regime existed at Fairhope than that of the stables. I continued this regime, for I meant to enter my horses in all important racing events that fall.

I had also now an abundance of fine guns, some of which had recently been converted to the new percussion system, including the one my uncle had promised me and then withheld. Queerly, I never used that fine fowling piece; I had a disgust of it and eventually I gave it to Dr. Ballard who quickly learned to value it highly. I found among the little fleet belonging to the manor a cabin sloop, some thirty feet long, which my uncle had completed just six months before his death. It was dressed up like a lady's boudoir, but when I had stripped it of most of its frippery, I never had a boat which pleased me more. I was often on the water, fishing for trout and rock, dredging for terrapin and hard crabs, and, along the shallows, searching for that flaccid but wholly delightful delicacy of our region, the soft-shell crab.

My life as a whole was typical of the times, the region, and of my class. If, in some aspects, it was narrow, in others it was broad and full. As young men we were not bookish,



yet we were not intellectually starved, having the companionship of wise men and wise and educated men. (I make a distinction. Nobby, to me, was the wisest man I knew, though quite without a formal education.) We were given heavily to sport because the means for sport were all around us. I have thought, and someone has written, that the fowling piece looks as well in a gentleman's hand as a gold-headed cane, the fishing rod as well as a ponderous tome.

We came, MacPherson and I, to the Wicomico River about three of the clock the following afternoon. The August day was blazing hot; there was no breeze and the water lay quiet and oily against the shore. The horses, though they had drawn my light, closed chaise, were so done in that I thought it best to have them put up at White Haven for the night rather than have them return to Princess Anne as originally intended. So they and the coachman, Julius, crossed the river with us on the ferry and put up at White Haven at a quite good inn.

There being time before the probable arrival of the steamboat for at least a bath, the lawyer and I took a room there and soon had laved away the grime and perspirations of our journey. To add to our comfort our good host made us an iced rum punch, which we drank while seated under a giant tulip tree at the rear of the inn. An hour later the *Maryland* came hissing, panting, and clanking up to the wharf, and presently a crier came through the streets announcing the arrival and stating that she would take passengers for Vienna, Cambridge, Easton Point, Annapolis, and Baltimore. Julius carried our portmanteaus to the vessel and we embarked.

The *Maryland* was broad and flat-bottomed with a full bow and a square stern. She had no superstructure or other joiner work above decks; passengers were accommodated in the hull. I have lived to see the steamboat become a thing of luxury and elegance; the old *Maryland*, however, had neither luxury nor elegance but resembled somewhat a bad

cross between a schooner and a scow. Yet she was successful and served the Shore well for a number of years.

We tied up for the night at Cambridge, and rather than endure the discomfort of the hot and humid weather in our stifling quarters, MacPherson and I went ashore and found a room at Mr. Preston's Inn. We slept little, due to the heat, and for my part I was glad when a steward from the *Maryland* routed us out of bed at half past four. Early as it was, the inn servants were about and gave us breakfast, in consequence of which we almost missed the boat and were forced to take a berating from the captain for having held him up five minutes. Five minutes! In those leisurely days, and certainly in steamboating, *hours* were of no moment in the matter of schedules.

At six that evening we reached Baltimore. There was a night stage to Philadelphia; we decided to take it. We found a conveyance and were taken to a hotel from which the stage left. Seats were available. Within an hour we were rumbling through the streets, and dreadfully hot they looked with the heat still eddying up from the cobblestones and the houses so close together they appeared to be gasping for air. At length we reached open country. The coachman—a wondrously profane and comical man—shook out his reins, cracked his whip; the horses burst into a canter, and as each hoof struck the road, a puff of dust ascended, mingled into a cloud, and settled on coach and passengers. Yet I personally did not mind that so much, being free now from the exasperating jolting and rasping over the cobblestones; furthermore, a breeze had risen in the west and brought me my first breath of coolness since I had begun the journey.

Excitement and interest kept me awake until nightfall, for I had never hitherto been north of Baltimore. With the darkness, I began to doze. In that queer state which is neither sleeping nor waking, in which one hears all the noises of the occasion without comprehension and yet has a certain awareness, I lingered for the next three or four hours. MacPherson slept soundly beside me, once his head had come to rest on the shoulder of the traveler next to him,



who minded not the imposition because he, too, was asleep.

A blast of the coach horn brought me back to full consciousness. We were entering a village, dark and silent; but presently, on turning a corner, we drew up before a well-lighted tavern of some pretension. The coachman threw his reins to an hostler, dismounted from the box, and called to all and sundry, "Now, gentlemen, look lively. Look lively, I sa-a-y! A half hour here for supper!" The word "supper" had apparently aroused MacPherson, for I swear he still slumbered until that magic word was uttered; he sighed, grunted and groaned, stretched and yawned, and allowed me to pull him from the coach.

In a room across from the tavern's bar, a number of tables were set with the necessary dining utensils, plates, bread and butter. The other viands were displayed on a great sideboard at one end of the room: a fine round of cold beef; a great slab of cheese; watermelon and cucumber pickles; jars of strawberry, peach, and pear preserves. A jolly and comely maid carved the beef and sliced the cheese with great liberality; to the rest one helped one's self. Coffee and tea were served at the table. I thought the food extraordinarily good and this interlude the pleasantest of the journey.

We finished with ten minutes to spare and were standing in the bar when two men entered, carrying their saddlebags. The first was a broad-faced, stout man who walked with a sailor's rolling gait. He looked neither to right nor left, but strode at once to the bar and ordered rum. "I have ridden this day," he told the innkeeper, "eight-and-thirty miles in the saddle and I would sooner round the horn." He grimaced and tenderly felt his hinder parts, said again, "Rum," and was silent from that time on.

I suppose it is a fact that we are all taken with the other man's misery provided it has a humorous aspect. At any rate, I gave no attention to the sailor's companion until he placed himself at the bar. "Ah, Combs," he remarked to the innkeeper, "we meet again."

"A pleasure," Combs returned, "as always. I hope I see you well, Mr. Gervaise."

Gervaise! I moved a step to get a look at his face and saw at once that he was Paul Gervaise.

"Well enough," he told our host, with that half gracious, half arrogant intonation I had particularly marked at our meeting four years ago. He lifted his head abruptly and his eyes encountered mine. For a long moment he looked at me, then recognition dawned in his eyes. "Ah," he said, "the young Mr. Innes, grown, by God, into a pretty figure of a man." He crossed to me and gave me his hand which I took with eagerness. "So you are now master of Fairhope," he went on before I could speak. "I heard but last week. I congratulate you, Mr. Innes, on not only being the master but also on looking the part."

"Thank you," I answered and inquired if he were bound for Philadelphia, adding that I was proceeding there by the coach standing outside.

"I am," he answered, "to join my sister who is now at the Rose Tavern."

My pulse gave a great leap. "I have a very bright memory of Miss Gervaise," I said, with a boldness gathered from I know not where. "I hope I may see her when in Philadelphia."

"Why not?" he answered carelessly.

Belatedly I introduced MacPherson. "We have met," MacPherson said, "in Princess Anne at the house of Mr. Gervaise's uncle."

"Ah, yes," Paul returned. "You are Mr. MacPherson, my uncle's lawyer."

"And David's," MacPherson said. I wondered if his tone actually held, as I thought, a hint of warning in it.

Paul said, "His interests are in good hands. You have accommodations in Philadelphia, Mr. MacPherson? If not, I suggest the Rose. You may know it."

"Ay," MacPherson answered. "It was formerly the Rose and Crown, though not in my time of knowing it, I confess. Perhaps accommodations have been secured there for us. I



canna say, that matter having been left to David's agent, Mr. Samuels."

"If they have been secured elsewhere, we can doubtless change them," I put in hastily. "If there is room at the Rose, you will see us there, Mr. Gervaise."

He smiled a little at my eagerness and then his eyes narrowed for a brief moment as one busy with calculation. Before he could speak the coachman strode from the dining room, rounder, redder, and more jovial than ever. "Step lively, gentlemen!" he bellowed. "Step lively, I sa-a-y!" He swept through the bar with the other passengers crowding his heels. I bade Paul Gervaise a hasty *adieu*, saying that I would wait upon him and his sister in Philadelphia. He waved a hand to me and turned to his rum.

MacPherson did not speak until the coach was once more on its way. He said then, "Yon lad, David, ye ken, is a very pretty one, I grant ye." He paused a moment and then snapped out, "But a dangerous one. Dangerous as gunpowder near a spark."

I asked petulantly, "What grounds have you for that remark?"

"None, actually," he replied. "It is a feeling I have, lad, and have had. He has something within him which gnaws him perpetually. Ca canny in this friendship ye are attempting to assume with him, David. Ca canny. He holds some sort of fascination for ye, it is plain to be seen. Beneath that polish is a bold, reckless, and savage man. I think he will do you no good."

"Nonsense!" I retorted sharply. "You are imagining things."

"Ye have even no small part of the feeling I have, then?"

I hesitated. "Perhaps," I admitted. "I do think something goads him. But it is the restlessness of the gentleman adventurer, not the devious thing you suggest."

He said in a moment, "Ye know the girl, too?"

"I met her four years ago," I said. I turned to him. "You would know if she has married, being, as you are, her uncle's lawyer."

"I would know," he replied. "She has not married." His

sigh echoed mine, but his was not one of relief and excitement. I said nothing more, nor did he, and soon we went back to our dozing.

The journey was long in those days from Baltimore to Philadelphia. The actual distance was over a hundred miles; we stopped quite frequently for relays of fresh horses; we stopped again at seven for breakfast. On one length of the stage a wheel-horse went lame and our pace slowed to a walk for some miles. But to offset that the entire road was good, if dusty, and the night quite cool. It was high noon when we reached Philadelphia and high time, too, for the good MacPherson drooped like a flower in a drought. He did not even protest when I suggested that we go straight to the Rose. The coachman obligingly dropped us and our bulky portmanteaus there, and to my pleasure I found that Mr. Samuels had arranged accommodations for us. Not wishing to present ourselves to him in our bedraggled state, we retired to our chambers. I had a sponge bath and then went to bed and slept heavily until MacPherson aroused me at eight that evening.

"Why did you not awaken me earlier?" I demanded indignantly after inquiring the time. "The whole day has gone."

"Because," he answered tartly, "I was just awakened myself, ye ken. Come now, shave and dress. We are due at Mr. Samuels' at quarter of nine to sup. His coach is below awaiting us. I think it highly courteous of him to inquire of our arrival and to extend hospitality at such short notice."

"Well," I said, "after all he is my agent."

"Hoots," he retorted with some dryness, "ye have something to learn. But I will let you learn it firsthand." With that he left the room.

I dressed, in bad humor, for my mind was full of Jeanne Gervaise, and I resented this invitation of Mr. Samuels' because, if it were not for that, it was possible that I might see her this evening.

It is odd how one's mental picture of a man is so curiously



and invariably unlike him when one meets him face to face. I had thought Mr. Samuels would be a bluff and hearty man, glib of tongue—much the type of the commercial man I had been seeing of late at the Washington Tavern in Princess Anne. I found him none of those things. He was a small man, not over five feet and a half in height, with large and gentle black eyes, a high domed forehead, and a voice of peculiar warmth and richness. His hands were small, delicate, white, and beautifully shaped; I think they were his one vanity because he kept them much in evidence. I have never known another man of small stature who had so commanding a presence, and that without strut or pose.

I describe him fully because he was to exercise a tremendous influence on my life. He was, at the time of this meeting, fifty-five years of age; until his death twenty years later he was my counselor, tutor, and friend. He had a genius for finance and trade; I found, to my confusion, long before the evening was over, that he had already become a merchant prince and I suspected that his fortune was double mine. All this from the humble start with which his father, an immigrant from Germany, had provided him.

Not being a business man, this side of him, while impressing me, did not hold a tenth the interest which other facets of his provided. He was a truly learned and cultured man, widely traveled, of superior tastes. He it was who taught me the love of books, dwelling particularly on those of Master William Shakespeare, and thus gave me a host of unfailing, abiding friends. In later years—and I do not write of them in this book—he often visited me for so much as a month at a time, particularly after the death of his beloved daughter, Judith. They were visits of great profit to me culturally. He taught me an appreciation of music, improved my cuisine through introducing certain Continental dishes to my table, let me draw freely from his wisdom and knowledge of life. And I scarcely need tell you that years later when other great manors were in ruins all around me, Fairhope stood secure, if unprofitable, solely because of Mr. Samuels' business efforts on my behalf.

Over the Madeira, MacPherson told him of the Eastern Shore's distaste generally of slavery and of my own in particular. The subject was a natural one for at that time it was on the tongues of all plantation owners. Their consciences persistently bothered them, but I would be claiming too much moral strength for them and myself to say that our misgivings were of a purely moral nature. There was an economic problem involved; slave labor, with that foremost staple, tobacco, practically gone from the Shore, was no longer a source of great or even considerable profit, and not remotely comparable to the profits currently earned by such labor in the cotton and sugar-cane producing states. Slaves brought tremendous prices in those states and were in tremendous demand; in Georgia and Louisiana a prime field hand brought eight hundred dollars, according to *Nile's Register*, in the year of which I write. It is certainly to the everlasting credit of Maryland masters that so many of them preferred to free their slaves and forgo these high prices, though money was badly needed by some of them.

There were complexities, strangely enough, even in the freeing of men, but for the purposes of this narrative it is only necessary to dwell on one aspect. Mr. Samuels told us of a monstrous traffic which had arisen—on the Shore as well as elsewhere: the kidnaping of Free Men of Color by slavers who sold them in the Deep South. I listened in amazement while he told of an organized raid from the Maryland side into Delaware in which sixty freedmen and women were abducted.

"Delaware!" I said in amazement. "Why raid into Delaware?"

"Delaware laws never permitted the domestic slave-trade with other states. In consequence, there are a great number of freedmen and women there. Actually, kidnaping in Delaware is of considerable antiquity. As far back as 1760 the statutes of Delaware had to provide against it. But think not for a moment that kidnaping is confined to Delaware. It goes on even in that stronghold of the fervent Abolitionists—Massachusetts. It goes on in Maryland and Virginia, New



Jersey and Pennsylvania. It is not confined to freedmen; slaves are often abducted." He made a little gesture with one smooth, white hand. "Tremendous demand for any one commodity creates a high price for that commodity; a high price means great profits. Great profits often tempt men into illegitimate acts, even into crime."

"But what about the law?" I demanded. "What are the Delaware authorities, for instance, doing about this shameful traffic?"

"There is an apathy," he said after a moment. "Some say that these rogues have risen to such wealth and power that they are in politics."

"I have heard," MacPherson put in, "of a gang of kidnapers who operate on the upper Nanticoke led by a woman, Patty Cannon."

"Patty Cannon exists," Mr. Samuels answered. "A desperate woman, a murderess, a kidnaper undoubtedly. But she has not the brains for what has been going on these past two years. No—a large-scale operation has been and is in progress, adequately financed, captained by men of superior intelligence. Patty Cannon and her gang are of the lowest type: cutthroats, purse snatchers, petty thieves who ambush travelers and steal whatever comes to their hands, including men. She and those under her have not the capacity for the large and complete operation which undoubtedly exists."

They were wilder times, these, and very often one was forced to take the administration of the law into one's own hands. Therefore I was not so much perturbed at the laxity of the law as I was of the idea of the hideous traffic. To enslave a human being was certainly bad enough; but to deprive him of freedom who had once been a slave and had been freed—who had the sweet taste of liberty in his mouth—seemed to me monstrous beyond belief. I said so.

"Ay," MacPherson agreed, "it is so, David—an ungodly traffic."

"It will be stamped out in time," Mr. Samuels added. "All

such things are. We progress." He led the conversation then to other matters.

As we were rising to go he put a book in my hand. He had very recently returned from England and there had made the acquaintance of Mr. Washington Irving, an American author resident in Britain. The book was Mr. Irving's latest work, *The Sketch Book*, just off the English press as Mr. Samuels was leaving for home. I did not realize at the time that he was putting in my hands a treasure. No single volume has given me so much pleasure over so many years. From it I formed the taste for reading, as Mr. Samuels cleverly calculated I would, believing, as he told me much later, that there was enough of my father's blood and inclinations in me to carry me forward once I had made a start. But at the time he merely said, "Mr. Irving shares a passion with me, and doubtless many others, for English inns. In this book he writes of some of them. I think you will find his descriptions entertaining. . . . Good night, my young friend. We shall talk business at eleven tomorrow."

I thanked him and told him we would be on hand at his counting house and that I would be happy to read the book. It was, however, over a year before I so much as opened it, and only then because of my desperate need for distraction.

The Rose was dimly lit when we reached it, for the time was after midnight. I looked through the common rooms for Paul Gervaise, but they were empty save for a maidservant who was sweeping in one. There being nothing left to do but go to bed, I did so.



## 9

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FOUR days were to elapse before I was to see either Paul Gervaise or his sister.

What had happened to him in the interval, whether he had made some side journey or had loitered at the tavern where I had last seen him or had been in Philadelphia but not at the Rose, I was never to find out. Nor was Jeanne at the tavern, though her rooms were being kept for her. That afternoon MacPherson took stage for New York to visit a brother newly over from Scotland. The man of law went reluctantly, with many an admonition to me, and left me a memory of his kindly, worried face peering at me through the coach window as the great vehicle lumbered off. I had returned to one of the tavern's common rooms and was sitting there disconsolately wondering what I should do with my time, for the great city was beginning to pall on me a trifle, when there was a commotion outside the door. The sleepy Rose came suddenly to life; there were laughter, cheery voices, the calling of orders to menservants and maid-servants, the sound of brisk feet in the halls and on the stairs. Not having been able to put such life in the Rose myself, I became curious and stepped outside, and came face to face with Jeanne Gervaise.

I thought at once, contradictorily, how little she had changed and how much she had changed. Physically, little change was apparent; she might have grown a trifle, filled out a trifle, but in essence she was as I remembered her—petite, dainty, and lively. I have since wondered if she were really beautiful, and to this day I cannot say. I do not think that separately any feature save her eyes was really flawless;

together, however, animated by her intense aliveness, and supplemented by the moving richness of her young body, no man would say that she was else than beautiful.

The change in her was more than one of manner, or of the poise that comes with full womanhood and experience of life. I could not define it save in words I shrank from, such as wilfulness, a noticeable hardening, arrogance, and something strange that might be loosely defined as a sort of evasion. That was in Paul's face, too, and I have seen it in the faces of other highly self-centered persons and those who live by their own laws. I saw all these things, I give you my word, in the few seconds she looked at me before recognition showed in her eyes and her warm and charming smile wiped them from my mind and left me once more her servant.

She said with a little cry, "It is the boy who was at the forge that snowy night—David, David Innes!" and took in my fine clothes in one swift glance, and the assurance that position and wealth had given me. Then she laughed and said, "Ah, yes, I have heard. I remember. You are master now of the manor." She gave me her small, warm hand, took my arm and walked me to a sofa, sat down and motioned me to sit by her. "Now you must tell me all about it," she went on. "I have not forgotten the nice boy at the forge and it makes me happy to see him come into his own."

I told her what had transpired in the four years since I had seen her. She listened intently, her lips parted, and said not a word until I had finished and was feeling a little abashed at my volubility. Then she put her fingers lightly on my sleeve and said, "I am happy for you, David Innes."

"Thank you," I answered, and added, "I saw your brother on my journey here from Baltimore."

"Paul?" she said. "I have been expecting him. When was that, Mr. Innes?"

"Tuesday night, or rather Wednesday morning; the time was after midnight. The coach stopped for supper at an inn; your brother came in before we left. We spoke together. I



expected him to arrive as soon as I, if not before, but to the moment he has not shown up."

"Some matter of business detained him doubtless." She spoke carelessly. "Or one of gallantry. I have learned to expect Paul when I see him." She turned her head to look at me. "You'll be here for some time, Mr. Innes?"

I answered at once, "Oh, yes. I have no plans at the moment. I came here to see Mr. Samuels, who is kind enough to be agent for me in some matters. We have finished with things commercial, however; save for a farewell dinner with him I am disengaged." I added, "It would be very generous of you, Miss Gervaise, if you could spare a little time to show me Philadelphia."

"La," she said and laughed, "you have grown bold, Mr. Innes, since I last saw you."

"Then you will have pity on me?"

She arose and after a moment nodded. "Yes. But no plans for today. I have been visiting friends in the country near by and I am tired. Tomorrow, perhaps."

"You will not forget?"

We were walking toward the stairway. At my words she stopped, swung around, and looked me full in the face. "It is odd," she said, half musingly, "that you remembered so long the little girl you met at the forge."

"It is even more odd," I returned boldly, "that you should remember the gawky boy you met so long ago."

She nodded. "Yes. I have remembered. So sweet a young boy despite his awkwardness, so shy and yet so eager." Perhaps because she thought her words sentimental she laughed again and remarked, "I see that you have fully realized the promise of bigness I saw in you. You would be a dangerous man in a quarrel, Mr. Innes, with that combination you have of size and quickness."

"Never was there a more peaceful man," I returned, smiling.

"Still," she replied thoughtfully, "I should not like to see you roused and be on the wrong end of it."

I did not answer because we had resumed our walking

and had come to the stairway where a big-boned, heavy woman, in a maid's costume, stood.

"My maid, Celeste," Jeanne explained. "She has been with me twelve years now. She is a jewel—a Breton woman. She is more companion than maid, so I shall introduce you." She went on in French, "Celeste, this is Monsieur David Innes of Fairhope Manor which is near my uncle's home, Princess Anne."

The woman, who seemed to be quite without the celebrated grace of the French, turned her stolid face toward me, scowled, and said in the Breton patois, "Charmed, Monsieur," which was certainly a palpable misstatement because she appeared to be anything but charmed. I, on my part, cordially disliked her from the first moment I set eyes on her. However, I gave her a curt bow and managed enough French to acknowledge the introduction.

Jeanne said, "It is nice that you have some French, Mr. Innes. I am half French, as you probably know or suspected."

"I thought you Louisiana French," I admitted.

"But I am not that," she retorted. "I was born in the West Indies and did not move to New Orleans until I was ten. My mother was born in France. We are orphans, Paul and I, and were brought up by an aunt now in New Orleans."

"And that is where you have been these long four years," I said.

"There—and many places," she returned. "Paul and I are among the restless of the earth. We—"

"*Hola!*" We swung around at the salutation to see Paul coming toward us, smiling and debonair. He had a handshake for me and a warm clasp for his sister. These two were "fond," as the saying is in French Louisiana: united by an unusually compelling and close bond, yet without mawkishness. I have never heard them express their affection for each other in words; there was no need for words—their understanding of each other was complete. Standing there, close together, I saw how alike they were physically: the same fine bones, though Paul was a tall man, the same coloring, the same easy grace, the same intense vitality. Mo-



mentarily they shut me out while she asked some low-voiced question and he answered it with one word; then his smile was back to me.

"So, Mr. Innes," he said, "you contrived the meeting without my aid."

"Did he ask your aid?" Jeanne demanded. "Imagine that! La, I am finding him very masterful, quite unlike the boy at the forge."

"Treat him with respect," Paul returned, with a derisiveness which had no sting. "He is now the most eligible bachelor, I have no doubt, in Somerset County. If we needed to repair our fortunes, *ma petite*, I would set you on him."

"And you don't?" I said with mock disappointment.

"David," he said, "—I shall call you David because I have taken a fancy to you—we have never been more prosperous." He took a small package from his waistcoat pocket and gave it to Jeanne. "Just a bauble," he explained to me. "She has a vast passion for jewels. Look at her! Look at the color in her cheeks! I would not be more pleased over a good ship."

What he said was true; she was excited, but, curiously, not more so than the maid, Celeste. They were both unwrapping the package, their fingers unsteady, their heads close together over it. The paper came away and exposed a small box of mahogany. Jeanne's hand trembled as she undid the clasp and snapped the lid back. She said, "Oh!" then, breathlessly, and Celeste exclaimed, "*Mon Dieu!*"

I saw a diamond of some size, held in a filigree clasp to which was attached a thin chain of fine gold—a beautiful thing and valuable. If I was not moved by it particularly, the women were; they regarded it not only with something akin to adoration but also with a passion that somehow was not pleasant to see. Paul said quickly after a glance at my face, "Take your bauble upstairs, Jeanne, and examine it at your leisure. David does not take the feminine view of jewels."

She closed the box with an effort and turned to me. "Until tomorrow, then, Mr. Innes," she said and went up the stairway closely pursued by a panting and voluble Celeste.

"And now," Paul said, taking my arm, "to masculine affairs."

The coffee shop of Mr. Simon Ware, like so many things of an earlier era, was in genteel decline. It had been in its heyday during the two decades which preceded the War of Independence; it was fashionable until the end of the eighteenth century. Now, under the management of Mr. Simon Ware, 2nd, it dozed on its quiet street under the late afternoon sunshine. A dozen or so garrulous old gentlemen were inside, discussing not only the shop's past glories but also the excellent meat pies for which it was still noted. We walked past them to a booth in a dim corner of the paneled room.

"I have not eaten since early morning," Paul told me as we seated ourselves, "solely because of the memory of Master Simon's beefsteak-and-kidney pie and the knowledge I would be here this evening to enjoy it." He beckoned to a waiter, an ancient, who came and stood beside us. The old man said not a word, scarcely seemed to heed Paul. I thought him communing with himself over old and deep and placid things.

"Order up," Paul instructed him, "a beefsteak-and-kidney pie for two, with two mugs of ale; then a boiled currant roll with sauce also for two, and coffee with it. Then follow that with a bottle of Madeira."

The old man moved away. "Did he hear?" I asked. "Did he comprehend?"

"Eh," Paul replied, laughing, "I forgot this place is new to you. Yes, our meal will come precisely as ordered and promptly. I doubt that there is a waiter here under seventy and almost all have been lifelong employed here. They are part of the atmosphere of Ware's."

I said, "You are much in Philadelphia, Paul?"

"It would seem that way to you," he answered, "but actually I am very little here."

"And your sister?"

"Scarcely more. We are more in Annapolis than anywhere else. My uncle has a house there."



"I have a house in Annapolis."

He nodded. "I know it well, it being but four doors from ours. You haven't been there since you inherited it."

"No, but I was often there while my grandfather was alive. Annapolis was in his day, he has often said, a much gayer place than it is now."

"Baltimore has overshadowed it," he returned, "but it remains a lovely town and our choice of any in the North. We are returning there within a week. Why don't you accompany us, David?"

"That I will do," I replied promptly. "I meant to stop off on the return journey. Now I add pleasure to business."

I have had pies as good as the one which came presently, from our Kate's knowing hands, but the currant roll was truly a superlative and delectable thing, at once sweet and tart and with a melting quality to it and a blend of flavors which lingered on the tongue. Currants did not do well in the Fairhope region but we had an abundance of dewberries, blackberries, and black caps. I thought to myself that I would have this roll made of black caps and sent for the receipt, giving the waiter a substantial *pourboire* to be handed to the chef. The receipt came in due course, scrawled on a piece of brown, kitchen paper.

It turned out, however, to be but another sample of the deviousness of mankind, being not the true one but one rather for a common thing we call roly-poly in our parts. I vowed at the time Kate tried it, and laughed at me, that when next in Philadelphia I would have that cook by the scruff of the neck. I may add that I lived to fulfill the vow and squeeze the proper receipt from him in a most ungentle manner.

But at the time I pocketed it with satisfaction. Paul was ready to go and, in the manner of restless men, impatient over any delay no matter how trifling. "Now, David," he said when he reached the street, "between the Rose and Ware's, plus your good Mr. Samuels, you have been seeing the sedate side of Philadelphia. I propose to take you now to the wharves—to a tavern there where I must speak briefly

with a man. It is a place of sailors of all nations, of thieves, bawds, and masterless men. Say now if you would care to go."

"If you can stand it," I answered carelessly, "I can."

So it was that before very long we stood before a sorry building near the waterfront, looking up at a sight which bore the picture of a cutter and underneath that the words: "Timothy Villen, Prop."

"Apropos," Paul said, grinning at me, "as you will see. He is a great villain, is Timothy, and doubtless will hang one day. Meanwhile he enjoys considerable fame in this city as a strong man and bully. He stands four inches over six feet—not a man to cross."

The place smelled vilely of spirits, stale beer, and unwashed humanity. You will find many such places in every great seaport; it would be scarcely worth description if it were not for what transpired. There were in The Cutter the usual public rooms: a long, low-ceilinged one with a semi-circular bar in the angle of one wall; a small dining room with a single table in it at which some sailors were having supper; a shabby bar-parlor evidently reserved for captains and mates because it was now occupied by two hard-bitten masters and their strumpets and a man who seemed of lesser importance because he sat apart from the others. It was to this man Paul beckoned.

I withdrew to a rough settle across from the bar and seated myself. The scene, though coarse and unpleasant, was new and strange to me; I watched it with a curious sense of unreality, as one watches a play. The women were harridans—there was not a really comely one among them nor a youthful one—and all were bent not on pleasure but on extracting the last sou from their dupes. And the dupes themselves were a villainous lot, steeped in every vice that the four corners of the world could teach.

With one exception. At a table in front of me sat a countryman, a shock-headed, brown-faced, blue-eyed man of perhaps thirty who looked as wholesome as his three companions did vicious. He was, I judged, one of those merry,



amiable fellows of the quiet backwaters of our more southerly regions, for that accent was in his speech, a simple soul who found life good on a few acres of poor soil with a mule to help tend it. How he came to be in the company he was I could not conjecture; three more obviously sly and sneaking rogues I have never set eyes on.

For a time I could not gather what these rogues were about. Presently they changed their tactics and became abusive, evidently seeking to provoke a quarrel. It became apparent soon that they were out to rob the countryman and, having failed in their scheme to induce him to part with his money, had resolved to take it from him by force. I wondered how that was to be accomplished in a roomful of men; surely some of them would intervene, or the landlord himself, in so barefaced a robbery. Thinking this, I glanced at Timothy Villen behind the bar just in time to see him make some sort of a signal to one of the rogues who promptly threw himself upon the countryman.

If they thought to take him unaware, they were mistaken for he was on his feet in a flash. A long arm lashed out and the foremost rascal hit the floor with a solid thump. But the other two were on him now and the melee became a tangle of flailing arms, punctuated with curses and grunts from the thieves and whoops that were battle cries from the countryman. The third man got back on his feet and joined the fray.

I have seen some fighting men in my life but none to equal this shock-headed man. There was sheer joy to him in the conflict once he had taken it up: his blue eyes blazed; his whole face was alight; he roared and whooped in a sort of ecstasy. And what a mighty man he was! That deceptively slender frame of his was made of steel springs and whalebone. He moved with the quickness of a cat and with the same sure-footedness and sense of balance, and all the while those terrible fists of his were striking out, bruising, cutting, breaking. One rascal fell to his hands and knees and remained there, sobbing and spitting blood; another turned

tail and ran; and the third went down from a crushing, rib-breaking blow and rolled under the table.

The shock-headed man tossed his red mane from his eyes, gave a loud whoop of victory, caught his breath, and announced in a soft, calm voice that he would be glad to fight any friends of his late assailants. Receiving no reply he repeated his offer with the stipulation that he would tie one hand behind his back. I think that the fight had been well within his comprehension, and familiar, but assuredly he had little understanding of the company he was in. I saw the proprietor, Villen, motion to another table. Two men got up, big, burly ruffians, and one had a club in his hand; they began to close in on the shock-headed man.

I shouted, "Look out!" not in time to save him the blow but in time to permit him to deflect it from his head to one shoulder. He went to one knee and I saw the look of agony on his face. I could stand no more. I seized the man with the club by the throat and shook him until he went limp under my hands, meanwhile keeping him between me and the other ruffian who was aiming blows at my face. He was an ineffectual sort of brute and presently I disposed of him also. The shock-headed man was now on his feet and I could see by his face that the pain was passing. "Put your back to mine," I told him. "We may have to fight our way out."

Then I heard a murmur in the crowd and turning my head a little I saw Villen coming toward me, shedding his nankeen coat as he came. He was, as Paul had said, a huge man and his arms were like the trunk of a tree. He must have been a fearsome sight as he shuffled, ape-like, toward me, judging by the exclamations from the assemblage, but I thought him muscle-bound, and when he drew near enough I stepped within his guard and struck him between the eyes. He went over on his back; I picked him up, carried him to his bar, and threw him over it.

"God's truth," said Paul fervently, appearing at my shoulder, "may I never oppose you two!"

The shock-headed man grinned. "Twarn't nothin' on my part," he said modestly.



We went from that foul room. No one attempted to stop us; no one even spoke.

To the Rose we took the shock-headed man, ostensibly to have a doctor look at his injury, but really because I could not part easily from him, so taken with him was I.

His name, he told us, was Taggart Castleman Branch. He was a native of Virginia, that part where the hills run up to the Blue Ridge, where the brooks are clean and sweet, and where, from his small, high farm, he could look with ease into North Carolina just a few miles away. A roving and bachelor uncle had settled in Pennsylvania, acquired some property, and becoming ill, sent for him. It was characteristic of Taggart Castleman Branch that though greatly content with his poor lot, he should heed that call of distress from a kinsman. For two years he had lived in a land peculiarly alien to his tastes; then the old man had died. When the estate was wound up Taggart found himself with a good pair of mules, a fine wagon with cover, a thousand dollars in cash—and an intense desire to shake the dust of Pennsylvania from his feet. He had packed up his effects, which included a pretty wife and four children and had begun his journey southward.

Reaching Philadelphia, he had found quarters for his caravan behind a livery stable, and having some purchases to make, ventured into the heart of the great city. It was his misfortune to accost the three rogues and inquire from them the location of a harness maker which had been recommended to him by the proprietor of the livery stable. The glib rascals drew him into conversation, learned something of his affairs, and immediately conspired to rob him.

At this point in his narrative I asked, "You are planning to return to your old home, Mr. Branch?"

"Reckon so," he replied in his slow drawl. "I don't hold with the idees they got up here. A lot of things they do irk me, but mainly I disagree with them on what constitoots a day's work. My frame simply ain't fitten, and never will be, to put in twelve hours an' more a day on *any* work. Why,"

he went on, and scratched his head in perplexity and wonderment, "I seen those Dutchmen neighbors of mine in the fields from sunup to sunset six days a week with never a break foh a little huntin' or fishin', or a nap under a tree. So I reckon, yes suh, that I'll go back to a land where barns are smaller and livin' a whole lot easier."

"I can tell you of a land," I said, "where living is still easier," and went on to tell him of the Shore, with its fertile earth, fecund rivers, and great Bay. His eyes sparkled as I told him how in the autumn myriads of duck, geese, and swan came to our water, how trout, rock, hard-heads, and other fish were to be taken with the mere casting of a baited line, how succulent oysters were to be had for the tonging, how a barrel of hard crabs could be caught in a morning. I told him of a gentle and well-mannered people who had always found time for sport and recreation, of a mild and salubrious climate, and wound up with the suggestion that if he cared to make his home there I would provide him with land.

"Mr. Innes, suh," he returned after a moment, "I sho' take that as mighty kind of you. And some day I may take advantage of it. But I reckon that right now Cindy—same being my wife—has a hankerin' foh her kinfolks. You kin be sho', though, that I'll be a-studyin' 'bout what you told me. Yes, suh, I sho' will be a-studyin' 'cause it sounds like a mighty pleasant land and one fitten to my frame."

I parted an hour later from Mr. Taggart Castleman Branch with genuine regret, and my last words to him were, "Remember the name—David Innes; remember the place—Fairhope Manor, near the village of Fairhope, in the County of Somerset, Eastern Shore of Maryland."

"I thank you kindly, Mr. Innes," he said and gave me a clasp of his hand which felt like a sprung bear trap must. "I ain't likely to forget."

Nor did he forget—wholly.



CONTINUALLY I am amazed at the perversity and queer-ness of human nature. When, at the risk of my life, in behalf of decency and civilization, I was largely instrumental in destroying one of the most evil gangs that ever batted on human misery, no one save those directly concerned made much of me or even thought highly of the accomplishment. Yet from an instance in which I took no pride, even felt shame of, albeit it was in a good cause, I became something of a hero and the pride of the young bloods of Philadelphia.

For it leaked out, in the way that these things do, that a young gentleman of Maryland had, in defense of a simple countryman, sadly beaten the mighty Timothy Villen and thrown him over his own bar; and furthermore had soundly drubbed two of his bullies (gossip had made it four) so that neither Timothy nor his men would be about again for weeks because of their injuries. There was a modicum of truth in that; I had flung Timothy among his glasses and bottles so that he bled from half a hundred places. The two other rascals, however, unless they were of more tender fiber than I thought them, suffered far less at my hands than did the three who had the misfortune to engage Mr. Taggart Castleman Branch. I thought at least two of *them* would not be about soon.

Protest as I would, I became, as I say, something of a hero. Mr. Samuels came to me laughing and perplexed, saying he had been flooded with requests for introductions to me, once our connection had become known, and that his daughter, Judith, had returned and would have me for a party in my honor if I would be so kind as to accept. I, of

course, accepted and took Jeanne and Paul with me, and we all had a very good time. Less happy was another circumstance. I had the bad judgment to order at this time a pair of top boots from a well-known bootmaker, who promptly took advantage of the fact and came out with David Innes top boots; other merchants who catered to the young gentlemen followed suit. One could buy David Innes stocks, David Innes shirts, David Innes gloves, and so on *ad nauseam*. A poet even wrote a sonnet in my honor and had it published in the newspaper.

In the midst of all this pother, MacPherson returned. The good man did not quite know whether to be vexed or amused. He thought my judgment poor in accompanying Paul to The Cutter and told me no man of good habits would have business there; yet I think he thoroughly enjoyed the excitement which had come into our lives, the many social occasions, the company of the young men who came so often to the Rose to see me. As for Paul Gervaise, he was in his element; easy-mannered, handsome, convivial, he charmed all, men and women alike. I heard no more from him of leaving for Annapolis at the time he had set.

Despite these new demands on my time, you may be sure that I was with Jeanne as much as she would permit. We had a strong attraction one for the other, of that there was no doubt—something almost chemical in its action and yet more than that. She did not deny this attraction; on the contrary, she accepted it fully, and told me one day at the end of the month when I blurted out my love for her, asked her to marry me, and was pressing her hard, "David, I do not deny my feeling for you. But I have no wish to marry."

"No wish to marry!" I repeated in bitter disappointment. "But, Jeanne, it is natural and right that you should marry. Surely you do not intend to stay single the rest of your life."

"Perhaps," she said.

"What nonsense is this?" I demanded. "Have you some idea you must care for Paul, as a mother does, the rest of your life? And he at this moment doubtless courting one of



the pretty and rich Misses Lane he met at Mr. Samuels'? Will he have any thought for you when he happens on the right one? You know he will not."

"It is not that wholly," she replied. But my words had made her thoughtful and after a moment she slipped her hand into mine. "David," she said at last, "will you give me time? Will you be a little patient?"

"I have loved you long and long," I said softly. "Since the moment I first put eyes on you I have loved you. It is not a feeling that will pass overnight. If you must have time, then you must."

She was touched by these honest, simple words so straight from my heart. I saw her mouth tremble and her great dark eyes mist over. Her other hand crept into my palm, lingered there, and presently she lifted her full, sweet lips to mine. At that very moment, even as I bent toward her, there came from somewhere near at hand—sharp, angry, and perhaps dismayed, commanding to her and, in a strange sense, to me also—the one ringing word, "Ma'mselle!"

Celeste was in the doorway.

There was no fright in Jeanne's face, nor indignation, rather an acceptance of something I did not understand. She stood up and said with dignity, "You will knock, please, in the future when I am with Monsieur David."

The big-boned Breton woman bent her head and murmured, "Pardon, ma'mselle."

"You wish something?"

"A reminder, ma'mselle." The beady, blue-lidded eyes were inscrutable.

"It will keep."

"Yes, ma'mselle." She left the room.

"There is a woman," I said with strong distaste, "I could well do without."

"Yet you must take her if you would take me. I could not get along without her."

I shrugged. "I would do that to have you. If I must—I must. . . . Now, Jeanne, if the mood has not left you I would have that kiss."

She smiled, hesitated, then raised her face to mine. I had not only that one kiss but also half a dozen others and would have continued this absorbing pastime indefinitely had she not pushed me away. "Enough," she said. "No, no, David; no more now. I will not be swept off my feet. I asked for time and you granted me time."

No argument could move her so I said at last, "Very well, you shall have time, though I like the idea little. But time is a relative word. Is it hours, days, or weeks you want? I cannot think in terms of months."

"Yet you must," she answered with great firmness, "though not many of them because you have so softened me, David, and shattered my resolve. Say a month for my sake and one—yes—one for your sake. No, no! I am determined. This is now the end of August. On the first of November I shall be at my uncle's house at Princess Anne. At that time I will give you my answer."

"Two months!" I exclaimed gloomily. "Under the circumstances it is half a lifetime. I am not to see you in the interval?"

"No. Paul and I leave for Annapolis tomorrow."

"He will have little inclination for that."

"Yet he will go," she said. "And, David—let me speak of this matter to Paul, not you."

I nodded. "That would be best, perhaps."

I left her a half hour later and was myself in no poor spirits because it was plain that she returned my love and was without doubt inclined toward marriage. Much of a maiden's hesitation comes from the fears and doubts natural to maidenhood; I think that Jeanne had little of those timorous misgivings. Her hesitation sprang largely from the sense of responsibility she felt for Paul, and from something else which I could not define, something shadowy and disturbing to me. But a man in love puts from his mind those things which disturb him and dwells only on the pleasanter aspects; so I went with blithe steps along the passage to MacPherson's room.



He was packing his portmanteau and the new carpet bag he had bought in New York. "So you intend leaving me," I said.

"David, man," he said testily, "I canna bide with ye forever. I hae business at home to which I must attend. I am no saying I didna enjoy my veesit. I did, and that is the fact."

"You will be leaving me, you realize," I said, grinning, "to the temptations and perils of the great city."

"It is no the big city I am feared of," he retorted with some sharpness. "Och, too, I mind how well you heed me."

I answered, "In most things I heed you. But you are unreasonable about Paul. Tell me this—what do you hold against Jeanne?"

"The lass? Naething, David, save the fact that I dinna think her the wife for you."

"I asked her this afternoon to marry me."

He let the strap buckle fall from his fingers, straightened slowly, and faced me across the small table. To my surprise he did not upbraid me, just swallowed thrice so that his Adam's apple bobbed up and down like a float with a fish beneath it, and said, "Aweel, David, it isna as if I had not expected it. I willna carp. After all ye are a man grown and as such must make your own decisions. I am sorry that your choice, ye ken, didna fall on the maid, Prudence. Yet I wish you much joy."

"I said that I'd asked her. I did not say that she had accepted."

"She refused you?" His tone was incredulous.

I retorted angrily, "Am I so great a catch, then, that no maid would refuse me? We are not in Fairhope now but in this great city where there are many men who have all I have, yes, doubled and trebled."

"Och ay," he said, "but dinna get heated. The fact is that she didna refuse you."

"Nor did she accept," I retorted. "She will let me know in two months."

"Ay," he said dryly, "I ken. Yet I will grant she is a lass

of speerit and if it were not for her brother and that lowerin' Breton fishwife maid of hers—who, I firmly believe, has the mark of the De'il on her—I wouldna hae a word against her."

"Jeanne and Paul leave for Annapolis tomorrow."

"And you with them?"

"No."

His face brightened. "Aweel," he said, "it will no be so bad for you here what with all your new friends, and Mr. Samuels to fall back on."

I said, "I am not staying. I am going home with you."

Mounted on a hack I had secured in Princess Anne from the Washington Tavern, I came on the third day of September, just as twilight was dimming the day, to Nobby's forge. One glance told me Nobby had gone; there was a put-away-for-the-night look about the forge; everything was in its place and the fire had died. I tied my mount to the rack and walked across the trimly kept grass to the cottage. The front door swung wide to invite the small breeze. Nobby and Jeremy were at table and over the room hung the pleasant, homely fragrance of fried fish, cornbread, and freshly brewed coffee. I stood a moment to savor the scene and the feeling of being home it brought to me, then stepped into the room and said, "Would you set a place for a weary traveler?"

Nobby leaped to his feet. "Blow me!" he exclaimed, "it's Davy!" He caught my outstretched hand and shook it until my wrist ached. "Lad, but I'm perishin' glad to see you . . . Jeremy, set a place for Davy. . . . Blow me, Davy, you look a proper dandy in your new Philadelphia clothes. Sit down, sit down! . . . Jeremy, look lively!"

Jeremy finally got possession of my other hand, shook it solemnly while he bellowed in an aside to the kitchen for a plate. Nobby thrust a chair against my knees and I subsided gratefully into it, glad my long journey was over, glad to be home, glad to see Nobby's beaming face, even glad to see that humbug, Jeremy. For the better part of an hour they pressed questions on me. Fortunately they had no word of my encounter with Mr. Villen of The Cutter and my subse-



quent popularity in Philadelphia—all of which, by the way, I was beginning to regard as ridiculous—so I could answer their questions without embarrassment.

I said at last, "Enough! Enough! Now give me the news of home."

"Little transpires here," Jeremy returned. "We are as you left us, David, save that the old sailor has passed on, *Deo volente*."

"So the old man has gone," I said. "Well, he made his contribution if in so small a thing as his cured duck. For that I think he will be remembered. Many men leave less."

"'E was old," Nobby said. "'E 'ad no feeling left for living. 'E passed in 'is sleep."

"Lina," said Jeremy, "had her eighteenth birthday a fortnight gone. She waits now for you to free her. Then she will marry."

I said contritely, "That matter slipped my mind. I will have MacPherson draw papers in the morning."

Nobby said abruptly, "That reminds me, Davy. Jim London—'im who is man of all work for old Quigg—was hup 'ere a-lookin' for you, a week ago come Sunday. 'E said 'e 'ad an arrangement with you to go to Fair'ope when 'is term is hup."

"That is true," I replied. "I ran across him in Princess Anne a month or so ago. When Captain Forbes sold him to Quigg he had, according to the will of a previous master, only five years to serve. He will have completed those five years in October. I want Jim for the bakery. Phineas is getting old—"

"'E said," Nobby interrupted, "that 'e believes Quigg is goin' to sell 'im South before 'is term is hup."

I looked at Nobby in disbelief. "What! Sell him South? Not even Quigg would do that!"

I could see from Nobby's face that he had not thought Jim apprehensive over nothing. I said in a moment helplessly, "You see the difficulty of the position. Jim is slave until the last day of the month. He is, until that time, the property of Quigg; we cannot interfere. All that we can do

is to tell Jim to be on the alert and to run for it if what he fears is imminent."

"Would the law," Jeremy asked, "permit him to be sold?"

"Only for the period of his unfulfilled servitude."

"Could he be lawfully sold South for that period?"

"He could not. Under the will of a previous owner he is to be freed at Princess Anne on the first day of October, eighteen hundred and twenty."

"I thought," Nobby said, "that you could see Quigg, Davy, and let 'im know of your interest in Jim. And that you hexpected Jim to report to Fair'ope on the first of the month. That might deter 'im, Davy; certainly it would make 'im think twice. For wot 'e plans, if 'e does plan it, is plain kidnapping."

"I can't believe that," I expostulated. "Quigg is too smart for that. Yes, he is shady, but he has always been clever enough to keep within the law."

"I would ride with you," Nobby said in his quiet way, "to the Pocomoke River."

"We will ride," I said at last with no very good grace, for I was sick of riding, "when I have a day or two at home."

"Why not send Mr. MacPherson?" Jeremy inquired. "He should have a salutary effect upon Mr. Quigg's morals."

"MacPherson," I said. "Just the man, Jeremy! Think you that all right, Nobby, or shall we go?"

Jeremy threw in one of his tags, "*Qui facit per alium facit per se*," which I took to mean that one who does a thing through another does it through himself, and thought the tag fitting and for once looked at Jeremy with something close to respect. Nobby said, "MacPherson will be fine, Davy, carryin' as 'e does a 'int of the law about 'im. 'E will make Quigg think twice."

"Then MacPherson shall go—and soon. Like myself he is very weary from his journey. But in two or three days he will be recovered. Will that do?"

"It will 'ave to do," Nobby said.

I arose. "Come now, Nobby, and we'll go to the Little



Manor and let Kate, Judah, and Martin know I have returned."

He looked at me a moment before he asked, without impertinence, with some sadness, "And Prudence?"

"There will be no need for that," I said at last.

Next day there began a week of immoderate heat. The summer winds which serve us so well, blowing across our narrow peninsula from the ocean or from the Chesapeake Bay almost at our doors, failed us unaccountably. There was a strangeness about this weather; the sun did not strike brassily from the sky but was veiled in mist. This same orange-purple mist sat on the near horizons and even on the landscape a field's breadth away, giving a suggestion of autumn though to the eye alone. For it seemed to all of us that this vapor across the sun but intensified its heat.

The days we managed without much distress, moving through small duties in a sort of somnolence. Meals were light; I dined on a pair of fried soft-shell crabs placed on diamonds of toast or a broiled squab or a young, fried chicken or a broiled slice of our own ham with candied sweet potatoes. We had a few late watermelons left, and toward sundown one would be drawn from the deep, wide well we used as a springhouse, a quarter of the cold, ripe-red, sugary sphere falling to me. Its refreshing effect, however, was only of very brief duration; soon I was as hot as ever.

As is usual when a period of strange weather is prolonged, there were dire prophecies on every hand. We had an ancient on the plantation, my overseer's grandfather, Nathaniel Hixon, who on the sixth day of the great heat had said—as quoted to me—that in his eighty-eight years on the Shore he had never seen such weather. He was to see fifteen months later much worse weather and to die from it. However, to return to the present, when I heard what he had said I thought I would have a word with him as he was something of a scholar and student of Nature. He lived alone being now without the desire to communicate, save at rare intervals,

with his fellow men, in a small cottage belonging to me. It was a half mile from the manor, located on a point of pines which thrust out into the broad river. Thither I went early in the morning of the seventh day.

He had been a-fishing with the dawn and was returning in his boat which appeared as old and shaky as he. I waited at the head of the path for him and presently he came along, dangling five small hard-heads from a string. He recognized me and touched his forelock but neither stopped nor spoke. I followed him to the cottage. Becoming aware then that I wished speech with him he motioned me inside, not at all ungraciously but with the disinterest of great age. He had only one interest, I think, beyond the fundamental needs of living, and that was the river, being a mighty fisherman, wise and lucky, and at the sport in all weather save the worst.

I told him of the things being said in the village, such as the earth had slipped from its orbit and had come closer to the sun and that we should all perish, man and beast. He turned his head to me and said contemptuously, "There are ten thousand fools to every wise man."

Being brought up a little short by this pronouncement, I stammered that I knew, of course, such talk was ridiculous; but had he in his many years of life hitherto encountered such weather? I had heard he had said that he had not.

"You heard that from my grandson," he returned, "who only gets out of a conversation what he wishes to hear. I said that I could never remember the wind being stilled so long. I have seen hotter weather; I have seen all but the deepest wells with nothing but sludge in them. To a man who has lived as long as I have little in Nature can be new. She repeats herself endlessly and the small variations are but minute flaws in the pattern."

"There will be an end to this heat soon?" I asked.

He looked at me as if he were surprised at my insensitivity. "Ay," he returned. "Can't you feel the coming change?" He held up his hands, the fingers spread wide. "It is in my fingertips. Before midnight there will be wind and rain."



I left him presently, for his thoughts had turned inward again and he was no longer conscious of my presence.

The heat of that day was almost unbearable not only to whites but also to our colored folk despite the fact that they were far better equipped by Nature to stand it. At ten o'clock all work ceased by my order. An hour later Mr. Massingale arrived saying that misery loves company. He was closely followed by Nobby and Jeremy who told me that the village was like a furnace and that the inhabitants had gone to the groves on the banks of the Manokin or Annemessex. "The heat will break tonight," I said, and had for some strange reason not the faintest doubt of it. "And, Nobby, you and I ride in the morning to Princess Anne. We must get instructions to MacPherson in the matter of Jim London who rests heavily on my conscience."

Jeremy said, regarding me with his green and glassy eyes, "I fear you will be disappointed, David, if you expect a change in the weather. The glass is steady, nor can I see any indications of change elsewhere."

"Yet," I returned, "there will be rain before midnight."

"David," he returned with some petulance, "having sailed the seven seas I have a little knowledge of weather. Therefore—"

I said shortly, "I don't speak from my own knowledge, Jeremy. Just say that I have had advice from a competent source."

Mr. Massingale laid a hand on my shoulder. "I will take Jeremy's side in this matter," he said. "And because this has been a week of intense boredom, not to say painful to me because I am a full-blooded man, I will lay you a wager—just, you understand, to provide some small excitement. I will wager you a hundred that Jeremy is right and that you are wrong."

"Well," I said after a moment's thought, "as you know, I do not get the excitement out of gambling that you do. Yet I will take the wager, not to uphold my own dignity but rather that of the man who predicted the change in the weather. I noticed that he needs a new boat so I shall use

your hundred to build him not a skiff but a comfortable cat-boat."

"David," Jeremy said reproachfully, "at least you should ask for odds. Look at the sky! There is not the faintest indication of a change of weather."

"You mean well," I told him mildly, "but let the wager stand."

Mr. Massingale laughed. "Forgive me," he said, laying a hand on my arm. "A thought struck me, David. I was thinking how different you are from the lad who came here only a few short months ago."

I had been gazing off across the sun-filled river. Now I turned to him. "Yes," I said after a moment. "I am aware of the fact. But I sometimes wonder if I have not left something valuable behind me." Nobby was looking at me. Though his jolly, kind face gave no indication, I wondered if he thought so too. I asked abruptly, "Nobby, did Prudence and her family go to the groves this morning?"

He nodded.

"Why did they not come here?"

He shifted uncomfortably on his feet and said at last, "'Ow should I know, Davy?"

Jeremy flung me a Latin tag vilely pronounced to the effect that a man cannot have his cake and eat it, and said it so sadly that I was not annoyed nor had the heart to rebuke him. Nobby, knowing no Latin but sensing from my face, perhaps, what his friend had remarked, said shortly, "'Ave done, Jeremy. A man must follow 'is Fate. Would you 'ave 'im follow it with 'anging 'ead?"

Massingale clapped him on the shoulder. "Well said, Nobby!" he exclaimed. "Spoken like a man! Now let us go and have a julep and I will make it for you with my own hands."

The storm broke on the stroke of eleven. My guests had left in late afternoon but Nobby had returned when he saw that a storm was brewing, which was about ten-thirty o'clock, to spend the night and accompany me to Princess Anne in the morning. The storm was one of vicious fury,



with appalling thunder and lightning which danced around the sky like some mad fiend and struck from every direction. So long delayed was the rain that I thought it might not come. But when it did I wished it had not, for it came in on a great wind and fell in torrents. For two hours this storm, which was of a truly insane intensity, raged. The elm by the stables, of which we were so proud, was struck by a bolt and died by springtime; another bolt hit the gristmill but did no damage. At the Little Manor a sycamore was blasted. Boats were sunk in the creeks and two rivers and several barns of the neighborhood were hit, though only two burned. Mr. Massingale lost three fine cows and remarked wryly when next he met me that he thought I had overdone the matter a little; he would have gladly paid off his wager on a more moderate display.

When all was over a most delicious revivifying coolness flowed over the land. We went out on the porch to enjoy it and to listen to the pleasant drip from the trees. Nobby asked, "Was it old Hixon, Davy, wot told you the weather would change?"

I said it was. "I thought so," he said. "So I 'ad a pound bet with Jeremy." He added regretfully, "Too bad 'e 'asn't a pound to 'is name."

"You pay him something," I said. "What does he do with it?"

"Rum," Nobby returned. "Must 'ave contracted a terrible thirst during 'is sailin' days."

"That reminds me," I said. "Did he ever remember where he had previously seen Paul Gervaise?"

"Yes," Nobby replied. "It was the marmelyde which fetched the memory, Davy."

"Marmalade," I said in astonishment. "What had marmalade to do with it?"

"We were at supper the day after you got back. We wos talkin' of wot befell you in Philadelphia and 'ow you 'ad met Jeanne and Paul Gervaise, and of their queer maid you 'ad told us about. We were 'avin' 'ot biscuits and I 'ad a fawncy for a bit o' marmelyde. So I got out me last pot—until your

brig returns from the Old Country, Davy—and put it on the table.

“Jeremy jumped to ’is feet shoutin’, ‘I remember! I remember, Nobby. The marmelyde done it. I was myte of the schooner *Ebenezer Pollard* out of Boston tradin’ coastwise and to the West Indies just after the close of the last war.’ Then ’e went on to say—”

The gist of Nobby’s tale was that the *Ebenezer Pollard* had touched at Jamaica to deliver a consignment of salt fish. The captain and Jeremy had visited a ship chandlery there to pick up some supplies which included a dozen pots of Dundee marmalade. As they were making their purchases Paul Gervaise entered accompanied by a big-boned, lowering woman—Jeanne’s Breton maid undoubtedly. The ship chandler had deserted the two New Englanders to serve the imperious gentleman. Seeing the pots of marmalade on the counter, Paul had ordered two dozen; the ship chandler had not that amount left in stock and Paul had entered into treaty with the Yankee captain for his dozen. The sturdy man, being from Nantucket and of an independent breed, refused to sell, even at a premium, not liking Paul’s manner. Paul had not insisted and had soon left.

But when the supplies were delivered that afternoon to the *Ebenezer Pollard*, the twelve pots of marmalade were missing. In their place was a small cloth bag containing the cost of the sweet plus a twenty per centum premium. In high dudgeon the captain went back to the chandlery only to be told that the marmalade had been sent him; someone had obviously appropriated it on its way to the ship.

I interposed here, “That sounds like Paul, I grant. But let’s have what you are leading up to, Nobby, without any more circumlocution. Was Paul privateer or slaver or both? I have had hints enough; you will not take me unaware.”

“’E was privateer, undoubtedly, during the war,” Nobby said.

“Well,” I remarked, “there was honor rather than disgrace in that.”

“Yes,” Nobby returned. “But it bred lawlessness.”



"That is so," I agreed. "Yet you have not answered me. Did Jeremy say that Paul was a domestic slave-trader? Or that he was, against the law, running in slaves from Africa?"

Nobby answered reluctantly, "It was rumored in Jamaicy, accordin' to Jeremy's captain, that he did both; that the Breton woman was an hactive partner and sailed with 'im. Some in Jamaicy said that; others denied it and said 'e was a planter, with plantations in Jamaicy and Louisiana, and that the Breton woman was 'is young sister's maid."

"That is the truth," I said. "Paul suffers from being mysterious and romantic, and God's truth, Nobby, I think he does pose some. I think he likes to have legend to his doings. But I will wager you the finest mount in my stables that there is no harm in Paul."

Nobby made no reply. I said in a moment, "Think you that Jeremy ever was mate of a ship?"

He laughed joyously. "I think 'e was cook," he said.

## 11

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MASTER, man, and guest overslept the next morning and were the better for it, though, in truth, it was a shame to waste so large a part of the cool and brilliant day. Birds were in voice as though it were springtime, so pleased were they with the soft, blue sky and the rain-washed freshness of the earth. Before us the bright river was clad in sunshine and across it weaved the sails of catboats and pungeys dredging for crabs or perchance oysters, there being now an "r" in the month. It was a pleasure, too, to hear, after so long a period of dispirited somnolence, the gay shouts of the field hands and the creaking of the windmill and the rattle of carts along the lanes.

Nobby had breakfasted earlier than I and had two horses

saddled and waiting under the portico. Brown Jill being no longer up to my weight on journeys of any length, I now rode mainly a big chestnut mare, Kitty, which had been bred in Ireland by Mr. Massingale's brother and imported by my uncle two years before he died. He had bought her as a steeplechase prospect and had paid a deal of money for her. She had tremendous stamina and a great burst of speed, and though an extraordinary "lepper," as the Irish say, was given at times to refusing the jumps. Having two horses in our stables who consistently defeated her in steeplechase races—though she had the speed of them on the flat—my uncle, in keen disappointment, had retired her and put her up for sale. Finding no purchaser at the price he asked, and unwilling to part with her for less, he took her over for his own personal use. When I succeeded him I followed suit.

Save for her failing at the fences, she was the finest horse I ever bestrode: a beauty to look at, being close-coupled and compact and of great symmetry despite her bigness, and as easy in her trot and canter as a rocking chair.

Nobby rode Brown Jill, who had always been a great favorite with him. Under his weight, she was fast and capable of long distances at a sharp pace without distress. I had often wanted to give her to Nobby but never had the heart to do so because she had been mine from the day she was foaled and I had raised her, and loved her as only a boy of few possessions can.

I was glad to be again astride a horse and riding along the white, shell road which wound through cool forest and pleasant farmland. My love for Jeanne, and the uncertainty of its fulfillment, had created a great restlessness in me and a dark tumult in my mind. For it seemed to me that everyone was against this love of mine and prophesied secretly to themselves no good of it. Had I fears myself? I could not say, so great was my longing for her. I knew only that I must wed her, else my life would be as flat and savorless as meat without salt, as stagnant as the rain pools in the forest, as lacking in incentive as the life of the poor foresters on the pine barrens.



As I rode I sighed, knowing the day to be only the eleventh of September and that I must wait a month and twenty days in this lowness of mind. In sharp contrast to my glumness were Nobby's high spirits, this being a holiday to him. He whistled and sang and talked to Brown Jill, pointed out to me the coveys of partridges as they crossed the road, showed me the squirrels in the nut trees, the meadowlarks in the fields, the flash of flame in the thicket which was a cardinal. I could not fail, in time, to grow less troubled, and though my unease was always with me, I entered at last into something of his mood.

Coming abreast of the manor of Beverley, just outside Princess Anne, we saw a strange thing. A man, mounted on a big yellow horse, came toward us riding *ventre à terre*, closely pursued by another whose face was set in desperate rage. He held in his hand a double-barreled pistol of the percussion-lock type, similar to a pair I had brought back from Philadelphia, and as he flashed past us he raised his arm, sighted carefully, and fired. I thought the man in front winced but could not be sure; at any rate, the ball did not miss him by more than a hand's breadth. He clapped spurs again to the great yellow gelding and I saw soon that he had the better mount; he was slowly but surely drawing away. Soon a turn in the road hid them both. Nobby and I looked at each other in astonishment. "Blow me," Nobby said. "Queer idea they 'as in these parts of sport."

"Did you recognize either man?"

A twinkle came into his eye. "Davy," he replied, "I 'ave known some queer coves in me life. But that was in me youth. I 'ave since reformed. Such desp'rate willuns I no longer number among my acquaintances."

We were soon in Princess Anne, riding along its gracious, tree-lined main street. It was a pretty town, a prosperous one, and the largest on our part of the Shore. Fine houses of wood and brick, with spacious lawns, shrubbery and boxwood, sat back from the street in dignified privacy and had an air of ease and sumptuousness. Though it was nearing the dinner hour there was much traffic in the town, with

horsemen, vehicles, and pedestrians coming and going and lending a fine busyness to the county seat.

As we turned into a side street toward MacPherson's house, we were halted by a small crowd of countrymen and watermen standing before a rude booth. Behind the board which served as a counter stood a man in tall hat, checked coat, and bright green trousers. He was, despite his flashy clothing, a very dirty man with a pronounced squint in one eye, which gave him a piratical air, and a bulbous nose redder even than Jeremy's. He had, though, an air of great amiability about him and rarely have I heard, even among our politicians, so mellifluous and persuasive a voice as his.

"Come forward, ladies and gentlemen," he was saying, with vast blandness, "and participate in the opportunity of a lifetime!" He paused to gesture dramatically at a row of pint bottles, filled with a greenish liquid, on a shelf behind him. "I am able to bring you, by express permission of the great man himself, a small supply of Dr. Badenby's patent Elixir of Life, mixed by his own hands in Edinburgh and newly over on the barkentine *Sylla*. A sovereign cure for gout and flatulence, extremely effective in alleviating the misery of colds and coughs, a tonic for the blood, a conditioner of liver and kidneys, a preventive of boils and pimples. Doctors recommend it as being particularly agreeable to the female constitution, allaying the weakness resulting from fainting spells, stopping dizziness and the pains of migraine. Dr. Badenby's famous Elixir of Life is used by the nobility of England and France and is in great favor with all the gentlefolk of our large cities. I bring it for the first time to the smaller communities; it must be put, Dr. Badenby insists, within reach of all who suffer, and I obey. Not only that, but I bring it at a price all can afford. Not a dollar, ladies and gentlemen, but the *half* of a dollar—fifty cents only for this large bottle [he now had one in his hand] of Dr. Badenby's patent Elixir of Life. Come forward while the supply lasts. There will be no more until the *Sylla* returns perhaps a year hence. You, sir; you, madam. Thank you, thank you."



Now on my return journey from Philadelphia I had seen this rascal filling those same bottles at The Springs, which is a small resort lying between Salisbury and Vienna. Not only that, but I, watching him idly while I drank a bumper from the spring, saw him add the green coloring. I had it in my mind to expose him but a little reflection showed me the folly of that. For those that had bought would resent my revealing their gullibility, those about to buy would resent my destruction of the faith in the stuff that the rascal had built up in them, and the onlookers would scarcely thank me for interrupting the performance which to them was entertainment. But I had something to ask this squint-eyed rascal. I pressed my mare forward until the charlatan looked up and saw me. He recognized me immediately and I thought for a moment he was going to dive under the rail and run for it. I said hastily, "Hold! I intend you no harm, cheat though you are. I merely want to ask you a question: That day I halted at The Springs did I not see in the tavern stables a big yellow gelding?"

"There was a big yellow horse there," he replied.

"Who owns that horse?"

He glanced around him furtively, then ducked under the rail and came to my mare's side. "There is only one horse like that," he whispered, "and that is owned by Joe Johnson, son-in-law to the notorious Patty Cannon. He is a cutthroat, a slaver, and a bully."

"Was he in Princess Anne today?"

"He would not tarry," the squint-eyed man answered. "I am told he was warned away from here a year or two ago, having been suspected of kidnaping one of Mr. Fraser's slaves."

"I saw your great bully," I said, "fleeing for his life from a man two thirds his size. Think you that would be Mr. Fraser?"

"Sir, what I know is gossip," the squint-eyed man said honestly. "It could be—or could not be. I would not know Mr. Fraser if I had him in my teacup. I heard at The Springs

the evening of the day you left that Joe Johnson rode south on a little matter of kidnaping."

"You had seen Johnson before?"

"Many times. I travel the Peninsula, from Wilmington to the Cape. I stopped at his tavern before I learned better."

"Did you ever see him in the company of a man named Quigg—a small, mean man dressed in shabby black?"

He laughed. "I know Mr. Quigg of Snow Hill," he replied. "I doubt that cautious man would ever be seen with Joe Johnson or, for that matter, do business with him. Mr. Quigg retains a tight hold on his semirespectability."

I was relieved. "Thank you," I said and passed him a bill. He took it, glanced at the denomination, folded it carefully, and put it in his waistcoat pocket. Then he bowed ceremoniously to me, taking off his hat, and went back to dispensing his spring water.

I sat there a moment in thought, then pulled Kitty around and rejoined Nobby. "We will not disturb our man of law yet," I said. "Instead, we will dine. The exercise and the weather have picked up my appetite."

We rode to the Washington Tavern and, handing our mounts over to a stable boy with instructions to unsaddle for an hour, entered. The proprietor at that time was a bluff but cordial man with a bald pate sparsely fringed with ginger-gray hair. He was known to us familiarly as Ginger William. When we entered he was busy assisting behind the bar, but he waved us apologetically to the gentlemen's lounge on the left and said he would wait on us in a moment. When he came to us we told him we would like, first, to wash, and then dine. He led us, after asking the state of my health and if the recent heat had unnerved me as it had so many in Princess Anne, to the rear of the bar where a handsome double stairway, divided by a partition, ascended to the second floor. I never could remember which side had been originally reserved for gentlemen and which for ladies nor, do I believe, did he; at times he took me up one and again up the other. The tradition was being lost, as were so many courtly ones, and I was sad to see it.



In the dining room, to our surprise, we found MacPherson, making his dinner off a bowl of barley broth. The heat of the past week had all but prostrated him; he looked white and drawn and the hand which held his spoon trembled. Nobby told him of Jim London's visit and I the episode of the yellow horse. He had no love for Quigg but he shook his head at the end of our tales.

"You think there is no need for any action in the matter?" I asked.

"None. Jim was being fanciful. Quigg wouldna dare."

"So I think. Perhaps, though, it would not be unwise to have a word with Jim."

"Keep away from Quigg. The less ye have to do with him the better off ye are."

"It would be hard to speak to Jim without running afoul of old Quigg."

"Then dinna see Jim," he retorted. "If ye speak to Quigg ye will antagonize him because ye canna speak of Jim without reflecting on Quigg. And it is a stupid man, ye ken, who goes out of his way to make enemies."

"There speaks the lawyer," I said.

He looked at me, frowning. "David," he said, "it is in my mind that ye have become of late unconscionably hard-headed and I like it not at all."

I checked the angry retort on my lips in time, remembering that I had no better friend in the world than this same dour Scotsman. I said that no doubt Jim had become fanciful as the day of his freedom approached, living as he did in an atmosphere of dark and devious procedure, of which I had gained years ago some first-hand knowledge.

"Och ay," MacPherson said. "There are dark and devious doings there. But ye will remember that no proof has been brought to show Quigg other than an honest man. And as such, ye ken, ye must treat him, if ye must o' necessity have dealings with him. If there be no need, avoid him. So, David man, my advice is that after ye sign a few papers for me of a pressing nature, ye ride back to the manor. If Jim doesna report to ye on the first it will be of his own free will."

Now completely reassured, I assented.

We hurried neither over dinner nor over business and in consequence dusk had begun to thicken when we turned into the Fairhope road some four miles below Princess Anne. We had proceeded another quarter of a mile when we saw among the pines to the right of the road the flicker of a fire. Coming directly opposite the spot I said, "Someone camps there, Nobby."

"'Tis the medicine man," he replied. In a moment he laughed and added, "'E is a proper campaigner, Davy; 'e 'as made 'imself very snug."

But I had seen something else—the flash of the dancing light on the tawny hindquarters of a horse. Looking closer I saw the squint-eyed man bending over a skillet, quite unaware of our presence, and behind him, stretched on the ground, the shadowy figure of another man. "Come, Nobby," I said. I swung Kitty into the wood and keeping behind a fringe of young pines was almost upon the encampment before I was heard. Then the squint-eyed man leaped for a long flintlock leaning against a tree.

"Steady!" I shouted. "We mean you no ill! It is the man who spoke to you in Princess Anne." I rode forward.

He recognized me as I came within the circle of light and dropped the muzzle of his fowling piece. I thought him immensely pleased to see us; he positively beamed upon us and asked us to dismount and share his supper. Of the man who had been on the ground there was no sign, though the yellow horse stood close at hand tethered to a pine. I asked, "What happened to your guest?"

The guest answered for himself by stepping from the darkness. He had a pistol in his hand but its muzzle was pointed downwards. Evidently the squint-eyed man's cordiality to us had reassured him.

I had a good look at him as he came forward. A coarse-grained man he was: hard-faced, tall and lanky, and younger than I had thought him to be. His coat and waistcoat were off and one shirt sleeve had been torn away at the shoulder. It had been used to bandage the upper part of his right arm



and was, I saw in a moment, stained with blood. As I looked down on him, seeing his small, beady eyes, the black stubble of his beard, and his vicious rage, barely concealed, I knew that I gazed at as desperate a ruffian as the Peninsula had ever held. And yet he was that and nothing more; behind those shifting eyes was cunning only, not brains. If he were the right hand of Patty Cannon, as men said he was, then Mr. Samuels was correct: no large-scale organization could be handled through a lieutenant of such limited mentality.

I was never to meet Patty Cannon nor to have any dealings with her; I was never to see Joe Johnson after this one meeting. But when, in later years, grown men spoke of him and her with awe, I laughed in their faces. I have always maintained that three resolute men could have cleaned out that gang of scurvy knaves in an hour.

"It is a good horse you ride," I said to Johnson, as I dismounted. "Save for his speed you might have had that bullet in your back."

He broke into a stream of foul invective against the other man. His voice was coarse, rasping, and his speech a combination of the backwoods idiom and that of the sailor before the mast. I was about to stop his ranting when he ceased of his own accord; he winced and his sallow face was suddenly drained of blood. The pain of his wound was doubtless intense. I waited until the spasm had passed and then said, "Look you, Mr. Joe Johnson, I have no wish to quarrel with a disabled man. I have heard much of you, and while I do not believe all I have heard, yet where there is so much smoke there must be some fire. You see yon road? It leads to the neck of land between the Big Annemessex and Manokin Rivers. On that neck are my plantations and those of my friends. Now take heed: if ever I see you again on this road I shall either shoot you out of hand or beat you within an inch of your life! As you have been warned from the Princess Anne neighborhood—and near paid with your life for disobeying—so I warn you from this region."

"Mr. David Innes," he said in a blend of sarcasm and malignancy, while I looked my surprise at his knowing my

name, "there are plantations even in your cursed Neck where I have bin welcome in the past, and hamlets, too, where free niggers got above themselves. Joe Johnson has been sent for more than once to take care of such a situation. Avast, Mr. Innes; I have had some word of you, bein' in Philadelphia town whiles you were, and no stranger to The Cutter. I want no quarrel with you. I will gladly stay off your cursed road. But speak for yourself, my cove; your neighbors will speak for themselves."

"You lie!" I said. "No neighbors of mine ever had dealings with you!"

He grinned at me despite the pain of his wound. "With prime field hands at eight hundred dollars a head in the cotton states?" he jeered. "Free niggers and slaves have both gone South from your Neck in the dark of the night. And more will go, my cove—though not by my hand. The devil take me if I show my nob in this canting region again."

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"You will see," he replied. "Ay, you will see. And remember well—neither Joe Johnson nor Patty Cannon will have a hand in it."

So great an unease filled me suddenly that I did not press him further on the point. I said instead, "You were in Philadelphia when I was?"

"I am often in Philadelphia town," and added impudently, "We do a good trade there."

"Have you ever met there or elsewhere a gentleman by the name of Paul Gervaise?"

"Now who mought that be?" he asked and I did not know whether or not he mocked me, so sly his words and expression. "No, my cove, I have never met him." He turned from me and addressed the squint-eyed man. "Help me on with weskit and coat. I must get this arm to a sawbones."

The medicine man did as he was bidden, then Johnson untied the yellow horse and led him into the clear space. I judged that gelding to be young, perhaps rising four, and also to be a half-bred. He was truly a magnificent animal and was soon to win, in Delaware and Maryland East, as much



fame as his master, though of a different sort, being an honest fame. I was not slow in voicing my admiration of the fine beast.

"Avast, Mr. Innes," Johnson said. "I love money. I would sell you anything for the pretty yeller pieces, includin' my mother-in-law—anything at all, my cove, save this horse." He rode off without another word.

The squint-eyed man gave vent to a huge sigh of relief.

"He had been skulking in the woods and saw my fire," he explained. "It is a painful wound he has; the ball gouged into the muscles of his upper arm. Stay a while, gentlemen, will you not, and share my meal? At least, let me offer you coffee."

"Well," I said, "we will take coffee with you," being somewhat fascinated by the rogue.

As Nobby had remarked, he was a seasoned campaigner. At one side of his campfire a sleek mule fed on a bundle of freshly cut grass; at the opposite side his wagon was drawn up. A most ingenious tent, supported by two poles fitted into the top, covered the wagon. Inside was his bed, a chest to hold his merchandise, and another to hold his food. Sweet potatoes were roasting under the forelog of his fire; in one skillet cornbread was baking, in another he was frying bacon. A pot, suspended from a slanted stick, bubbled and steamed and released the fine fragrance of good coffee.

We sat down on some boughs of pine and our host served us sweetened coffee in tin pannikins. We begged him to go about his own meal, which he did. He had good manners, a good education, and as he spoke, telling us of his travels, I could not help feeling sorry to see him so reduced. Whether it had been rum or natural inclination toward trickery and vagabondage that had ruined what might have been a brilliant life, I could not tell—perhaps some of both. At any rate, he was a cheerful rascal and entertaining.

I said at last, "We have not your name, and I should like to know it."

"Carfax," he answered. "Prentice Carfax. It is my right name. I am far enough from my home to use it without fear

of embarrassing those who bear it—er—more circumspectly.”

I asked where he went next.

“To Newtown,” \* he said, “and from there to Snow Hill.”

“Do you know,” I asked, “the Swan Inn at Snow Hill?”

“Very well,” he said, “and also its charming proprietress.”

He gave a slight tug to his waistcoat and looked at us with some coyness. “A deucedly fine woman, gentlemen, is Mistress Swann. I may say I have some hopes in that direction. I will admit that there has been a temporary setback to my progress due to another man—”

“I think,” I interrupted, smothering my laughter, “that I know him.”

“A scoundrel, sir, a fraud.”

“Eh,” I said, startled. Nobby’s hands, I saw, had begun to clench.

“A tall, lean Yankee in a rusty green coat, with glassy, green eyes who makes a great show of spurious erudition. And who fiddles most vilely. It is a sickening sight, my dear sirs, to see him waiting upon Mistress Swann with small airs and effeminate graces I’ll warrant he lifted from some broken-down French dancing master. Yet he impresses the widow. It may be that in the end I shall have to challenge him.”

I could not contain my laughter any longer. “So,” I said at last to Nobby, “you have been sending Jeremy to do your courting.”

“Blow me,” cried Nobby furiously, “I’ll ’ave ’is life, Davy!” But presently the humor of the situation struck him and he broke into great shouts of laughter. We explained, presently, to the squint-eyed man, who generously shook Nobby’s hand with the wish that the best man should win.

Nobby was still laughing when we reached the forge an hour and a half later.

“Those humbugs!” I remarked. “What can a fine woman like Mistress Swann see in either of the two?”

“They’re hartful,” Nobby answered as he dismounted.

“Artful?”

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\* Now Pocomoke City.



"Yes, Davy, hartful. Becos they lives lightly they 'ave a light way about 'em—which women likes in courtin' if not in the married state. 'Umbugs prosper, I 'ave noticed, in proportion to their 'umbuggery. The real great ones go into politics."

## 12

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**A**BUNDANT autumn was upon us, wearing robes of gold, crimson, and purple, bathed in mist and mellow sunshine. The vanguard of the wildfowl flew in great flocks above us and slanted down to river or creek or marsh. Oysters were fat; the striped rockfish surfaced at the mouth of every creek and gut and seemed to ask for the hook. If summer had fattened the cattle, the sheep, and the turkeys, and given the hogs their growth, autumn took the credit and presented them as her own. Gone was the heat from the day; mornings were brisk and evenings cool; blankets came from their chests of cedar, fragrant and comforting. Even our ancient, Hixon, who has been known to ask inquirers after his health what in the name of seven devils it was to them, took on a certain amiability and nodded to a greeting.

In the closing days of October, when I should have been troubled over the outcome of my love with the decisive day so near at hand, I had a sudden resurgence of hope and confidence, and a feeling of well-being. As a matter of fact, any reasonable man would have found it difficult to remain downhearted. All things to do with the plantation had prospered under my hands. My brig had returned safely from England and France with fine profits from our ship's biscuits, and a cargo homeward, through the interest of Mr. Samuels, paid me full well in freighting charges. She lay anchored in the river now while Captain Saul Holland and his crew had a

well-earned leave of absence. Jim London had come to us on the first, and after two weeks' vacation to enjoy and appraise his status as a free man, had returned. He was serving an apprenticeship under Phineas in baking and would take over when qualified. Lina had been married a month to Nobby's freedman and lived now behind the forge; Martin was gaining fame as a lay preacher, so well had our good parson taught him. I went to hear him one Sunday as he preached in a grove on a bank of the Manokin. So eloquent was he, so earnest and yet so reserved, with great power in his words and unhackneyed ideas to back them up, that after the service I offered him freedom on the spot.

"Not yet," he had answered. "I am not yet ready, Mister David."

"As you wish," I returned. "Tell me when you are ready. You have a fine talent, Martin, and a great fervor to serve your race and to do good. Tell Parson Eames to try and enter you to some college in the North where you may be ordained—or what it is you have to be to become a parson—and I will foot the bill. . . . No, no, I give *you* no charity. I make your service available to your fellow men, and so the charity is to them."

It was Allhallows' Eve and I was returning with Mr. Massingale and Dr. Ballard from a day's partridge shooting, and had come to that point where a corner of the field showed me the length of my lane, when I saw coming along it a coach. Puzzled, I said, "I have seen that coach before but I could not tell you to whom it belongs."

Dr. Ballard shaded his eyes against the rays of the sinking sun and said in a moment, "It is George Gervaise's, Davy, of Princess Anne."

"You are sure?"

"Positive, Davy."

I excused myself and with beating heart set out at a run to catch the coach, knowing that Mr. Gervaise would have a message for me of importance. Presently I was seen from one window and the coach halted; someone got out on the



side hidden from me and a moment later the vehicle rolled on. I shouted aloud in joy and relief; it was Jeanne who stood there. I took her small outstretched hand in mine as I came up to her. She did not keep me waiting. She said at once, "David, I have returned, as I promised, even one day early. I will marry you—and gladly."

For a moment I stood there, gawking at her like some lout, being used to coyness and circumlocution in maidens, and scarcely crediting my hearing. Then I swept her into my arms. She answered my kisses freely and with passion until I got too greedy; then she pushed me away, laughing, and saying that doubtless we were observed by half the people on the plantation. Arm in arm, we went back to the house where Paul and his uncle awaited us.

Paul looked at us and said, "All is right with you two, at any rate." Then, for the first time since I had known him, he abandoned that light air of his—half derision and half devil-may-care—and shook my hand, saying earnestly, "I wish you joy, David; I wish you luck, God knows, and that's the truth."

Mr. Gervaise congratulated me briefly and added, "David, I must return at once to Princess Anne because of a previous engagement. I leave my nephew and niece with you until the morrow so that you may make your plans. Now I would like a few words with you in private."

After I had made Paul and Jeanne comfortable, I led him to the library. He sat down across from me, a cold dry man whose one interest, his fellow townsmen said, was business. He began at once, without preamble, in so cold and distant a tone that I wondered what woman had hurt him, "All marriage is a gamble; you would be, as I am, well off without it. But I know at this point you will entertain no advice so I will give you no argument. Now, David, it is the truth that I know very little of my niece and nephew, having seen them for the first time about four years ago, and infrequently since. My brother Peter, like myself, was a ship owner. We are originally Boston men. I took my patrimony and went to Annapolis and from there to Baltimore and then to

Princess Anne. He, too, came South, first to Savannah and then to New Orleans.

"He married there a Creole woman of beauty and wealth and returned with her to her home in the West Indies, where she had large plantations. Two of these plantations were inherited by Paul and Jeanne; Paul was left his father's shipping business which was of considerable extent. Paul, who has the love of the sea in him, still owns and operates three good ships; the plantations are managed by an uncle on the maternal side. So far as I know both young persons have a considerable fortune."

"I am glad for their sake," I said, "but it matters not at all to me."

He said sharply, "It should, for within a decade or so we are coming upon hard times here on our Shore; a realization of all assets is necessary with judicious management of them. . . . To continue—you see how little, how really little, I know of Paul and Jeanne. I do not handle any of their financial affairs. I know little of their early life—not much of what they do now. I am seldom in Annapolis and they are seldom in Princess Anne.

"By all this I mean to say that while I seem to stand in *loco parentis* to them, in actuality that is not so. This may sound to you as though I am trying to evade responsibility; having no responsibility I therefore cannot evade it."

"I understand, sir," I returned. "You are telling me that your brother's married life, and the lives of his children, lay so far apart from yours that you have no real knowledge of them."

"Precisely," he answered. "I can guarantee this: they are well-born, well-mannered, and have had the advantages of their class and position. Jeanne has beauty and great charm and has been a belle since she was fifteen. She could have married advantageously a dozen times over—several times to my own knowledge in the past few years—had she been so minded. Paul—well, you have doubtless judged Paul yourself. Reckless, restless, ever on the move, ever seeking excitement, I do not approve of him. Yet I have a fondness



for him, though he does little to encourage it, and what I have will some day go to him."

"That is Paul," I returned. "We all fall victim to his charm."

He looked up at me and his eyes dwelt on my face for a long moment.

"You are no fool, David Innes," he said then. "There is a good bit of your Scots father's canny blood in you!" He stood up and gave me a hand as dry as a piece of parchment. "I wish you happiness. Now, I leave all planning to you, Jeanne, and Paul. Whatever you decide will be acceptable to me."

No sooner had his coach rolled off than Jeanne and Paul came running to me, laughing. "La," said Jeanne, "are you still speaking to us, David?"

I grinned. "As far as I understood him," I replied, "you are a pair of outcasts."

"But nice ones," Jeanne said, showing her dimples.

"Well," Paul put in, "the old gentleman is honest. How can he vouch for us, not knowing us?"

"I need none of that," I said, "from anyone."

"A pretty speech," Jeanne commented. "But did he actually disown us, David?" There was a touch of anxiety in her tone, I thought.

"Not at all," I answered. "He merely said that he knew nothing of your early life but he would guarantee that you were well-born, well-mannered, and had received the advantages of your class. Furthermore, he said Paul was his heir."

Paul's eyebrows shot upwards. "Think of that!" he murmured. "And I so casual with him."

"You think too little of money," Jeanne told him almost sharply.

He patted her shoulder. "See to it," he told her carelessly, "that you do not become like Celeste and think too much of it."

"Your uncle," I interposed, "left the planning to us. Shall we be about it?"

"Yes," Paul said, "for I am due back in Annapolis in a week, where a ship of mine waits. So it is, bluntly, marry at once or wait my return just before Christmas."

"At once," I said with eagerness. "Nothing could suit me more. My brig now lies in the Annemessex and we can use it for our honeymoon journey to wherever Jeanne wishes."

"Between the two of you," Jeanne said, "I seem to have no choice. La, how can I get ready for my wedding in a few days?"

"Five days you will have," I said. "On the sixth day, at high noon, we marry. Paul can be a day late at Annapolis."

"Agreed," Paul said. "What say you, Jeanne?"

"I say again I seem to have no choice. . . . Very well, on the sixth day at high noon."

"In our little Episcopal Church here," I added, "with good Parson Eames to wed us."

Jeanne glanced at Paul, then at me, and said, "Is that necessary, David? Could we not have a magistrate or justice perform the ceremony here at the manor?"

"No, no, Jeanne!" I exclaimed, aghast. "I could not do that! It would scandalize the neighborhood, not to mention the hurt to our parson's feelings. If you are Catholic we could have another ceremony performed at your church later."

"We are not religious," Paul said.

"You see my position?" I pleaded.

He got to his feet, strode to the window, and looked out for a time. Jeanne said nothing. Presently he turned to her. "Jeanne," he said, "I think it will be necessary to fall in with David's plan."

"I will consent to the parson," she replied. "But I should like to be married in the garden here."

He looked at me and lifted his shoulders. "Will you compromise to that extent, David?"

"Yes," I replied. "Of course. It's just that our little church has always meant so much to us. The garden it shall be, at high noon on the sixth day, with a reception to follow. I



cannot affront my neighbors—who will be your neighbors, Jeanne.”

“I have no objection to the reception,” she said and Paul added heartily, “I would be disappointed if it were otherwise.”

Now, with a hundred and one large and small matters to attend to, I bitterly deplored my orphan state and the lack of women in my household. Mrs. Massingale, hearing of my plight, assumed charge, assisted by Mrs. Forbes and Colonel Jardine’s lady from Revelle’s Neck. Mrs. Jardine, who had been a friend from childhood of my mother’s, sent to the Little Manor for Kate and to the forge for Lina; both drawing room and kitchen soon were hives of activity. It did not take me long to discover that there was to be for me no comfort in this shift of responsibilities to the women; I was little more than errand boy to them and they kept me busier than a tailor with the hives. It was “David!” here and “David!” there and “Marse David!” in the kitchen. Jim London and my coachman, Julius, fared no better; they were so much in the saddle riding hither and yon that presently the sight of a horse began to nauseate them.

Never have I seen such a furor in our Neck, with neighbors, mostly women (who seem to love a wedding above all things), coming and going, and falling upon me with little “Ah’s” and “Oh’s” and a coyness embarrassing to a man. Only I did not mark Prudence among the number and wondered about it and felt a little slighted. All my close male friends save Jeremy eschewed me; I could not coax them to the manor, and Mr. Massingale and Nobby were so rude as to laugh in my face when I asked them for help against the women. “God’s truth!” said Mr. Massingale. “I have enough petticoat rule from one woman. Would you ask me to cope with half a dozen?”

Jeremy, however, found conditions much to his liking and danced attendance on the women with pretty speeches and the air of a young cockerel, though a little stiff in the joints, and served, at least, to keep them amused.

I came to the end of those five days weary and worn, went to bed at half after eight, and was accompanied up the stairs by the sound of brisk chatter from the indefatigable women in the drawing room.

There is little to write of the morning or of the wedding. All things had been done for me; all things had been made ready. That it was so was fortunate because I moved in a daze and things had no reality. I stood in the garden at last with Mr. Massingale beside me and the parson before us. From another side Jeanne and Paul came to join us, she in a simple, pure-white dress—moving and beautiful she looked—and he in fine broadcloth with a glazed white-leather stock. Smiling, assured, handsome, he saw my sorry plight and grinned at me, not knowing whether to laugh outright or to give me aid from his flask.

The parson joined Jeanne's hand with mine and spoke kindly and solemnly, with a hope in his eyes and in his voice for our happiness. We answered each, "I do," then turned each to the other. The parson blessed us. I took her in my arms, my fright gone now, the assemblage forgotten.

For just a moment quiet endured; then all were on us, laughing, congratulating, kissing the bride, shaking my hand. Prudence came to me, put her fingers in mine, and said sweetly and sincerely, "I wish thee happiness, David. She is lovely."

"And so are you," put in Paul at my elbow, bowing low to her in his grandest manner. "David, may I not be presented to this charming lady?"

I made the introduction and presently they went off together, leaving me with a feeling of unease and the hope that he would not turn her head. While I stood there, musing, Nobby came up to me, dressed in his best, his ruddy face shining from honest soap and water, his unruly hair slicked down to his skull.

"So you are wed, 'ard and fast," he said and grinned at me as though there was something very humorous in the fact.

"Yes," I told him, "and you would do well to follow my



example. And soon, else someone will take the comely widow from under your very nose."

"I dunno, Davy," he said. "In me youth I wanted to be an innkeeper, with a green coat and top boots and a bar full o' bright bottles and a snug fire to part me coattails before. And a hamiable female to 'elp along. But I find now the forge very pleasant and me 'ouse'old 'appy. The green coat and top boots I already 'ave, also the fire. As for a bar full o' bright bottles, I don't find them necessary."

"That leaves the widow," I said.

"I dunno," he returned. "I'll 'ave to give that more reflection."

"Reflection!" I said. "You have been reflecting for five years or more."

"I'll reflect while you're gone, Davy," he said, still grinning. "You ain't an himpartial judge any longer where the female sex is concerned. Your influence in that there matter is all o' one direction. You 'ave shown a 'eedlessness an' a recklessness to rush into a very grave undertakin', Davy, which 'as surprised me."

I looked across the garden, where Jeanne stood laughing and chatting with a group of young men. "Do you blame me?" I asked.

His gaze followed mine and presently he said very seriously, "It would be 'ard to blame you. She is a lovely maid with a great power of attraction. And yet I wish you 'ad waited and 'ad more time with each other before being wed."

"Old crow," I scoffed, "old croaker! It is that same dilatory attitude which will cost you Mrs. Swann. But enough of that. Let us find Paul Gervaise, Mr. Massingale, Mr. MacPherson, Mr. Forbes, Dr. Ballard, Mr. Foxall, and Colonel Jardine and have a glass of wine together before we get caught up in the amenities of the reception."

We sailed on the first of the ebb tide, Jeanne and I, down our beautiful river, and by sunset we were wallowing, though not unpleasantly, in the short seas of Tangier Sound.

We have reared many men of worth in our neighborhood but none poet enough to sing the beauties of the Big Annemessex River or the glory of sunset on Tangier Sound. From the deck we watched the sun sink and the horizon flame in horizontal bands of strong orange and yellow, merging presently into crimson—so rich and deep that it brought a cry from Jeanne—and fading into a pink afterglow, soft and lovely and restful. Against it flew a wedge of wild geese, dropping its thrilling clangor to us on the sea, and then the quick autumnal twilight closed in. Jeanne said as we went below, "I would like a pearl like that afterglow, David—a huge and lovely pink pearl."

"You shall have it, my sweet," I replied, "the next time our brig returns from Europe. London, I should think, could supply us."

"Yes," she said, in the manner of one who knew. "London will have it and I can give you the name of a dealer in pearls there."

The brig was well, even handsomely, appointed. Our cabin was amply roomy; the little dining salon, though a model of compactness, was comfortable for six. The table, fastened to stanchions, was of mahogany, as were the seats screwed to the floor. The paneling was of a slightly coarser-looking wood which I thought was walnut, the floor of teak. Odd, but attractive, were the swing trays above the table and the carved rail or "fiddle" to keep plates and cups in place when seas were running. And never, Captain Holland said, had the little salon looked better or gayer than on that evening as we sat down to supper, with flowers bedecking it and some of my finest silver on the table, not to mention the young turkey cooked by Kate in a manner which made its skin so brown and crackling and so pleasant to the teeth.

Celeste, the Breton woman, served us. Jeanne would not be without her maid and companion, though we planned only a short trip; travel was no novelty to Jeanne. With a good steward aboard, I resented the presence of this stony-faced woman who, I am sure, looked upon me not merely as an interloper but as a necessary evil—necessary due to some



overwhelming whim of Jeanne's which Celeste could not understand but must condone. When supper was over she whisked Jeanne to our cabin. I sat awhile with Captain Holland over Madeira until, feeling foolish, as all bridegrooms do, I arose and striving for an air of insouciance, bade him good night.

Jeanne was in her nightrobe, of some sheer material which showed the warm tints of her flesh and hinted with sweet sensuality of her womanly ripeness. And though I may seem like a laggard lover, or lacking in ardency, I sat on the side of the berth and looked at her as she alternately smiled at me and employed a comb in her soft, dark hair. I thought of the strangeness of marriage and how it had delivered tender female beauty and youth into my hands for the enhancing or the marring, and swore to myself that I would be kind, understanding, and undemanding.

My lady put aside her comb, dropped a kiss on my forehead, and got into bed.

"David," she said, "there is a time and a place for reverie, but, la, it seems to me that this is neither the time, nor the place."

## 13

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IT is an old saying in our neighborhood that new love is against good farming, meaning, of course, that one's pre-occupation with it results in neglect in other directions. My neglect was not in my farming, which is largely attended to by others, but in neglect of the season I love so well. Never did autumn go as quickly as that one; it seemed that I had but gathered it to me when it was gone. So little had I savored it that I had not the taste of it at all. When winter swept down on us, borne on the wings of a howling north-

east wind, I had a sudden, quick sense of loss and looked around me to see what had become of the halcyon days.

And by these words I have betrayed, I hope, my pleasure and satisfaction in my marriage. To say—despite my great love for Jeanne—that I entered into it quite without misgivings would be untruthful. I could not help but share some of the fears of my disapproving friends. It was not long, however, before I could laugh at their forebodings and at my own fainter ones. Never was bride more devoted, more honest, frank and merry! Mr. Massingale had told me with a wry look on his face that patience and forbearance were necessary in the first months of marriage, that the adjustment of one to the other in matters of taste and habits was difficult and a matter worthy of study. Though I never repeated the advice to Jeanne, I often thought that she gave this adjustment much study. Never did young wife try harder to please; rarely, I am sure, did one have more success.

Being human, she had her idiosyncrasies, as I had. One gave me the only bad moment—and it was but a moment—in the first months of our marriage. I had gone up to our bedroom on some trifling errand. Jeanne was not there but she had been there but a second earlier for her perfume lingered on the air. On her dressing table was a box covered with red Morocco leather, bound with bands of gold and etched with graceful filigree also of gold. I had seen the box occasionally before; I knew it to be her jewel case. But now it was unlocked; the top stood open. Half idly and half curiously I stopped, looked at it, and moved aside the top tray.

I cried out sharply, in wonder and excitement. Here were jewels of exquisite brilliancy and fashioning, mounted in rings, pendants, brooches, buckles and pins, rubies of robin's-egg size, pearls, opals, and other stones whose names I did not know. I had inherited our family jewelry and among the pieces were some of unusual worth. But they were nothing to what I looked on now.

One of the rubies I picked up and held between thumb



and finger, against the light of the candelabrum. And as I stood there, admiring its depth and glow, it was snatched from my hand and I was pushed so violently aside that I slipped on the highly polished floor and went to one knee. I swung my head around. Jeanne stood above me, her fists clenched and upraised, her face dark and twisted with furious anger. "How dare you!" she shouted. "How dare you peek and pry! Is there no privacy in marriage? Must I have your fumbling fingers in all my possessions? Look you, David Innes, and remember this: if again you so much as—"

By this time I was on my feet. I was angry but for some obscure reason I was also compassionate. "Hush, Jeanne," I said quietly. "Do you know what you are saying? Or is some other self of yours, strange to me, talking through your lips?"

She looked at me and clapped a hand across her mouth and there was a great fright in her eyes. Presently she began to sob and beg my pardon, telling me that she must be mad. "Not mad," I said, smiling at her and taking her hand. "It is just that you set too much store on these baubles. Come now—close your box and put it away. I have seen all I want of it." She did so, then came back to me, pushed me into a chair, seated herself on my lap, and cried for a time.

Later she told me that she had the bulk of her entire fortune in jewels. She had begun the collection with those inherited from her mother; she added to it later through profitable ventures in a trading way with Paul, taking all her profits in jewels. Her profits from her share in the plantations she invested the same way. "Jewels are a passion with me," she concluded. "I know I am scarcely reasonable about them. Just multiply your passion by a hundred for your stables—for your favorite horses like Kitty and Brown Jill—and you have some idea of my feeling for my jewels. It is not merely their money value, David; it's the beauty in them: their brilliancy and colors and the surpassing luxury of them. I never weary of them; I can toy with them by the hour."

"Well," I said, "I suppose that's woman's way," and let the matter go at that. Nevertheless the scene had shocked me and I carried it much in my mind until the passing days

blunted its sharpness. Then, there being no recurrence of it in any manner, shape, or form, I forgot it. As well I might, for what did it matter in the light of her warm love for me, never concealed, never held back, and the pains she took to make me comfortable and happy!

I had been three months wed when one evening in early February I rode homeward from Revelle's Neck where I had spent the afternoon with Colonel Jardine on a matter of business. The weather had turned very cold after the sun had set; though the time was but a little past seven o'clock, it was now freezing hard with a piercing wind to back it. The sky was chill and remote; belted Orion, the hunter, strode it, sharply bright, as were the other stars. I dropped my chin well down into my great coat, put Kitty into her tireless canter, and swore that when I got home I would have such fires in our chimneys as the manor had never seen before. Though the winter had been anything but severe, I found that a dip in temperature below the freezing point made the big rooms of the manor hard to heat. Every room must have its fire, and to supply all in cold weather was a full-time job for an able-bodied slave. To tell the truth, I was never comfortable in the manor on the infrequent days of sub-zero temperatures, whereas in the Little Manor, it being much more compact and the rooms smaller and built tighter, we kept reasonably warm in the coldest weather.

There was an austere beauty in the night, as I saw when exercise had warmed me somewhat. The waning moon had not yet arisen but there was a startling brightness on the landscape from the sharp light of the stars. Little wild life was abroad; I heard a fox's wild quaver from a far-off field, lonesome and hungry; an alert hound bayed a warning to him. All was quiet then save for the ringing sound of Kitty's hoofs on the frozen road.

I rode on, thinking, as a man will, of the supper awaiting me—of how I had asked Annabel for a steak-and-kidney pie with thick top and bottom crust and of brown gravy added to what there was, so that there would be enough, which



there rarely is, I have noticed. We make this pie from our own prime sirloin and fresh kidneys; I have found no dish I like better on a cold winter's night, especially when surmounted and enclosed by Kate's flaky, golden crust which literally melts in one's mouth. While I expected less from Annabel, I had no doubt that I would fare well enough.

Soon I turned into the main road. Kitty, becoming impatient for her warm stall and for the company of her kind, began stretching her canter, which I permitted though watching the road closely, for there was thick and glassy ice in some of the low places. The north wind blew hard on the side of my face; I could see the branches of the great pines tossing under it, the stripped hedges bending to it, the dry, tall grasses shuddering away from its icy breath. Glad I was, indeed, to see the lights of the manor, to toss my reins to Julius, and to warm myself before the leaping flames in my library.

Jonas came to me presently, saying that supper was ready when I was. He looked troubled and I asked him what had gone wrong.

"Marse Davy," he answered dejectedly, "seems like I cain't please Miss Jeanne no more. Dey was trouble at dinner over Annabel's cooking an' Miss Jeanne blamed me fo' serving food whut I knew was bad in quality."

"Did you know it was poor in quality?"

"Dat's de trouble. I didn't think it poor, Marse Davy. It was jus' de same as Annabel always cooks. I ain't sayin' she's de best cook 'roun' here, but she ain't as bad as whut Miss Jeanne and Miss Celeste say. She ain't never bad. She pleased Marse Richard well enough."

"She's not really a first-class cook, Jonas."

"Mebbe not, Marse Davy, but I cain't see where I'm to blame."

"You're not," I answered promptly.

"Cain't please Miss Jeanne no more," he mourned.

"Nonsense, Jonas. I'll speak with her."

I went upstairs intending to do so, but Jeanne was closeted with Celeste in the small sitting room there. I did

not disturb her; I washed and changed and then, the supper bell sounding, forgot the matter. Jeanne came from the sitting room and kissed me, asking for details of the afternoon as we went down the stairs arm in arm.

We had our soup, it was removed, and the pie came on. I thought it good, for Annabel had a way with meats, even if the crust was a trifle tough. But Jeanne on tasting it threw down her fork and said angrily, "This is abominable, David. Something simply must be done. Annabel ruins everything she cooks."

"Come, Jeanne," I said, "the pie is not that bad."

"How can you say that?" she demanded. "That crust is not fit to eat!"

"She is," I conceded, "a little weak on pastry."

"She is weak on everything save the simplest dishes. I will not entertain with her as cook, David; I simply will not do it. La, do you want me laughed at by your friends?"

"They have not laughed to date," I said. "Nor did they laugh in the time of my uncle who entertained widely."

"You do not know that," she said, "and you a man."

"Annabel has been with us a long time," I said slowly.

"I do not propose to throw her out," Jeanne put in, "but rather to make her second cook. David, I have in Annapolis a really fine chef."

"A chef?" I asked. "Do we need a chef?"

"Why not," she replied, "especially as I own him; he is one of my own slaves. He is a New Orleans mulatto, skilled in all their fine cookery, their bisques and gumbos, their fish and meat dishes. He makes something I have longed for, David—a breakfast *brioche* as good as you could find in New Orleans. I must have him, David; I beg you to listen to me."

"My dearest," I said, "I always listen to you. If you must have him, you must." She leaped from her seat and came around to kiss me and thank me profusely. I motioned Jonas to leave the room and then I went on, "I give in to you in this matter because you have some right on your side; furthermore, Annabel realizes her own limitations and will not mind too much. But if you have any thoughts of replacing



Jonas you would do well to get rid of them." I looked closely at her face. "I see you have had thoughts of replacing him."

"Yes," she admitted. "He is old and slow."

"He is neither too old nor too slow," I said. "He is thought an excellent butler by such authorities as Mr. Carroll and Mr. Massingale. He stays, Jeanne."

She smiled at me, though I could see that it was an effort, and remarked in a moment in a light tone, "You will not be bullied, will you, David, even by your bride? Let it go, let it go. In letting me have Pierre I am satisfied."

And so to our household came in due course the mulatto, Pierre Lopez, half Negro, quarter French, and quarter Spanish—one of the greatest evils ever thrust upon me by a Fate suddenly turned malignant.

I did not like Pierre Lopez from the moment I first set eyes on him, though, such is human nature, I soon was bragging lustily enough about him and his amazing skill at cookery, and enjoying my friends' envy of my cuisine under his hands. He came to me one day in March, escorted by Jonas who said, "Miss Jeanne says to tell you that this is the man she spoke of. His name is Pierre Lopez. He goin' cook for us, Marse Davy."

"Lopez?" I said. "Oh, yes, Jonas. Leave him with me."

He was a small man compared with my own bulk: not more, perhaps, than five feet and seven inches, but well-knit and active and scarcely thirty years of age. My first impression of him was that he was a little too sleek and oily for my taste and something of a fop; my second, that he was also highly intelligent—not scholarly in the way that Martin was, but sharp and bright and quick-thinking. He spoke with just a faint touch of accent which I thought French but which might have been Spanish; his English was fluent and grammatically correct. Obviously he was a man of some education. His skin was the smooth and even brown of one of the fine leather-bound volumes in my library; he looked only faintly Negroid. He had the color of a mulatto and doubtless was one; but he had the features of an octoroon. The face

would have been pleasing save for something in it I could not then define. Or it may have been something his face *lacked* which made him immediately distasteful to me. I do not mean that mine was a violent distaste; I mean only that I never was able to summon any warmth toward him such as I had for so many members of the cheerful and obliging colored race.

He went to work at once and showed his quality as a chef in the very first meal he served us. I could not do else than echo Jeanne's warm praise. Annabel was not worthy of being in the same kitchen with him. I summoned him, complimented him, and asked him where he had gained his art and he so young a man. "It is natural," he answered with a shrug of his shoulders. "It comes to me. My mother was a noted cook." He bowed himself out after a minute's more conversation and Jeanne said to me triumphantly, "La, David, was I not right? Was I not clever? Can you deny that he is a treasure?"

"He is a chef," I answered, "and a good one."

I stood one afternoon about two weeks later under an oak tree near the creekside. Spring was early that year and was now well forward; the day was so balmy, so filled with the fresh faint odors of greening grass, warming soil, and swelling buds, that it might well have been plucked from late April. It was a Saturday, as I remember, and Nobby was with me; we were at target practice with the fine percussion-lock pistols I had brought from Philadelphia. I was born with a love for firearms and had a knack with them, whether fowling piece, rifle, or pistol; by the time I was nineteen—and aided by plenty of practice—I had the better of my tutor in the art, Nobby.

My new pistols, made by Messrs. Ferguson & Martin of Edinburgh, were a delight; I had not known that pistols were capable of delivering such accuracy. They took a ball of about twenty-eight to the pound and shot so consistently where I aimed—with only an occasional shot going wild due, perhaps, to some fault in the ball—that at fifteen paces I could time and again cut the heart out of playing cards. So



expert had we both become that we devised a new game—shooting from horseback, at the gallop, the target, a silhouette of a man. We had been at this for an hour and were resting now beneath the oak. Jeanne, followed by Celeste, had come up to us, drawn by the sound of our firing; behind her stood a scattering of our colored folk—those whose duties permitted them time off in the afternoon—which included Jim London and our new chef.

I wanted Jim for something of a confidential nature, so I walked over to him. "Marse Davy," he said, giving me his wide, good-natured grin, "I ain't aimin' evah to be on de wrong side of dem pistols when dey's in yo' han's."

"Well, Jim," I answered, laughing, "I cannot conceive of your doing anything which would ever put you in front of the muzzles of my pistols."

Lopez spoke. "You have great skill with them, sir." He always called me sir, never Marse David or Mister Innes.

"Eh," I said carelessly, "it is no credit to me. I have had guns since I was old enough to hold one, and plenty of game to shoot at to develop skill."

Then he said a surprising thing. "Could you hold, sir, on a man so well as you did on that wooden replica of one, whose head you filled with balls?"

Quiet fell with his question. Jeanne and Celeste, now at my elbow, ceased their chattering; there was a queer look on Jim London's face as his slow mind turned on some obscure possibility. I realized that the mulatto intended no impertinence; rather that he was, for some reason, interested in his question and my answer.

I held out my hands. "If it came to mortal combat," I said slowly, "if I had been wronged to the point where I desired the death of the man who had wronged me, I would not desire firearms; I would want him here under my hands."

He drew back at that; his eyes flicked to Celeste, to Jeanne, and back again to me. Then he managed a weak smile and said with his ready tongue, "I should prefer to confront your pistols, sir." I laughed, amused at his quickness. "See to it that you confront neither," I told him lightly.

I dispatched Jim on an errand and was turning back to Nobby when I saw a horseman come cantering down the back lane. I shouted, "Jeanne, it's Paul!" and rushed to meet him. He flung himself off his horse and threw an arm around me. "Davy," he cried, "I swear it's good to see you!" Then he fell to thumping me in a joyous, schoolboy way, telling me that marriage became me and asking when I would stop growing and how the weather was up there in the clouds. Jeanne came to make a trio of it, but with a mock pout and saying that she believed he was growing fonder of me than of her. Whereupon he caught her up and kissed her and said that she was more beautiful than ever.

Celeste pushed forward and threw a short, sharp question at him in French. He frowned at her. "Speak English," he said shortly, "in front of David; your patois must be difficult for him. . . . Yes, it was a good voyage; we touched at Jamaica, Martinique, Savannah, Jacksonville, and New Orleans. Trade was excellent. You both made good profits—high profits. David, the cotton states have gone quite mad. They will not even raise their own hogs any longer and begrudge land for corn. It's cotton, cotton, cotton. They think of nothing else; they speak of nothing else."

"It is making many wealthy," I said, "according to *Nile's Register*."

"It is making me wealthy," he grinned. "I got fantastic prices for merchandise, especially hams and bacon."

"Good," I said. "I and some of my neighbors have a venture in them ourselves come late fall. I have myself this year some five hundred hogs. And I am burning brick now for a larger curing shed."

"God's truth, Davy," he said, grinning, "I can't get over how well you and Jeanne look. Almost you persuade me into marriage. Could I have that sweet Quaker maid I think I would consider—" He broke off to greet Nobby, to whom he had taken a great liking. "Eh, blacksmith," he said, "we were just speaking of marriage. Does that lean, tall Yankee still do your courting?" For he had heard the story from us. We all roared and Nobby looked sheepish.



"Nobby," said my perspicacious wife, "does not really want to marry. Jeremy is part of his evasive tactics. He is as evasive as Paul."

Nobby scratched his head. "It ain't hexactly that, Miss Jeanne," he said. "More a matter, like o' weighin' one thing against hanother."

"Surely a laggard lover," I said. "Come along, Paul, you'll want food and rest." I looked around for Jim London but he had not returned. "Lopez," I said, "be good enough to take Mr. Gervaise's horse to the stables."

"Lopez!" Paul said and turned like a flash. The mulatto came forward smiling and saying, "Good day, sir. I hope you had a pleasant journey."

"God's truth!" Paul ground out in fury. "What did I tell you, Jeanne, Celeste? What did you promise me? What folly is this? Fools! Fools!"

Again Celeste flung a short, sharp sentence at him. So fast it was that I got none of it; Paul did, though. His clenched hands opened; he looked suddenly beaten. Jeanne, with a side glance at me, said rapidly, "I know we disobeyed you, Paul. I know you had other plans for him. But let us have him, at least, until he can train someone in cookery."

"What is this?" I demanded. "Have we robbed you, Paul?"

"No, no," he groaned. "No, David."

"Paul," Jeanne cut in sharply, "you are making much of little."

His head straightened. "Am I?" he replied somberly. "I think not."

"A family matter, M'sieu David," Celeste explained to me. "A little misunderstanding of no consequence."

Lopez reached out a hand for the bridle of the horse. Paul thrust him away. "Get back to your kitchen!" he snarled. "And keep out of my sight!"

"I do, sir, what I am told," the mulatto answered, smiling. "If you find my presence unwelcome remember that I am only obeying orders."

"Come, Paul," I said in my ignorance, "he is right. It is not his fault."

"It is a family matter, M'sieu David," Celeste put in again. "We will settle it in private."

"A good idea," I agreed. "But, Paul, explain to me whether Lopez is owned by you, by Jeanne, or by you both jointly."

"He is owned," Paul said, "by the devil."

Jeanne clutched his arm. "I have never seen you like this!" she stormed. "You act like a madman. Come with me; we will discuss this in your room. Presently you will have David believing that some awful calamity is about to fall on him due to Lopez's being here. What nonsense! Come!" He suffered himself to be led away.

"He seems to dislike you," I said to Lopez.

"It is not that," Celeste answered for him. "Pierre has been with us for many years. Paul is not always of judgment sound. Furthermore, he does not like to be disobeyed or thwarted."

I demanded with some shortness, "Is Lopez the property of Jeanne or of Paul?"

"Of madame," the Breton woman answered. "But you know those two, m'sieu: how close they are, how fond. What is one's is the other's and always has been with them."

I saw Paul an hour later. He was smiling and happy again; evidently the matter had been settled to his satisfaction. At any rate, he said no more of Lopez during the three days he was with us. He left on the Tuesday, promising to be back with us again in early summer.



I do not know how or when I first became aware of the feeling of something wrong in my house, of something going on that was furtive and dark, something evil. When I first felt it I laughed at myself and said I was growing fanciful, there being nothing on which I could put my finger. But the feeling persisted with me and would not be dismissed no matter how cogent the arguments I mustered against it. I would have spoken of it to Jeanne but I knew she would laugh at me, or having felt it herself, would ask for proof. I had no proof; I had nothing save a sense of dreadful unease. So I said nothing to anyone—not even Nobby.

Part of my feeling may have been caused by the sudden restlessness among my people, freedmen and slaves. My wagon-maker, an amiable giant, asked for a week off to visit his mother in the hamlet of Salisbury. He did not return. I thought that he had found a better job (he was free) and made no inquiries. Then Annabel came to me. She had been freed by my uncle's will. She said she wanted a rest; now that we had Lopez she was no longer necessary; she might return after a few months. Thinking it a case of jealousy, I could do nothing but let her go. So matters went; by late May I had lost three freedmen (which I was able to replace); and Annabel and one of my slaves had run off.

Presently tales began to come to me of other plantation owners suffering similar losses. Some had lost freedmen, about which there was little to do; some slaves. Now runaway slaves, like death and taxes, are a constant part of the plantation pattern, but the odd thing about these runaways was that none came back and none was caught. Alarmed at last we held a meeting of all slave owners and employers of

freedmen in our Neck. A check-up revealed that in the month of May plus the first twelve days of June not less than nine freedmen and three women had left their jobs, and eleven slaves were listed as having run off—a total of twenty-three.

We could not believe that this sudden epidemic was accidental; it was too widespread. Immediately we appointed a committee, of which I was one, to try and find some of these freedmen and free women. I found Annabel at Princess Anne; but there was no word of my wagon-maker in Salisbury. He had not been home. We located three freedmen: one had shifted to Newtown; two more were recovering from alcoholic sprees. Of the runaways we found not a sign. There was nothing else to believe but that slaver-kidnapers were working in our neighborhood after a lapse of almost twenty years.

With hot anger we mustered at Fairhope Academy to meet the emergency. Colonel Jardine was chairman of the meeting and wondrously fierce and inspiring he was, despite his sixty-five years. He organized us into seven patrols of seven mounted men each—one for every night in the week. We were to ride for four hours a night and the time of our commencing was to be kept secret. It might be at the fall of dark one night, the next in the early morning hours. Orders would come from him to the patrol commander an hour before dark concerning time and route.

“Let no freedman go without escort to his destination,” he told us. “Discourage as much as you can any movement on their part at this time. Explain that slaver-kidnapers are at work, clever ones. Try to dig out of your people what has occasioned their restlessness. I doubt you will get much from them, but try. Keep an eye on any strange Negroes or whites in your vicinity; question all closely. On patrol be faithful; follow your route; keep your eyes open; investigate any and all things suspicious. Do what I have told you, be close-mouthed, and this calamity which has fallen on us will cease in a week.”

He appointed me second in command to him and also



patrol commander. Being the first appointee I was given the first patrol—for the following night. Mr. Massingale, Dr. Ballard, Mr. Foxall, Nobby and Jeremy chose to ride with me; to make up my number I picked another man from Fairhope, young Tom Ford, a good rider, a keen sportsman, an excellent shot.

Though it was late when I got home, for we talked long after the meeting had been formally dismissed, Jeanne was waiting up for me. I told her part of what had transpired. She ridiculed the idea of slaver-kidnapers. "La," she said, "it's just coincidence, David; slaves and freedmen merely got restless, all at the same time. Put it down to spring fever."

"It's not quite that simple," I said, and pinched her cheek. "However, I'll know more after a week. I ride with my patrol tomorrow night."

"Tomorrow night!" she said, with a little gasping intake of breath.

"Now, now," I assured her, "don't be alarmed. You said yourself it was unlikely that there were slavers at work here."

"I do not comprehend your concern," she said. "What have you lost? Freedmen which were not yours and which you readily replaced, so many of them are there in Maryland now; one slave—a malcontent which you were going to free soon to be rid of him. What care you what happens to him or to the freedmen?"

"You do not understand, Jeanne, apparently. These freedmen are being kidnaped, we think, and are being sold back into slavery somewhere in the cotton states."

"La," she said, "what difference does it make? They will be just as happy. Life is no more difficult down there than here for them."

I said in astonishment, "Surely you do not mean that, Jeanne!"

"I do mean it," she replied. "They have little feeling. You are oversentimental, as are all Maryland masters."

I knew that she had a callousness toward the colored race,

as had Celeste and even Paul; I have remarked it in others, particularly from the West Indies, who had dealt with slaves newly over from Africa. Yet I could scarcely believe she meant what she said. For we—most of us, certainly—think a lot of our colored folk in our region; they are self-respecting and diligent and are not a race to us but persons and families. "I know how you have been trained," I said indignantly, "and perhaps you are not to blame for speaking as you do—though I do not think you quite mean it. Let me ask you: Could you sit by and see, for instance, Annabel and Jim London sold back into slavery as field hands, they who, above all, have served out their time as slaves and have now so fully earned their status as free men and women?"

She answered impatiently, "I do not think as you do, David, on the matter, but let that pass. I do not see the necessity for your riding at night and leaving me here alone. You know I'll have no sleep without you."

She could always soften me by mention of her dependence on me and she did so now. "My dear," I told her, "this is necessary. I am now under orders, just as a soldier is. I have no choice. But we ride only for four hours."

"Four hours," she said. "That is not so bad. You would be home before midnight."

"Unfortunately," I said, "I do not know what four hours they are to be. They may not begin until midnight, or even later."

"You do not know?"

"Colonel Jardine decides."

"Decides when?"

"I will not know until about nightfall tomorrow when I ride or what my route will be. There is great secrecy about this, Jeanne; you must not talk of what I tell you."

"It seems," she said with a little toss of her head, "that you have not much to tell me."

"Why should you wish to know more?" I asked reasonably, thinking that she was tired and fretful because of the lateness of the hour. "You will know when I leave and when I return."



"You are inaugurating this patrol," she replied. "Why should you be the one? If there is any danger it will be that first night; after that the slavers—if there are any—will either get out or be so cautious you will not find them. David, let someone else take the first patrol. Exchange with someone, I beg of you, David."

"Jeanne," I said, half exasperated, "how can I do that? I, who am second in command, and who must set an example?"

I do not think that she had hoped to change my mind. She said no more, just gave me an angry look and flounced up the stairway. For the first time in our marriage there was a coldness between us which endured more than a moment. She lay apart from me in our wide bed, did not answer me when I spoke, and presently fell asleep. I lay and tossed and thought for hours and finally fell into a heavy, unrestful sleep. When I awoke she had already gone downstairs. Yet when she joined me for breakfast there was no constraint upon her; she kissed me and chattered on and seemed in excellent spirits.

The day was one of small rain, slightly chill, so that in the morning and again toward evening patches of mist hung in the low places. I have often thought that the elements frequently conspire to help rogues; here would be a night to a slaver's wish—dark, wet, and misty. Nobby brought me Colonel Jardine's orders, heavily sealed, just at twilight. We were to ride at eleven-thirty of the clock, to patrol the main road eastward, and to visit every landing on our side of the Big Annemessex River of a public, semi-public, or isolated nature. There was soundness in these orders; the fact that no runaways had been caught, or had changed their minds and returned, offered pretty conclusive proof that they had been spirited from our neighborhood by boat or ship. Obviously, some landing not too distant was being used.

I sent Nobby to instruct the other members of the patrol to rendezvous at the forge at the time stated by our commander. About nine o'clock I walked to the stables and told Julius to have Kitty and Brown Jill saddled at fifteen minutes after eleven and to stand by until my return as I

did not know in what shape I would bring back the mares and I wanted them to have his personal attention. At the stated time an under-groom, young Milo, a bright lad, brought our mounts to the door. Ordinarily I would have thought nothing of the fact that Julius had not personally delivered the horses; he, as head groom, had considerable responsibility and was empowered to delegate some of it. But in my present state of unease I was both suspicious and irritable. I asked the boy, "Is Julius at the stables?"

He hemmed and hawed in the way an underling attempts to cover up the shortcomings of a well-liked superior. "Come along," I said. "We'll find him." Nobby and I mounted and, followed by the under-groom, rode to the quarters where Julius lived with Jim London and another bachelor.

A candle glowed through one front window of the quarters. I dismounted, gave my reins to Milo, and went inside. Jim and Julius lay across their beds; judging from their position, their stertorous breathing, and the smell of rum in the room, they were both dead drunk. I knew that both liked their glass of rum; once or twice I had seen Julius intoxicated, though never when on duty. But never before had I seen Jim London take too much spirits. I looked down on them both with hot anger, and seizing a wooden bucket which contained well water, I discharged the full contents into Julius' face. He shuddered, groaned, and gasped, yet did not sit up nor even open his eyes. I said furiously, "Well, my friends, I will give you more of the same, and you, too, Jim, till I either awaken you or drown you," and sent the boy for another bucket of water. This I dashed into Jim's face but got no more response from him than from Julius. Grimly I told the frightened boy, "Bring another."

"'Old on, Davy," Nobby said. He had tied the horses and had come inside. "Somethin's wrong. They look more than drunk to me. They looked drugged, Davy. I seen men like that before, I 'ave."

"Drugged?" I repeatedly sharply.

"Ay, Davy. Jim's no drunkard." He held up an empty



bottle of about a pint's capacity. "Two men would 'ave a 'ard time gettin' drunk on this."

"There may be others."

"Where? Drinkers don't 'ide their bottles. They empty them and toss them to the floor. A 'alf-drunk man ain't no more hartful than a drunk man. No, Davy; something queer 'as gone on 'ere."

"We have no time for investigation now," I said. "We are under orders and the rest of our patrol is doubtless waiting. Awake Hixon." To the under-groom I said, "Rouse Cornelius and David. Bring them here." The two were freedmen artisans in whom I had every confidence.

I was alone in the room when I became aware of a presence behind me in the doorway. Swinging around, I saw that the newcomer was the Breton woman, Celeste. "What do you here?" I asked her sternly.

"Madame sent me to ask if you had your oiled-silk rain cape, m'sieu," she replied, "and begs you not to ride without it."

"I have it, Celeste," I replied more gently.

She was looking at the two drenched figures on the beds. "What has happened?" she asked.

"Drunk," I answered. "Or drugged."

"I could tell you, m'sieu," she said. "I have some knowledge."

"Then tell me," I retorted impatiently. "I must ride."

She bent over them, studied each for a time, felt their pulses and brows. "Drunk only, I think," she said. "You can leave them safely. They will have recovered by the time you return."

"They will not be left," I told her. "I am rousing Hixon and two of the freedmen who will stay with them until I return."

"Quite unnecessary," she replied.

"I think they are drugged," I said.

"I assure you, m'sieu—"

"Despite your knowledge," I answered, "I think they are. Now off with you and leave this to me."

Hixon came in at this moment, his nightcap on, a coat thrown over his nightshirt. He was a little resentful at being dragged from his bed but I gave him no time for complaint. "Arm Cornelius and David when they arrive," I told him. "Arm yourself. And under no circumstance will more than one of you three move from this room until I return some four hours hence. You understand? Men in our country do not drug themselves; *ergo*, these two were drugged. For what purpose we can only surmise."

"Kidnapers?" Hixon asked, with a little gasp.

"It is possible," I said.

Behind me Celeste laughed. "You are fanciful, m'sieu," she said.

I turned to her. "Mademoiselle," I snapped at her, "*you* are impertinent. Take yourself off to the house where you belong."

She looked at me and I almost drew back at the deadly hatred in her eyes. It was there only a fleeting second and her face was impassive again. She left without another word.

I repeated my instructions to Hixon, then Nobby and I rode off to join our patrol.

Few men there are who do not find a thrill and a lift of spirit at sight of an armed cavalcade or excitement and a peculiar satisfaction in being part of one. Is some strong atavistic instinct appeased by the feel of the horse between one's knees, the weapon at one's side, and the knowledge that one rides on the grimmest of man's doings—battle? Infinitesimal or large, skirmish or drawn-out conflict, or even the probability of it, the thrill is there. Here was I, a man of some education, taught the ways of peace and the enduring worth of it, taught to turn the other cheek as a good Christian should (but rarely does, I have noticed), responding to an unholy excitement as small boys joyously respond to a parade. True, I was in the right of it and was but protecting my own; and this was scarcely war. But the fundamental elements were present. Violence might be meted out, and violence might be received. There was risk



to limb and life. Surely that thought should be sobering.

But only Mr. Foxall behaved with gravity. The rest of us jested with one another as we tightened girths and looked to our weapons, conscious of stimulation and elation. We were armed with pistols and fowling pieces loaded with buckshot—all, that is, save Mr. Foxall, who being a Quaker would not bear firearms against his fellow man and had instead a stout oak cudgel as a measure of forcible persuasion, though not deadly.

When all were ready I rode from the forge followed by the others in pairs: Nobby and Mr. Massingale; Dr. Ballard and Mr. Foxall; Jeremy and young Tom Ford. The rain which had endured all day, generally small but sometimes thickening, showed no sign of let-up. The wind was in the east; we rode directly into it so that in no time our faces were beaded with raindrops and those without capes had trickles of the chill water running down their necks. I do not think our spirits were dampened to any great degree, we being used to rain in our fickle climate, but our conversation was. Soon it died out altogether. I heard no more jesting or low laughs, only the creak of weighted saddles, the occasional clank of metal on metal, the slosh-slosh of hoofs along the wet road, and the blowing sound that horses make to clear their nostrils.

As for myself, I was curiously content riding there in the rain. It seemed to ease the lowness of spirit from which I had suffered of late. I like to be abroad at night; even as a young lad darkness held no terrors for me, so used had I become to being out at all hours on sporting expeditions. The deep-night darkness of a raccoon hunt, the early morning darkness of wildfowl shooting, the first thick, starless darkness of evening as I literally felt my way up the creek in my sloop after fishing a late tide—all these were familiar to me. I knew the night moods of woods, fields, and waters, in spring and summer, fall and winter, moonless and moonlit, dry and wet, frigid and warm.

Despite the rain and mist, there was little discomfort to any of us in this fragrant June night. We followed the route

laid out for us, dutifully called at the landings, sometimes to be greeted by the baying of hounds, other times to be received in dead silence. No one was at the landings, no one was abroad on the road; only one farm, where perchance a sick child lay, showed lights. I ordered our pace so as to reach the easternmost limits of our patrol in two hours. There we rested our horses for a quarter hour under a great oak. It was almost two of the clock as we started the homeward patrol. The rain had ceased while we rested though we had not realized the fact because of the prolonged dripping of the oak. Presently the clouds were rent and a handful of stars showed through.

We were abreast of Mr. Walston's plantation when Nobby spurred up to me and said, "Hearken, Davy, hearken!"

I drew in my horse and the others did likewise. We listened, through the thickness of the mist and the heaviness of the atmosphere, hands cupped to the shape of our ears. We heard at first nothing save the endless drip from the trees, the shrilling of tree toads, and the breathing of the horses, with now and then the wheezing of leather as a man moved in his saddle. Then there came to me the sound of hoofs, pounding fast and hard on the shell road, though far off. "One man only rides, Nobby," I said.

He answered after a moment, "One man, Davy. 'E comes fast."

"Spread across the road," I commanded. "Let us learn his business."

They deployed across the road on either side of me. I loosened my pistol in its holster and felt for the cap on the nipple. And now the rider was almost upon us. I shouted, "Hold!" He heard me and leaned back on his reins and brought his panting horse to a stop. Before I could speak he cried, "Marse David? Is that you, Marse David?"

The voice was that of the young under-groom who had saddled up for me. "Yes, Milo," I answered and added testily, "I hope what you have to say is important. Else I will have something to say to *you* for racing one of my best steeplechasers on a night like this at risk to his knees."



He escaped a wiggling; what he had to say *was* important. Hixon, my overseer—with characteristic thoroughness and perhaps an eye to his own skin—had not been content with the assistance of Cornelius and David. He had quietly awakened other trustworthy slaves and freedmen and had stationed them as sentinels at approaches to the house. Milo was sent to the wharf on our creek. Soon he sought shelter from the rain in the cabin of one of our sloops. He had been there more than an hour and was beginning to doze when he heard the muffled creaking of oar locks and the sound of low voices, and, peering out the companionway, saw that a six-oared barge had drawn up at the wharf's end.

Now Milo was a youth of considerable courage, being not only an under-groom but also one of our best jockeys. Instead of bolting the companionway and sitting safe and snug, he climbed to the wharf, wormed his way along one side of it, and hid behind some crab barrels. By this time the barge had made fast and in a moment two men clambered to the wharf. They stood for a while and talked, Milo said. One man then dropped back to the boat; the other walked rapidly toward the manor. Milo fell in behind him.

What impressed Milo particularly was the fact that this burly man, surely a stranger to our neighborhood for Milo did not recognize his shape, his voice, or walk, should stride with so certain a purpose along our lane, neither hesitating nor taking a wrong turning but proceeding briskly and with the utmost familiarity; nor did he pause until he had come to the bake-house. There, under the small porch, he halted. Milo crossed the lane and, coming up behind the bake-house, wormed his way along the far wall until he stood within ten feet of the porch, though safe enough because of the rain and darkness.

Those friendly elements, however, proved unfriendly a few minutes later. The burly man was joined by a second man. Where he came from Milo did not see; who he was Milo could not see. The burly man's voice was quite audible to the boy; the newcomer's tones were lower, not recognizable; only part of what he said Milo distinguished. He talked

rapidly for a time, the burly man remaining silent save for an occasional explosive oath.

"Let it go for tonight," the burly man said when the other had at last finished. "There will be other times. What you propose is too risky. I would rather take them from under the nose of the overseer now than to trust to later when that big young man has returned and is supposed to be asleep."

The newcomer replied vehemently, evidently urging the burly man on.

"No," said the burly man dryly, "I have no evidence that he is a simple, trusting fellow—or a blockhead. His actions tonight indicate the contrary. It was not my failure but yours—by your own account. Was it clever to drug a man on duty? Was it not likely that he would be inquired for? I think it was. No, no! Keep those two for a month. We work no more until these patrols cease, until the furor dies away. Tonight is the last for a time and I am anything but happy about *it*."

The other man shifted his position and Milo could now make out what he was saying, though he did not recognize the voice. There was some malice in the newcomer's tone as he said, "What I told you were not suggestions. They were commands. Not my commands, but hers. Do I understand that you are going to disobey them?"

For a long time the burly man made no reply save to curse with bitter vehemence. He said at last, "I had hopes she was out of this."

The other man laughed. "Out of it? Anything but! She has not the slightest intention of letting the power out of her hands. Beyond everything in her life she loves that sense of power she has. We are as much under her direction now as we ever were. And perhaps it is as well. We still need her strength. Some of us have evidently acquired scruples."

"What I have acquired," the burly man retorted, "are not scruples but caution."

"Jim London must be got out of here tonight," the new-



comer stated flatly. "The other man does not matter. Now, do you carry out your orders or not?"

"I will carry them out," the burly man retorted with some sulkiness, "though I think her strategy is at fault. But never mind—let that go. I will take those ten blacks from Sudler's Landing, drop down the river, and lay off the mouth of this creek. Then, with a half dozen men, I'll come up the creek in the barge and, if all is quiet, seize London and the other man. You will be around to help?"

"I'll be here."

"You are certain that cursed patrol will be off the roads by half past three?"

"Positive."

"Dawn comes early now. I will have to risk Sudler's Landing at that time or earlier. We must be in the Sound by daybreak." He moved abruptly away and the other man followed him.

You must not suppose that Milo gave me the story as set down here, or that he was, in his excitement, little more than coherent. I got the details by cross-questioning and putting my own interpretation on his answers. "Milo," I said, when I had at last drawn from him all he knew, "you have done a fine night's work, as has Mr. Hixon. You have shown not only real bravery but a high grade of intelligence. I will see that you are well rewarded. Now ride home—at a trot because a race horse needs knees—and keep your mouth shut when you reach there. We shall attend to the rest."

MY troop came up to me full of questions because they had caught only a portion of my conversation with Milo. I paid little attention to them; I was busy with my own grave thoughts. Who was the man who had talked with the burly man? Obviously he had drugged Jim and Julius; obviously he was one of the gang of slaver-kidnapers. Was he one of my freedmen, one of my slaves? Was he from an adjoining plantation, from the village, or from a distance? If from a distance, as I wished to believe, how had he become so familiar with the manor? And how had the burly man gained his knowledge of our lane?

As for this woman who gave commands to which the burly man had been quick to submit despite his inclination in the contrary direction, I was entirely at sea. I could make no sense of it and thought Milo had not heard aright. I simply could not force myself to see Celeste in the role of the slavers' queen. Knowing her, as I had learned to know her in the past weeks, I could not think she had the brains for it. She was ruthless, savage, greedy; I might stretch a point and believe that she had been once connected with the slavers. But to think of her as the leader of this desperate band I could not. Undoubtedly Milo had misunderstood. Or there was a queen up there somewhere on the Nanticoke. I put thoughts of the woman out of my mind and went back to consideration of the burly man and his companion.

Who were these men? My mind went around and around, accepting, discarding. Finally cold logic told me that there had been a point of contact with all plantations which had lost men; doubtless there was one with mine. But I could not see how this evil could have sprung from mine. Who of my people had the leisure or brains for it?



There was no time for further reflection. Sudler's Landing was two miles from where we were. Mr. Massingale said, "Davy, I fancy by Sudler's Landing they mean the old tobacco wharf, do they not? The new landing is immediately in front of James Sudler's house."

"Yes," Mr. Foxall put in. "They would have no traffic with that good man and militant Christian, James Sudler."

"Undoubtedly the old tobacco wharf is the place," I agreed. "Let us ride there. Who knows the road? I have not been near the place in ten years."

Nobby, who had visited all the neighborhood plantations in his capacity as blacksmith or iron-worker, said he knew the way. I called him up to ride with me. When we had fallen into our formation and had moved off, I went over my reasoning with him point by point, leaving out mention of the woman. I asked finally, "Nobby, what do you make of it?"

"I dunno, Davy," he answered. "But I can tell you this: it is the work of a competent gang. They 'ad their first slip-hup tonight—and a minor one at that—in two months of 'ighly profitable hoperation. No Joe Johnson is in this. These willuns leave no track. Mark you, Davy, you will get nothing from Julius or Jim that will be 'elpful. Why? Because they know nothing. They 'ad a bottle o' rum they were savin'; someone drugged it."

"Why did they choose tonight to drink it? I'll tell you why. Someone started them drinking. Someone *had* to start them. The *coup* was planned for tonight."

"You will find," Nobby said, "that 'oever did left no impression on their minds. If the rum 'ad failed, Davy, then the drug would 'ave been put in their food or water. They were meant to go tonight. But slavers o' the brains o' these make hallowances for slip-hups. That's why you'll get nothing from Julius and Jim."

"Tonight, if God wills that these rogues fall into our hands," I said savagely, "we will give no quarter nor ask it. We will teach them a lesson that will keep their comrades off this Neck the rest of their lives."

"So be it," Nobby said solemnly.

The clouds had thickened again and by the time we reached the old wharf rain was falling. Truly the elements were on the side of the scoundrelly slavers; a man could scarcely see twenty feet in front of him. We found no one there, on land or on water. "Well," I said dejectedly, "they have either gone or have yet to come. I see nothing to do now save wait. Dismount and ease your horses."

Fate had willed, however, that we were not to be disappointed. The first part of our battle was ludicrous in its ease and simplicity. Perhaps half an hour had gone by when we heard the jolting, grinding noise of a wagon close at hand. We were at the side of the road in a clump of pines. I gave the command to mount. "Now," I added, "Nobby, Dr. Ballard, and I will take them from the front; the rest of you, under Mr. Massingale, from the rear. You stay where you are; we'll ride up fifty paces. When I shout, close in on them. Club them with your weapons. Don't shoot or you will alarm the barge."

We took up our new position just in time, though so thick the night I doubt if we could have been observed unless silhouetted against sky or water. Two mounted men led the wagon; I could not see how many were behind. When the two were abreast of us, we rode out on them with low shouts. I smashed the first man from his saddle with my fist; the second man had no time to so much as check his horse before Nobby broke his head with the butt of his fowling piece. There being but one horseman behind he fared badly, what with the righteous indignation of our good Quaker and young Ford's youthful enthusiasm to "bag him a slaver." Meanwhile Mr. Massingale, holding a pistol to the driver's head, brought the wagon to a halt.

While Mr. Foxall reassured the terrified captives in the covered wagon, Nobby and I dismounted and stood over our prisoners. Nobby's man lay very still but mine was groaning. We had not failed to bring a length of rope; I called for it and in a moment Jeremy brought it. "Bind them both," I told him. "And use those sailors' knots you know so well how to tie." I went back then to see how the third rogue had fared



and found Tom Ford sitting, quite needlessly, on his chest, for there wasn't a motion in the man. "I doubt," I told young Tom dryly, "that he'll need watching for some time to come. However, have Jeremy bind him."

The driver, a Negro, which none of us knew, accepted his bonds calmly. We then took the captives from the wagon and lined them up along the road. There were ten of them, men and women, all heavily manacled. "Dupes!" I said to them angrily. "What tale did you listen to that brought you here!"

I got little from them. The slaves said that they had been promised freedom, that the slaver had posed as an Abolitionist. The old story. The Free Men of Color had been lured by the promise of better living somewhere in the North. They knew nothing of the men who had made promises to them, could not identify them. "When first you were approached," I asked, "was it by a colored man or a white man?"

Eight said they had been approached first by a colored man, two said by a white man. That was the sum total of worthwhile information I gathered from them. Nor was the gentle Mr. Foxall able to learn more.

"Is it confusion that makes them so vague?" I asked him. "Or is it reluctance to talk?"

"Some of both," he said. "There is instinctive distrust of the white man—and why not?—even when the white man performs an act of kindness toward them."

"No two of the eight approached first by the colored man agrees on his looks," I said. "They have him short and tall, lean and robust. They agree on nothing."

"So each in his mind observed the slaver," Mr. Foxall said. "They saw him differently. But every one would know him again—even if they would not identify him to you."

We left Mr. Foxall and Jeremy to guard our prisoners and to keep an eye on the colored folk. The rest of us—with Tom Ford driving the wagon—proceeded to our ambush on the wharf. The wagon we placed so that in silhouette it would be against the sky when seen from the water; having tied up the horses the five of us took positions on the end of the decrepit wharf. "Look to your guns," I said. "This will not be so easy."

If I mistake not we have resolute men to deal with on that barge."

The fine rain continued to fall; the night was full of faint splashes and a steady dripping from wharf to the water below. Strain as we might we could hear no sounds a couple of hundred feet from us; even the stamping and movement of our horses tied in the pine grove near at hand were indistinguishable because of the multitude of small sounds about us. While water holds what light there is, extracting it from the faintest gleam in the sky, the wide creek was, under the mist and rain, black as the Pit. It was no wonder that the first intimation we had of the barge's presence was a low hail.

I located the boat then; it stood slightly downstream and about a hundred feet out. While I was peering at it the hail came again. "Answer it," Nobby said urgently. I called, "Ahoy! All's clear!"

Sharply came the answer from the barge, "Show your signal, then, fool!"

"They have us," I groaned in Nobby's ear.

"'E said, '*show your signal*,'" replied the quick-thinking Nobby. "'Ow could you show a signal save by a lantern, Davy? Let's chance it. Tell 'im our light is out."

I did so in a gruff voice and added, "Come ashore. There is a patrol near by."

A command was given and the barge moved toward us, slowly, though, and suspiciously. Then, suddenly, a finger of light shot from the boat and fell on us. It was a beam from a thing I had heard of but had not seen—a thing called a bull's eye or dark lantern. At the back of the interior was a strong reflector, in front was a slide. By pushing the slide aside a shaft of light shot forth. That lantern was our undoing; it swept over us mercilessly, pointing, probing. Then it winked out and a strong voice bellowed, "Treachery! Back oars!" A pistol boomed and the ball whistled between Nobby and me; another spoke, and then came a volley.

"Fire!" I shouted. "Rake them fore and aft!"

Dreadful havoc our volley of buckshot must have created in that barge, aimed by men accustomed to taking the swift



canvasback duck and gray goose in the half-light of dawn. Cries of pain, wailing, frightened shouts came to our ears. "Back oars, you fools!" the strong voice cried. "Row or die!" I fired my second barrel, aiming by the sound of his voice. There was another outbreak of cries, cursing and groaning, followed by the sound of a heavy splash, then the rhythmic working of oar locks though not by all oars, I'll warrant. The tide, almost slack, did not hinder them. In a moment they were out of range.

I felt shaken and a little nauseated, so that for a moment I had to lean against a piling. Then I thought of my men, straightened up, and asked, "Anyone hit?" Young Tom Ford answered, his voice a little quavery, "I have a pistol ball in the stock of my gun and a splinter driven deep into my hand."

"Anyone else hit?"

Mr. Massingale gave a long, low sigh. "I am nicked," he said, "in the thigh."

Dr. Ballard said at once, "See, Nobby, can you light a fire on shore. There is dry straw in the wagon, I think. In the meantime I'll try to stop the bleeding." He moved to Mr. Massingale's side.

There was dry straw in the wagon and from beneath the landward end of the wharf we drew an armful of dry faggots and pieces of board. Both Nobby and I carried tinder boxes. While he ignited the straw with flint, steel, and tinder, I shaved a couple of dry sticks. We built the fire under the wagon, and when it went well, moved the horses forward and drew the wagon away. Soon we had a blaze that defied the rain and gave Dr. Ballard light to look at Mr. Massingale's wound. "You will not ride for a while," he told Mr. Massingale at last, "but the wound is painful rather than dangerous. You were hit with a rifle ball of small caliber and it has popped right through." He turned to me. "We escaped lightly, David. I should not have liked to have been in that barge. I'll guarantee that there was scarcely an unwounded man in it after our last volley."

I agreed with a nod of my head. I did not want to talk

about it; the cries of the wounded still rang in my ears.

So terrible a defeat had we inflicted on this band that never did they, or any other of similarly organized nature, put foot on our Neck of land again. The three white scoundrels we had captured were not handed over to the law; we feared its slowness and its susceptibility to influence. Colonel Jardine sat as judge upon them and ordered thirty lashes for each. Punishment was carried out three days later publicly; they were then transported by wagon to Westover and ordered out of the county forthwith. The Negro driver turned out to be a runaway from Accomac County, Virginia, and was returned to his master. How many on the barge were killed or wounded we never learned. The mere fact that none of those on it ever returned, though doubtless craving revenge, showed the severity of the lesson we had taught them.

As the final curtain closes the play, with clean-cut positiveness and no chance of a misunderstanding, so did the epidemic of runaway slaves and absentee freedmen cease. Those few slave owners who, when in dire need of money, had been quietly selling slaves South, abandoned that habit with dispatch. Even legitimate slave traders gave our Neck a wide berth and would have no dealings with anyone there.

Of course I got no information of worth from Jim or Julius, though I worked on them for hours. It was their own rum they had drunk. I asked had they drunk other spirits earlier that evening. Both denied that they had. I asked them why they had chosen this particular evening to drink the rum they had been saving, or rather, which Julius had been saving, as the bottle was his. After much insistence and probing I drew from them the fact that the bottle had been on the table when they had returned together from their supper. (Both were fed from the manor kitchen.) Had they left it there earlier? No, they had not. Who, then, removed it from its hiding place and put it there? They did not know. Who, in addition to themselves, knew that they had a bottle and where it was secreted? No one. The bottle was on the table; they had a swig each, then others, until the bottle was empty.



After this inquisition I dropped the matter. I was confident that the kidnaping had come to an end. If at times I wondered who the burly man had been and who his companion, I was quick to believe—for vague reasons of my own—that both, doubtless, had been on the barge, and perhaps paid with their lives for the freedom they had made of my property. As for the woman Milo had mentioned, more and more she became to me a figment of his imagination. I abandoned all the lines of investigation I had laid out. The truth was that I *wanted* to know no more, perhaps subconsciously fearing where my investigation might lead me. In that I was but human. I had much at stake.

I had earned the ill will of Celeste by my abruptness with her at the Quarters; perhaps I had earned it earlier by the mere fact of marrying her mistress. If so, it had been fairly well hidden; now it was open and malignant. Lopez, too, seethed with the depth of his hatred of me, though more guarded by far than Celeste. What had turned him so completely against me I did not know. I noticed it first on the day the three kidnapers were flogged. I was mounted on Kitty and so was on the outskirts of the watching crowd. He stood near me. At every stroke of the cat-o'-nine-tails he flinched as though he himself were being whipped; as the punishment went on he grew more and more disturbed and paler until he was a sickly gray. I touched him finally with my crop. "I would not be here myself," I said, "if it were not a duty. I take no pleasure in the sight though the scoundrels well deserve it. Why do you stay if it affects you so?"

He looked up at me, his face full of blended hate and fear, and in a moment moved away without answering.

The lowering aspect of these two, never changing in my presence, never lightened by a smile however brief or a volunteered word, very soon began to annoy and irritate me. I dreaded going to Jeanne about it. She had not been herself of late; she had lengthy moods of coldness, punctuated with flashes of temper and irritability, softening only when she became ardent, returning to her distant manner when the demands of her warm nature had been satisfied. I thought

her coming down with some malady, so moody was she, and begged her to see Dr. Ballard, but she would have none of him, and was angry with me for the suggestion.

One morning, being newly aggravated by some action of Celeste's, I got up my courage and went looking for Jeanne, determined to have the matter out with her. I met her in the hall; she, it appeared, was looking for me. "David," she said, "I have just received a message from Paul. He cannot come to us this summer and has asked me to go to Annapolis and spend two or three weeks with him."

"I don't see how we can do it right now," I replied. "Harvesting of wheat is going forward. We have immense crops this year on both plantations and I should be at this very moment helping Judah at the Little Manor."

"I do not propose that you go," she replied. "I propose going without you, taking Celeste and Pierre, both of whom, I notice, have become annoying to you."

"But," I protested, "we have never been separated since our marriage, Jeanne. I wonder that you should want to go alone."

"I need a change," she said. "I have not been beyond Princess Anne since we returned from our wedding trip. I have not been used to such quiet and isolation."

"I am sorry," I said contritely. "I should have realized that the life you now lead is widely different from your former life, with its constant change, excitement, and gaiety. Jeanne, I have been remiss. I should have taken you to Annapolis, Baltimore, or Philadelphia this spring. In the future I shall manage better. Part of each summer we shall spend in White Sulphur Springs. And, harvest or no harvest, I'll go with you now."

"Please, David," she said, "let me go alone. We shall both benefit by our absence for a short time from each other. Also, I feel that if I do not give you a rest from Celeste and Pierre you are going to demand that I discharge them. That I cannot do, David, where Celeste is concerned. Lopez will leave in the autumn—when he has taught our new girls in the



kitchen. So, see the wisdom of what I say and fall in with my plans."

There was nothing to do save consent, and that I did as gracefully as possible. I put her, Celeste, and Lopez on my brig early the following morning to get the tide. I had not seen Jeanne so gay in weeks. "You seem," I told her, more than a little cast down, "very glad to leave me."

"La, David," she replied lightly, "you know better than that. I am excited, though. It will be nice to see Paul—to be back in Annapolis—to take up, even in a measure, the life we used to have. But only for a short while." She kissed me absently and pushed me to the rail. "You must go now," she added. "Up anchor, Captain Holland."

The manor seemed very empty, very quiet without her. The sinking feeling that had been with me on the ship as I bade her good-by grew and grew until by nightfall I was acutely miserable. I told myself that I was being ridiculous, but deep within me was the certain knowledge that something was awry. Suddenly I was done with all circumlocution and vagueness. I went to our great bedroom—so lonesome without her, and made more so by the lingering fragrance of her favorite perfume. There I sat down to face matters, to ask myself the questions I had evaded so long.

Was Paul one of the leaders of the powerful slaver-kidnaper band Mr. Samuels had told me about? Were Jeanne and Celeste his partners? Was Lopez an associate? I had at long last brought my suspicions into the open and I found that I could contemplate them with some degree of calmness.

I will not weary you with my arguments, pro and con. If you have followed my narrative at all closely you have already drawn your own conclusions. When I went to bed at last, hollow-eyed and sick at heart, I had answered all three questions in the affirmative—answered them so completely that there was not even the shadow of a doubt in my mind then or later.

In the morning I sifted matters again. Lopez undoubtedly was the one the burly man had spoken with the night Jim

and Julius had been drugged. Lopez or Celeste had done the drugging. Lopez had engineered all the kidnapings in our neighborhood with Celeste as aide, though how she functioned I did not know. Jeanne's part in it was apparently passive though she was equally culpable: she took her share of the profits. Paul, undoubtedly a leader of the band, had not wanted me plundered. He had been furious that Lopez had been brought to the manor. Yet he had been dominated by Celeste. What hold had the ugly Breton woman on him? Was she in reality the slavers' queen? What hold, if any, had she on Jeanne? What had brought so lovely, and otherwise so fastidious, a woman as my wife into this horrible traffic? What had kept her in it? Excitement and adventure had influenced Paul; money had influenced Celeste. What was it that had influenced Jeanne? Money? Money for the jewels she loved so extravagantly? Excitement? What?

I had to stop my endless conjecturing or I would have gone mad. I moved that afternoon to the Little Manor, having told Jonas and little Jonas, and the rest of the manor servants, to take a holiday until their mistress returned. I plunged at once into the reaping, working shoulder to shoulder with the others, arising in the morning when they did, going to the fields with them, stopping only when Judah laid down his scythe. I do not know what the others thought of me—perhaps that I was mad, that the broiling sun had touched my brain. I had little word for them. When I had supped, I went to bed and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion, awakening only at the clangor of the rising bell. I do not remember what I thought of as I reaped. Perhaps nothing beyond the confines of that yellow world of wheat. Partridges whirled away and rabbits scuttled ahead of me and I looked at them vaguely as though they had never given me pleasure and as though I scarcely knew them.

By the time the reaping was finished I had worked from me much of my load of despair. And now my head came up again and I once more became aware of what went on around me. Here were Kate, Judah, Martin, and the others, warm toward me, though wondering. I smiled at Kate who



stood on the back steps with me and told her how well she looked as though I had just seen her after a long absence; then I bade her send Martin to Nobby and ask him to have supper with me, and could she let us have broiled squab and a strawberry pie.

For evidently while I had toiled certain things had resolved themselves in my innermost mind. Above all, I was certain of this: that I had and would hold Jeanne's love. All signs told that; nothing denied it. Here was the one firm element I had to work with. And work with it I would.

## 16

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JEREMY, having shown commendable resolution in our foray against the slavers, got considerable profit from it. With some misgivings I had, at his request, included him in my patrol, for none of us looked upon Jeremy as a man of war. He, however, had not only proved valiant but also practical. When we had left him with Mr. Foxall to guard the prisoners and the colored folk, he had rounded up and tethered the three saddle horses belonging to our captives which otherwise might have escaped us. Then, hearing the heavy volleys we were exchanging with the barge, he feared that we were outnumbered. So, with Mr. Foxall's permission, he had ridden to our help and into a rifle ball which had ripped the heel from one of his boots, branding his own heel with a livid and painful mark over two inches long.

For his service, Colonel Jardine subsequently awarded him his choice of the captured riding horses complete with saddle, bridle, and holstered horse-pistol. Young Tom Ford was given another. The draught horses and wagon and the third riding horse were sold at auction. The money was to be divided between Milo and Hixon for their fine aid, but as

I had rewarded them both with substantial sums, I refused the gift for them. With some of the money we bought the convalescent Mr. Massingale a piece of plate as a memento of the foray; the rest was, by unanimous vote, divided between young Ford and Jeremy, both having less of the world's goods than the rest of us. In consequence we beheld Jeremy one day riding down the village street, garbed in a new blue coat of surpassing brilliance, a pair of excellent cord breeches, top boots, and a tall, glossy beaver hat. He looked neither to right nor left as he passed Niles' store—where Dr. Ballard and I happened to be standing—sitting his horse like some haughty, if slightly Bacchic, Roman emperor, his great red nose shining like a beacon.

"Damme," said Dr. Ballard, grinning, "think you that he goes courting, Davy? He will be irresistible now to every spinster over forty on the Neck."

"Hal" I returned. "He will be riding soon to Snow Hill to show his affluence to the widow."

"Look at the old satyr," Dr. Ballard murmured, "posing and simpering before those two pretty maids. He has an eye for them all, young and old."

Jeremy had drawn up before Prudence and Betty Jones and was leaning to one side of his saddle, hand on hip, in a most elegant posture. "I hope they understand his Latin," the doctor said, "because it is more than I can."

"Don't belittle his learning," I said. "Have you not heard that Daniel Sebastian has hired him as usher for the Academy?"

"I have heard," he grunted. "I would withdraw my son were it not that Daniel himself is a sound pedagogue. How does it happen that young Thompson is leaving? I like that fellow; I think he has the makings of an excellent school-master."

I said, "You have not heard? It is a rare story. Young Thompson is, as you know, a very great Nimrod. He had the habit of taking his flintlock to the schoolroom and from the window shooting an occasional rabbit, partridge, squirrel, plover, and whatnot."



"Fair enough," the doctor put in. "Daniel sets a poor table. The lad was but within his rights."

"One day, just before the closing of school, while the classes droned sleepily over their lessons, Daniel, happening to glance out the window, saw his one slave asleep under a tree. The hoe, which should have been employed on the weeds of the garden, was hung on a limb above him and waved to and fro in the breeze. That hoe seemed to flaunt defiance to Daniel. He is an irascible man, as you know; he seized a seasoned cane which had warmed many an errant urchin's breeches, probably my own included, and set out with vengeance in his eye.

"Wishing to take the culprit in the very act, Daniel detoured through the garden and, bending very low, began to creep upon the slumbering Negro, quite unaware that at this moment young Thompson had drawn a bead on a fat young rabbit busy with the lettuce. The rabbit heard Daniel's approach and began to run; Thompson, seeing his dinner escaping, swung his gun with the rabbit's course and let go. Daniel was taken in the stern. It is rumored that his good wife picked something like threescore birdshot from his ample posterior."

Dr. Ballard threw back his head and roared. "So Jeremy becomes underteacher," he said, "on a random shot."

"And on his present popularity," I said.

"Is he leaving Nobby?"

"Not he. He will not chance Sebastian's table."

The doctor broke off the conversation to watch the approach of the two girls and swept off his hat gallantly when they had come close. "Were I younger," he told them, "I would be hard-pressed to choose between demure blonde and vivacious brunette."

"La, sir," said Betty, laughing, "you might not have had your choice."

Prudence moved aside to speak to me and we left the two to their badinage. She grew lovelier and richer, I thought, with each passing month. I also thought she was quieter; her charming smile did not come quite so readily and the former

gayness had gone from her speech. She gave me the greeting her father always had for me, "David, I hope I see thee well."

"Well enough, thank you," I replied. "I need not ask that question of you."

"I am well," she said. "Thee are at the Little Manor now, David?"

"Yes," I answered. "Jeanne is with her brother in Annapolis."

She was looking at my face so intently that I said, "Have I changed so, Prudence?"

"Thee has changed," she replied. "Older and graver thee has become, David, and there are a few lines on thy face. But they are manly lines and are not unbecoming." She gave a little sigh and added, "We are both older, David."

"Ay," I said, "but you will look young at fifty."

She smiled. "I do not feel young at twenty. 'Tis responsibility which ages us, if nothing more than the responsibility of being adult."

I looked at her keenly. "And the decisions consequent thereon," I said. "Then it is true, Prudence, that you are about to marry Mr. Dennis."

She drew herself up a little at that, as though I had no longer any right to question her on such a subject. But all she said, and that dully, was, "Perhaps. And now, good day to thee, David. I must do my buying. Come, Betty."

Dr. Ballard crossed to me. He gazed after Prudence and remarked, "Just to look at her makes the sap rise in these old bones of mine, David. Her mother was just such another Quaker lass, as beautiful as one of those Dutch China dolls my wife has on her mantel. She could have had her pick of any of us young bloods on the Neck or in the county. But she chose to marry sedate, solid, and substantial John Foxall. And who is to say she was not right? I have heard it said that Prudence is to wed young Dennis. A brilliant match for her and equally good for him. She will bring new blood to a fine family. There was a time when I thought you would marry her, David."



There being nothing to say to that somewhat blundering remark, I said nothing.

Nobby was shoeing Kitty. I stood by idly watching him while Kitty, her head turned, watched us both, her ears flicking back and forth as though following our conversation. We were talking of racing and of how I must get my stable back into it and enter some of my horses in the fall meets. The afternoon was pleasantly cool for early July; on the limb of a linden hard by the wide doors of the forge, a cardinal was recourting his mate. "Pretty girl, pretty girl, sweet, sweet," he whistled, and I thought she would not long resist *that* blandishment.

A shadow fell athwart the doorway and presently Jeremy, clad in his new clothing and mounted on his new horse, came into view. "Ah, Jeremy," I said, "where away? I see you have horse-pistol and saddlebags."

"I ride," he answered importantly, "on business for Mr. Sebastian. Nobby, I shall be away a couple of days. I have several calls to make."

"Thus old Sebastian breaks in all his ushers," I grinned. "They are first bill collectors, second underteachers."

Nobby laughed and Jeremy frowned at me. "You are pleased to jest, David," he rebuked me.

"Well," I said, "if I am wrong I beg your pardon. But it was a reasonable supposition. How is Daniel? Has he recovered from young Thompson's aim?"

"He has suffered severely from that young man's indiscretion," Jeremy replied.

"Still takin' 'is meals a-standin' hup?" Nobby asked.

Jeremy did not deign to answer, being somewhat lacking in a sense of humor. "I ride, gentlemen," he said. "Expect me not for at least two days. Nobby, *ex necessitate rei*." He rode off with dignified gestures of farewell to us.

Nobby went back to shoeing Kitty. I said, struck with a sudden thought, "Jeremy may have business for Daniel, but I'll wager, Nobby, he ends up at the Swan Inn. He'll not be able to resist showing his finery to the widow."

"Blow me!" said Nobby, lowering Kitty's near forehoof to the ground. "I 'adn't thought o' that, Davy. And wot a tale 'e'll 'ave for 'er." He chuckled. "I should like to be there to 'ear 'im. 'E'll lay it on thick, 'e will, complete with Latin. Shouldn't be surprised if 'e impresses the widow, the way 'e 'andles facts. Facts, Davy, are to Jeremy the groundwork on which to lay a fabric o' fawncy. 'E does it so well I love to listen to 'im. The widow will 'ave some first-rate hentertainment."

"Well," I retorted indignantly, "I have never seen your equal as a suitor! You bring to your wooing all the warmth of a toad. It serves you right if Jeremy walks off with the widow right under your nose."

He looked at me. "There's no 'arm in Jeremy."

"Think you so?" I jeered. "How long since you have been at Snow Hill?"

"A matter o' three months," he replied. "Time runs on so fast. Wot with one thing and hanother I 'aven't got round to it, Davy, though it is on me mind."

"On your mind!" I retorted. "A fat lot of good that will do you. Come! I'll ride with you to Snow Hill this very afternoon."

"Why didn't you say you was restless, Davy," he replied, "and wanted a journey? Surely, I'll go with you—"

"You'll go with *me*?" I bellowed. "It is *I* who is courting the widow?"

"I 'ave thought so at times," he replied, scratching his head.

"Very well," I said, offended. "I will not meddle in the future. But do not come to me moaning and sighing if your vacillation costs you far more than you expect."

The twinkle in his eyes deepened. "I 'ave noticed your restlessness, me lad," he said, "for several days now. I think, Davy, you are in need o' some diersion. I don't say that I would not welcome meself a slight change. So while I get into me better clothes do you ride back and get your saddlebags and fetch me Brown Jill."

I laughed. "So I have shaken you, old fox," I said. "Very



well; we will confound Jeremy by our presence. . . . Have you finished with Kitty?"

"Ay, Davy. I think she will reach a little better with the set o' those shoes."

It was nine o'clock that evening as we left the ferry on the Snow Hill side. The ride, the change, had done me good by taking me out of myself. In truth, there is no specific so potent for me as the back of a horse and a pleasant wilderness to ride him through. Are you harassed by care? Take note of the birds, the rabbits, and the squirrels. Do they not live—and pleasantly—so largely on faith? Try, then, for yourself less worry and more faith. In the great simplicity of Nature you will lose sight of your own complexities. Jog to the trot of your horse, with the merriment of the birds all around you, and the breeze coming to you strong with the scent of pine, myrtle, and sun-warmed shrubbery, and your face will smooth out as if magic fingers had passed over it—as indeed they have—erasing every frown line. Nobby says there is virtue even in the smell of a horse, that stables are most healthful places, and that grooms live very long. So I have remarked myself, save in the case of black Tom Hill who was stamped on by one of Mr. Massingale's stallions.

The door of the inn stood open to the soft summer night. A half dozen chairs had been placed beneath a magnolia tree; men sat in them and talked in soft, unhurried voices. The dank smell of the river was shot through with the heavy fragrance of magnolia blossoms; cicadas were in strident note and mocking birds sang, as they will at night particularly in July. We surrendered our horses to a groom and went into the inn. Behind her cozy bar, Mistress Swann sat, discoursing amiably with the village doctor. There was no sign of Jeremy.

She cried out happily at sight of us. "Nobby! Mister David! Well, I do declare! What bright thought or fortunate circumstance brought you my way?" She came out from behind the bar and gave us each in turn her plump white hand, and rattled on as loquacious, warm-hearted women will, with never a pause long enough for us to inject a word.

"Susan," the unromantic Nobby cut in at last, "we 'ave not supped. Stir your cook and 'ave 'er prepare somethin'; not too 'eavy, you hunderstand, yet not too light, but accordin' to the time o' year and our happetites which are considerable."

"God's truth!" I groaned in his ear. "You are a heavy-handed lover if ever I listened to one. Have you no tender sentiment to utter to her?"

"A stuffed crab, perhaps, to begin with," Nobby said, "followed by broiled fowl and new potatoes and a bit o' greens; then a tart, a piece of ripe cheese. Beer all along. Look sharp, Susan, like a good lass. Almost six hours 'ave we been in the saddle."

Mistress Swann departed all aglow to do his bidding. Nobby asked, "Now, Davy, wot was it you was a-whisperin' of?"

"The devil take you," I said sulkily, "for a yokel. You have the tact and graciousness of a field hand. Think you Jeremy is that crass? No—he would be bending over her hand and making pretty speeches."

"Ah," replied Nobby carelessly, "some 'ave one way and some hanother. But remember this, Davy: landladies I *know*. I 'ave made a study o' them, bein' that I saw so much of them in my hearly life when I was grum, stagecoach driver, and the like."

"This one," I retorted, "you are not likely to know much better if you continue your present tactics, despite your experience as groom, coachman, and the like."

He only grinned at me and remarked presently, "No sign o' Jeremy. But then 'e would 'ardly be likely to get 'ere tonight."

In little more than half an hour, Mrs. Swann summoned us to supper. "Susan," said Nobby, seating himself at the table and hooking a thumb in his vest, "that was well done. The motto of every good public 'ouse should be dispatch. The grums should look sharp at the happroach of the traveler; the maidservants should be lively; the cook be halert. Dispatch, Susan, principally distinguishes the good public



'ouse from the hindifferent. Hother helements, o' course, henter into the keepin' of a successful tavern. A bright and cheerful bar is good; a coziness is 'ighly desirable; a pretty landlady is no small hasset. The quality of the food must be 'igh hinvariably. But wot do all these things havail without dispatch? They are like a good 'orse with a bad jockey."

"How true," said Mrs. Swann fondly. "Nobby, I have always said that you were cut out for an innkeeper."

Nobby turned hastily to his stuffed crab. Mrs. Swann said to me, and brought me upright in my chair, "Mister David, your brother-in-law was here last week. What a handsome and charming man he is."

"Paul Gervaise here? Impossible, Mrs. Swann. He is in Annapolis."

"Yet he was here," she replied. "We talked of you and Nobby. I could not be mistaken."

"Was he alone?"

"He dined with Mr. Quigg and another man unknown to me."

"There were no—no ladies in the party?"

"None. They spoke of ladies, though—two of them that they were to pick up at Franchot's Folly."

"Franchot's Folly," I repeated. "What is Franchot's Folly and where is it?"

"A plantation, I think, somewhere on the Nanticoke River. Mr. Carfax could tell you, were he here. Mr. Prentice Carfax—you know him, he says. It is too bad—he passed through on his way to Virginia several days ago."

"It is not important," I replied.

She left us presently and I said to Nobby with an assumption of carelessness, "Doubtless Jeanne—and Celeste—are visiting friends at that plantation called Franchot's Folly. Have you heard of it?"

"No, Davy," he replied. "I 'ave not. Folly is the name people 'ave given to many o' the great plantations with great mansions on them which their howners could not keep hup when the tobacco went. So the 'ouses fell into ruins or partial

ruins. There is a great 'ouse not far below 'ere named Rhoderick's Folly."

"I understand," I said.

"Someone must 'ave bought and restored Franchot's Folly for Miss Jeanne to be a-wisitn' there."

"So I have thought."

But ere I slept that night there came into my mind the remembrance of the conversation I had heard so long ago at Quigg's house—of the shift of headquarters to the Nanticoke and of money to finance it. So, perhaps, Franchot's Folly had become the headquarters of the slaver-kidnaper band with which Jeanne, Paul, and Celeste were connected. I had accepted so much that it was not difficult to accept this, nor was I unduly perturbed. Only I had a curiosity about it and longed to speak to the squint-eyed man, for in confirming this belief he would confirm others.

When morning came, however, bright, blue, cool, and cheerful, I had no desire to do more than eat my breakfast and lounge in a chair before the inn, leaving Nobby to his widow. And so my morning was spent. Jeremy had not come by noon; we decided to dine and leave. But before we had finished the midday meal he arrived. I heard Mrs. Swann cry out, "Jeremy, what has happened to you? Oh, you poor soul—your poor face!"

Nobby and I arose and went to him. He was so full of what had happened to him that he showed no surprise at our presence. On leaving us he had ridden to Newtown and transacted there that evening part of the business on which he had been sent. In the morning he finished the remainder of his errands and was on the Snow Hill road by ten. He had come perhaps half the distance—seven miles—when he met two horsemen riding the other way. As they drew near him one of them said to the other, "By God, that's Shinn's horse!" and riding up to Jeremy, struck him a tremendous buffet and knocked him to the ground. Dismounting, this big ruffian again knocked Jeremy down, and was pounding him unmercifully when the second man threw himself on his comrade, calling him fool and begging him to desist. The



big man finally allowed himself to be taken aside, and after a colloquy, in which both my name and Colonel Jardine's were mentioned, both men jumped on their horses and rode away at the gallop. Jeremy, eyes puffed and bleeding heavily from the nose, staggered to a near-by stream and bathed his wounds until the swelling and pain abated, then came on to the inn.

I heard all this with dismay. "Am I never to be free from this plague?" I groaned. "We have chased those scoundrels from our Neck yet they are all about us when we ride a few miles from home. Are we never to be free of them?"

"Jeremy's 'orse betrayed 'em," Nobby said soothingly, "and it was only wild chance that he should 'ave come across those two. The chances are a 'undred to one it will not 'appen again."

"Describe those men and their horses to me," I said to Jeremy, enraged now.

"David," he replied, "I beg of you to let the matter pass. Blow but begets blow. Leave them as they are—uneasy."

"Ay," Nobby concurred. "Well said, Jeremy, me lad. . . . Come, we'll 'ave the doctor take a look at you and when 'e puts you right, Davy and I must ride 'ome. Stay a day hextra to recuperate. I'll speak to Mr. Sebastian. Susan will take good care of you 'ere."

I gave in to them. We rode, though, not home but to Princess Anne and spent the night with Mr. MacPherson. From him I got part of the story of Franchot's Folly. Franchot was a Frenchman of good birth and considerable wealth who had come to Dover, Delaware, ten years after our War of Independence. There he had fallen in love with a beautiful girl of the town, Elizabeth FitzGerald. He married her and it was for her that he built the great, rambling mansion of twenty-one rooms at the junction of a small creek with the Nanticoke, above Vienna. He lived but two years to enjoy his young, lovely wife and fine mansion. With his death, the large remittances he received from France ceased; a lump sum payment was made to the widow of only a thousand pounds.

Soon she remarried and moved to Baltimore. The magnificent mansion was kept up partially for a time, then permitted to fall into decay. Five years later it was sold for a song to a ship owner from Cambridge. He tore down one wing; the rest of the house he kept in fair repair until his death in 1814, but died penniless in consequence. That was as far as MacPherson's information went. "An unlucky house, David," MacPherson finished. "There are houses like that, ye ken, which bring little good to anyone. Ay, it had a brave and rich name at one time, *Fontainebleau*. But men ken it now as Franchot's Folly. An unlucky house."

## 17

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MILLO rode over to the Little Manor some days later to tell me that Jeanne had returned. Paul had brought her in one of his ships. Now, above all things, that was what I wanted: I do not mean alone Jeanne's return but that Paul should bring her. It was to him I wished to speak first of the grave matters I had in mind—to get his thoughts and his advice. I had Martin saddle Kitty and I rode at once, not pausing to change my rather rough clothing.

Jeanne was waiting for me on the steps. She ran into my arms, kissed me and fondled me, and with little cries of pleasure told me how glad she was to be home. Knowing what I knew now, it amazed me to see how free she looked from guilt, how free she *felt* from guilt. That dreadful, demeaning, soul-destroying traffic in which she participated rested not at all on her conscience nor showed in her face. Ay, it was in Paul's handsome face, and in Celeste's, and even more so in the face of that Judas, Lopez. Lost men—lost souls—branded for all men to see if they could but read the signs as I had learned to read them.



I was long in getting away from Jeanne, so much had she to tell me, so fond was she. No one could doubt that she was happy to be home, to be with me again. Her every action bespoke the fact. Listening to her, looking at her merry and guileless face, I found myself wondering if I was not in error. It took all the strength of mind I had to harden myself against her, to remember that my subsequent happiness depended on my firmness and resolve now.

At last I was able to break away and to draw Paul into my library. There, quietly and without heat, I lay before him my findings and suspicions. He did not interrupt me though his face blazed at first, then whitened, and his agitation was so great that he got to his feet and paced the floor. He admitted nothing, denied nothing, merely asked when I had finished, "What do you wish me to do, David?"

"To go to Jeanne for me and let her know the extent of my knowledge. To tell her she must withdraw from this traffic now and never touch it again. Lopez must go and Celeste with him."

"Celeste!" he said.

"I fear her influence over Jeanne. It must be great, as it is with you. Paul, I do not understand why she dominates a man of your strength and spirit. I simply cannot understand it."

"That I will tell you," he replied in the manner of a man who has come to a sudden resolve. "We would have been paupers had it not been for Celeste."

"Paupers?" I asked in astonishment.

"Contrary to what you have been told or believe, my father left nothing, scarcely enough to cover his debts and the cost of his funeral. I think it was the plantations that had drained him—we had three bad years in succession. Well, I shan't dwell on it; just accept the fact."

"But Celeste?" I asked. "Was she not your nurse and then Jeanne's?"

"Yes, David. But Celeste had a brother—a rather notorious one, Pierre Levasseur. You probably have not heard of him; he was known throughout the deeper South. He was a slaver.

A year or thereabouts after my father's death he was shot to death in a brawl. Everything he had went to Celeste. Having neglected her in life, he made up for it in death. At that time Jeanne and I had little. The ships had gone, the plantations. Jeanne was young; I was not even grown. We lived with an aunt. Life wasn't pleasant; it would have grown intolerable. Celeste's inheritance came in the nick of time.

"You will understand, David, that Celeste had ready for her a profitable business which could operate as profitably under Levasseur's lieutenant, Captain Marchand—"

"Marchand!" I exclaimed.

"You know him?" Paul asked quickly.

"I have heard the name," I replied. "Years ago, Paul. Go on."

"I hardly need to, David. It must be plain to you now. Marchand, under Celeste, operated the business, expanded it. I was drawn into it, then Jeanne. In five years I was able to buy back our ships and plantations. Some of the money came from privateering, some from slaving. We moved to Maryland, and found here and in Delaware a chance to expand further. Profits were not only tremendous—they were amazing, David. We had never a check until you and your men dealt with us so roughly."

"You had no part in that," I said.

"No. I was promised that you and your neighbors would not be molested." He sat down and looked at me wearily. "I never approved of kidnaping, David, particularly of free men. I did not approve of moving North. But they said it was necessary: the days of the slaver were in decay; they must be bolstered by kidnaping. Among the better people up here the attitude toward slaves and slavery is different; fight as you will, you cannot fail to absorb some of it. I have not been easy in my mind for a long time. Maybe I grow older or softer. Or maybe I am frightened—frightened at what I have become and may become."

I made no reply for I saw that he had more to say. Soon he went on, "Africa was one thing—where slavery is as old as time, a convention, a custom. The slave was the coin of



Africa. As such we who traded accepted it, and thought nothing of it and had no conscience about it. Slaves were slaves and would be so, whether we took them or left them. It was smuggling when I was in the African traffic, for an act of our Congress forbade the importation of slaves after the beginning of 1808. There was adventure then, high adventure and excitement. By no means had we it all our way. We lost one ship, then another. We were forced to stop. So Africa went from me. What was left was nothing."

"Yet you continued."

He shrugged. "I knew no other trade—and habit is strong. Then there was our obligation to Celeste."

"Obligation? You must have repaid her a dozenfold!"

"In money, perhaps."

"Paul," I said, "I cannot have Celeste here with Jeanne. You have your qualms, I see; but Celeste has none. No pity, no mercy. She will never leave the traffic as long as there is a dollar to be squeezed from it. From this day forth Jeanne's connection with the trade must cease, no matter how slight her involvement. She must promise me never to touch it again in any manner, shape, or form. She must arrange, ay, that she must, to have Celeste and Lopez leave here forever at the earliest possible moment."

He looked at me strangely. "And if she refuses?"

I summoned all my courage. "Then she must go," I said. "But she will not refuse. I have never doubted her love for me. I count on it to work for me. Great God!" I continued violently, jumping to my feet, "do I ask so much? That my wife free herself from degradation? What does she get from this traffic? Jewels? I will give her jewels. Change? We will travel, here and abroad. Excitement? She is in sad case if she requires the excitement to be gathered from the trade of slaving! It is time she turned her thoughts to the children she will one day have."

"Children," he said in that strange tone.

"God's truth, Paul!" I exclaimed in exasperation. "Is there anything preposterous in our having children? Is it not a normal happening?"

"Yes, yes," he answered hastily. "Forgive me, David, my thoughts were wandering. I will speak to Jeanne at once and tell her what you have said. And when the shock—for shock there will be—is over, you will go to her and tell her yourself all that you have in your mind."

"Yes."

"There will be trouble over Celeste, I am sure."

"Celeste must go. On that matter I am determined. Go now, Paul, if you please. Let us have the matter done with as soon as possible. It has weighed me down for weeks."

He said sadly, "Poor David. We have brought you nothing but trouble as I knew we must."

"If you and Jeanne turn from this traffic," I said, "you will bring me happiness enough to counteract the trouble a hundred times over!"

He went then to the upstairs sitting room. After an hour Celeste came along the hall and went upstairs to join them. Another hour dragged by and the half of still another. Jonas sounded the supper bell. It was only then that Jeanne came down the stairs. I got up and met her in the hall, and I felt the perspiration on my brow. Her eyes were red and she looked emotionally exhausted. "David," she said, "I cannot admit to all you have charged us with; I feel, too, that you do not view certain matters the way we do. But let that go. I give you the promise you asked for because I am, first of all, your wife. You have asked also that Celeste and Lopez leave here. Lopez will have made a good cook of at least one of our girls by early September. He will leave then. Celeste will leave as soon as she can make certain arrangements in New Orleans. By the time letters come and go it may be October. Do you object to that? Is it too long?"

"Too long?" I said heartily. "My dearest, of course not! I expected her to have to make arrangements. No, she may take any reasonable time provided it is fully understood that she is leaving. As for Lopez, we shall set a definite day. He leaves the manor the first day of September."

I moved forward to take her in my arms. "Not now, David," she said, avoiding me. "I will need a little time."



I stammered my apologies. "I know, my dear," I said. "This has been a shock to you. But put it behind you—"

"Please, David," she said without anger. "I am not in the mood for platitudes."

Supper, I found, was a rather strained occasion. Yet within a few days Jeanne was apparently her old self. A little quieter, perhaps, but warm and loving. For the first time in many weeks I went happily about the affairs of the plantation.

Our orders for ship's biscuits were particularly heavy this year, we for the first time (through Mr. Samuels) having received a great request from a supplier of whaling ships in New Bedford. Our crops had been good; we milled enough flour to meet all demands. But nothing works perfectly—there is never a satisfaction without a flaw. Jim London fell suddenly ill at great cost to our bakeshop, not to mention the distress to himself. I called in Dr. Ballard; Jim, he said, was suffering from inflammation of the bowels. Bland food was indicated for him, and a rest. Julius put him to bed and I assigned one of our kitchen girls to wait on him. I had to summon old Phineas back from his retirement and to hire another freedman in Princess Anne to assist him.

Jim did not improve, or if he did it was not noticeable to us, and was often in great pain. After a few days he begged me to send him to his sister, a free woman, who lived about four miles away. He was so insistent that I finally consented, though I thought he would get better care with us, for Dr. Ballard came to him daily. Strange to say, he began to improve after a few days. I rode to see him on Sunday; he was sitting up. He looked stronger and he said he had less pain.

"Rest, Jim," I said, "and come back when you feel better. I think that will be in about a week from the look of you today."

He did not return in a week. We had been so busy, in this our busiest time, that I had not been to see him nor had I been able to spare Julius. He came to my mind the following Sunday after church as I stood chatting with the parson about

Martin who would soon be free. I rode out immediately. Jim was not with his sister. She was extremely reluctant to talk, but I finally drew from her the information that Jim had gone to Newtown the previous day to look for work. He thought the dust from the flour in the bakeshop had been responsible for his illness.

I was annoyed and angry. "He might have told me," I said.

"He hated to hurt yo' feelin's, Mistuh David," she replied. "He thought it best jist to go an' say nothin'."

"Did he not know that I would provide another job for him if he could not stand the baking?"

She lifted her shoulders. "I doan know, Mistuh David. He gone."

Nothing more could I get from her. I told Dr. Ballard of our conversation the following day. "They get ideas," he said. "Of course the flour had nothing to do with his illness. Let the idea wear off and he'll come back, David. Jim liked it here. He'll miss you and Julius. He'll come back."

I had counted heavily on Jim's return. Phineas was old and shaky; he directed rather than worked. His assistant was new to the trade, slow and fumbling. There were others who worked in the bake-house, of course, but those two were at the top. I had begun to think that we could not fill the New Bedford order when Celeste and Lopez came to me, suggesting that they take over in the emergency. It was no move on their part to stay at the manor, I knew; they were leaving. Celeste had made plans; Lopez was returning to Annapolis and seemed happy about it. Being desperate, I availed myself of their services.

They brought to the work an efficiency that the bake-house had never known. I was not amazed at that; I was amazed at the fact that they should want to help me. In leaving they seemed to have developed a warmth for me. Their former dour attitude was replaced by one of combined courtesy and friendliness. They smiled when they met me and seemed ever eager to help. You may be sure I looked for a motive. But there seemed to be none.

And Jeanne—never had she been so loving, so ardent, so



melting. She let the voluptuous side of her develop to its fullest. Our bedroom became a boudoir with frills and flounces and heavy scents until, in truth, sometimes my own senses were aswim. I labored in those days under a queer and enervating excitement. I had no thought whether or not it was good for me; I knew only that it was infinitely pleasant.

On the first of August, MacPherson brought Martin his manumission papers. We made quite an occasion of it at the Little Manor; the parson was there, Jeanne, Nobby, and Jeremy. Martin was to go North in early September; he was to enter a school as a senior divinity student. All arrangements had been made by the parson and I had paid the modest bill in advance. It was a great pleasure for me to see how highly regarded he was by my friends. MacPherson made him a present of one hundred dollars and Nobby followed suit. Jeremy gave him a Bible—a noble gift because it was made at the expense of his ever-present thirst. From the parson he got a book of prayer; from his mother and father a fine portmanteau which MacPherson had secured for them. Only Jeanne had no gift for him. I thought it strange because she was so generous. When I spoke of her neglect on the way home she said carelessly, “La, David, I forgot.” She caught my arm and smiled up at me. “Does it matter, my sweet? If so, I am sorry.”

“No,” I said at last. “It does not matter.”

And, in fact, little mattered to me those days beyond my life with Jeanne. My troubles, my irritations, seemed over; all things proceeded smoothly. Baking was soon finished; the brig was loaded and dispatched to New Bedford and Europe. Captain Holland carried an order for the pink pearl I had promised Jeanne. It pleased me immensely that her anticipatory excitement over it was normal rather than feverish. In all things she was adapting herself to life as mistress of the manor and putting far behind her the life she had lived. Some of her little queerness remained, but I no longer found it irritating. She must have a white maid to replace Celeste;

she would not have a colored girl around her. She retained her abruptness with the household servants—not that she was ever unkind: just short in her orders to them and without warmth. She would never visit the Quarters, whether those of the artisans or field hands. I noticed with some astonishment, now that I had time for calm, perceptive appraisal, that her dislike for colored people carried over to Lopez. Her orders to him were largely transmitted through Celeste. Praise him, she would; but she avoided contact with him whenever possible.

Of my close friends she liked Colonel Jardine, Mr. Massingale, Mr. Forbes, Dr. Ballard, and certain other gentlemen more my own age of Revelle's Neck. She disliked Mr. Foxall and Mr. MacPherson. For Nobby and Jeremy she had a careless regard. The wives of my friends without exception liked her; she was no flirt, no coquette.

With the brig off, we had time now for pleasure. We were much on the water when the weather permitted, spending lazy days fishing for trout, rockfish and hard-heads, or just lounging under the double awning I had rigged aft on the sloop. There was a cove I owned at the river's mouth where the water was a clear blue-green so that even at high tide one could see the brown sand at the bottom and small fish steering their way across it. Here, when the strong August sun was veiled, I would anchor in four feet of water and lower the ladder over the side. Then, when no sail was near, Jeanne would slip out of her clothes and frolic in the cove like a white and lovely sea nymph. She loved the feel of the salt water flowing over her soft nudity, and when I had devised a method of tying her hair in a square of oiled silk so that it would not wet and mat from the salt, she splashed and dived with the facility of a Sandwich Island girl and built up skill in the art of swimming. They were pagan days and deeply sweet to me.

Lopez left on the last day of August. Celeste went with him; she was to return in a week with some things Jeanne wanted from the Annapolis house. We had scarcely got over the flurry of their departure when it was time for Martin to



go. I drove with him to White Haven and saw him safely aboard the *Maryland*. There was a deep, quiet happiness about him even though he hated to leave us. The way was open before him now and his feet were firmly on it.

"Come back," I said, as the *Maryland* was departing, "when you are parson, Martin, so that all of us may see you as such. Not that you can travel on a parson's pay, but don't let that worry you—money will be forthcoming. Fail not to write when you need things. Write regularly to your mother; I will read it to her."

The steamboat grumbled and wheezed and moved from the wharf. I stood there watching it until a turn in the river hid it from sight. Few things I had ever done gave me greater gratification than the contribution I had made toward Martin's education and the fulfillment of his ambition. I went home in a happy glow.

Summer flowed imperceptibly into fall, so gradual the transition. The year had been a lovely one: an early spring, a moderate summer, and now a season of cool nights and zestful, sun-filled days. No one could have possibly believed that all the wonderful weather of this wonderful year, tempered so ideally to the needs and wants of mankind, should lead into the most savage winter in over a hundred years! But that was to come.

This season I was determined to have my fill of sport, having been deprived of it last year. By late September the partridges were scarcely ready, many of the broods not yet being strong on the wing. Few wildfowl had arrived from the North and there were no woodcock in our coverts. Some pigeons were about and a quantity of doves, which furnished a few days' shooting. However the clapper rail (which we call marsh hen) were abundant and fat. This was a sport which Jeanne particularly liked. I would paddle her up the small guts at high tide and, if it were in early morning, from every direction would come the dry, reedy keck-keck-keck-keck of the birds, diminishing as the day went on. Shooting was not too difficult as the marsh hens flushed before us from the muddy banks, and Jeanne developed a skill at it.

She had a good eye and steady hand, and furthermore was undoubtedly accustomed to firearms. I thought she would do well on our most difficult target, the bobwhite on the wing.

## 18

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So swift did the fog roll in that I, in my absorption, was not aware of its approach until it was all about me, writhing and twisting and making fantastic, ghostly shapes of the trees set apart, the spaced corn shocks, and the hedge-row where it rose above the common growth. Now ours is a sun-filled land and fog like this is rare. I had been brewing coffee over a campfire set under a persimmon tree. The morning I had spent in partridge shooting, alone save for my pointer and setter; the time was early afternoon. I do dearly love occasionally these little solitary excursions, with no company save that of my dogs, with no one to say nay or let us do this in place of that, when I can move as leisurely as I please, pausing to observe and remark without incurring the displeasure of eager Nimrods.

It is on these occasions that I can stop and make a little fire in this place that I always choose—on the edge of a field, though within the wood, beneath a persimmon tree; that I can linger over the fascinating little tasks of outdoor cooking, pausing now and then to listen to the wood voices, to watch the faint blue cloud of smoke ascend through the branches of the persimmon; that I can enjoy the earthy, autumn fragrance mingled with that of broiling bird and steaming coffee. Being in no hurry, I have time for my thoughts. I do not need speech, beyond an occasional word with the dogs. They lie to one side of the fire and watch me, knowing there will be tidbits for them from all this culinary effort.

This particular October morning had been overwarm until



midday. Then, with great abruptness, a cold wind had arisen and clouds had hidden the sun. The sudden cold, chilling the warm water, had, I presume, created the fog and the wind had moved it inland.

Before my partridge was broiled and my coffee bubbling, so thick was this fog, coming at me in great billows with a dank smell to them, that I could not see thirty feet in any direction, and the dogs crept to my feet and remained there. Eerie it was, though it did not affect my appetite. I had my bird, bread and butter, coffee and cheese, and a swallow or two of Madeira from my flask. Then I looked around me and wondered how I was to get home, not having the homing sense of a pigeon. I was not far off, to be sure—not more than a half mile of fields and woodland lay between me and the manor house. But this fog had so obliterated my familiar world with its paths and landmarks and hedges, which when followed properly would lead me home, that I scarcely knew how to begin.

But begin I must while such daylight as there was stood in the sky. I put out my fire, reluctantly because of the sense of cheerfulness it gave me, and set off with the dogs at my heels. I gained the first hedgerow without trouble and now began to follow the pattern of the fields' outline which was one of abrupt right angles so that presently I lost all sense of direction and merely followed doggedly on, taking the right angles when I thought them proper for my purpose. It was odd how much alike those hedgerows seemed when there was no basis for comparison. The fields all looked alike too—that is, the patches I saw of them—and the woodland was merely trees.

At the end of half an hour I was not home though I should have been, even at the mildest pace, and I had walked quickly. I stopped and called the setter to me. "I have not brought you home," I told him. "See if you can put me straight. Go home, lad! Home! Home, lad!"

He only looked at me, a little foolishly as though I were joking, and got behind my back. I realized that the commands confused him; sending him home was, in his mind, a

form of punishment. I took up my way again, determining that, in the future, I would carry a pocket compass. I was in no danger; it was the endless plodding which irritated me, and a sense of helplessness, and the fact that I had fallen into a ditch.

A few minutes later I came on a rail fence. Climbing it, I found a path on the other side. Instantly I knew where I was; this was the path that led from the manor to the house which the ancient, Hixon, occupied.

The path to the manor gave into the road which lay past our outbuildings, such as the bake-house, the carpenter's shop, the wheelwright's shop, the weaver's neat brick cottage, then into the main lane and on to the porte-côchère. All around me as I walked were the sounds of industry, but curiously faint and flat under the deadening blanket of fog. A cart went by close at hand but I could not see it; disembodied voices came to my ear. I heard the whinny of a horse, then a stamping and a stern "Whoa!" from one of the grooms. It was a ghostly world I strode.

Being muddy, I did not go to the main entrance to the house but to a door which was in one of the curtains—curtain being the name we give to the passageway which connects a wing to the main building. While I stood outside, scraping the mud off my boots and noting that I was splashed with it clear to my stock, I heard the front door open. Whoever came out was shut off from my view. Soon I made out the voices of Jeanne and Celeste. They stood on the porch and were discussing the phenomenon of the fog.

I would have gone to them had I been less muddy and disheveled. I went back to scraping my boots and had all but forgotten the presence of the two when I heard an angry cry from Jeanne. "I believe you *want* to go!" she said.

"Is that strange?" Celeste demanded. "Am I welcome here? Yes, I want to go. I shall buy a little house in New Orleans on Esplanade and live there with one slave who will do for me what I have been doing for you."

"I have worked David into the mood," Jeanne retorted furiously. "I am confident he will let you stay. And you will



not! You are like the rest—tired! *Mon dieu!* You sicken me, all of you. The work you do for me is more fiction than reality.”

“I was not too tired—”

“Hush!” Jeanne commanded peremptorily.

Celeste said sulkily, “There is a ship for New Orleans from Onancock on the twenty-fifth. So your husband told me. On that I can have passage. And on that ship I am going. It is time. Mark that, Jeanne, it is time!”

That was all I heard. The door opened and closed; presumably they went back inside. Now there was nothing extraordinary about that conversation; it would scarcely have been worth recording save for one thing—that Celeste *wanted* to leave. What Jeanne had said was true—that I was weakening in so far as getting rid of Celeste was concerned. With Lopez gone, with Jeanne’s promise ever recurring to me and Jeanne’s manner ever showing her sincerity, Celeste no longer seemed formidable. I knew the value Jeanne put upon her as companion; I knew the many services she rendered my wife, no matter how Jeanne might decry the idea that Celeste served as maid. She *was* a maid, say what Jeanne would. Yet it astonished me that Celeste should want to go, should think of leaving Jeanne after all the years they had been together. There was something in the matter that I did not understand.

Celeste came to me that evening and asked me to get her passage from Onancock with Captain Sparks. Evidently Jeanne had failed to move her. I said, “There is no hurry, Celeste. That schooner is a small one and you may not be comfortable. Why not stay until our own brig returns? We shall be sending then our ham and bacon to Savannah, Jacksonville, Mobile, and New Orleans and you shall have free passage.”

Avaricious as she was, she refused my offer. I said at last, “Very well. I will arrange for passage from Onancock on the twenty-fifth. Let me see—this is the third. There is plenty of time.”

“I shall *count* on passage then, M’sieu David.”

"Very well," I returned shortly. "I'll arrange it."

I said to Jeanne later, "Celeste insists on leaving with Captain Sparks from Onancock."

"Let her go," Jeanne returned and dug her sharp little teeth into her lower lip. She would say no more on the subject.

Calamities, I have noticed, strike from clear skies. No sky could have been clearer than that of the following morning, and nothing could have been farther from my reckoning, as Jeanne and I rode together in the rich autumnal woods, laughing and joking and enjoying each other, than the idea that calamity was in store for me. I had no foreboding, no prescience of it; on the contrary, I thought how well things were going forward and how pleased and happy I was with all about me.

When we reached home Julius had a message for me from Nobby. Would I ride at once to the forge on a matter of some importance? Being mounted, I said I would go at once and so took leave of Jeanne, promising to be back in time for dinner. Nobby was not at the forge; his freedman told me that he was at home. I left Kitty tied to the rack and walked to the cottage.

To the right of the cottage, I saw a wagon that looked familiar; near by a mule was grazing. I laughed. So Mr. Prentice Carfax had come to Fairhope. I thought his presence a little strange because he must know I would not permit him to offer his nostrums in the village. I paused a moment before I reached the door to think what I would do. I had a queer regard for him; he not only amused but also interested me. I loved to listen to his flamboyant talk and to tales of his adventures in roguery. I decided to offer him hospitality for so long as he cared to stay and then to speed him on his way with a little present of money.

He sat with Nobby before a small fire as the day was a little crisp. I said as I entered, "Mr. Carfax, I am glad to see you."

Getting to his feet, he took my hand and shook it warmly.



"Mr. Innes," he said, "that pleasure is mutual. But I come on an errand that I fear will be painful to you. I wish it were otherwise and that we could enjoy the wine Mr. Parks is now mulling for us in a light spirit."

"Come, come!" I returned. "It cannot be that bad—"

Nobby looked up. "It is bad, Davy," he put in, "and no mistake. Martin was taken in Baltimore and the slavers now 'ave 'im at Franchot's Folly."

Sick at heart, I looked at the squint-eyed man for a long moment. Then I sat down at the table. "Tell me, I beg of you," I said to him, "what has happened."

"It is soon told," Carfax said. "About three years ago Captain Marchand of Franchot's Folly happened to be in Vienna while I was there. Evidently I amused him for he asked me to visit the Folly where he would give me hospitality and permit me to sell my wares. I did and I have made it a place of call ever since.

"I was there a week ago. An epidemic of stomach disorder had broken out in his slave quarters—slave prison is the more accurate term. His ship's doctor was on a voyage. I had told him at one time—and truthfully—that I had once studied to become a physician; he begged that I look at the slaves. There were only a half dozen, he added; they had just shipped a large consignment South. I went, of course. The diagnosis was simple—the colored people were suffering from a mild dysentery.

"Your man, Martin, impressed me at once as being far above the average. I talked with him several times. He mentioned your name on one occasion. As it happened I was then alone with him. I told him that I knew you; soon then I had his story from him."

"He was taken in Baltimore?"

"Scarcely had his steamboat landed when he met an acquaintance who offered to help him get a conveyance to Philadelphia. But first they must have supper." Carfax shrugged his shoulders. "There you have it—drugged food or coffee in Martin's case. Drugged rum, or too much of it, in the case of others. And Judas' lies in the case of still others.

When Martin awoke, he was at The Folly, destined for shipment to the West Indies, being considered too intelligent to sell South and chance his making his way back to you." He felt in his pocket and produced a scrap of paper. "This is the note he asked me to give to you."

The note said:

MR. DAVID:

I am taken by slavers. This man will tell you about it and how to rescue me. Please come for me. Believe what this man tells you. Please come at once.

MARTIN

I told this man you would give him a hundred dollars if he delivered this note to you in person.

"Mr. Carfax," I said, when I had finished reading it, "you have earned your hundred dollars many times over. You shall have it as soon as I return home."

"It was not the money that brought me," the squint-eyed man said with dignity. "I could have got a greater sum by surrendering the note to Captain Marchand. I came because I enjoyed meeting you and Mr. Parks—because I was sorry for Martin."

"That was good of you," I told him, "and I am deeply grateful. But the money you must have because of the trade you lost, as I judge you came straight from the Nanticoke to me. Mr. Carfax, I must get to Martin at once. He suggests in his note that you have a plan."

"I think I have the only feasible plan," he answered, "short of an army at your back. You will need the assistance of your good friend, Mr. Parks."

"Davy can't go without me," Nobby said cheerfully. "Why should I let 'im 'ave all the fun?"

I said, "Old friend, I'll not forget this. Go on, Mr. Carfax."

"The slavers maintain an inn at Cambridge called the Ship's Inn. It is maintained primarily for the comfort and



entertainment of slave buyers from the South but more particularly as a place of scrutiny of these buyers. It does, however, a general trade also. Agents in the South send the slave buyers not to The Folly but to the Ship's Inn, where they are weighed and measured by one of the most cold-blooded scoundrels I have ever known. His name is Bollans; he is the innkeeper. If you have the right word for him—"

"There is a password?"

"Of a sort. But I'll come to that later. As I said, if you have the right word for him and awaken no suspicions, you are sent on to Captain Marchand at Franchot's Folly. You cannot go direct there—not as a slave buyer. You could not go there at all—you would have no excuse. But Mr. Parks can, as a journeyman carpenter, of which they are sadly in need."

"I think I understand," I said. "Nobby goes there as a journeyman carpenter and attempts to get the information I need to pass me off to Bollans as a genuine slave buyer from one of the cotton states."

"Precisely, Mr. Innes. They were really a careless lot at The Folly until you drove their representatives from your neighborhood with such heavy loss. They have tightened somewhat but are still careless. Why not? No one has ever molested them there. They enjoy a peculiar immunity, not only that which comes from wealth and political maneuvering but for quite another reason. It is this: no one really cares what happens to these freedmen they are kidnaping."

"Monstrous!" I said.

"The memory of the last war is still fresh with most of us. Many have not forgotten that these freedmen—and a great number of slaves—threw in with the British, that the British were thinking of forming an army made up of them to fight us. They had the islands in Tangier Sound filled with Negro camps. The resentment has remained especially among the lower classes; the freedmen have few friends. Then, too, the Nanticoke is a wild and lawless region, as you will see.

"So, having nothing to fear, they are careless, though, as I said, less so since you gave them the drubbing you did. I do

not think it will be difficult for Mr. Parks to gather the information he needs for you. He will be working inside a lot of the time, right where the talk goes on. There is no one up there that knows him or you—”

“What of the three slavers we publicly whipped?”

“You need have no worry on that score. Marchand got rid of them all. Men only blunder once with him. In fact, after their whipping they never returned to The Folly. I heard it said that they went to the West.”

“There is one,” I said, thinking of Paul. “But never mind that. It is a chance we must take.”

“Now because speed is the essence of this matter,” Carfax went on, “I suggest this procedure: Mr. Parks leaves tomorrow morning for The Folly. You give him say four days to gather the information; you meet him on the fifth day at Vienna where he will pass on to you what he has learned. You go on to the Ship’s Inn if he has been successful; he returns to The Folly to stand by in case you need him. You cannot buy Martin; therefore you must provide escape for him. Have I made myself clear?”

“Extremely so,” I said. “I am greatly in your debt, Mr. Carfax. You have been a true friend.”

He bowed and said he was honored to be considered so. “There is one more thing,” he added, “and I have kept it on my mind because poor Martin so stressed it: No one, man or woman, must know of Martin’s plight. No one must know that you intend attempting to rescue him. You must say nothing in your own household, Mr. Innes.”

“I understand,” I said wearily. “It was doubtless Lopez who kidnaped him. Have no fear, Mr. Carfax. No one shall know where I am going.”

“That was the name he gave me—Lopez,” Carfax said. “A mulatto, revenging himself on you, Mr. Innes.”

“Yes,” I said. “Poor Martin.”

“I am not a man of moral stamina,” Carfax said. “I am a drunkard, a cheat, certainly a charlatan. There is something in me which delights in deceiving the gullible at a profit to myself. I have often, in my grave moments when I take stock



of myself, thought that I would stoop to almost anything. But this traffic nauseates me. Those in it must be entirely without heart, soul, or hope. So I see them."

"Yes," I said, wincing. "I agree." I added in a moment, "Have you put yourself in danger by coming here?"

"No," he said. "I came into your Neck after dark and after dark I shall leave it. Tomorrow before daybreak I'll be in Princess Anne. No one will know of my side journey."

I said to Nobby, "I must have some excuse to leave home."

"Simple," he answered. "'Ave Mr. MacPherson come down and take you away on a matter o' business. 'E will contrive some plausible story, else what are lawyers for?"

"Good," I said. "I will do that." I turned to Carfax. "There is another point of danger—the Ship's Inn. Am I liable there to encounter anyone I know? I have heard that it is excellently run and has a large trade. In fact I would have gone there on my way to Philadelphia had it not been full. You understand that I am not fearful of personal danger, only of the danger to our plans."

"No one," said Carfax dryly, "would accuse you of cowardice, Mr. Innes. There is a possibility that you will encounter someone you know at Cambridge. That is another chance you must take. If you are careful, I doubt that it is a considerable chance."

I was silent so long thereafter that a sort of constraint fell on my two companions. Carfax stroked his chin and shot little side glances at me; Nobby, too, was regarding me uneasily. My face must have belied my thought for I was not thinking in terms of immediate violent reprisal. Nobby said, "Heasy does it best, Davy, this time."

"I was thinking," I told them both, "of the sheer bestiality of it: that they should take a man like Martin, knowing what they knew about him, which, mistake not, was about all there was to know. He was six when my father first noticed his brightness. From then on he was schooled with me—save for the unprofitable year I went to the Academy—when he continued to be taught by my father. Here was a valuable life, my father and other educated men thought. What did

it matter that his skin was a trifle dark? Here was intelligence to be led and to be fostered.

"Eleven years Martin was taught by my father, an honors graduate of one of Britain's finest universities. Other men contributed—notably Mr. MacPherson and our good parson. They must have been well pleased with Martin's response to their efforts or they would not have continued. They must have seen Martin's possibilities for great and intelligent service to his race and knew how greatly that type of service was needed.

"My father did not live to see Martin's tentative gropings crystallize into a definite desire for religious service. He would have been vastly elated, would have realized that in no other way could the influence of a good mind—remembering the times and Martin's color—be so widespread. That is the man the slavers took, knowing all about him: a parson in thought, in act, in desire and education; a parson save for a small technicality which less than a year's study would abolish. A *good* man.

"Think you for a minute that Lopez did this kidnaping on his own? I stood by him when we publicly whipped the three slavers who fell into our hands. There was mortal terror in his face. No, no! He was *forced* into that kidnaping; he chose what he thought was the lesser of two evils—our wrath in place of that of his superiors. Well, we shall see if he chose wisely.

"For mark this: I will tread softly this time. But I will go again to Franchot's Folly. And this time, Mr. Carfax, I *will* have a small army at my back. We shall burn Franchot's Folly to the ground and every ship belonging there we can reach! To the leaders we shall give no quarter. No, none! No matter who they are. *No matter who they are!*"



I RODE forth for Franchot's Folly on as glorious an autumnal morning as all this wide land of ours can offer. The sun was just rising as I left our lane; a thin coating of frost was on the level farmlands. So still was the new day that I could hear as well as see the crimson, orange, and saffron leaves falling from the trees; they made soft, low, sibilant noises that had a touch of a sigh in them. In the old fields and along the hedgerows, hen partridges sounded their anxious, half querulous whistle, warning the heedless brood to assemble. Meadowlarks, their yellow-washed breasts plain in the level sunlight, made short flights within the broom-sedge fields; woodpeckers were at their endless tapping in the woods. The songs of the small birds were all about, joyous songs colored with anticipation, for they were stirred with thoughts of migration to those lands where winter is no more than a suggestion.

Not knowing what might befall me, I was not astride Kitty. I rode instead a showy black gelding which was that and little more: a short-shouldered, short-pasterned nag whose trot was torture. I rode alternately at a walk then at a canter, avoiding the trot as I would the plague. I was dressed in my showiest clothes, for I must look prosperous; I carried my finest pistol, though for another reason. My saddlebags were a-bulge.

So early did I come to Princess Anne that the loungers were not yet assembled on the brick walk before the Washington Tavern. Ginger William stood in the doorway as I rode up, yawning and stretching, with half an eye to the beauty of the day. His mouth snapped shut as his eyes fell on me. "Mr. Innes, sir," he said, "good morning to you."

I answered his greeting and said, "Breakfast, William, if you please."

The tavern set a very good table. I had a bit of steak with eggs and hot biscuits, buckwheat cakes and syrup and some sausage on the side, a pot of really good coffee. Ginger William stood by and regaled me with bits of Princess Anne gossip. Other men drifted in and stopped to speak with me, or gave me a cordial good morning. I thought how friendly all things were—the old dining room, the host, my fellows at breakfast, the lovely day—and regretted the necessity that took me from the midst of this quiet and cordiality to the wild and violent region of the Nanticoke. Then I remembered that good Nobby was already there and the thought brought an end to my idling, for I had dawdled over breakfast. I discharged my bill, a groom brought my horse, I mounted and rode off.

Two hours and three-quarters later I came to Salisbury, a fishing hamlet then, with combined saw and gristmill. Small as the hamlet was it hummed with activity, the noon rest having just ended. The broad millponds were rafted with logs; the sound of the saw tearing into the vitals of the tree trunks was superimposed on a multitude of smaller, busy sounds. The smells of sawdust, of freshly cut lumber, of tar were strong and pleasant. I intended to spend the night at The Springs, which was at an inconsiderable distance from Salisbury. Well ahead of schedule, I tarried two hours in Salisbury, enjoying its activity, though I had a low opinion of its swampy, confined harbor where sharpies, pungeys, and log canoes were moored, where nets were stretched and fishermen lounged and queer odors prevailed.

There is a sandy plateau lying between the Wicomico and Nanticoke Rivers and through it winds the sandy road, dipping and rising. The gelding made hard work of it, not being a willing horse. Expecting little from him, I was not put out, though I wished a hundred times I had Kitty under me. Despite its sandy nature, the region was not without beauty in the soft light of the golden afternoon. I stopped a time or two to gather persimmons. They had been touched with frost



and were both winy and spicy. Overhead the ever-present buzzards soared, their gruesome appearance excused by the benefit of the tasks they perform.

Few persons were on the road, which surprised me, for the day was made for travel, with Nature unreeling a new and gorgeous picture every hundred yards. I passed a few farm carts driven by colored men, a single coach from which a pretty girl of fifteen gave me a flashing smile, a gig driven by a worried-looking man that I thought a doctor who bowed to me gravely. That was all. However, I had other company and I was not lonely.

It was not overlong before the road dipped into the hollow of Barren Creek and I was at The Springs. It was then a prosperous health and summer resort, and though its season had waned for the year, some guests remained and the Mineral Springs Tavern was a busy-enough place. I was sorry to see presently that a new sign had gone up and that the tavern was no longer but the Mineral Springs Hotel, John Sprague, Proprietor. I do not care for the word "hotel"; it has not the warm, round sound of "tavern." When I spoke of that to Mr. Sprague he said, "We must keep up to date, Mr. Innes. We must progress." Well, I have lived to see much vulgarity and much unhappiness stem from this idea of progress.

The new word had not improved the cuisine, and I had an indifferent supper and a breakfast that Ginger William would have been ashamed to serve me. I came to the Nanticoke across from Vienna at ten o'clock. I lost an hour at the ferry, for they were tinkering with it, and was late by some twenty minutes for my appointment with Nobby. When I rode into the village there he was, mounted on his old bay mare. I did not speak to him nor he to me, but a glance at his face told me that all was well.

I continued through the village on the Cambridge road, and when I was a mile out, drew rein. Nobby was close behind me. He turned off into a piece of pine woods and motioned me to follow. When we were hid from the road he

dismounted. I crowded my horse to him. "Well," I said and grinned, "at least you are alive."

"Ay, Davy," he said. "And I have all the hinformation you need. I think Carfax was hovercautious, for never 'ave I seen a looser-lipped crew."

"Tell me," I said.

He scratched his head in that reflective way he had. "Better see for yourself," he said. "Queerest place I 'ave ever come across. Sort o' a big tavern, Davy; I 'ave seen as many as sixty men there in a day includin' the rogues themselves. They not only deal in slaves; they 'ave a perishin' big business there in hexport and himport due to the ships they own. 'Onest merchants rub shoulders with some o' the most desperate willuns I 'ave ever laid eyes on and think nothin' of it. Blow me, Davy, those rogues are a kind o' hinstitootion. The whole region—and wot a region it is—looks on 'em as benefactors due to the gold they toss haround."

"Are the leaders there? Is Marchand there?"

"Captain Marchand is there. 'E is a force, Davy; 'e is a deadly man. Then there are two lieutenants; one o' the name o' Sands and hanother called Emmet. And, o' course, Bollans who is at The Folly much. Gentlemen the first three are: well-spoken, heducated, and of fine manners. Bollans is different, bein' 'ard and coarse. But you must see, Davy. No words o' mine can tell you 'ow it is there. Blow me, it beats me."

"Did you see Martin?"

"No, Davy, but 'e is there. They spoke of 'im."

"What type of place is he confined in?"

"Difficult, me lad. A 'igh palisade surrounds it which is well-guarded. That's the problem; all else is heasy. You will be Mr. Marion Davids of Georgia. It is best to keep some o' your own name in your halias, Davy, so that you won't be a-taken hoff guard. They know me as Nobbs. Makes it heasy."

"That is sound," I returned. "Go on."

"You will go to the Ship's Inn and tell Bollans this. Better write it down so you can't forget. You will say, 'I ham Mr.



Marion Davids o' Belle Plaine Plantation, hup river from Savannah, Georgia. I come at the biddin' of your agent, Henry Tait. I wish to buy fifteen prime field hands. I 'ave harranged first payment in Baltimore.' Got it, Davy?"

"Yes," I said, "and I will write it down."

"Habove all say you 'ave arranged for them to get 'alf their money in Baltimore. They like quick money. 'Alf down, you will say, and 'alf when the blacks are delivered to you at Norfolk, where you 'ave passage 'ome harranged."

"As simple as that," I marveled.

"Ay, Davy. They are hoverconfident. We gave them the first setback they 'ad in years."

"Did you hear how they took that?"

"Very poor. They was considerably put hout."

"Do they want revenge beyond the taking of Martin?"

He shook his head. "Not in the sense o' personal conflict with hus, Davy. I think they 'ad enough of hus." He laughed. "You never told me o' the fight at The Cutter, Davy."

"You heard of that?"

"Ay. That big man, Villen, is in with them, though 'e is rarely 'ere. I 'eard them speak o' 'im. 'Oo was the man 'oo fought along o' you?"

"Taggart Castleman Branch," I said and grinned at the memories the name evoked. "Give me you, Nobby, and five Taggart Castleman Branches and I would take on all those rogues with bare hands."

"'E is a mighty man, I 'ave been told."

"He is that," I added after a moment's thought. "This slave prison, Nobby—this barracoon—can it be broached?"

"Ay," he replied confidently. "They are not vigilant, Davy; they 'ave no cause to be. I may get hinside there in a day or two to do a job. I'll 'ave a better hidea then 'ow to go about deliverin' Martin."

"Is The Folly far from Vienna?"

He shook his head. "Hup-river but a few miles. There is deep-water hanchorage there."

"How long do you think I'll be permitted to stay there?"

"Huntil they fill your horder. And they can't do that yet."

They 'aven't got fifteen hable-bodied field 'ands. They 'aven't got ten. A big shipment was made, as Carfax said, about a month ago. 'Tis said they shipped two hundred blacks."

"As many as that!" I said in astonishment.

"Ay," Nobby returned with some dryness. "They 'ave quite a business. . . . And now we'd better part. I am due back. And you must ride to Cambridge—some fifteen miles it is. A good three hours on that black nag. I would as soon ride a sheep, Davy."

"It is some consolation," I returned, "to know that Kitty and Brown Jill are safe at home."

He agreed with a nod of his head and remounted. "Stay five minutes in the wood," he instructed me. "We must not be seen together." He wheeled the bay mare and with a wave of his hand rode off.

It was mid-afternoon when I reached the Ship's Inn. It lay near the harbor, Cambridge Creek, with the broad Choptank River just beyond. A beautiful river it is, too, with its clear water dotted with sailing craft, its high shoreline, its plantation mansions showing through their screen of trees with the Negro quarters beyond and looking, from a distance, like weathered dollhouses. The Inn itself was a snug, well-kept frame house of two stories with a long rambling wing on the left end and stables to the right rear. There was a grass plot and flowers before the main building, and a clump of box cut roughly in the shape of a ship.

This had been a famous inn long, long before the slavers had taken it over. It had been a favorite of my grandfather's when he had been a young man; my father had known it well. In his day it had been kept by an Englishman named Morton who had been an innkeeper in the old land. He had remodeled it according to the English tradition and under him it had come to the height of its fame. On his death it had passed into the hands of his wife and from her, evidently, to the slavers.

I surrendered my horse to an hostler and went inside. The bar was immediately before me; on the left was a bar-parlor



or lounging room, on the right a big cheerful room with a hearth on which a fire burned. It was fitted with settles, booths, tables and chairs. The day was too pleasant for lingering inside: only one man was at the bar, conversing with the comely barmaid there; two men were at backgammon or some such game in the bar-parlor; two others were eating a late dinner in the room where the fire crackled so brightly. I asked the barmaid for lodging and dinner, whereupon she rang a bell and presently a woman emerged from a back room and came toward me. She was a smooth-faced, amiable, rounded woman of perhaps thirty-five. I thought her the wife of the proprietor but I learned later that she was the widow of a Cambridge sea-captain, Daniel Price of privateering fame, and that she served Bollans as inn-mistress, he being unmarried. I was soon to notice that all the servants, white or colored, were particularly good-looking and amiable as though they had been especially chosen for those attributes.

Mrs. Price asked me my pleasure, and on stating it, she said she had a room and what would I have for dinner? The gentlemen had dined on newly roasted leg of lamb and there were some fine cuts remaining. I said that would do excellently. She then produced a book and had me write my name in it, that is, my alias. I had no sooner recorded my address as near Savannah, Georgia, than she remarked, "Doubtless, sir, you will be wishing to speak to Mr. Bollans."

"Yes," I returned, "but there is no hurry. I thought I might wander about first and see Cambridge, this being my first visit."

Now that careless remark was a happy one and so registered with her. My not being eager made her so. "Sir," she said, "Mr. Bollans comes and goes. He happens to be here now and it is best to see him while you may."

"As you wish," I replied.

"By the time you finish I shall have your dinner ready. This way, sir."

She showed me to the head of the stairs and kept me waiting while she entered a room there. She was not long gone;

the door opened and she beckoned me in. It was a large room, evidently a combination bedroom and office—in addition to the usual furniture it held a desk and cabinets. A man sat at this desk and at sight of him I had all I could do to repress a start. He was a squat, exceedingly fat man with a great white moon of a face and little pig-eyes sunk deep in it. I have never seen a face so impassive, so expressionless; it seemed scarcely face at all, something if not quite monstrous at least shocking until one got used to it. His little eyes flashed over me, for a second only, but in that time I knew he had judged me.

"Mr. Davids," he said, arising very slowly, so great his weight and ungainliness, "I am happy to see you, sir, at the Ship's Inn." He spoke in the high, clear voice of a choir boy.

Mrs. Price left the room and closed the door behind her. He slumped back into his seat. "My weight," he apologized. "Any effort makes me a little short of breath. Now, Mr. Davids, we are alone and I am at your service."

I rattled off what Nobby had told me to say. He nodded when I had finished. Money was his first thought. "Payment as you suggest is satisfactory." Security, his own and that of his comrades, was second. "How came you here, Mr. Davids?"

I was ready for that question. "By brig to Norfolk, by bay schooner to Onancock, thence by horseback to Cambridge. And tired I am of the saddle."

He seemed satisfied. "There may be a delay of a few days in filling your order. We made recently a large shipment of field hands to the sugar-cane plantations in Louisiana."

"Well," I returned, "I have time, with my cotton crop not only safely in but ginned and disposed of."

"That is well," he said. "Cotton prices remain high."

"They are most satisfactory," I replied smugly.

"There is much talk of Florida nowadays as the coming land," he remarked. "I have thought of going there. Do you know anything of Florida, Mr. Davids?"

I knew what I had seen in *Nile's Register* and that I told him.



"A good land," he said. "I must investigate it." He mulled over what I had said on Florida for a time and then his thoughts came back to me. "Mrs. Price," he added, "spoke of your wishing to see our town after you have dined. Therefore I suggest that you spend the night here. In the morning I shall take you, sir, to Franchot's Folly and Captain Marchand."

"That will be very satisfactory," I replied, hard put to conceal my exultance. "And now, if that is all, Mr. Bollans, I will go below and dine. I had but an indifferent breakfast at The Springs."

"More show than merit has the tavern there," he concurred. "Very well, sir; be ready to ride at nine in the morning."

I marveled the rest of the day at that inn and how well dissembled its real purpose was. For I would have sworn, had I come there unknowing, that it had no other business than that of providing good entertainment for man and horse. The quality of its clientele was uniformly high; never was there a sign of roughness or coarseness. Cambridge men of substance came to it and had their rum or toddy; there were a number of gentlewomen among the guests and some children. Such waiters and other inn servants one rarely finds outside the great cities. I suspect that they were unusually well paid—those who were not slaves.

All this, I say, astonished me. But I was utterly confounded when, after supper was over, the great, gross Bollans went to the spinet in the bar-parlor and sang, while a young lady guest played, with the voice of an angel—so clear and sweet and true, taking the high notes with the greatest ease and roundness, that I had a catch in my throat. There is never a man so bad that he has not a spark of worth in him, if we would only remember the fact. If I turn parson at times it is because I sometimes fear my own rage with great strength to back it and a manner of not knowing when to stop when fully aroused.

Apprehensive that someone might enter who would know me, I stayed well in the background all evening, observing

rather than being observed. Listening to the conversation around me I soon gathered that there were other slave-buyers present. One handsome young fellow from South Carolina was after house servants; he was to choose them in the morning. Another, an older man with a fine, aristocratic face, had bought that day several artisans and was groaning at the price he had paid. Both spoke with contempt of the slavers and the traffic, but both, nevertheless, had dealt with them. Oddly, neither of them approved of slave-holding. "No man alive," said the other man, "is capable of being the absolute owner of another human soul." That was true and I had always thought so, taking my attitude early from my father; and I would rather hire freedmen than own slaves. But an established system is slow in yielding, and one must heed the will and needs of brother planters. It is easy to be liberal when one does not suffer much from it; far less easy is it when such liberality would cause severe financial loss if not bankruptcy.

Both planters spoke sourly of the Abolitionists and the older man suggested that it would be well for them to turn their attention to the freeing of slaves in the North, meaning, as I gathered, the white factory workers, men, women and children, who labored under intolerable conditions in Massachusetts and were mistreated as no wise planter ever mistreated a slave of his. From that they went back to cotton and my interest in them ceased.

By ten o'clock I was weary and called for a candle. Mrs. Price herself brought it to me and lighted me to my room. She put the candle down and turned, smiling, to face me. "There is a bit of entertainment here," she told me, "we reserve only for *fine* gentlemen who come on an errand such as yours. Doubtless you can guess what I mean." I looked a little puzzled and she went on with some coyness, "La, Mr. Davids, must I come right out with it? I refer to a bed companion. We have some pretty maids available: white, near white, or brown. Be assured that they are safe, and of gentle spirit—not bawds. They are occasional, not in the trade of it."

That was a franker age and I did not take offense. I merely



pleaded that I was tired and felt no need of a bed companion.

"And you so pretty a fellow," she reproached me. "Almost am I tempted."

"You do me honor," I said, "especially as I realize that you are *very* occasional."

She decided not to be offended. "Well," she replied, "if you are weary, then you are weary and that's all there is to the matter. But you go to Franchot's Folly tomorrow. There the girls I spoke of, and others who stay there, are available."

I made no reply and she withdrew, after a hesitant moment, a little stiffly yet reluctantly.

## 20

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WE had come to Franchot's Folly, driving in by a back road which had begun above Vienna, Bollans in a chaise behind a very good trotter, I on the black gelding who had made hard work of keeping up with the landlord's fast-stepping bay. Both horses were heaving as we drew up. I said somewhat sharply, because I hate to see a horse distressed without just cause, "You set a fast pace, landlord." He looked at me coldly and replied, "I employ horses to serve me, not I them. If a horse lasts me a year he is doing well."

He made hard work of getting his gross bulk out of the chaise unaided; I had turned my back on him. Now to my right was The Folly and in front the broad Nanticoke. At the end of a long wharf a British merchantman was tied up, unloading, as my nose told me unmistakably, Demerara sugar. Beyond, at anchor, lay a Yankee schooner and slightly beyond that a brig. Below, and well to the other shore, a fast bay schooner was tacking to us. A half dozen smaller sail craft were tied up to the wharf close inshore.

I thought, as I looked at the busy scene, how legitimate it all seemed. Here apparently was everyday commerce and the men who served it: sailors and deep-water sailors, fishermen, stevedores, merchants and their clerks, wagon drivers cracking long whips—even the ever-present loungers to lend the last touch of verisimilitude. Bollans had waddled up and was standing at my side. There was a look of smug complacency on his face. "A busy place," I commented.

"Yes," he replied. "We have our fingers in many pies, sir. We turn a profit in many ways. On this end of the business"—he waved a hand at the wharf—"we have a partner of superior business ability."

"You are a partner?" I asked.

"Indeed," he replied. "I was with Captain Marchand and a man you've probably heard of—Pierre Levasseur."

"Vaguely," I replied, remembering that I was supposed to be from the deep South. "He was a slaver, was he not?"

"The king of them," Bollans replied with pride. "Ay, sir, the king of them. He built a great trade and left it all to a peasant sister. But we who helped build became partners at last."

"You spoke," I said, "of the partner responsible for the commerce I see before me."

"That is the only name we keep secret, sir," he replied with some stiffness.

"I big your pardon," I said. "I have no wish to pry. I was thinking that I agreed with you on the subject of his business ability."

He was mollified. "Yes," he said, "of that there is no doubt. He is one of the three who holds this place together. I am another; there is still another. The rest"—he was contemptuous now—"seem to have no stomach for the trade any longer. They are tired. Tired, Mr. Davids, with great fortunes still to be reaped! This coming ten years will see the greatest demand for slaves in all our history. 'S'truth," he went on angrily, "I am no younger than they. And I am not tired. Nay, never have I been more eager or more strong. In ten years I shall have enough to buy the greatest plantation in



Florida. . . . But, come. We are wasting time." He led me to the mansion.

And mansion it was, though it had been despoiled of one of its lovely wings. Even now the white façade it showed to the river was magnificent. Galleries (long porches) had been added, indicating, perhaps, a Louisiana influence, but they were in good taste and did not detract in too large a measure from the fine lines of the house. The grounds were well kept and about ten acres of fields were tilled; the rest was fast reverting to woodland. That was well because my planter's eye saw that the soil was exhausted; tobacco had robbed it of all vigor and worth.

Part of the central portion of the house served as a tavern. Two great rooms had been thrown into one to make bar and dining room; to the right of them, and across the cool, wide, and lovely hall, there were three more rooms. One served as an office-reception room; the second and third rooms were also thrown together and were obviously the counting-house. Here were tall desks and clerks at work. A small, bald Scotsman, by name McNab, was in charge and was aided by a big, sandy-haired young man with near-sighted eyes and a very foolish face who went by the name of the Deacon.

McNab was a disputatious, stubborn man, wise only in figures though given to arguing on all subjects. I had to state my business in the utmost detail and arose from my talk with him highly irritated. He prided himself on being a son of the people. I doubt the people were proud of his claim. As for the Deacon, there was no harm in him. He seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of foolish good humor. McNab, on the other hand, was full of venom; he was of the type known as the "black" Scot, dark-eyed and dark-complexioned and, I thought, dark-minded and mean-minded with a venom toward all of any birth or education. I learned later that both he and the Deacon—whose last name was Bronson—had received their clerical training under my old acquaintance, Mr. Quigg.

Bollans drew me away quickly. "And now," he said, "we'll go to Captain Marchand. . . . This wing," he explained as we entered it, "is reserved for those of us who conduct the

business and for our guests. We have on this floor drawing room, dining room, and library; we have also our own detached kitchen. Above are bedrooms."

He showed me to the drawing room and left me there while he searched for Marchand. Fine furniture was in it, polished and dusted. A portrait above the mantel caught my eye and I got up from my chair to look at it. The face was long and sensitive with a dreamer's eyes and a look of high birth and gentleness to it. Franchot, I thought, and wondered why Fate had dealt so hardly with this gentleman who, and I would have wagered my all on it, was good and kind and deserving. It seemed a needless cut to me that he should be forced to look down now from his portrait on all the unholiness which went on in the drawing room he had built for his lovely bride.

A voice behind me said, "Mr. Davids," and I turned to see Marchand.

It is hard to describe this evil man. Perhaps I can best do it by saying that he looked like one who had outworn all the gods. A big man he was, matching me in all save perhaps breadth of shoulder, and not far behind in that—a man, obviously, of tremendous physical strength, despite his forty-odd years. You could see the strength of him in the way he carried himself—as if he had never been mastered. He said, "You grow big men in Georgia, Mr. Davids. Sit down, won't you? I am Marchand." He said that as the great soldier might say, "I am Napoleon."

His voice I recognized at once; I had heard it that night, so long ago, at Quigg's—a gentlemanly, educated voice overlaid with a sort of deliberate roughness. Perhaps he assumed that to offset the effect of his dandified dress, for he wore what were undoubtedly the latest London fashions, or his manners, which were polished.

I sat down as he bade me and again briefly stated my supposed business. When I had finished he said carelessly, "As Bollans told you, we may have to detain you a day or two. We are immediately earmarking for you eight good field hands which you may inspect tomorrow. Perhaps by that time the rest of your order will be in. Two shipments are due."



With that he dismissed business. We talked for a few minutes of commonplaces and then he arose. "Dinner will be ready soon. I will have you shown to your room so that you may freshen yourself." He pulled a cord and in a few minutes a pretty, white maidservant entered. He directed her to take me upstairs. "Come to my table when the gong rings, Mr. Davids," he added.

It was only when I got away that a horror of him began to grow on me. That strange, dispassionate look on his face, his elaborate courtesy, even the faultless clothes he wore and the way he wore them, repelled me. I remembered his eyes—blue they were and handsome yet dead in his face and faintly filmed as of a man who no longer wishes to see clearly. He was worse than Bollans for he was tired now of his sin, gorged, satiated for all time. No sensation was left to him that was not blunted; he had, in his short lifetime, outworn them all. I wondered how a man like that awaited inevitable death. In that dark prison of his mind, did he reflect on his evil? I could not answer that. I only knew that he lived, like some great bat, in a deliberate, self-imposed twilight.

The dinner gong broke in on my dark reflections and I was glad of it. I put back waistcoat and coat, ran a comb through my hair, and walked down a gracious small stairway to the lower floor. Men were in the passageway moving rearward. I followed them and came, as I thought I would, to the dining room. Four tables were set here, all small, but there was a large, unset table at the back.

Marchand sat alone. I walked over and joined him. Bollans was at the next table with the young gentleman I had seen at the Ship's Inn last night, and two other fairly young men, who I guessed (and rightly) were Marchand's lieutenants, Emmet and Sands. Six men were at the third table—merchants and sea-captains, I thought. At the last table sat McNab, the Deacon, and another man.

Three maids served us, all white, all attractive, and of good figure. The one who waited upon us I thought particularly handsome—a tall, straight girl with a mass of auburn hair, a white skin, and wide-spaced brown eyes. Marchand saw me

looking at her, and when she went out he said, "A pretty wench but a tremendous strumpet. She takes care to approach every gentleman who visits the Folly."

"Not without considerable success, I'll warrant," I replied with some dryness.

"You are right," he conceded. "I have heard it said that she has buried a stocking full of gold. The other two maids are also accommodating and less greedy. There are also others; perhaps the one who showed you to your room is the pick of the lot."

"Being," I said, "only occasional, perhaps."

"Ah," he said, and smiled, "Mrs. Price has been at you. Well, why not? It is not every day we have a Mr. Davids visit us. She shows a pretty taste. I fear you are a trifle strait-laced on the subject."

"No," I replied. "Just not interested."

"We must have women here," he returned.

I said, "That I understand."

Nobby later told me that the food at the tavern was indifferent; here, at the officers' table, it was excellent. Not alone had we the products of our own rich region but those of the Indies, of Europe and South America. I had a dish called curry, made of cubes of lamb in a thick, spicy sauce of most ingratiating taste, the whole poured over rice. With it was served a rich sort of preserve the name of which I have forgotten. But I do remember that it was surpassingly good. They lived like kings, these rogues, indulging themselves to the full. I remarked how jovial they were, as a whole, which, as one of my favorite writers says, rogues should not be but often are.

It was past three when we finished dining. To my relief Marchand stood up and said, "Mr. Davids, unfortunately I must absent myself from you until late tonight. I ride at once to Vienna. Mr. Emmet, however, will take good care of you—"

"I should prefer," I said quickly, "to disturb no one. There is much to see here and I should like merely to stroll around



and observe. I am sure I can amuse myself the rest of the day."

"As you wish," he replied courteously. "All the front of The Folly, including the wharf and the ships, you may see. Only the back is out of bounds." He called Emmet and introduced me to him, explaining to him that I wished to look around and putting him at my service when and if I desired his help. I realized, of course, that Marchand was setting a watch on me—gentlemanly and unobtrusive, but still a watch.

I got free from them all at last and went inside. I had to see Nobby without more delay. I was not easy at The Folly, with Paul or Lopez likely to turn up at any moment and with merchants coming and going. ~~Who was to say one from my own~~ county might not appear? A number there were not above dealing with anyone who could show them a big profit. No, I was not comfortable; we must make our move at the earliest favorable minute.

Now I was at a loss. How could I find Nobby? He might be at work in any of the number of outbuildings and all were out of bounds to me. Then it struck me that Nobby doubtless was looking for me. All I had to do was pick out a conspicuous position in front of the mansion and wait there with such patience as I could muster. Come at last he did. "The wharf, Davy," he said out of the corner of his mouth as he passed me. I resumed my pacing for a while, then followed him, strolling casually.

Along the wharf I stopped several times to have a few words with fishermen, sailors, and drivers so that when I came to Nobby and spoke to him there was no suspicion attached to it. He wasted no time. "I 'ave seen Martin," he said, "and it will be a simple matter to get 'im hout. I 'ave keys of which I will make copies. These willuns are hunbelievably careless, Davy. I 'ave never seen their hequal."

"Make sure," I warned him, "that your plan is workable. The rogues may be careless, but they'd take our lives with the nonchalance I would show in killing a mosquito. I realize we must take a risk but let it not be a foolish risk."

"I'll 'ave Martin out o' there," he replied with great con-

fidence, "at ten o'clock tomorrow night. 'E will not be missed until mornin'. Just hafter midnight the hebb tide sets in. We'll float down to Vienny, cross the river there, and walk that night to The Springs where we will 'ire conveyance to Princess Hanne."

I could find nothing wrong with that plan and I told him so.

"Go to the tavern tonight after you sup," he said. "All the gentlemen do by way o' sight-seein', Davy. I'll be there." He walked away from me. I remained another half hour on the wharf and then returned to the house. Emmet was on the gallery waiting for me. "Come inside, Mr. Davids," he said courteously, "and have a glass of punch with me."

He was an intelligent man, this young Irishman, though his face showed strong marks of dissipation and some of the recklessness which Paul's held. He talked freely of the slave-trade, even of kidnaping, with that odd detachment I had noticed in others of the band. These outraged people they took by force, tearing them from the hearts of their families, separating husband from wife, mother from daughter, father from son, were just so much merchandise to them, so many bales of goods or bags of sugar. I said at last with an indignation I could not control, "You will not admit that they have feeling, Mr. Emmet. I wonder that you admit they are human. It is true I have come to buy slaves. By that, I mean slaves, not kidnaped freedmen."

My attitude was not new to him; evidently he had encountered it in other planters. "You shall have slaves," he replied, "but were you less soft, you would make a better deal. We have a few recalcitrants which can be had at a bargain. It is wonderful how they calm down when they get even a thousand miles from home." He lifted his head and shot me a sharp look. "You do not care much for us, do you, Mr. Davids?"

I made no reply.

"Ah, well," he said, "few of us can feel certain that there is any great purpose in the way man travels through time. We exaggerate our importance. And if that is true of the human



race as a whole, how indifferent the actions of any one individual become."

"You bolster yourself with a specious argument," I retorted. "Your actions are not unimportant when they injure the civilization we have built up to protect the human race as a whole."

"They are unimportant to me," he replied, "and that is all that matters." He motioned to a young woman who was leaning against the bar. "Come, Peg," he said, "and divert us. We grow serious—and dull."

"I thought," she said, as she came to our table, "that Polly gave you enough diversion last night to last you a week. Or else she exaggerated her powers."

He laughed. "Softly, Peg," he admonished her, "softly. Mr. Davids' opinion of us is already poor enough."

"Mr. Davids," she said with a toss of her head, "knows well enough that he is not in church when he is at The Folly." She sat down as a colored waiter brought us our punch. "Yvonne is back," she said, turning to Emmet.

He looked surprised. "But how? She was with Mr. Gervaise. He should be in Norfolk today."

"He is at Annapolis," she said, "having arrived yesterday morning. Yvonne came across in the bay schooner, *Queen*. She said men are at work painting his ship and bleaching the sails, and that he may arrive tomorrow with Captain Swenson of the *Oslo*."

"Um-m-m!" he said, frowning. "Mr. Gervaise grows more and more unaccountable. There was nothing of painting on his schedule. McNab will have something to say to him."

"No one says anything to Mr. Gervaise," she retorted with a little sneer which was partly directed against him.

He did not seem angry at her words but thoughtful, rather. "Slowly we disintegrate," he said after a time. Then, remembering suddenly my presence, he added with an assumption of lightness, "Family quarrel, Mr. Davids. Think nothing of my words. We are always at our squabbling, as you would expect in a venture of this kind. Yet we are bound together to the

bitter end." He continued to be thoughtful and presently excused himself and left us.

I said to the girl—she was little more, "You are the young woman who showed me to my room, are you not?"

She nodded. "I have charge of the girls."

"Of Yvonne?"

"Yvonne," she returned bluntly, "is Mr. Gervaise's mistress."

"And Mr. Gervaise is—"

"Mr. Gervaise," she returned mockingly.

I did not press her. "Tell me," I asked, "where can I find a carpenter? I wish to have a small crate made in which to ship some articles to Georgia."

"We have a journeyman here. I could send him to you."

"That would be kind of you. Would it be possible to see him soon so that I may have the small job executed first thing in the morning?"

"I'll try to find him. Do you wish him sent to you here or to your room?"

"To my room," I said, "and thank you very much."

She got up at once and went about the errand.

I had scarcely reached my room when Nobby knocked on the door. I bade him enter. "Trouble," I told him. "Paul is expected tomorrow. They did not mention any time; perhaps by late afternoon."

"E will not betray hus, Davy. Paul would never do that."

"I tell myself so," I returned, "but I cannot be sure. What Emmet just said to me is true—they are bound together to the bitter end. Paul hopes to break from them, I think. I gathered that from Emmet's talk. I doubt he can do it, Nobby, so deep in it is he. Emmet spoke of disintegration. I think disintegration has already set in. But it will be slow and general because strong minds have come to the front and are in charge and will hold what they have until the last moment."

He nodded soberly. "They honly give themselves ten years—the most hoptimistic o' them," Nobby said. "I 'eard Marchand say that five years would finish 'em. When Delaware and Maryland law gets together, Davy, and hacts together, that's the hend for them. They knows it. The public is slow;



the public is fumbling; the public puts up long with habuses. But in the end the public puts things right. As for Paul, 'e will not betray hus. Anyway, what can we do but risk it?"

"It would be impossible to attempt Martin's escape to-night?"

"It can't be done, Davy. The keys won't be ready; Martin won't be ready. 'E 'as 'is hinstructions for tomorrow night. It ain't possible for me to see 'im tonight. No, Davy, it's got to be tomorrow. We must risk Paul."

"Very well," I said. "Let it be so." I added in a moment, "Bollans told me this morning that he is one of the partners who took over the running of this organization. I think Quigg is the second."

"So I think," he replied. "I 'ave 'eard 'is name mentioned 'ere a lot. 'Tis said McNab and the Deacon were trained under 'im, that they are 'is men."

"Say Quigg, then," I went on. "Who is the third? Not Paul, not Marchand. Is it Celeste?"

"It could be," he answered. "It well could be, Davy."

"Yet," I said, "she is returning to New Orleans. I overheard her speaking of buying a house there. I may be wrong, but the impression I got was that she was retiring. Who, in your opinion, is next in line—Emmet?"

He nodded. "Hemmet it is, then, unless there are hothers I 'ave not seen. No man will top Marchand in hevil but Hemmet will be a second. 'E 'as brains, Davy, and no more conscience than a rattlesnake."

Soon after he left, fearing to be with me too long. I went to the tavern when I had supped, but did not stay long, finding the company about the stripe of that of The Cutter. The women, I thought, were as a whole more comely and less vicious, the men worse, as there was an infusion of the lowest type of countrymen and fishermen I have ever seen—incredibly ignorant, foul-mouthed, and quarrelsome. Most of these, Emmet told me, were former volunteers and militia which had been brought to the Nanticoke during the war of '12—masterless men, loafers, who had remained when the war was done, turning their hands to a little farming or a little fishing

and whatever profitable crime came their way. The tragedy was that they had married the poor but decent girls of the region who bore them a child a year and led lives so grim and destitute as to be appalling.

Refusing the offer of the auburn-haired girl to bed with me, I left this grim and vicious company and went to my room before the clock showed ten.

## 21

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NEVER can I remember a morning which spun itself out so long. I viewed the eight field hands and chose six of them and felt like a dog, in my pretense, because I saw that a number of them seemed to sense my compassion and would be glad to go with me. I was not taken to the barracoon and in consequence did not see Martin; but Nobby told me at noon that he had worked there during the morning, had seen Martin and given him instructions again, and felt that we could not fail. Nobby's red and jovial face showed signs of strain, nevertheless. If ever we sat on a powder keg it was now. The more we saw of these scoundrels the more we learned of their conscienceless savagery and utter ruthlessness.

I went to dinner and was again at Marchand's table. It was now getting on toward half past two and my spirits began to lighten somewhat, having seen before I left the gallery that no ship was in sight which might carry Paul. I did not think that Paul would knowingly betray us; I did not think, even, that he would interfere in our rescue of Martin. I did know there would be awkwardness in the meeting; that he was volatile, emotional, not schooled in self-discipline, and might unwittingly give us away.

Dinner was about half over when I heard rapid steps in the



passage. A moment later a man entered the dining room. I had not seen him for years but I recognized him instantly—he was Quigg. I do not doubt that my heart skipped a beat or two and that I had a momentary feeling of suffocation, but I was, almost immediately, calm again. Here was tangible danger and it seemed less to me than the apprehension I had been under since the moment I arrived.

He stopped a moment to speak to McNab and gave me that moment to plan. He had not seen me for a long time and then as a stripling. There was a chance, a good chance, that he would not recognize me grown tremendously and in my fine clothes. It seemed best to brazen out my imposture.

Dressed in his rusty black, mean-faced, insignificant yet menacing, he came, as I fervently hoped he would not, directly to our table. Marchand said, "Ah, Mr. Quigg," accenting the *Mister* slightly as a man does when he wishes to be a little distant with another and give no cause for unwelcome familiarity, "I have been expecting you this last week. This is Mr. Davids, of Georgia, who has come to buy some slaves from us."

"Slaves?" said the hypocrite, thrusting a skinny paw in my direction. "I have no knowledge of slaves. I deal in merchandise—in trading and shipping ventures. . . . Mr. Davids, how are you?" Only then did he raise his eyes to my face. He looked a long time; something went on behind those mean eyes of his. What it was I could not tell. He said nothing, merely released my hand and dropped into a chair.

His dinner was brought to him and he fell to wolfishly, ever and anon giving me little covert looks, blinking and winking when my eyes surprised his, busy turning over secretly something in his mind, and I could not feel that this something was other than inimical to me. Yet he said nothing of it, but answered some of Marchand's questions and asked questions of his own, avoiding as he would the plague any mention of slaves or slaving. So rapidly did he bolt his food that when the sweet came he caught up with us; then it was he leaned back and said to me with great deliberateness,

"Mr. Davids, your face is familiar. I could swear that I have seen it before."

"Possibly," I said with such calmness as I could muster. "In your business you must have been often in Savannah."

"My business?" he snapped at me. "I am a merchant. I have had no business in Savannah that my agents cannot handle. I rarely go from home. No, I have seen you elsewhere. I cannot think where."

"Does it make a great deal of difference?" I asked, assuming a carelessness I certainly did not feel.

"It annoys me," he returned. "I pride myself on my memory, on the fact that I never forget a face. But be assured I will remember."

And now the conviction came to me that he *had* recognized me and was playing with me as a cat plays with a mouse. I cast a look around the room; Marchand, Emmet, and Sands were the fighting men, with possibly some aid from two sea-captains. The two merchants present would not interfere; Quigg, McNab, and the foolish-faced Deacon were negligible. The odds, discount whom I might, were certainly heavy enough, but I was not to be taken without a struggle. I stood up. "Mr. Quigg," I said, "I do not like your manners—table or otherwise. . . . Captain Marchand, pray excuse me. I shall be in my room when you want me."

"What is this, Mr. Quigg?" Marchand demanded. "Have you affronted Mr. Davids with your impertinent questioning?"

"Fool!" said Quigg roughly and I wondered that he dared to speak in such a manner. Then I understood why—he was frightened. His face was yellow and drawn and his knees were shaking. "Fool!" he repeated. "Do you know who you have here? Not Mr. Davids, but David Innes!"

Had I been a vain man I might have taken some small pleasure, despite my plight, in the consternation which showed on every face. I said, glad in a way that my masquerade was over, "Yes, I am David Innes. I have come for my man, Martin. If you are wise you will surrender him to me and permit us to depart." I picked Quigg up by the collar



and gave him a buffet which sent him spinning under the table next to us.

Marchand shouted, "Take him, Emmet, Sands!"

I laughed. "Why not you, Captain Marchand? You make two of Emmet."

He did not want to accept the challenge but I think he dared not refuse it. He got up slowly. I had no time to waste; Emmet and Sands were on their feet and coming toward me. I have a quickness about me which is an inheritance from my Highland-Scots ancestry and a lightness on my feet despite my bulk. Marchand was scarcely straightened before I was on him. I hit him, as Nobby had taught me, with a hooking left fist, then followed it with my right hand. A blankness came to his face, such as Villen had shown; he sat down on his chair, rolled off it to the floor. And—will you believe me?—I was suddenly a little sorry and wished, for the sake of his own prestige, that I had given him a chance to employ his great strength. His slowness was his undoing.

There was not much time for pity. Emmet and Sands, both courageous men though not of much size, had begun their attack. The two sea-captains, one a big man, were advancing; behind them came the Deacon. McNab had darted from the room, bawling for help. I fought now to make the door; they fought to prevent me. They were in deadly earnest, realizing what my escape might mean, and were stiffened by the knowledge. Emmet was quick and agile, and, furthermore, had some knowledge of the manly art. He fought to delay me, retreating, advancing, ducking under my blows, and delay me he did. When at last I caught up with him I withheld my full power because he had been so valiant.

Sands I cast aside and the big sailor and was almost at the door when Captain Marchand, having recovered, stole up behind me and brought a chair crashing down on my head. My head exploded and I dissolved in a sea of blackness.

I was not long unconscious; my head is too thick for that. Though I could not move I was dimly aware of what went on about me. I was being carried by four men who were not at all careful of me. Small explosions burst in my brain at

every step. The men carried me to an outbuilding, cursing me and complaining of my weight, and dropped me on a rough bunk. I did not hear them depart; I lapsed into a condition somewhere between unconsciousness and sleep, and must have lingered there for two hours because when I awoke dusk was dimming the room.

My eyes opened and I lay thus for perhaps another quarter hour, so great the throbbing of my head. Then the pain eased. I sat up. I was in a small, brick building with two minute windows, both heavily barred. My hands were tied. I got to my feet and for a full minute my head swam and I swayed to and fro, dizzy and nauseated. Again the pain receded. Gingerly I felt my head. It had been broken open and my hair was matted with blood.

In addition to the rude bunk and one chair there were a tin basin and ewer, or pitcher, in the room. The ewer was half filled with cold water. I bathed my head, my hands being tied, fortunately, in front of me, and got great relief from the act. I found I could think beyond the pain I suffered. At first I was filled with hopelessness and a sense of final defeat. Then I reflected that Nobby, wise and resourceful, was still at large. Quigg had never seen Nobby; I had nothing to fear from the miser in that direction. I began to feel better.

At intervals of fifteen minutes for the next hour I bathed my wound and found that not only my recurring nausea but also my weakness was passing. Inside the prison it was pitch black now. I arose and examined the windows; I doubted that I could get my bulk through either one even if the bars had been removed. I could not see the door, but when I put my shoulder against it I had no doubt that it was made of thick oak. I could not help myself; help must come from outside.

I had scarcely finished my examination when I heard the rattling of a bolt. The door opened. Emmet, Sands, and a girl entered, Emmet bearing a ship's lantern. The girl carried a tray with a napkin thrown over it.

"I trust, Mr. Innes," Emmet said, "that this lantern throws enough light so that you can see the pistol Mr. Sands carries. We will stand no nonsense."



"Rather than threaten me," I retorted, "you should set to and thank me that I did not wring your neck as I would a chicken's."

"I am appreciative," he said. "But that does not alter the statement I just made. We are curious. We are wondering how you planned to take Martin."

"Well," I replied, "I have no objections to your wondering."

"You came to spy out the way of things," he said. "Then you were to return for that patrol of yours which has already done us so much damage."

"You were there?"

"No. The man who commanded—a valuable man to us, Mr. Innes—was so severely wounded that he has not yet recovered. Never mind that at the moment. Did I outline your plan?"

I laughed inwardly but only said, "If you can give me a better one, I'll be glad to adopt it."

"You thought your patrol could destroy us?"

"Look you," I said incautiously, "you must know that I could muster a hundred men. Well you know their caliber. Could I, or could I not, destroy you?"

He shook his head at me. "I think, Mr. Innes," he replied, "that you will be here a long time. You are a great problem to us. I doubt that Paul Gervaise or—and even more important—his charming sister, your wife, will permit us to dispose of you."

I said, "Knowing you for the cutthroats you are, your words make me feel a little better. But how long do you think you can keep me here before my patrol comes looking for me?"

"We do not think your men know you came here," he returned shrewdly. "There are good reasons why you should not tell them, or employ them, save as a last resort. There are family secrets, are there not, Mr. Innes? Shall I tell you your *real* plan? You have hidden somewhere in the neighborhood, one, two, or perhaps three close friends. Once you got familiar with the way of things here you were to return to them and together you were to try and free your man. That is it, Mr. Innes. That is what we think."

"Think as you please," I retorted, realizing I had laughed too soon.

He got up. "I have one more piece of information for you," he said, "before I leave. Captain Marchand has issued orders that so long as you stay here in this prison you are not to be harmed, or even harshly treated. You are to have everything you wish in the way of comforts within quite liberal limits. But if you attempt to escape you will be shot. We can justify that measure to Paul Gervaise and his sister on the grounds that it is your life or ours."

"If Marchand is giving orders," I said, "he must be recovering from the trouncing he took."

He grinned briefly at that. "The Captain has recovered," he said. "He it was who struck you down with a chair, but you nearly did for Quigg."

"It was from fright, then," I retorted. "I but slapped him."

"Your hand is weighty," he said. "I have the marks of your knuckles on my cheek though you held your full force."

"You spoke," I said, "of comforts within liberal limits. Does that include cutting my bonds?"

"It does," he said, and severed the ropes while Sands, in the background, held a pistol directed unwaveringly at my head. The girl then lighted a candle from the one in the lantern and placed it in the neck of a bottle which hung above the bunk, after which all three departed.

I drank the coffee they had left but scarcely disturbed the food. The night had grown chilly. I wondered how they heated that little prison; there was no fireplace in it. I had, however, been provided with a couple of blankets and I will admit that both seemed clean and fresh. There being nothing now to do save go to bed, I loosened my clothing, pulled the blankets over me, and snuffed the candle. I did not think I would sleep readily, having some hope that Nobby would get to me, but at least I would be warm. Yet sleep I did soon, being very weary and shaken.

I was awakened by the sound of tramping and voices. A ship's lantern was thrust in my face. "He is here," a rough voice said. Another said, "Ay, he had no part in it."



I sat up. "What is it?" I demanded. "What has happened?"

Emmet answered. "Nothing, Mr. Innes. Return to your sleep." They went out, crowding one another in their haste.

It did not take me long to become reasonably certain of what had caused their excitement and I was filled with a great exultance. Undoubtedly Nobby had succeeded in getting Martin from the barracoon! Evidently all had gone as my good and brave friend had planned, save that discovery of Martin's absence had occurred more quickly than he had expected—due, no doubt, to the heightened vigilance of the slavers. Could Nobby free me also? Difficult the task was, and there had been no time for careful planning, no time to make keys or to warn me of my part in an attempted escape, little time for bribery and such other measures as are employed.

I went to my window and listened. The window looked eastward; I could not see the house but I could see the stables—they were near at hand. Much shouting was going on; horses were stamping and neighing, commands were being given. The moon lay only a hand's breadth above the trees and gave little light. I could not tell how many men were mustered in front of me. I judged between twenty and forty. As I watched, the horsemen rode off.

Endless the time seemed thereafter until, quite distinctly, I heard a thud, a groan, followed by the withdrawal of the outside bolt. Then Nobby's voice, "Davy! Quickly, Davy!"

I was at his side in a moment. "I am here," I whispered. "Come," he said. "Don't talk."

He set out at a run and I followed him. We swung wide of The Folly and reached the Nanticoke well below it. Before us was the blot of an old wharf, dipped crazily to one side—that is, the hundred feet of it which remained. Under the landward end of this remnant Nobby scuttled and I followed. On hands and knees we crawled over wet sand and through debris until we could go no farther. Nobby said, "'Ere is Martin, Davy."

"Martin!" I said. "Martin! Is it you!"

"Yes, Mr. David," he replied. "I am here." His voice was so thick, so husky, that I thought him on the verge of tears. I

reached and found his hand. "All is well," I said. "You will escape. Now get hold of yourself and answer some questions, for I must know. Who took you, Martin? Was it Lopez?"

"Lopez," he said, "and Miss Celeste. I would not have gone with Lopez alone. I never trusted him. But Miss Celeste made everything seem all right. They took me to a private home and drugged my food. They took what money they found in my pockets and all my papers. They did not find the bulk of my money which I had hidden inside one shoe heel which is hollow."

"They proposed selling you to the West Indies?"

"Yes, Mister David. Save for that I would have gone with the first shipment."

"Davy," Nobby put in, "Martin told me a few minutes hago that Jim London went in that shipment."

"Jim!" I cried and ground my teeth in wild fury. "So they took Jim. Who took him, Martin? Was it Lopez? Was it Celeste?"

"I don't know, Mr. David. He would not say. He was very reticent about the matter. I do not think it was Lopez."

"Then it was Celeste."

"He would not say."

"Do you know where he was shipped?"

"I heard later, Mister David. He was one of fifty that were consigned to the sugar-lands of Louisiana."

I asked after a time, "You are well, Martin?"

"Yes," he replied. "I have been well since I first saw Mr. Nobby. Hope came back to me. God has been kind."

"Nobby, old friend," I said, "how can I ever thank you? Without you this would have been impossible. Delivering me, under the circumstances, was a minor miracle."

"I could not 'ave haccomplished that, Davy, without 'elp. It was Paul 'oo managed it."

"Paul? Is Paul here? And he has helped you?"

"Paul was landed at Cambridge and rode 'ere about two hours and an arf hago. I was at the tavern, showing myself so as not to be suspicioned, when 'e harrived. I caught 'is heye and laid a finger on me lips. 'E left the tavern and in ten min-



utes sent the gel, Yvonne, for me. Ay, 'e is true blue, is Paul. Never a moment did 'e 'esitate, Davy. 'E got the spare key to the big padlock; 'e went with me and disposed o' one guard while I bashed in the 'ead of the hother. . . . Now look, Davy, for we must be sharp: Martin 'as a plan concernin' 'imself, 'e thinks better than hours. 'E wants to make 'is way to Dover tonight. If 'e can make it 'e will be safe becos' there is a Quaker there who hoperates an hunderground and will see 'im safe to New England. I think well of it, Davy. Becos' why? Becos' once your hescape is known all will be concentrated in takin' you. They know they will be 'ard pressed if you get haway."

"Yes," I said. "I think he will be safer anywhere than with us."

"Then the moment the 'ue and cry sets up for you, Davy, Martin leaves. 'E knows the direction of Dover. . . . Ah," he went on as renewed shouting came to our ears, "one o' the guards 'as recovered and told 'is story. Come, Martin, you will 'ide up the tree I showed you and when the chase spreads then make for Dover. Any place is better than 'ere with Davy. Look sharp!"

"Martin," I said, "do you need money? I was not robbed."

"No, Mister David, not now. I have enough. Later I will need money to replace that which was stolen. Also a new manumission certificate. I will write for them, if you please."

"Of coursel" I replied. "And now good-by, Martin. Good luck to you. . . . No, no, there is no time for thanks! Go now and may God be with you and preserve you."

He pressed my hand and crept away with Nobby. In a few minutes a number of men came down the shore; from their talk I judged they were checking the small sailing craft and skiffs. They flashed a light under the wharf but I lay unseen, well-hidden by a piling and broken beams. Nor did they find the skiff which I later learned Nobby had tied beneath the outer end of the wharf. I do not think they were so much careless as convinced that I was already well away from The Folly. And it was not against them that they did not discover

the skiff. They were not looking for a boat; they were looking for the *absence* of one from its usual place.

Just beyond the wharf they halted and turned back. I did not hear what they had learned; as they passed me they were speaking of some other matter.

Perhaps twenty minutes had gone by since Nobby and Martin had left—certainly not more than a half hour—when a volley of shots burst on my ears, followed by fierce and prolonged shouting. I thought the clamor came from behind and to the left of the big house. I listened, filled with a great fear. The shouting died away in the distance. All was quiet again save for a low, rhythmic, thudding sound, so quiet that I could hear the lapping of the gentle waves against the pilings and the occasional splash of a big fish chasing minnows close inshore.

I realized presently that my hands, resting on my knees, were trembling violently and that the thumping noise I heard was the hammering of my heart. Suddenly, my inactivity became unbearable, oppressed as I was with a sense of disaster I could not shake from me. I crawled to the edge of the wharf, looked around me, straightened up cautiously. Lanterns moved among the pines to the rear of the mansion; I could hear a rough, commanding voice raised in high anger. A moment later I caught the sound of running feet and, as I threw myself flat beneath the wharf, Nobby's hoarse and urgent voice, "Davy! Davy!"

"Right here!" I cried. "In God's name what has happened?"

He said only, "Come!"

Running along the shore and keeping in the shelter of the high bluff, we came soon to a hedgerow looming above us. Nobby climbed the bluff; I followed at his heels. A hundred feet farther he stopped and knelt and I saw that a man was stretched out there. I dropped to my knees. "Martin!" I whispered. I put my hand between his shoulders and raised him a trifle. "Martin!" I said again.

He was alive, but barely so. He said, "David, good friend," in the merest whisper. I put my ear to his lips. I think he added then, "So near to—" I could not be sure, his voice came



so weak and fluttering. That was all. His head fell to one side. Gently I laid him down and felt for his heart. I could feel no beat. I whispered at last, "He's dead, Nobby."

"Yes," Nobby answered huskily. "God rest 'is soul."

I got to my feet and asked in a shaking voice, "What happened?"

"'E must 'ave been dazed with the thought of 'is closeness to freedom," Nobby answered wretchedly. "'E lost all caution. I left 'im at the cedar tree and told 'im to climb hup and stay there huntil I 'ad a look at things. 'E didn't; 'e made a bolt for it right hafter I left 'im. I was walkin' along the trail in the wood not far from the barracoon, trying to locate the sentries, when I 'eard the shots. A minute later Martin broke from the woods not ten feet from me. 'E fell on the path. I 'elped 'im hup but 'e couldn't walk. So I took 'im on my shoulder and made a wide circle, 'oping to get 'im back to the wharf. 'E stopped me at last, Davy. 'E knew 'e was dying. 'E asked me to put 'im down and to get you."

"They didn't give him a chance to surrender," I said bitterly. "They shot him down."

"'E walked right into a patrol returnin' from hup-river. They took 'im. I think 'e couldn't face captivity again. As they marched 'im back to the 'ouse 'e wrenched 'imself free and dived for the woods. 'E was 'it with part of a load of buckshot."

I bent, gathered poor Martin in my arms, and carried him back to the old wharf. There on top of the ancient planks we laid him. I said a broken prayer over him, commending his soul to God, though I had no need to do that: his was a fine and earnest life. They would bury him here by the Nanticoke. Some day, when I had destroyed these murderers, as destroy them I must, I would take him back to the Little Manor, to the sunny graveyard on the slope of the ridge where his grandparents were buried.

Sick at heart, Nobby and I went back to our place beneath the wharf. How long we waited there I do not know. I was aroused by Nobby saying, "Tide 'as turned, Davy. Time to

go. 'Old on to my coat. The skiff is tied near the hother hend o' the wharf."

We waded a hundred feet to the skiff. Nobby took the oars; I sat in the stern. We cast off and let the tide sweep us down-river, not daring to row. The moon was well up now; wild, dark clouds drove across her face. There was wind high above and there would be wind below soon, but it would be a wind that favored us rather than hindered us, provided it would not prove violent. The shadowy shore slipped past and, after what seemed an age, a turn hid the lights of The Folly. Nobby bent to his oars but kept well to the right-hand shore.

I said then without jubillance, "We have a chance."

## 22

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WE knew, before we came abreast of the Dorchester marshes, the strange, deep bitterness of being hunted men—of being hunted to the death. Along that reach of the river, every man's hand was against us; every boat that could be mustered, from the smallest catboat to the largest sloop, prowled the water like a bloodhound, tacking here, sailing there, ever searching. We knew well enough that most of these boats were manned by fishermen and farmers of the neighborhood; we knew, too, it was not loyalty to the slavers that had brought them out but gold. There was a price on my head; of that we had not the faintest doubt. Nothing else would account for the dogged persistence brought to our pursuit.

Twice we had been hailed, and twice bullets had whined past our ears, before we reached Vienna. We could take no precautions against these surprises save hug the shore as closely as possible. So dark the night, the pursuing craft would



be on us before we or they knew it; we would hear the slight sucking of the water under the boat's bow, the creaking of sail tackle, and then see the loom of a shadow imposed upon a deeper shadow. Those on the boat would see us when we saw them, and hail us to stand by. Whereupon we would flee and they would fire at us. By the time they had come about they had lost us for we had reached the shallows where they could not venture.

We had not dared land at Vienna, knowing a deputation of desperate men would be awaiting us. Our plan was to keep as close as possible to the west bank (the Nanticoke flows almost from north to south) until we had passed the last landing on that side, and then angle across to the other bank which was for miles a continuous stretch of marsh, with an occasional point of pines coming almost to the river. Nowhere was it tilled or fenced or showed a dwelling.

Now we had come abreast of this wild and desolate region. I changed seats with Nobby, it being my turn again at the oars. Neither of us liked this crossing but cross we must and that quickly for dawn was not far off. All about us now were the voices of wildfowl, from the strident quacking of black duck to the honking of the gray geese. The moon, behind the cloud wrack, was sinking fast and the wind was cold with a threat of rain in it. I said after a time, suddenly conscious that I had been resting overlong on my oars, "I do not like this, Nobby. There is a great chance that we may blunder into one of their boats. Yet we must chance it."

He replied briefly, "Pull, Davy."

The Nanticoke at this point was scarcely a mile broad. I have measured it since on the map. There was not much tide, one way or the other, so far as I could determine, and the wind aided us on our diagonal course. Haste was necessary and I let caution go in favor of speed, putting my shoulders into the strokes and letting the oar locks creak and click as they would. And at that, I think, all would have gone well save for the moon. It chose a bad time, indeed, to clear its face and show us a big sloop gliding across our bow not two hundred feet distant.

Sharp on the night came the command, "Stand by to come about!" followed by the hail to us, "Ahoy! Who are you?"

"Fishermen!" Nobby shouted instantly.

"Come aboard and let us have a look at you!"

Nobby said between his teeth, "Bend to it, Davy! 'Ead for the marshes. Straight a'ead, lad."

The sloop was very much on the alert but strangely enough its crew did not anticipate our purpose until we had gained valuable distance. Then a cry, the view halloo, and a command to fire. The volley came, crackling and strung out, splinters flew from our skiff, and I heard the wicked whine of a ball not five inches from my ear. "Row, Davy!" Nobby cried but he had no need to urge me; all my strength was behind every stroke. I saw the big sail of the sloop fill, saw her start toward us. I think I must have cried out in despair. And then, in the nick of time, the fickle moon veiled her face.

Nobby said with a little sob of thanksgiving in his voice, "Halter your course, Davy. Row south!"

I did as directed. The sloop was hidden now from us as we were from it. Carefully and quietly I rowed though it took all my will power to do it. For ten minutes I kept the skiff pointed southward. Neither of us said a word. Behind us the shouting on the sloop grew much fainter; the vessel was obviously standing inshore. Nobby spoke at last, "Now slant for the marshes, Davy, and henter the first creek, big or little, you come on. Dawn is habout to break."

Soon the dark band which was the marsh became visible. Along it we rowed, searching desperately for an inlet to its heart where we would be hidden. We had not far to go, for this watery terrain is cut with a multitude of creeks. The one we came on was wider and deeper than we wished but we had no time for choice as light had begun to spread in the east. Despite the dour sky how quickly the light of morning came! We dared go little farther now without reconnaissance, remembering that we must fear pursuit not only by water but by land. Our position had doubtless been reported to those on shore and our course fairly accurately determined.

The right bank rose suddenly into a point of pines. I pulled



ashore and we got out and saw each other's face in the harsh, revealing light. Nobby's was gray and lined with fatigue and anxiety; I thought him on the verge of collapse from sheer exhaustion. As for myself I know I must have been a grim sight. We turned from each other and took from the boat a bag of food, a canteen of water, a hatchet, and a sailor's watch coat, all of which Nobby had provided.

"We must 'ide the boat and rest for a time," Nobby said. "Then we shall try to make our way to the Wicomico River. Once hacross that we are safe, Davy."

We dragged the boat into the marsh just off the point and hid it with care, groaning over the toil of it. We washed the mud from us and bathed our faces. Climbing to the point again we saw in front of us a thick clump of small pines, none being more than six feet high. To the heart of this we pushed and cleared a small space there, covering it with pine boughs. Nobby drew from his bag a slab of cold corn pone and a piece of pork rib. We looked at the food and then at each other and put it back in the bag.

Sick at heart over Martin, unutterably weary, filled with a feeling of ignominious defeat, we laid ourselves down on the pine boughs, pulled the watch coat over us, and slept.

I was awakened by Nobby pressing my hand as frontiersmen do to insure a soundless emergence from sleep. I sat up and he held a finger to his lips. "What is it?" I whispered.

"The sloop came in," he replied softly, "while we slept and is tied to the bank. The seamen are 'aving breakfast on shore. I 'ave been watching them for arf an hour. A few minutes ago they sent a skiff hup the creek with food. Hevidently they 'ave mounted men in the neighbor'ood. I was afraid o' this creek but then what could we do, with dawn comin' so perishin' fast?"

"They have not found our boat?"

"Fortunate it was," he returned grimly, "that we was thorough, Davy. But they may find it. We must get out o' 'ere at once."

A splatter of rain fell upon us, flung by a wind which bent

the tips of the stubby pines. Nobby looked at the sky and shook his head. "Storm's habout to break. Let's 'ave a bit of food and a swallow o' water while we can." He produced the pone and rib. We ate a small quantity and had a drink of water.

"Now, Davy," he said when we had finished, "get ready. You take the 'atchet and canteen. I'll take the bag o' food. The coat we must leave. We must crawl, lad, crawl straight haway from 'ere for two 'undred yards. Ready? Come, then."

That was slow and vexatious work, that crawling, and greatly fatiguing. But we had no mind to stand up. I had only to turn my head to see the rogues grouped around their fire. Sands commanded the sloop; I saw him standing to one side, as befits a captain, and eating from a tin plate. None of the others I recognized, though Nobby said later that he knew most of them. The wind was so high that any sounds we made among the dry leaves could not be heard; the danger lay in movement because an eye goes quickly to that. The pines, once we had cleared our thicket, grew widely spaced and there was scant underbrush. Our safety lay in deliberateness, not speed. It seemed to me an endless time before Nobby turned his head to look back once more, then slowly stood erect. For a short distance we slipped like Indians from pine trunk to pine trunk. When we stopped again we could see nothing of the slavers, not even the smoke or flame of their campfire.

The rain thickened and was beating a mournful dirge on leaf and bole and the wind was constantly rising. The nor'easter had begun. We found a big cedar and stood under it while we discussed our future movements. I said that undoubtedly our pursuers would take it for granted we should try to reach the Wicomico, that they would put a line of mounted men between us and the river, and that the line would doubtless be strung along the road which led to Salisbury. If they had enough men they could cut us off, at least until darkness.

"Ay," Nobby agreed, "they know habout where we landed, Davy, though I think—unless they find our boat—that they



will believe we came hashore a little farther hup. So they will 'ave most o' their men strung halong the Salisbury road in front of hus and to our left. We had best go southeast—not so far as the fishin' 'amlet which lies in that direction, but near to it, and then try to cross to the Wicomico."

It was bitter travel. Ever we came on the upper waters of the myriad, reaching creeks. Some we waded, our feet sinking at every step deep into the ooze; some we swam, being already wet to the skin from rain; others we followed doggedly until they narrowed and we could cross. Our progress was unbelievably slow and difficult; we walked three miles or more for every mile we gained in the right direction. Plodding and resting and plodding again we wore away the morning. All the while the rain fell and the wind blew, not violently as yet, but working itself up to violence.

Just at noon, after a long detour along a wide creek which had carried us sharply inland, we came upon a good road. Whether we had become incautious or whether we had lost our sense of direction I do not know, but I do know that we were almost taken. We were standing like ninnies on the road, looking up and down it and wondering where it led, when we heard above the wind the clank of metal on metal and the sneeze of a horse. There was just time to cast ourselves into the paralleling ditch when a half dozen horsemen came around a turn in the road, riding at a sharp trot. They were proceeding down the Neck—away from Salisbury, in other words—going in the direction we were.

They must have seen us had they been less uncomfortable. The rain drove against the side of their faces so that they rode with heads bowed and eyes on the ground. Just when they were safely past, they halted, to our great dismay, and withdrew to a clump of pines by the road where they proceeded to chop wood and make a fire.

For an hour they held us pinned to the ditch while they brewed coffee and ate their bread, meat, and cheese. Then we could stand the rain and cold no longer; our teeth were rattling in our mouths. We inched our way back into the woods and took to our heels, expecting to feel any moment a

bullet between our shoulder blades. Only the darkness of the day and the thickness of the rain kept us from being seen, I am sure; on a normal day we would have been in full view of them for at least a half minute. We reached the wide creek again and this time without hesitancy cast ourselves in it.

I doubt that we would have reached the other side had we not come on a sand bar where the water was not more than a foot deep. Here we rested, sitting on the bottom, while the pelting rain raised miniature geysers in front of our noses. Ludicrous we looked, no doubt, but all sense of humor had gone from us. We had taxed our strength to the utmost; we must rest or drown. Queerly, the water felt less cold than the rain on us and I think it was so. We did not suffer from our immersion and I noticed that my teeth had stopped chattering.

We made the other shore, plunged into the woods, and came out a short time later on another road across which we scuttled like frightened rabbits. Just within the fringing wood we halted. "Davy," Nobby said, "we soon must find shelter or perish." I looked at him. The usual redness of his face was mottled with patches of a white-gray; he was about at the end of his strength. "Come back to the road," I said, catching his arm. "I noticed something."

"Ay," he said, "I saw it too. A cart or gig 'as newly passed hover, for neither the wheel prints nor 'oof prints 'ave been washed out."

We returned to the road and carefully scanned the prints. "Not ten minutes gone," I said, watching the rain pelt down on them. "Look how quickly they are being washed away."

"Yes," he said. He made a gesture with his left hand. "What would you say lies that way?"

"The Nanticoke," I answered. "And on the other hand the road to Salisbury. This road must join it within a half mile."

He agreed with a nod of his head. "And wot would be at the hend of this road Nanticoke way?"

"A farm?"

"No, Davy, this is too faint to be a farm road—too little used."

"A fisherman's shanty?"



"Ay, but more likely a gunning and fishing lodge." He bent to point out the wheel track. "A gig made that, Davy, or I'm no blacksmith. No cart made that narrow mark."

"I see," I returned. "No fisherman would have a gig. So it is a lodge."

"Yes, and the owner 'as returned 'ome, probably to Salisbury, 'aving been driven hout by the storm."

I needed to be told no more. "Come," I said. "We shall see. If there is so much as a shed there we can last the night."

How we walked that last half mile I do not know. I do not think we walked but shambled, rather, thinking every dragging step would be our last. So lost were we to all feeling, all emotion, that we did not even exclaim when we came to a small clearing and saw there a neat cabin of logs with a rude stable just beyond it. There was a heavy padlock on the door of the cabin. Nobby took the hatchet from me, fumbled a minute with the lock, then sprung it with one desperate blow. We opened the door and stumbled inside.

I was aware only of the warmth of the room and that a few coals glowed yet in the fireplace. Nobby, bent like an old man, raked the coals together and put kindling on them. I stood, leaning against the mantel, watching him stupidly, the water running from my clothes and forming a pool at my feet. He said hoarsely, "Get hout of those clothes, Davy. See, there are blankets in the bag tied to the rafter. Undress and cover yourself with one so that you don't catch cold."

The queerness of his voice stirred me to effort. I took down the bag of blankets and drew out a pair, then dropped my sodden coat and waistcoat from me, pulled off my ruined boots, breeches, and underclothing. I hung a blanket on me and then went to Nobby. He was still crouched before the fire. I helped him to his feet. His fingers fumbled at the buttons of his waistcoat; nerveless, they seemed, and undirected. I unbuttoned him, pulled off his boots, helped him remove the rest of his clothing, draped him in a blanket. His head was rolling on his neck as I dragged him to a chair and pushed him into it.

Whether I slept or not after I had seated myself I cannot

tell you. I think I sank into a dreadful apathy rather than slept. I was conscious of nothing about me: no sights, no sounds—nothing. I thought nothing of what had happened or what was to come, or of the man named David Innes at all.

From this state my emergence was slow. I had no sensation of awakening. I saw first the fire, burned very low; next I saw that Nobby sat near me, his chin dropped forward on his broad chest. His was the rhythmic breathing of sleep. I looked around the snug cabin, lighted only by the dying fire, heard the roar of the storm into which no man would now venture, and knew that we were safe and secure for at least the night. Little by little my apathy seeped from me and was replaced by a feeling of strange content. I arose and built up the fire, found a candle and lit it, strung our discarded clothing so that it would dry, then went to the door and looked out.

Night had fallen, pitch black and wild, filled with the roaring of the wind and the resounding beat of the rain. I forced the door shut and bolted it, and being curious about the time, got my watch from a pocket. It had stopped, either from water entering the case or from some damage to it during my fight at Franchot's Folly. I remembered suddenly that Nobby habitually carried his in an envelope of oiled silk. I found it—it was running and the hands showed a few minutes after seven. For at least three hours, then, I had sat in that chair, sunk in stupor.

Hunger came with my returning strength. I found fresh meal, a quarter of a ham, sugar, tea, and other similar items in the larder. So hastily had its owner gone that he had left behind to go to waste, as he would think when he remembered, a big pat of butter and eight eggs. I set to and mixed a corn pone, poured the batter into a spider, and set the iron utensils in the coals. I caught rain water for the tea and put it on the fire to boil; I set the table and began to fry the ham. During all these preparations, Nobby had slumbered, but now, as the fragrance of the sizzling ham began to permeate the room, his nose wrinkled and twitched and finally one eye popped open. Soon its fellow followed suit and the haze of his profound sleep began to lift from his mind. He yawned and



asked me what o'clock it was and if the storm still raged.

"What," I replied, "do you think that clamor overhead is—mice in the ceiling?"

Grinning, he stretched and stood up, looking in his blanket like a rubicund Roman in a toga. "So, Davy," he said, "we 'ave escaped the willuns."

"For the night at least," I told him. "What will happen tomorrow I cannot foretell."

He groaned, feeling himself. "I hache all over," he said. "I feel as beaten-biscuit dough would feel if it 'ad feelin'. Blow me, Davy, it was a near thing that. We hunderrated them; we did not know 'ow many men they could muster or the nature o' the people in that districk and 'ow they would do hany-thing for gold. We went habout that henterprise half-cocked. It cost hus dear. Poor Martin."

"We will go back," I said savagely. "Ay, we will go back someday soon."

I was awakened once in the night by a blast of wind so fierce that it shook the stout, low cabin and blew sparks from the fireplace all over the floor. They caused no damage and one by one they winked out. I lay awake but a short time; the monotonous drumming of heavy rain on the roof soon lulled me to sleep. When I again awakened morning had come. The wind had dropped considerably and the rain had eased, yet the morning was wild enough. I arose with a great sense of refreshment. The wound on my head had ceased to trouble me and my strength and confidence had returned. Nobby soon roused himself and I saw that he, too, was his old self. Cheery, whimsical, and humorous, he got up a prodigious breakfast for us of corn cakes, syrup, and ham.

Our clothing was dry, save for our battered boots. We drew the remaining dampness from them by turning them before the fire, then dressed. The time was now eleven o'clock, the storm showed signs of subsiding entirely. Within an hour the rain ceased. I walked to the door and threw it open. There was water yet in the clouds, I thought, and the wind continued fairly strong. "There'll be more rain later," Nobby

said, coming up behind me. "This storm ain't hover by any means." He stepped outside and looked around the dark heavens. "Ay, more rain without a doubt within an hour or two. Shall we go now, Davy, or wait for it? For meself I feel safer in the rain. It served hus well yesterday."

"Against that," I said, "is the fact that we need light to make our way—unfamiliar to us, Nobby—to the Wicomico. I want none of those woods in the dark."

He did not answer me and I saw that he was looking intently up the road. In a moment he moved swiftly to my side. "A man comes," he said, "riding a mule."

"One man?" I asked.

"That's all I see now. One man. 'E carries a long rifle."

"One man," I said, swept with anger, "we can dispose of if he carries a cannon. Has he seen you?"

"Yes."

"Let him come close."

Nobby slipped back to his former position and said in a puzzled voice, "'E 'as waved 'is 'and, Davy. 'E seems friendly. Certainly 'e comes hopenly."

"What does he look like?"

"Long-legged chap, dressed very roughly. No 'at. Shock of flamin' red 'air."

"What!" I shouted, electrified, and ran outside. Riding calmly toward us and humming a mountain tune came Taggart Castleman Branch.

"Mr. Branch," I said huskily as he slipped from his mule and took my hand in his hard, honest clasp, "I have never before in all my life been so glad to see anyone. Surely the good God himself directed you to us. What on earth do you in this wild region?"

"Foh six months," he said, giving us that happy, warming smile of his, "I have been a-searchin' foh you, suh."

"Searching for me? But I gave you explicit directions."

He looked at me, sheepish and abashed. "Mr. Innes, suh," he said, "I plumb forget all you told me but your name. I came down the Sho' and searched every river—the Sassafras, the Chester, the Miles, the Tred Avon, the Choptank. When I



got to the Nanticoke I was plumb worn out; all the travel was not fitten to my frame. I ran into the man who owns this cabin, Mr. Destry, and he rented me a shack across the creek and all the land I wanted. In the spring I figgered I'd pull out again, suh, and try the other rivers."

I thought then to introduce Nobby which I did. "I 'ave 'eard of you," Nobby told him, grinning widely. "And I ham 'appy to meet you in person." I saw that there was immediate liking between the two.

I asked presently, "Did you know we were here, Mr. Branch?"

"The slavers came yesterday to my place, suh, searchin' foh you. The leader was a man by the name o' Emmet. He told me your name and said that there was a reward o' six hundred dollars to anyone who would bring you in. I drew him out a little and pretty soon I knew beyond a doubt that the David Innes he spoke of was you, suh. He said you had come ashore in this neighborhood and to keep a watch foh you. 'Bout an hour ago I was at the barn. I happened to look in this direction and saw smoke rising above the trees. I knew Mr. Destry had gone. It was natchal then that I thought of you, suh. And here I am."

"Come inside," I said.

"No time for that, Mr. Innes, suh," he said with some gravity. "Put on your coats and come with me. There are slavers all about. They found your boat and they believe they have you pinned to this neighborhood. They've already searched my place; it should be safe there now. I'll hide you in the barn and when their watch slackens, suh, I'll get you across the Wicomico."

"Well," I said, "we'll go; but with the two of you at my back, and all of us armed, I have no fear of twenty slavers!"

WE crossed the Wicomico at White Haven in the brilliant afternoon sunshine of the following day. Nobby and I sat in the middle of Mr. Taggart Castleman Branch's tented wagon with his household goods all around us so that we were completely hidden. Taggart drove the mules; beside him on the seat were his pretty wife, Cindy, and two of the younger Branches, Amanda, eight, and Sally, four. Somewhere in the back was young Tag, nine, and his brother Verden, six. Tied to the tailboard of the wagon was the family cow.

Before dawn we had begun our journey from the Nanticoke and had come unchallenged to the ferry. No one had thought our caravan other than it seemed—a settler and family disgusted with the sandy soil of the plateau in search of fertile land. Taggart aided this half-truth mightily in his conversation with all men we had encountered. He complained bitterly about the poverty of his erstwhile district, disparaged the character of its people in no uncertain terms, and offered to fight anyone who would say him nay. No one thought fit to accept his challenge, liking neither the light in his eyes nor the great horse pistol which lay across Cindy's knees.

During these conversations Nobby would be hard-pressed to control his boisterous mirth, especially when Taggart embarked on a detailed account in his invariable manner: first, he would offer to fight anyone who disputed his remarks; then, his challenge being refused, he would offer to fight with one hand tied behind his back. This being passed over he would call nine-year-old Tag, certainly a chip off the old block, and suggest, as the region seemed to produce no men of either valor or strength, that Tag would be glad to oblige anyone desiring to uphold the honor of the Nanticoke.



We had judged that White Haven would be largely outside the influence of the slavers and we were correct. No one approached us; we rumbled onto the ferry unmolested. We were soon across. Taggart shook his reins, cried, "Giddap, mules!" and we jounced off the scow to the sandy road.

Two miles farther on Taggart halted the team. Nobby and I crawled from our cramped positions and jumped from the tailboard of the wagon. Laughing and elated, we shook hands all around. We were safe now, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Princess Anne lay only ten or eleven miles away. We withdrew from the road to a grove of great pines and prepared to rest for a few hours, having come a long way since dawn. The mules had scarcely another mile left in them.

If I have in this narrative made Taggart Castleman Branch pugnacious, cocky, a bully ever on the alert for a real or fancied affront, then I have done him a grave injustice. For the fact is that he was the least quarrelsome of men. Here, in the bosom of his family, no man could be more amiable. The little Branches patently adored him and were ever at him, with tuggings and questions, loving to be near him and to bask in the warmth of his wide grin. Rosy-cheeked, blooming Cindy, looking ten years younger than her age, saw not in him a man of battle at all, though doubtless realizing—for he had disposed of all her suitors most summarily—that he had some merit along this line. In her wise eyes, he was the tender husband and the kind father, less concerned, perhaps, with the accumulation of a competence than most other men, but making up for this lack a thousandfold by an unquenchably gay and valiant spirit. If ever man was knight to his wife, Taggart was to Cindy.

We came to the Little Manor at four of the clock the following afternoon, the day being Saturday. The house lay in its bower of trees with golden sunshine splashed across its roof and spilling over to the lawns and rose garden. I looked at the scene with a lump in my throat, not only seeing its peace but also feeling it in every nerve and drawing it in through every pore. I saw Judah and Saul in a near-by field, shocking the last of the corn; Kate stood on the steps, looking

curiously in our direction and wondering at our tented wagon. I thought of the heartbreak in store for her and for a minute did not see how I could tell her.

Drawing up in the barnyard, the little Branches poured from the wagon and stood about me, wondering and questioning, and full of glad exclamations and wide-eyed "Sho's!"

"This," I told them, "will be your home for a while. Mr. MacPherson, the lawyer you met in Princess Anne, will soon have another place for you." The property of the old sailor (he who had introduced that delectable dish, "cured" wild-fowl to our neighborhood) had been put up for sale by his heirs. I had set MacPherson to the task of buying it. I thought the place would exactly meet Taggart's needs and so be "fitten to his frame."

I took Cindy to Kate, told my sad story, and left them together. Cindy could do more for her than I could now. Judah had seen me and had come in. I told him what I planned for Taggart, and feeling unequal to the telling of the death of Martin again, I left that to Taggart, took a horse from the stable, and, bare-backed, rode to the manor.

It was only as I dismounted that I thought to look at myself because Julius, who had run out to me, had eyed me so strangely. My boots were nothing more than a sort of dried pulp, though they had been of the best leather, bagging around my calves and ankles; my clothing was ripped and stained and the knees of my breeches had given way and showed the bare skin beneath. I knew the haggardness of my face and the beard on it and the unkemptness of my hair with a lump rising in it which was still plain to be seen. I tossed Julius the reins and stalked to the house. In the hall I called for Jeanne and presently she came down the stairs. I saw how she drew back from me, and the fright in her eyes.

"Well," I said, "I have escaped your comrades. I suppose there is no use asking for Celeste. They must have warned her."

"She is gone," Jeanne said. "She was warned."

"Then you know about Martin."

She moved her head in a gesture of assent.



"Did you have anything to do with Martin's taking?"

"Nothing, David. That was planned as revenge for your hard treatment of the men in the boat that night. Not one escaped without a wound; their leader and two others are not about even yet."

"Had I a rifle that night rather than a shotgun," I said grimly, "that leader would never again have been about. What of Jim London? Who took him?"

She winced. "So you know that."

"Martin told me," I replied. "Who planned that?"

"Quigg," she answered. "It was planned long ago—before the man got his freedom. Quigg did not think it safe to have Jim in this region as a free man. He had too much knowledge of what had gone on during the past four years to be safe."

"Ay," I said. "I might have known that. Jim did; he feared Quigg. Well, I will pay a visit soon to Snow Hill and complete the wringing of Quigg's neck."

She came close to me. "David," she said bitterly, "I see how you think. You will not be content now until you wipe out those at Franchot's Folly. But had you not one lesson? Do you not know how strong they are, how well entrenched they are? Abandon, I beg of you, this idea of revenge."

"I do not think of it as revenge," I told her, "but as retribution."

"Look," she said, "I talked with the man who came to warn Celeste. I have known him long, David—"

"Who is he?" I demanded.

"His name would mean nothing to you," she replied. "You did not see him at The Folly. He told me that he did not think they would be able to take you; he thought that you and the man who was with you, Nobbs—whom I took for Nobby—were too resourceful. He had some admiration for you both. He said you would return and that you would be filled with thoughts of revenge."

"He read me aright," I remarked dryly. "I will have those knaves by the scruff of the neck before I am much older."

"Listen to what he asked me to tell you," she said. "He said for you to put all thoughts of revenge from your mind; that

they were willing to call the matter quits; that they would never disturb you again, or come near to you if you, in turn, made no move against them. He said a few years would see them finished—five at the most, possibly three. But, if ever you showed your person in their neighborhood, you would be shot without warning.”

I laughed. “He had better have saved his breath to cool his porridge,” I returned. “When I return to his neighborhood I shall not be alone but backed by as many men as he can muster. We shall see then who will do the shooting. I have with me now the man who stood at my side in Villen’s Tavern—”

“You found that man?” she asked sharply.

“Yes. But why are you so perturbed? What does it matter to you what I do to the slavers? You are free from them.”

“You forget that my own brother—”

“Paul? Let me tell you, Jeanne, that Paul is through with them. That I know beyond the shadow of a doubt. I have had tangible proof of the fact. No, Paul will not be there when I return. Make yourself easy.”

“He helped you,” she said with a strange bitterness. “He helped you escape. They thought you had more help than that of Nobbs.”

“I did not say so,” I reminded her. “I said merely that Paul was getting out, as you must know. . . . You spoke of their tenure being limited to a few more years. That is true, though they can do vast harm in the time remaining to them. Marchand is tired; Paul wants no more of it; Celeste has doubtless retired to New Orleans to enjoy her unholy profit. I doubt that Quigg will be fit for much hereafter. A man of no courage, fear will hang heavily over him from now on. That leaves Bollans and one other they would not name—Emmet possibly. Bollans is a clever man, I have no doubt, also unscrupulous and brave. Emmet I know has both intelligence and bravery. But both together are not the man that Marchand is, or rather, was.”

“Then leave them,” she said swiftly, “to disintegrate. You cannot bring Martin back to life; you cannot bring Jim Lon-



don back home. Because you, or even they, could never find him now unless every plantation in the sugar-cane district of Louisiana is combed. That is an impossible task. What's done is done. Leave them to their trade. Only you care. Have you not marked that?"

"I have marked it," I replied. "Yes, I have marked it. Has there ever been a people in history more friendless than these freedmen?"

She lifted her shoulders. "You are oversentimental," she replied. "They do not care. They do not think as we do. What was it some man called them? 'Loud laughs in the hands of Fate'? That expresses it. Drop this, David, or you will soon get the name of Abolitionist."

"I am no Abolitionist," I growled, "and from what I know of them I would not care for their company. So long as our law says that slaves are property so long must we abide by the law. An Abolitionist who takes a slave from me and spirits him to freedom is a thief. I know as well as any Abolitionist that slavery is wrong. I need—"

"Spare me, please," she said, "your views again on that subject. Since General Washington provided for wholesale manumission of his slaves in his will, you of Virginia and Maryland have developed sudden conscience. Farther South they still think for themselves."

"You are needlessly tart," I said, stung.

"If I am, it is because you irritate me," she replied. "What are these freedmen to you? Why do you champion them? Leave them to the Abolitionists. Leave them to the law."

"There is no law on the Nanticoke," I returned hotly, "as well you know. As for the Abolitionists, they concentrate on slaves and ignore the plight of the freedmen." I raised my hands in a gesture of defeat. "I cannot make you see, Jeanne," I went on, "the horror of this traffic in freedmen. It has taken hold of me. I will never rest until that band on the Nanticoke is broken and scattered. Ay, it may be my Scots conscience. Whatever it is, it drives me."

"It will drive you," she returned angrily, "to your death. Have you no thought of me?"

"God knows I have," I answered. "And your concern is dear to me."

"But you will go on."

"I will go on," I said with some sadness, "not merely because of my pride, not merely because of desire for revenge, but because I cannot help myself."

She looked straight into my eyes. "You are a fool, David Innes," she said, a whiteness showing on her pale skin, "and you will regret it."

"You still have sympathies there," I said.

She looked at me, her eyes narrowed. "Perhaps," she answered. "I grew up among those men, dreadful as that may seem to you." Then, abruptly, her demeanor changed entirely. She smiled. "Let us not quarrel," she said. "After all, I am done with them. Come up and change those horrible clothes, bathe, and shave. I feel that I am talking with a stranger."

I felt that I, too, talked with a stranger, though I did not say so, and wondered if I would ever understand her.

It had been my purpose to move swiftly in recruiting men for my foray against The Folly, to make the attack before the cold weather came along. But I had scarcely rested and got the haggard look from my face when Nobby went down with a virulent swamp fever. For the better part of a month he lay abed and on three occasions we despaired of his life. Only great skill and stubborn refusal to be defeated on the part of Dr. Ballard, plus the devoted nursing of Cindy, Taggart's wife, pulled him through. The fever raged through him with the ferocity of a forest fire and one could see from day to day how it devoured him and shrunk him until he was only a shell of himself and could scarcely raise a hand. And when at last he won through and was permitted to sit for an hour or two a day before his hearth, wrapped in a blanket and sunk into the depths of a great chair I had sent over, it was enough to bring tears to my eyes to see the weakness upon him who had been so strong, to see his white and wasted hands lying along the arms of the chair and the manner in which he



looked at me, as of a small child, weak and dazed and yet curiously gentle, with never a complaint.

December came before he was about. Mrs. Swann arrived then and took him off to Snow Hill for further rest and for a change. With his going the urge of my purpose came back to me, and with Taggart to help, I began my recruiting.

Immediately I received another check. Those who rallied so valiantly in defense of their property—the seventy-odd who had banded to run the slavers from our Neck—looked at me, excepting a very few, with raised eyebrows as I told my plan. Mr. Massingale expressed the thoughts of the majority when he said to me, “God’s truth, Davy, what care I what they do up on the Nanticoke, so long as they do not molest me? I have, as has every right-minded man, sympathy for the poor devils of freedmen, yet not so much sympathy that I would risk my life in their behalf. They are in a state of flux. Our society has no place for them yet. But it will have. Time will take care of that. Leave it to time, Davy.” In all our district I failed to recruit more than seven men—eight with myself.

Jeanne, hearing of the local attitude, said one day to me tartly, “They show better sense than you do. Did I not tell you that no one save yourself is concerned about the freedmen?”

“Possibly,” I returned. “I have, however, seven good men and I have learned how to get the rest—pay them. I will employ mercenaries. From Baltimore I can get enough former soldiers to make up the command I need.”

“You will go to that length?” she asked incredulously. “You must be mad.”

“I have not forgotten that they killed Martin,” I said without anger, “and so destroyed a fine and useful life. I have not forgotten Kate’s tears or Judah’s despair. I have not forgotten what I saw at The Folly, or that they took Jim. I have not forgotten how they drove us into the swamps and hunted us like animals and gave Nobby that fever which almost took his life.”

She was wearing, in a sort of a hanging brooch, the pink

pearl that Captain Holland had brought from Europe a month earlier. Her fingers went to the jewel, toying with it; her eyes were on me but she was not seeing me; she was plunged in deep thought. I was later to think that in those few moments she came to a decision, not altered by the subsequent event but fortified by it. She might have told me then what lay in her mind had not Jonas announced Mr. MacPherson. He came down the hall toward us, rubbing his hands in his brisk fashion. "Jeanne, David," he said, "I have unco news for ye in three quarters. Being in Snow Hill yesterday on a matter of business I stopped by Mistress Swann's inn. Nobby has gained both strength and weight and is rapidly becoming his old self. From Mistress Swann I heard that old Quigg has fled the neighborhood, taking his treasure with him, no doubt. And—ye will scarcely credit this—Jim London made his escape from the slavers in New Orleans, stowed away on a ship there, swam ashore at Charleston, and has made his way back to Princess Anne, traveling at night and lying by during the day. He is very emaciated, ye ken, and will be some time in recovering but he will recover."

"That," I exclaimed, "is almost incredible! I talked at The Folly with Marchand on the probability of escape of the kidnaped men taken South and he said that not one had returned in the years of their operation on the Nanticoke that they could check."

Jeanne laughed on a high, harsh note. "But it would happen where you were concerned," she said. "A man that *you* wanted back came back miraculously. What were the chances of your hearing that Martin was taken? One in a thousand—yet you heard. Are you a darling of the gods?"

"I have not thought so lately," I replied soberly.

"Jim is at his mother's house in Princess Anne, David," MacPherson put in, "and asked to see ye when next ye ride there. But I doubt that he comes back to ye. Something troubles him about the manor but he wouldna tell me what; he may tell ye."

"I will see him," I said, "the next time I ride to town and try and talk him out of his foolish fears."



"He is unco feared of something," MacPherson said. "But now, David man, to business if your gude wife will excuse us. I have a sheaf of papers from Mr. Samuels which will occupy the afternoon."

Jeanne said, "Go to the library, Mr. MacPherson, and in a moment David will join you. I want a word with him." She drew me into the drawing room. "Before you ride to see Jim London, or on any other business for that matter, I want to remind you that Christmas is but three weeks off and that I wish to go to Annapolis to do my shopping. It was not so long ago you promised me several trips a year—"

"Jeanne," I interrupted, "of course you may go to Annapolis and I will be happy to go with you. True, the brig is still South but the big sloop is comfortable and seaworthy. You could shop at Annapolis while I go on to Baltimore and try to recruit the mercenaries I spoke of."

"No," she said flatly. "If we go we go on pleasure. Surely you can leave that for another time?"

"Of course!" I answered, seeing her point. "We shall go, as you say, on pleasure only. When do you wish to leave?"

"Tomorrow."

"You do not give me much time."

She said impatiently, "Is it impossible for you to do things on impulse, David? Must you always be stodgy?"

"Eh," I replied. "Perhaps you are right, Jeanne, though I have never considered myself stodgy. Very well, we leave in the morning. In Annapolis you may also be able to get the white maidservant you so badly need. How long shall we stay?"

"At least ten days," she replied. "I need change and Annapolis will be gay this time of the year. Have Jonas pack plenty of clothing for you. I am taking a trunk and several bags."

I told MacPherson a few minutes later, "You will see that Jim has the attention he needs. Tell him I will look in on him when I return. I am going to Annapolis for ten days with Jeanne."

"I am glad to hear that," MacPherson replied, "for I think

ye would benefit from a change, David, and some gaiety."

"The trip will put off my foray against the slavers until spring," I said. "I thought to strike before Christmas."

"What difference?" he asked. "The weather is chancy from now on at any rate. Let the slavers get over their alarm, ye ken, and ye will strike the more surely."

## 24

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**O**FTEN, in later months, I heard my friends say over and over again that what happened was inevitable; yet, though I finally outgrew any brooding or moping over the bitter matter, I have never been without a sense of failure concerning it. I ask myself if I had acted thus and so instead of as I did, would the tragic outcome have been averted? I can never say with positiveness.

Jeanne and I had been in Annapolis a week lacking one day when at twilight I came alone down one of the streets of the fine old town, seeing with a little envy, as one does when abroad at the approach of winter darkness, the candlelight shining cheerily in the windows of the homes I passed, with the flicker of leaping hearth flames mingled in it and the human movement before the windows, and sometimes a scrap of laughter floating out, all betokening family felicity, warmth, and comfort.

A chill wind was blowing from the north and was skimming the street puddles with ice. The evening was not unpleasant, just brisk enough to make me enjoy my greatcoat, to cause me to step quickly, and to fill me with lively anticipation of a hot supper. I passed my own house, its windows blank and lifeless, showing its long unoccupancy in a certain forlornness. We had not opened it, preferring to stay at Mr.



Gervaise's which was always kept in a state of readiness for either himself or Paul. The Gervaise house lay but a few doors from mine: a square, Georgian mansion set fairly close to the street.

Now, though Jeanne had proposed this visit, there was no doubt that I had more enjoyment from it than she. There were many friends in town of my late uncle and my grandfather who seized upon us with the greatest of good will, so that we might have had a half dozen invitations for every one we were able to accept. Particularly agreeable to me were the young sportsmen who, like myself, maintained race horses and hunters. I had ridden to hounds with them one day and found them bold-going fellows and the best of company, and I will not forget readily a dinner they gave for me at an inn of roast green goose and apple dumpling. For Jeanne there were soirees and the theater which I think she endured rather than enjoyed. There was a noticeable restlessness about her. She was often distraught and inclined to be irritable when questioned, and I noticed she took no particular pleasure in her shopping, looking much and buying little.

This afternoon I had gone to dinner at a club and subsequently went with young Mr. Thornton Ashe to his gunmaker, where I purchased an English double-barreled rifle of the percussion-lock type carrying sixteen balls to the pound. It was the latest thing in the gunmaker's art, being over from England less than a month, and had, in addition to the new locks, an improved system of rifling. It cost a pretty penny, you may be sure, but I did not begrudge the money as I wanted the arm for use against the slavers. I bought also another pistol to replace the one taken from me at The Folly, and sent both pieces by the dealer's man to the sloop, not wishing to provoke argument with Jeanne at sight of them.

No lights were on in the front of the house, I saw, as I turned in the gate, and wondered about it. I let myself in. There was a faint glow at the end of the hall coming evidently from the library. Taking off my hat and greatcoat, I went along the dim passage, thinking that my footsteps sounded weirdly hollow and feeling a strong sense of depres-

sion. The library door was open but an inch or two. I stood a moment before it, sharply apprehensive, then laughed at myself and pushed it wide.

A man got up from a chair. I saw that he had a pistol in his hand. "Sit down, Mr. Innes," he said. "Feel no alarm over the pistol. It is for my own protection. I intend you no harm."

"So it's you, Mr. Emmet," I replied. "Where is my wife?"

"I have been left here to explain that," he said with some wryness, "a job I little like. Rest assured your wife is safe and where she wants to be." He gestured with the pistol toward the sofa. "Sit down, Mr. Innes," he said again. "What I have to tell you will take a few minutes."

"Let me understand this," I said. "Are you acting as my wife's agent?"

"Precisely," he answered.

I could not doubt him; his demeanor was too sure. I seated myself on the sofa, feeling a swimming in my head and a dreadful emptiness in the pit of my stomach. For, suddenly, I knew what he had to tell me. "She has gone," I said.

He nodded.

I could not speak for some time. He respected my distress and remained silent. When I found my voice I asked him hoarsely, "But why, Mr. Emmet? Why? Why? She had all that a woman could wish for—wealth, position, comfort, a loving husband. I ask you—why? Why should she leave me to go back to that degradation—for I presume from your presence that she has gone to *The Folly*?"

He said with some gentleness: "I will tell you what I know. I think she would have gone soon or late. She chose this particular time because of Jim London's return. *She* had put him into Quigg's hands."

I could do no more than groan.

"Judge her not too harshly on that matter," he said. "Jim was dangerous not only to Quigg but to all of us: to her brother, Paul; to herself. He knew too many of our secrets. We could not have him about—certainly not in your employ. Your wife was justified in breaking her promise to you."

"If she had told me," I cried, "as you have just told me, I



would have forgiven her! I realize that there must be a carry-over; one does not just drop a long association as one would toss away a bone. There are too many elements involved. Ay, I would have been understanding. Why did she not tell me?"

"There is more," he replied. He uncocked his pistol, placed it in a pocket of his coattails, seated himself. "About two and a half years ago," he went on, "we began, of a sudden, to go to pieces. I have never understood what happened to Captain Marchand. Overnight he changed; ay, it was that quick. He had been a great and ruthless driving force; suddenly he lost all initiative. He would no longer plan, no longer direct. Force of habit, only, plus the fact that he had made no plans for his own future, kept him at The Folly. Paul Gervaise had been failing us for months; with Marchand's example now before him, he gave up even pretense of interest. You know both Paul and Marchand and so know that I speak the truth."

"Yes," I said.

"Bollans and Quigg had invested large sums of money in the enterprise. True, they were repaid, but, being men of excessive greed, they were concerned with future profits. Neither, you understand, was more than a holder of stock, so to speak; they had no say in the direction of the business. When we began to totter they went to the one member of the enterprise left whose greed matched theirs—the true owner of it all—Celeste Levasseur."

"More evil," I put in, "than Marchand at his best."

He shook his head. "You are in error there. Evil, greedy, yes—but not what you imply. I know from your wife that you thought of Celeste as one of our leaders. She was never more than a shrewd peasant; without Marchand she was lost. Bollans and Quigg made the same mistake you did. They thought her a leader, an able adviser to Marchand. They found out differently when they went to her. All she did was wring her hands and bemoan her lost profits. She was incapable of making a single sound suggestion.

"Then Jeanne stepped in—ay, a slip of a girl but with more brains and drive than even Marchand had possessed at his best. She made Celeste admit Bollans and Quigg as partners,

with all the power that implies; she made Celeste promote me to take over Marchand's duties, and Sands to understudy Paul. Immediately we began to recover.

"That was the entry of Jeanne into the enterprise. Previously it had only touched her lightly. What she got in the way of money she got from Paul and Celeste—an allowance, rather than earned money. These two, Paul and Jeanne, were Celeste's only weakness. For them she would lay aside her peasant's greed; for them she would do anything. Paul never forgot his obligation to her; it kept him with us long after he had begun to hate the trade. Jeanne had less sense of obligation. It is too much to say that she used Celeste to further her own interests only; it is not too much to say that soon she completely dominated Celeste."

He broke off to look at me reflectively. "Power," he said at last, "is not for all of us. It should be for the very few who can use it properly. In the hands of most of us it contrives to wreck us."

I said dully, "Go on, Mr. Emmet. So Jeanne came into power."

"Not right away," he said, "it was gradual. But from the first she had the full support of Quigg and Bollans and soon, as I said, she dominated Celeste. A few months later she, Bollans, and Quigg were in complete control. She supplied the things which those two shrewd businessmen lacked—fire and imagination and daring. Odd, it was, too, how she took to the trade; she might have been old Levasseur's daughter, so ably did she weave the loose ends into a single strong rope again, so ably did she plan. Ay, give her credit: without her we would have fallen apart. On the other hand, she could not function a month without the aid of Bollans and Quigg. I do not think she is inclined to give them the credit due them."

"You are telling me," I said, "that power went to her head."

"Yes," he said, and added simply, "So much so that all you had to offer was not sufficient to make her give up her position of power. That is how I see it."



"Why then, in God's name," I cried hoarsely, "did she marry me?"

"Because she could not help herself. She loved you and does love you as much as it is in her power to love. She never looked at another man before you; I doubt that she does in the future. You were a fever with her that she could not quench. None of us wanted the marriage; in truth, we actively opposed it—Paul because he has a sincere liking for you; the rest of us because we were doubtful of you. We heard what you had done to Villen. We wanted, least of all things, a strong, outside husband for Jeanne. Quigg, who knew you, pleaded with her and warned her that we would one day stumble over you. But she would not listen; she would have you; she *must* have you. Well, she married you and in due course, as Quigg had prophesied, we did stumble over you."

"Mr. Emmet," I said desperately, "is it not possible for me to see my wife just once more?"

He looked at me a long moment before he replied. "Yes," he said, then, "it is. But on her terms. She knows now, as do we all save Bollans and Quigg, who know but will not admit it, that our time on the Nanticoke is very limited. And knowing that we cannot avoid a certain disintegration. Yes, it has set in lately; we know it, we feel it. We cannot count on public apathy to last more than a few years longer. Your own private war against us is just a forerunner of a public war which we cannot win. But these few years we want, and must have, without interference."

"The terms," I reminded him.

"If you will promise to drop your foray against us, if you will leave us in peace and let time do the work you wish to do, then your wife will meet you again here in Annapolis at any time you designate. You can get in touch with her by leaving a note addressed to her with the butler of this house."

When I made no reply he arose, gathered up his hat and greatcoat. I also arose. "Mr. Emmet," I said, "I realize that you have been kind, and I will not forget the fact. You have made some things plain. And yet, despite all you have said, I

again ask myself—why? What fascination lies in that degradation which would make my wife give up security, respect, position, love—all things that most women hold dear—to return to it? Were she an evil woman I could understand. But I cannot think that of Jeanne. Why did she leave me?”

“So,” he said, not unkindly, “ten thousand deserted husbands question themselves every year. Who knows what is in a woman’s mind or heart?” He swung on me suddenly, a little savagely. “Look you, David Innes,” he said, “I will give you some good advice. Forget Jeanne; forget Franchot’s Folly. Never see either again! Never! Never! Go back to your manor and in time you will forget and will be serene again. There are other women to love, you will find—soft, warm, compliant, and good; the world will not cease for you with Jeanne’s going. Go back to your kind!”

Before I could say a word he was out of the room. I heard his rapid steps along the hall, then the final sound of a closing door.

Only those who have passed through a similar circumstance can understand the depths of my misery or the nature of my suffering. There is something appalling and brutal in the sudden separation of husband and wife who have been fond, a tearing apart of fiber which is almost physical in its pain. In most cases there is some hope to leaven the misery; the mind says that all is over but the heart says wait all may yet be well. But what hope had I?

None, my common sense told me. To accede to her terms, to put right and conscience behind me was unthinkable. For would I not then be partner in my wife’s foul trade? By my very acquiescence I would be so, condoning it and her part in it. To give in to her was to raise her above me; headstrong, arrogant, and power-loving, she would dominate me as she had the slavers. Ay, she had already tried it, employing the soft, voluptuous side of her. That I saw now, and remembering those drugged hours, winced and drew back from the memory.

Yet I loved her and I could not think her evil. Calloused



she was in this matter of slavery from childhood; adventurous and excitement-loving like Paul; more arrogant than he and with a fierce love of power once she had the taste of it. But evil? No, I could not think that; not one so young, so beautiful and bright.

Long I sat there in my chair, overwhelmed by utter misery. And yet I think the sharpness of my grief was less painful than the succeeding feeling of emptiness. That was all but unbearable. The butler came into the room, looked at me, and left without speaking nor did he come near me again.

I left the house at last—when, I could not tell. The hour must have been late; when I got to the inn a short distance off, only the night lights were burning and the yawning proprietor was on the point of locking the door. He knew me and called me by name and said gravely that I should not be out on so cold a night without greatcoat or hat. Then he took me upstairs to a comfortable chamber, built a fire for me, and brought me a glass of hot punch. He was a kind man.

Why I did not go back to the manor the next day I cannot explain. I wanted to do so; my impulse, like that of a wounded animal, was to run to that familiar place, that one spot, that place I recognized as home, and hide until my wound had healed. Perhaps I lingered because I had some vague, ridiculous hope that Jeanne would return and renounce the slavers; or, it may be that in my state I was incapable of making any decisions whatever. At any rate, I stayed on at the inn, avoiding everyone save the landlord, spending my days in my room, going out only at night to pace the streets for hours.

One evening, five or six or even seven days later, for I had lost track of time, I stood at dusk on the wharf looking out to where my sloop was anchored. A light showed in the cabin; my faithful Negroes faithfully and patiently awaited my coming. An elderly man came toward me from a ship at the end of the wharf. I stopped him. "Sir," I asked, "could you tell me what date this day is?"

"It lacks but five days of the Christmastide by new calen-

dar," he answered with courtesy. "Thus it is the twentieth." He bowed to me and walked on.

"I will go home," I said aloud. "I will go home tonight." I hailed the sloop and Virgil came on deck. "Stand by, Virgil," I cried. "I'll be aboard in an hour and we'll sail tonight!"

His voice rang out happily, "Yes, Marse David. I'll have de skiff at de wharf in a hour. Yes, suh, Marse David!"

With a sense of relief strong upon me I hastened back to the inn and asked the good landlord for my bill. "There is a man here awaiting you, Mr. Innes, sir," he said. "I think you will find him in the bar-parlor."

"I will look for him," I said, "while you make up my bill and get my baggage down—that which came a few days ago from Mr. Gervaise's house. Wrap the clothing you bought lately for me as I have no bag for it. And have a carriage at the door within three-quarters of an hour."

I went at once to the bar-parlor. It was dim; a maid was just lighting the candles in the chandelier from a long spill. I had to peer to see the man who sat alone and dejected in a corner of the room. He caught sight of me, arose, and walked toward me in the hesitant manner of a man not sure of his reception. He said, "David," and looked at me, his face twisting.

"Paul!" I cried and put my arms around his shoulders.

We went together to a couch and sat down. For a long time we were silent; words came hard. Neither of us knew how to begin. I said at last, "You have come from the Nanticoke, Paul?"

He nodded.

"Jeanne is there?"

"Temporarily. Celeste, who fled to the Nanticoke when you escaped, was to sail for New Orleans with Sands this week. I doubt that Jeanne will let her go. They will likely take a house together—perhaps in Baltimore."

"You know, then, that Jeanne left me."

"I know, David," he replied bitterly, "and in doing so she broke a solemn promise to me, a promise repeated over and over and sworn to by all she held dear. I found out only yes-



terday that she had left you. We quarreled; she accused me of freeing you from the prison at Franchot's Folly. I said that I had done so and would do so again and that I was through with them. They sat in council then—Jeanne, Quigg, Bollans, and Emmet. I was allowed one of my ships and told to leave that day." He added, his voice trembling, "She came aboard with me, cried over me, said that nothing would ever separate us for long. It was best that I go now because I no longer had any heart for the trade and so was a handicap to them."

"Paul," I said, "that proves it. She is quite mad."

He shook his head. "Not mad," he replied. "But there is a sort of madness on her."

"You give me little hope," I said wretchedly.

"She will come to her senses one day," he replied, "when this madness, this lust, this greed—whatever it is—runs its course. It will be too late then—it is already too late."

I could not accept that statement but I made no reply to it. I said presently, "Paul, I have my sloop here and am sailing within the hour for home. Come with me and spend the Christmas holidays."

He answered wisely, "No, David. We would be poor company for each other now. I am going to Jamaica and Louisiana to dispose of my plantations. Then I'll return and go to Princess Anne and take part in my uncle's business."

"That is fine," I said with deep satisfaction.

He rode with me to the wharf and saw me off to the sloop, promising to be at the manor by the middle of March.

The sloop was got under way at once. She was a fast ship and with the wind strongly in her favor, we were well down the Bay at daybreak. I remember how cold the dawn came with the bleak wind moaning in the rigging and the wild geese querulously crying to each other that stern winter was here. Soon they were to have real reason to complain: we were on the threshold of the greatest frost in over a hundred years.

By nine o'clock we were off Hazard's Point with the mouth of the Big Annemessex River just before us. The sun had

cleared itself from the clouds and shone brightly though without much warmth. Countless waterfowl lay in the river and got up before the sloop in flocks which momentarily hid the sky and cast a darkness upon us.

Ay, the manor was pleasant to see as we tacked into the creek, with smoke pouring from its chimneys and the laden wood carts coming along the lane to replenish the stacks behind the barn. A thinner, grayer smoke seeped from the smokehouses where hams and flitches of bacon hung, taking on flavor and color. The windmill creaked and droned as it ground grain; flocks of pigeons flew up, circled with the sun glinting on their breasts, and dropped to the rich fields again. Over all was the look of peace and plenty, of substance and graciousness. My bruised spirit could not fail to lighten somewhat. I thought how glad I was to be home.

## 25

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THERE was much awaiting my hand at the manor. I was grateful because the work filled my days from sunrise to sunset and I had little time for brooding. In particular, we were busy with the curing and smoking of hams for the cotton states. A week's cool weather in November had permitted us to slaughter a great number of hogs. The bacon from these had been already cured and smoked; some of the hams were now smoking; others remained in the curing process. We hoped to ship all, plus the large quantity provided by my partner-neighbors in the enterprise, by my brig in late January, with another shipment made up of cured meat from December-killed hogs the first of April.

The new smokehouse was in operation, and though double the size of the old one—which stood beside it and smoked as



lustily—it seemed to produce as fine a product. Two days before I had returned, Hixon had ordered the rest of the hogs slaughtered, and that task was now going on. There was, I assure you, work for many hands on this one phase of our plantation operation, and I was glad to superintend and so free Hixon for a more active participation.

Taggart and family had moved to their new home—the neat, small farm which had once belonged to the old sailor. MacPherson had secured it for me together with an additional twenty-five acres of land, making a total of forty. The land, save for a five-acre woodlot, was all fine and fertile tilth, as much as Taggart and one freedman could handle. In addition to the farm I gave him another cow, a good fishing boat with nets, a chaise with a combination driving-riding horse, and the farm implements he lacked. He was delighted with his farm, which was located on the headwaters of a salt creek, and declared with vast enthusiasm that it was peculiarly “fitten to his frame.” I think, nevertheless, it was Cindy who got the most pleasure from it. The old sailor had loved his cottage and had altered it to his taste. I have often observed that deep-sea men have a wonderful way of making things shipshape and comfortable. In our entire region there was not another cottage so snug, so cool in summer, so warm in winter. Many little conveniences were built into it quite beyond the conception of the ordinary carpenter, such as concealed shelves, cupboards, tables and beds—used now by the children—which folded against the wall, a long trough supported on stilts which brought water from the well to big tubs by the kitchen door. The covered “dog-trot” between kitchen and house, which served as a porch and dining room in summer, was as airy and pleasant as the robin’s haunt in the tree near by, yet secure against weather by long shutters which could be closed in an instant. I was fascinated myself by the comfort of the little place and well understood Cindy’s delight.

Nobby was back at the forge, a little bleached yet, a little drawn, but capable of a few hours’ work a day. I will say that Jeremy, on vacation now from the Academy, tended him

devotedly and fussed over him as a mother hen fusses over a chick. I dropped over early every evening for an hour—any lengthier period seemed to tire him.

Thus my days were filled pleasantly enough to seven of the clock. After that I supped alone and lonely. I had no heart for the company of Mr. Massingale, or even Dr. Ballard, or my friends from Revelle's Neck. I should have made the effort; the period which must elapse between supper and bedtime stretched out interminably and was appallingly desolate.

It was on Christmas Eve, as I sat before the fire bemoaning my wretched state, that I thought of the book Mr. Samuels had given me, and wondered if I might not find some shred of comfort in it. After a long search I found it. As I have written, it was the *Sketch Book* by Mr. Washington Irving. Turning the pages, I saw some chapters on Christmas and fell to reading them. I cannot explain adequately to you the delight I found in them. A New England philosopher was to write later: "How many a man had dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book." So it was in my case, certainly. I was not without sorrow, but how immeasurably the hours were lightened for me during that fearful winter! For I went on from Mr. Irving's work to others, having had my appetite whetted, and formed a lifelong habit which was a source of cheer, comfort, and education to me second to none.

I had Christmas dinner with Mr. Massingale and his wife, supped with Nobby. Glad I was to have the day done, remembering the high pleasure of the previous one with Jeanne. The following morning I rode early to Princess Anne to visit Jim London.

Jim's condition was disappointing to me; I had expected greater improvement. There seemed to be an exhaustion on him not only of the body but also of the spirit. As I drew him out with questions, wishing to establish the truth or untruth of Emmet's tale to me, an ironic fact came to light—Jim did not remotely suspect that Jeanne had betrayed him into the hands of the slavers. Apparently he had been intercepted by Sands before he had reached the address on the letter Jeanne had given him. Jim thought the interception due



to machinations on the part of Celeste. When I had told him that both Celeste and Lopez had been forced to leave the manor, he expressed a wish to work for me again as soon as he was well.

I could not repress a bitter laugh. Truly, I thought, conscience makes cowards of us all. Jeanne had nothing to fear from him; he could not say enough in praise of her. "Dat Lopez an' Miss Celeste, dey was poisonin' me, Marse David," he said. "Dey was weakenin' me so dey could take me. Dat de only way dey could git me foh ol' man Quigg, kase dey knew dat *I* knew whut dey wuz. Miss Jeanne step in an' save me."

"So," I returned. "Jim, I have never seen Miss Jeanne, in all the time she was at the manor, go to the Quarters. Yet she went to see you."

"Yes, Marse David," he said with obvious gratitude. "Jist at dusk she would slip oveh, two, three times a week, foh a few minutes and bring me medicine an' sometimes broth. At last she tol' me to git out of dere and go to mah sister's. She made up de story about de flour dus'. Mighty kind she wuz, Marse David; mighty kind."

He went on to tell me something of his escape: of how he had seized a chance, as he helped unload a ship above New Orleans, to stow away; how he had been befriended by the ship's cook, a colored man; how he had got ashore, not at Charleston but at a small port in North Carolina; how he had made his way home, traveling at night, hiding and sleeping by day, living on sweet potatoes and such other produce as fell to his hands. He had all but starved to death. Once he had been taken by ruffians but had managed to escape. He had crossed Chesapeake Bay from a point in St. Mary's County, Maryland—an Homeric voyage when made as he did it in a skiff, obviously purloined. He landed at Hooper Island in a state of collapse. He would have died then and there, he told me, had not a freedman found him on the beach and taken him home. For three weeks he lay at the freedman's cabin; then, recovering some measure of strength, he was

taken by his good Samaritan in a catboat to the Somerset mainland.

"Rest easy," I said when he had finished. "Quigg has fled the country; he will not bother you again. Rest, get well, and return to the manor. You will be safe." I left him then, seeing he was weary.

Going to the Washington Tavern I sent word to MacPherson to join me there for dinner. I found the tavern crowded; Ginger William set at this time of the year—particularly in that period from Christmas to New Year's Day inclusive—a most sumptuous board. I had never chanced before to be at the tavern during this time of abundance, though the fame of it had come to me; I found the praise well-deserved. I must record what I saw, for as I pen these lines it is only a gustatory memory. Ginger William is long gone; the clanking railroad is thrust into Princess Anne, bringing its hurry and bustle and adherence to schedules. Gone is leisure and going is all graciousness. Ginger William's successor does well but knows the futility of good catering to men who have no time. My life has been long and I have seen many changes, some undoubtedly for the better. But I can never think that we have gained as much as we have lost. On every hand I see disputatiousness, malice, and envy, a hatred class of class and one individual of another. There is no longer contentment with one's lot; life has become a bitter struggle, serenity is unknown, savagery is rampant. Where all will end I do not know.

But these reflections have nothing to do with my tale and should not be inflicted upon you who, perhaps, think otherwise.

Ginger William was in fine spirits as he welcomed me to the tavern. He brewed a complimentary glass of punch for me and I was happy to drink his health and prosperity. MacPherson arriving, puffing and warming his ears with his hands. I must needs linger for another glass while he in turn drank to our good Boniface. This pleasant gesture over, we went to the dining room.

Ay, there was sumptuousness here in a land of sumptuous-



ness, and a fragrance of smoking meats enough to drive a hungry man to distraction. No miserly carving went on in the secret depths of the kitchen. A large table had been put up at one end of the room; here a deft Negro plied his knife while his assistant loaded the plates. One chose from among the boiled capons, the great roast turkey, broiled squabs, broiled or roast canvasback ducks, stewed wild goose with turnips, a sirloin of beef, a roast leg of mutton, partridges roasted in grape leaves, jugged rabbits, fried chicken on a huge platter, and baked ham—so fine it might have come from the manor—all steaming, savory, and brown. Near by were oysters, fried and on the half-shell; fried rockfish, a stew of terrapin, and small, cool, salty clams from the ocean side of our Peninsula; a great tureen of oxtail soup and another of creamed chicken soup; deep, hot pies of squab, of beefsteak and kidneys, of oysters, and of game. On the sideboard were pies of fruit, of pumpkin, sweet potato, and mincemeat; ponderous cakes, honey cakes, doughnuts, and squares of shortcake. Cheese also, strong and mild, with a plate of very good crackers to set off their flavors.

The problem was how to choose wisely from this bounty because, with so much to see and so many odors to provoke me, I was in a state of some confusion. I chose first some clams, these being more of a novelty to me than oysters; then a little terrapin in lieu of soup; then a slice of boiled capon in its celery sauce and another of roast beef, and still another of the turkey, with half a game pie to keep the cuts company. These, with candied sweet potatoes, tart jelly, and beaten biscuits, made up my main course. If I returned later for a bit of this and a bit of that, it does not stamp me glutton, for I was, despite my size, far behind the majority of the diners. In the ways of meats alone, MacPherson had what I had plus a partridge, a squab, and a portion of the wild-goose stew.

You may be sure that I thought, as I dined so well, of Dr. Ballard's remark that the prevailing ailment among Maryland's gentry still remained the gout, and hoped that the active outdoor life I led would offset the richness of the

dinner. I made some mention of my thoughts to MacPherson. He scowled at me.

"De'il take ye, David," he growled, "for recalling the fact to me. I have had some twinges of late." He regarded the apple pie on his plate with scowling face and presently pushed it away from him. But seeing that I calmly went on with mine he reappropriated his pie, remarking that one might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb.

I said, looking around the room and grinning, "You will have plenty of company to echo your groans. Half the gentry of Princess Anne are here today."

He sighed. "I had thought of a bit of cheese, ye ken," he said, "but ye have put me off it, David. I will, however, just nick off a wee slice and put it in my waistcoat pocket against the evening."

"You bulge," I told him when he returned, "as though you had the whole cheese in your pocket and not the slice."

"Aweel," he returned, "it comes with the dinner, ye ken, David, and I'm a man who has always liked to hae his money's worth." He pulled out his great, gold watch and consulted it. "Almost four," he said. "If ye are riding home tonight ye best get started."

"It matters little," I replied, "with no one to ride home to."

He shook his head sadly. "Ye have had no word from the lass, David?"

"None," I said.

His accent, which varied from only a touch of Scots to the broadest, always deepened when he was moved. "I hae nae words for ye, lad," he said. "I hae nae comfort to give ye." He tossed off the remainder of his Madeira and arose. "Could ye put up with me, David, for I have contracted an un-amiable habit of dropping off to sleep after a heavy meal, I would be happy to have ye spend the night with me."

"Thanks," I said, "but I must ride."

A half hour later I left him. I noticed, as I swung a leg over Kitty, that the day, though calm and sunny, had grown very cold. Ginger William called after me, "Best be brisk, Mr. Innes. The temperature has fallen ten degrees this last hour.



I look for a very cold night." I nodded and once I had left the town behind, gave Kitty her head. The sun went down in a clear sky; there was that period of intense darkness, then the stars came out, sharply brilliant and with a nearness to them. I did not like the look of still coldness the sky held. The earth was quiet also; not a twig rustled, not a spear of brown reeds moved. The vapor came sharply defined in the starlight from Kitty's nostrils. I grew cold—and colder. My feet were like icicles, and after a time I was forced to dismount and walk to restore the circulation of my blood. Thus I got to the manor, riding and walking, and was an unconscionable time about it.

I do not think the temperature went much lower that night. It was, however, sufficiently low to send me early to bed, my library fire failing to warm me.

On the morrow the Great Frost began.

In mid-morning clouds moved across the land and water and suddenly we were bound in an iron frost. Not that the early morning had not been cold, but it had been nothing to this. I had been looking at the Quarters of the field hands, which, according to practice, were scattered in small groups about the plantation, to make sure they were tight and warm; as I rode homeward I saw with astonishment the hardness of the earth, with a brown crust upon it and no yielding to it anywhere. The rims of the ruts would not indent but crushed beneath Kitty's hoofs, and on the hard-packed ground her feet came back to her as from a sheet of iron. The sky was not gray but a hard, austere slate color as I have seen sometimes on a winter's day at twilight.

Looking at it I saw that vast flocks of wildfowl were winging their way southward. Now it is an ordinary thing for us to see hosts of wildfowl in the sky as they trade from the Annemessex to the Manokin and back again, as they fly to ten thousand feeding grounds in salt creeks and marshes. The peculiarity of this flight was, first, that it was in one direction, second, that it endured the whole day through, with no slackening for the middle period of the day when wildfowl

rest. Throughout the late morning and afternoon I watched this phenomenon and grew more and more uneasy.

Toward evening the wind rose and a fine, powdery snow whirled out of the sky. So hard was it, and sparse, that it swept across the fields like grains of sand, lying nowhere, whitening nothing, not even the retaining hedgerows. It ceased before I went to bed. That night was the coldest within the memory of living men of our district. I awoke before midnight shivering uncontrollably. I built up the fire, piled upon my bed a half dozen extra blankets. Though warm at last, I slept fitfully, weighted down by my worry over my plantation people. I was awake when Jonas came to mend my fire. He came, not only in his greatcoat, but also with a blanket over that. He said that all was frozen tight: the pails of water in the kitchen, the kettle beside the hearth, the milk in the buckets. There was ice in my ewer and he had to break it to pour water so that I might wash.

We soon found that it was not possible to heat the big house. Food grew cold between kitchen and dining room; before the library fire one side of me froze while the other roasted. I found on investigation that no cabin, they all being small, was as uncomfortable as my own house. Suffering there was bound to be in such fearful weather, of course, but I did my best to minimize it. I stopped all work save the necessary chores and ordered a week's rations delivered to the outlying cabins. Then I called Jonas to me.

"There is no use in attempting to keep the house open," I said to him. "It is not only I who suffer but all of you who serve me personally. Only the kitchen is warm. Keep it open; close the rest. I'll go to the Little Manor until this hard weather ceases. Pack a bag for me and send it over by cart, along with such eatables as you think they might not have there and which I might require. Send little Jonas over to wait on me. As for you—stay by the kitchen fire. You are no longer young."

"Ain't no house goin' to be warm in dis weather, Marse David," he answered.

"That is true," I agreed, "but we can keep the Little Manor



fairly comfortable with much less effort and far less wood. Get the cart off as quickly as possible, Jonas. Kitty should go along with it under blankets. I will walk over later. Put a saddle in the cart, also my favorite fowling piece, powder horn, and cap pouch. I have plenty of shot at the Little Manor. That's about all—"

"Want de gun dogs, Marse Davy?"

"The setter only," I answered, "for he can stand the severe weather with less distress."

The wind came at twilight and brought with it again that hard, sparse, driving snow, snow that was in grains rather than flakes, that rattled like shot in the stripped branches of the trees and stung my face as I walked to the forge. It was odd to see the hard pellets bouncing across the road, resting nowhere unless it were in the frozen ditches, lending no white to the landscape that the eye could see. The flurry ceased just as I reached the forge; the wind dropped, the cold seemed to gather itself and intensify. I was told later that the previous night had been the sharpest of the winter; that I could not prove by my own feelings. When all was over, I thought every night for a full month had been equally bitter. It was on this particular night that the ancient, Hixon, was to die. I think he passed away without pain, for his son told me that when he found him next morning in his bed his face was composed and serene.

I entered Nobby's cottage just as Jeremy came in by the back door. He looked very cold; his great beak of a nose was purple rather than red and his lips were blue. He had just returned from the Foxalls, he told me. Mr. Foxall had departed the day after Christmas for Philadelphia on a matter of business concerning his sect, the Quakers, leaving Mrs. Foxall, Prudence, and Prudence's young sister, Esther, alone save for the servants. Jeremy had kindly ridden to see that all was well.

"And was all well?" I asked, remembering my frozen ewer and thinking that Prudence's must be the same and of the discomfort it symbolized.

"They are in good health," he replied, "and want nothing, though somewhat uncomfortable, as are all of us."

Nobby said from his great chair, "You 'ave seen colder weather than this, Jeremy."

"Yes," Jeremy replied. "Far colder, and for weeks on end. I did not mind it in that northern region; I find I do mind it here. My blood thins out in the great heat of summer here and leaves me unprepared for very cold weather."

"It has driven me from Fairhope," I remarked. "I go to the Little Manor until the cold spell is over. Think you there will be snow, Jeremy?"

"The sky says snow," he returned, "and not the flurries we've been having, but a great snow, *ad extremum*." He got his bottle of rum and after pouring me a small portion, half-filled a tin pannikin for himself and tossed it off. He said then, blinking his green and glassy eyes at me, "I think now I will live."

I turned to Nobby. He improved with every passing day. I saw that the bleached look was passing from his face; he had some color in his cheeks. "You look better," I said. "Can you keep warm here, Nobby?"

"Yes," he replied. "We moved our beds to this room, Davy, as you see. Jeremy 'as the sailorman's knack o' awakenin' at times during the night and so keeps in the fire. We are fairly comfortable. But no work goes a'ead at the forge becos' o' the numbin' o' my 'ands."

"Can you remember weather so cold? The salt creeks are frozen tight; every gut and ditch is icebound and on the marshes a man can walk where he will. There is a fringe of ice along the river shore and great plates of ice afloat."

"I 'ave seen all that and more in the years I 'ave been 'ere," he remarked, "but never a night so cold as last night or a day so cold as this one. I 'ave seen snow two feet deep on the level and a drift twelve feet 'igh on the road just a quarter mile below the Little Manor. But the weather haccompanying it was fairly mild. Nor did the snow last. A week and it was gone. This is a gentle land, Davy. It 'as its convulsions but wey don't hendure. I 'eard tell of a great frost an 'undred



years or so ago, when many 'uman lives were lost and thousands of sheep, cattle, and 'orses were frozen. But such an hoccurrence is a great convulsion o' Nature and 'appens only once in a century."

I left them presently to their supper, and with thoughts of my own tantalizing me, strode briskly along the road, trying to ward off the cold by virtue of a quick pace. The village seemed shrunken and huddled together; no one was abroad; all was silent. Chimneys roared though, I am sure, for an all-pervading smell of wood smoke was about. Right pleasantly it came to my nose and warmed my imagination if not my person.

By way of the back road and back lane I went to the Little Manor. Overhead that amazing flight of wildfowl continued, coming from the Bay and great rivers to the north of us. Low were many of the wedges; though I could not see them because of the intense darkness of early night, the whistle of wings was so loud at times that I wondered if the birds would clear our three tall walnut trees. The glacial cold had taken all caution from them. When before had the shy whistler followed else but a water path? Yet whistlers were just above my head that night as I stood momentarily beneath a walnut tree in the barnyard. No gunner can mistake the sound of their wings winnowing in the thin, frosty air.

Straight I went to the kitchen as I had when a boy on so many a winter's evening, feeling now as I had then after a long, chill day on a duck point, the cold seeping into my very bones and drawing the vitality from me. As I drew near I saw, in the light streaming from the window, that the snow had suddenly begun again. Now the flakes were much larger; they drifted lazily to earth. So gentle seemed the fall that I had no misgivings as I opened the door and went inside.

Kate was there tending a hissing spit; Judah sat near by, his chair tilted against the wall. The two younger children lay on their stomachs before the strong fire of oak and hickory logs. Little Jonas sat on a bench, sulkily paring potatoes. Lina was there, too, standing by a table, mixing something in a yellow bowl. I thought, with a little tug at my heart, how

bright, warm, and peaceful the scene and wondered—as I had wondered many times—why I could not achieve so pleasant an atmosphere in the kitchen of the big manor.

I said with a grin, after I had greeted them all and taken off my wraps, "Kate, look how little Jonas' lower lip sticks out. You are hurting his dignity by that task you have given him. One day he will be butler at Fairhope."

"De mo' he knows," Kate said, "de bettah he'll buttle, Marse Davy."

Judah gave his basso chuckle and Lina laughed in her round, mellow way. I said to her, "Have you deserted the forge, Lina? Are you still mother's girl?"

"I come while I can, Marse Davy," she replied. "Soon I ain't goin' be able to come foh some time."

I saw then that she was pregnant. "Finel!" I cried heartily. "Kate, you will soon be a grandmother."

"Yes," she answered with pride. "Dat so, Marse Davy. Dat baby gwine be free *by birth*—de fust in de fambly! Yes, Marse Davy, de first natchul-bawn *free* baby in de fambly! Elex-ander came mighty nigh to hit, bein' bawn only three an' a half months before Marse Peter give me an' Judah ouah freedom. But he done miss hit jist de same."

Time, I soon found, had softened their grief over Martin's death, as time must—time and the new life that Lina carried beneath her heart. The Lord giveth as well as taketh away; their simple faith and piety were restored and warmed at this evidence of a benevolent God.

I went into the main house and saw with approval the great fires blazing on the hearths of big drawing room and little back parlor. The dining room, which was in the frame addition, had been closed off. Upstairs there were fires in two bedrooms; the third was closed. Judah had stopped the cracks in windows and around the outside doors with paper and old strips of curtains. Much cold air must have leaked into the room from these small if elongated openings because, with them stopped, the house was warm, wide hall and all. Our third floor was, of course, shut off and the stair door covered with a blanket. I admit the fires downstairs were immense,



but at that they consumed far less wood than those at the big manor and not having such great areas to heat, performed with double efficiency.

After supper I read from the works of Master Shakespeare, delighting in his fecundity and aptness. For every mood of humanity and of Nature he has lines. Sitting before my fire, with the snow ticking against the windowpanes and the sound of the newly arisen winds in eaves and corners, I began with his play, *King Henry IV*, and meeting for the first time Sir John Falstaff, read entranced through both first and second parts, and then read again the first part. The hour was late when I finally laid the book aside; so enrapt had I been that I could scarcely believe that the great clock in the hall had chimed eleven and went to it with candle to make sure. Thus the hands stood, right enough.

I was about to go upstairs when I thought to take a look at the night. From the front steps I peered out, so far as my shielded candle would permit, on a chaos of white. Crowding thickly upon each other, dancing, whirling, covering earth, tree, and fence in a blanket of purest white, fell the snow-flakes. No gentleness was in the fall; dense it was and the flakes large and without softness. The wind was arctic in its severity. Let no man tell me again, looking at the sky and calling on his learning, that weather can be too cold for snow. Here was bitter cold and snow together. This was a blizzard I looked upon, such as they had in the Provinces of Canada.

Uneasily I went to bed, and with some reason as it turned out.

DAY called me late from sleep, so faint the light that came in my windows. I saw with astonishment that the hands of my bedside clock stood at few minutes of eight; I saw, too, that my fire had not been tended and was out. I lay still for a minute listening for sounds of activity in the house. There were none; all was silent save for the ceaseless ticking of the snow against the window and the moaning of the wind. Uneasy now I jumped from bed and dressed hastily, my teeth a-chatter. There was a queer light in the room; not a whiteness, not a semi-darkness, but something in between—wan and lifeless.

Turning to the window I saw that the sill was heaped with snow, so high as to cover a third of the lower half of the window. Snow was plastered against the crossbars which held the small panes in place, and where there was no snow, frost rimed the glass. So thick was the rime that I could not melt it with the heat of my hand. Not being able to see through the window, I could only guess at what went on outside, but thought a great storm raged.

My ewer was frozen; I broke a half inch of ice to get at the water. Bitter cold it was on my face and hands, already half frozen. I thought it little colder, though, than the lower rooms of the house. The fires had long since died and on the hearths lay only heaps of dead ashes which, when raked, revealed not a single live coal. Annoyed, and wondering what had happened to the servants, I hastened back to the kitchen. Careful Kate had banked this fire and soon I coaxed it into a blaze, and then into roaring, leaping, crackling flames.

Scarcely waiting to warm myself thoroughly I went to the kitchen door. A weight of snow lay against it which gave



to my shoulder; I stepped out into as wild a morning as I had ever seen. A great wind was raging, blowing along the snow-drifts and lifting from them smothering clouds that whirled about me and stung my lungs, while from the sky poured down a frightening, unceasing deluge of frost-barbed snow-flakes.

Even in the comparative shelter formed by the L of the kitchen and main house the snow was up to my knees. From where I stood I could not see the Quarters, so made my way around, much plagued by the swirling clouds of fine snow, to the north end of the kitchen. Here the full force of the storm caught me and drove the breath from me so that I could do no more than hang my head and gasp, and wonder if I dare venture another foot. Discovering, however, a little trick of holding my head aside to avoid the full force of the wind, I moved toward the back fence and the Quarters which lay beyond it. My vision was restricted to a seventy-five-foot radius; I could not see the barn, the cow pound, the wood rick—only those small buildings near at hand such as the tool shed and smokehouse, and they were shrouded with snow.

Reaching the fence I saw the reason for the nonappearance of my household help. A great drift lay just beyond, twice the height of a tall man and a full fifty feet thick, so near as I could judge, with its perimeter against the very door of Judah's cottage. From the top of it, which looked like the backbone of a starved horse, the wind blew a ceaseless cloud of snow, shaped as is the smoke from my fowling piece when first discharged on a calm day. All along the sides, too, little puffs of snow went up as of vapor, where the cold chisel of the boreal blast grooved and gouged and scalloped.

Formidable as the drift was, nevertheless it could be broached, and I wondered why men so stout as Judah and Saul had not tunneled through it. But as I stood there, doubting the spirit of my freedmen and seeing nothing to do save fall to myself and dig a way through, Judah, closely followed by Saul and little Jonas, broke through the edge of the drift with loud cries and stood before me. Kate, Lina, and the two children (though they were scarcely children, the boy being

now about thirteen) soon followed through the tunnel. We tramped a way for them to the kitchen and right glad we all were to feel the fire.

With breakfast inside us and being warmed and heartened, we set out to feed our beasts—that is, I, with Judah and Saul as assistants. We opened a path to the barn, a branch of it to the stables, another to the cow pound, a third to the wood rick, a fourth to the sheepfold. We fed the beasts and Saul milked the cows, and our milk, as Master Shakespeare had written (who knew all things and said them better than anyone else) did come “frozen home in pail.” We had no proper sleds, as have those who live in our northern states, only a rough, crude thing on thick runners called a stone sledge in some regions, which we use for drawing the very heaviest loads. Having nothing better, we put the mules to it and hauled a great quantity of firewood, stacking what we could in the kitchen and the remainder in the tool shed and smoke-house.

All this work in storm and intense cold brought a torpidity on me. When the toil was over, the hour then being close on the noontide, I sat sleepily before the kitchen fire, feeling sluggish not only in body but in mind—else I must have remembered that Prudence and her mother were alone and in need of reassurance if not to say actual help. It was in the middle of my dinner that I remembered it and I got up from the table with a shout. “Prudence! Prudence and Mrs. Foxall are alone! Mr. Foxall has gone to Philadelphia. We must go to them. Perhaps it would be well to bring them here until the storm is over. What say you, Kate?”

Warm-hearted Kate gave emphatic assent. I said, “Saul, put the mules to the sled immediately you have eaten.”

“Mules can’t git tru dat snow alone,” Judah put in from the table in a corner of the kitchen. “We got to shovel de way foh dem, Marse Davy. Hit a full half mile to Miss Prudence’s do’.”

“The mules can get through the snow on the level,” I answered. “It is only the drifts we’ll have to shovel through. Little Jonas can drive; you, Saul, and I will shovel.”



They did not like the idea of facing snow and bitter cold again and I did not blame them as the colored man takes the cold harder than the white. They were men, however, of kindness, substance, and courage, and I soon had them out. Travel was not so bad in the front lane; we were less than an hour negotiating it, but when we came to the main road I nearly threw up my hands in despair. Drifts as large as a barn lay across it because of its openness to the wind which had been mostly from the northwest, though veering occasionally to the north.

In truth there was no road at all now—merely a space between fields and patches of woodland. Nor were there ditches to bound this space, they being all frozen and filled in. Some lengths of fences remained visible; the rest were drifted over. Nowhere was there relief from the stinging wind save in the very heart of the great drifts we cut through. In these we learned to rest and to bring in the mules so that they might share the comparative warmth.

Yard by yard we fought our way to the Foxall lane. It lay on the west of the road; the wind had been at it, and save for one drift, we made fast time along it. Such light as there was in the sky was now beginning to fade. Cold, indeed, did the big frame house look as we neared it, with no smoke from the tall chimneys and the snow banked high against its northern and western sides. I was greatly relieved to see presently candlelight in the kitchen windows and blown smoke at the top of its stubby chimney.

I have ever loved the Quakers—and often envied them—for their calm acceptance of what God wills. Prudence, Mrs. Foxall, and young Esther were quite unperturbed—certainly outwardly—though suffering from the cold. When I proposed that they accompany me to the Little Manor they accepted at once, without foolish discussion, knowing it best not to abide at home without Mr. Foxall, as the storm had demoralized the running of the house. Prudence packed while Mrs. Foxall at my suggestion issued a fortnight's rations to servants and field hands in care of the butler, Pompey, who if not courageous was honest. The kitchen was left open for the con-

venience of the house servants. We locked the main house securely, putting up all shutters, making all as fast as we could. Then I placed the three women in the sled, wrapped well in blankets, and began the homeward journey.

Wind and snow had done their best to fill up the channel we had made, yet succeeded only in the last quarter of our journey which was along our own lane. Night had fallen but light streamed forth from our kitchen windows; we could not go astray. Ere we got to the kitchen door the women had lost the use of their limbs and I had to carry them to chairs before the fire. I noticed that tears stood in Prudence's blue eyes though she made no complaint. Kate had hot broth ready, but so chilled were all three that they could not use a spoon and had to be fed. My own hands were numbed and fumbled so at bowl and spoon that I had to lay both aside until I grew warmer.

It was good not only to feel the heat flow over us but to see its effect on all: how free movement came back to us, and then relaxation, followed by talk and presently by laughter. We four moved from kitchen to little parlor and I found that the snow had done us some service after all. Lying against the house, banking the foundations, it kept the lower part of the house singularly warm so that our fires were ample to maintain a comfortable temperature. For the month the frost and snow endured we were never cold within the house save in the very early morning, and so being warm there, found the outdoors endurable.

Three nights and two full days the blizzard lasted without slackening. Many lives were lost on the lower Peninsula and thousands of cattle, sheep, and horses perished. On our own Neck we escaped lightly, considering the great severity of the storm: the ancient died; Harvey Niles, cousin to the storekeeper, was trapped in a hut on the marsh and was frozen to death trying to make his way back to Fairhope; two aged freedmen and one woman succumbed to the cold; we had some losses in stock, particularly sheep. At the Little Manor my losses were negligible but at Fairhope Manor I lost two-score sheep, a brood mare, and two heifers, and was



not inclined to mourn over the fact but rather thank Providence I had escaped so lightly. The history of Maryland recorded no storm so severe, save the great flood of many years ago when the Colony was young.

When at last the coldly brilliant sun burst forth and my eyes could range over my fields, woodland, and marsh, what a sight met them! All was a vast expanse of white, with billows in it as in a sea, and here and there a huge drift like an island. Fences, ditches, low hedges were hidden from sight; roads were blotted out as though they had never been made. All the earth was filled and heaped; great branches of the trees were bent to the snow from the weight upon them and some were shattered. Looking northward I could see the spire of a church in the village. It lay only a few fields distant yet it might as well have been ten miles away. The snow took me up nearly to my waist where it lay on the level. Floundering through it toward the near-by smokehouse and reaching it out of breath and with no strength left in my legs, I realized that we were isolated—as was every plantation and farmstead—and so we would remain until a thaw came. We would have all we could manage to open paths to our barn and other out-houses.

All the day sun shone brightly but without one iota of warmth to it. Not a drop ran from the eaves; no softening took place anywhere on those great reaches of spotless white so that no crust formed; the snow ran through my fingers like powder. That night stars blazed again. Orion glittered as he strode the sky with green Sirius, the Dog Star, hard at heel. The white moon came up and moved across the heavens, remote and indifferent. Owls, sharp-set from hunger, called long that night—for I was up most of it—as they quartered like hounds the silent white fields.

It was, I think, the third day of this cold sunshine, in early afternoon as I came back from the stables where I had given Kitty a warm mash, that I stopped short in the tunneled path and almost cried out. For a man came toward me across the fields walking on the surface of the snow in a manner weird and superhuman. It was a moment before I realized that there

were such things as snowshoes; I closed my mouth, which had fallen open in my astonishment, not wishing to be caught looking foolish. Soon I saw that the man was Jeremy and that he bore another pair of snowshoes on his back. I hastened along the path to intercept him.

"Jeremy," I shouted, "I am here—to your left!"

He saw me and swung in my direction and it was odd to see him come across the line where the picket fence was and needing no gate because he was a foot above the topmost picket.

"David," he said breathlessly, "I have just come from the Foxalls. You have them here safe?"

"Ay, that I have," I answered. "Is Nobby well?"

"We have survived," he replied. "I spent the last two days in making snowshoes. I have a pair for you."

I thanked him and asked if he thought I could manage them.

"They are simple to manage," he replied. "A half hour's practice and you will have the knack of them. While they were made primarily for you to give me assistance in getting Prudence, Esther, and their mother to the village, nevertheless they will serve you well if you wish to get to Fairhope Manor."

"They will serve me splendidly," I answered heartily, "and not only in that. I have had the partridges much in mind; I can carry food to them if, indeed, any are left. But come inside, Jeremy. Prudence will be glad to see you and pleased with your concern for her and hers."

We went inside and found Prudence in the back parlor, looking, as usual, very pretty, sweet, and demure. I told her of Jeremy's kind thought and efforts on her behalf; she thanked him warmly.

"It is the least of what I would do for you, Miss Prudence," he returned gallantly.

I sat there for half an hour watching his strutting, preening, and ogling, and finding that I could take no more of it, rose and excused myself. Feeling a little disgruntled, for no good reason I could discover, I tied to my feet the snowshoes



and began to practice their manipulation. Getting the manner of it after a time, and though anything but expert, I took a bag of grain and set out for a thick patch of woodland near by, believing that the partridge would be there if anywhere. So it proved. I found a half dozen coveys within that five-acre wood, all so tamed from cold and hunger that they scarcely heeded me and would have come to hand if I had persuaded them with corn and wheat. I made little platforms of pine boughs and poured a heap of grain on each. Before I had moved away the birds began coming to the heaps, even to the one at my very feet. All seemed very weak and fed slowly at first, not ravenously as one would expect, and making low, distressful, chirping sounds in their throats which were pathetic. But food is warmth and ere I left I felt that I would lose few of them provided I could keep them fed. How many less fortunate coveys perished in the district I never knew; doubtless a great number, for the shooting the next autumn was most indifferent.

In the same wood were many rabbits. They had fared much better; their suffering was not from lack of foods—they had plenty of bark and twigs at hand—but from the intense cold. While they were wilder than the partridges (which some men now are beginning to call quail) yet they were tamer than ever I have seen them. I wondered how they would protect themselves in their weakened state from those savage nocturnal hunters, the owls.

I had so much pleasure from the snowshoes, being able to go now where I willed in this harsh, strange, but beautiful world of white, that as I went homeward at dusk I felt a glow of good will toward Jeremy and even hoped that he would linger for supper. However, he had gone before I reached the house. Prudence said that he was making a pair of snowshoes for her and would return on the morrow to give her lessons in their use.

Though the weather remained grim outside, there were inside comfort and a quiet happiness for me. I valued highly the company of Mrs. Foxall, Prudence, and Esther; they gave me something I had not had for many a weary year—a sense of

*family*. I had known them so long and so well that there was no constraint upon any of us. In the long evenings, as we sat before the fire, each of us followed his fancy. I would often look up from my book to see Prudence's sleek, fair head bent over her knitting, or whatever it was occupied her at the time, and think how lovely she was and how pleasant it was to be with her. And the thought would come unbidden, close my mind as I would, that all this I had now and much more might have been mine, should have been mine, had it not been for my meeting with Jeanne and the fever of love which had possessed me ever after.

Eventually I told her that Jeanne had left me. I could not tell her why; I could not put the sordid truth in words for her. Yet I think she guessed close to the truth, perhaps having been aided by some unguarded word from Nobby, who had, as I have written, a vast fondness for her. She asked me, "What can thee do, David? It is a horrible position thee are in."

"What can I do?" I replied bitterly. "Nothing! Never was man more powerless! I can but sit and wait, hoping that something will arise to show her the folly of her way."

She said, "Thee still loves her, David."

"Yes," I admitted wretchedly. "There is something about her that has driven itself deep in me. I have asked myself what it is, and why it holds me after her shabby treatment of me. I can never answer; I only know that it is there. So deep a thing must be love."

She turned her head and her gentian-blue eyes regarded me gravely.

"Love?" she said. "Love, David? I would not call a thing love that kept me continually in torment. I would call it a sickness."

"Others have said that," I replied. "Call it what you will, it possesses me."

She did not comment and in a moment I put in harshly, "Look, don't you think I know this is what I should have? You—if you would have me—and the love and peace with which



you would surround me, and the pride I would have in one so beautiful and good. That's—"

The faint, half-mocking smile in her eyes halted me. "One day thee will learn what thee wants, David," she said calmly, picking up the handkerchief she was hemming, "and then proceed to get it. Thee does not know now."

"There is a barb behind your demureness," I said wryly.

She almost laughed in my face. "I am far less demure than thee thinks," she answered. "Do my speech or clothes deceive thee? I am a woman, David, neither anemic nor spiritless. Why do thee insist on haloing me in thy thoughts? When I love it will be as a full-blooded woman, not as a ghost of goodness!"

Still laughing, she got up and went kitchenward, leaving me gasping and feeling very callow.

I had other barbs from her as the days passed, yet we grew in this propinquity ever closer. I never denied to myself or to her my love for Jeanne, but I was coming by slow degrees to see the hopelessness of it. I was a young man and a strong one and life surged through me; I could not put its normal fulfillment behind me like some monk. The wreck of my dreams lay about me, but from them I must arise and make new dreams and a new life. This bold resolve would come to me and linger with me a time; then some thought or memory of Jeanne would come and create invariably a wild, senseless hope of her return. I would be back then where I started until at length my common sense prevailed again.

One evening toward the end of January, as the four of us sat together in the little parlor, I looked up from my book, thinking the room overwarm. Yet the fire was not high; if anything it had burned a trifle low. I stood up, looked around vaguely, and asked if the others felt this sudden heat. Prudence raised her head. "I have felt it for the last hour," she said.

"Hark!" Mrs. Foxall said. "What is that beating sound, David?"

I listened, heard, and dashed to the window. Rain was drumming strongly against the glass and under it the last of

the rime was disappearing. "Rain!" I cried. "It is raining!"

We dashed together to the front steps. The wind had shifted to the south and rain was indeed falling. There was a feel of softness in the air and a warmth to the raindrops; they fell on us like a caress. Esther was dancing around, clapping her hands and shouting that her father would be home soon now. I said to Prudence when Mrs. Foxall and Esther had gone inside, "This has been a happy time for me. I am sorry it is almost over."

"And I," Prudence replied.

I took her hand. "Some day, Prudence, if—"

Gently she withdrew her hand. "Say nothing now, David," she said, smiling up at me, "while thee are full of *ifs* and *whens*. I do not dissemble my fondness for thee. That would be foolishly coy for thee knows I have it. Thee knows it has kept me from marriage despite pressure from Mother. I have waited and I will wait longer. Come to me again, David, when thy confusion is gone."

Warm and copious rain descended all that night and all of the next day. I thought, on arising, how little impression a night of rain had made; but by mid-morning snow was avalanching from every roof and the fence pickets began popping through the drifts. The following morning a spring-like sun shone forth, our own bright, strong, familiar Maryland sun which took the last chill from the air and spread abroad an April balminess. We could not have enough of it, standing on the steps bareheaded, our wraps laid aside, feeling it penetrate to every pore so long a-shrink from the cold. But as Judah said after dinner, it proved too much of a good thing, for we were soon in dire danger of a flood. All our ditches were yet blocked with ice; the snow water ran from the ridge on which the house was built toward the barn and stables and ponded there so that the horses and cattle presently stood in six inches of this cold and cheerless element.

Though I, with Judah and Saul to assist me, labored prodigiously for hours, we could not drain off this water which advanced like a tide. Soon the cow pound was flooded,



then the swine lot and sheepfold, then the poultry houses where forlorn fowls sat on their perches and clucked idiotically at the movement of water below them. The horses and mules we led to high ground and quartered in the woodshed, Kitty having been early removed to the tool house. For the other beasts, for the fowls, we could do little.

Before the ditches opened we lost some ewes and swine weakened by winter; our big red rooster, who was something of a fool despite his handsomeness and proud bearing, managed to drown himself. At the end of a week the snow had gone, save for soiled patches along the hedgerows and in the woods. Now all was mud. Pools of water lay in the low places and only the sandy roads would bear traffic. Mr. Foxall came to us the following Saturday from Onancock where a ship had landed him. Mud was not merely splashed on him and his weary horse; both were coated and recoated from head to foot and even his wife knew him only by his voice.

He took his family home that day, with many a warm word toward me. Prudence gave me her hand in parting and when I said, "Is that all?" hesitated, smiled, and then rising on tip-toes, kissed me. So they went and left me feeling their loss severely.

I rode in late afternoon to Fairhope Manor.

As though to atone for the outrageous winter, spring came very early that year. By mid-March it was well-advanced, with green in the lawns, buds swelling, the early shrubbery blooming and birdsong everywhere. Two weeks of genial sun dried the roads and mail once more came through with regularity. Never a word had I from Jeanne; Paul had not as yet appeared. Though I no longer burned fiercely and venomously to extirpate the kidnapers who had both shamed and injured me, yet the matter of their undoing lay before me as a duty and as such I accepted it. Oddly, Nobby, who was generally so genial and forgiving, harbored a personal grudge against them which I had outgrown. He had never forgotten how we had been hunted and any mention of that time hardened his face and brought a blaze to his eyes.

With the roads open and good weather upon us I lost no time in holding council with those who had volunteered to help me—Nobby, Jeremy, Taggart, Tom Ford, Will Jones, Henry Muir, and that incurable romanticist and man of action, Dr. Ballard. It was agreed that we go to Colonel Jardine for advice. We rode that very afternoon to Revelle's Neck and waited upon the Colonel in a body. He had been a Cavalry officer in both the War of Independence and the War of '12; his faded eyes lit up at intelligence of our plan and he at once agreed to instruct us in tactics so that we, in turn, could instruct the mercenaries I proposed to hire. Our drill began the following day in a pasture to the right of the big manor.

And now a queer thing happened. We had been at drill less than a week when other volunteers began to come forward, being unable to resist the excitement of our maneuvers, our



firing practice, and the good fellowship of our association. I believe that I could have had forty men had I so desired. I chose fourteen of those who offered, giving me a total of twenty-two, including myself. Any more would have been unwieldy, nor did I think more needed for the task, considering their high quality.

I marveled at how disciplined we became under the Colonel's instruction. I was naturally the captain of the expedition, but I left to him the selection of the other officers. He chose, as I hoped he would, Nobby, Taggart, and Dr. Ballard as lieutenants and gave them each a squad of six men, I being the overall commander. Two hours of every day we gave to our drill, generally toward evening. So isolated was our community that we had no trouble with the law, which might have stepped in merely to exercise petty authority. Yet this same authority would not be put to work for us if we asked the law's representatives to right the wrong that had been done us and a hundred others by the kidnapers. Ay, in those times we had little law and what there was of it was understaffed, often indolent, often corrupt. Men then had the habit of taking the law into their own hands. I no longer condone that; as I write, it is no longer necessary and against the public good.

In the final stage of our preparations I was summoned by Mr. Samuels to meet him in Baltimore. He had a commission for my brig; he asked that I accompany Captain Holland as he had several matters of importance to discuss with me. We sailed that very evening and the next day were in Baltimore. I met my friend at the countinghouse of Mr. Phineas Jelke and we devoted the afternoon to business. Mr. Jelke wanted the brig immediately for a period of four months. When I explained that I was shipping the following week a cargo of hams and bacon to the cotton states he promptly offered to act as agent for me and dispose of them. I agreed and in that manner he got the brig at once. I had done so well at shipping that I later asked Mr. Samuels if he thought it wise on my part to buy another brig or schooner. He replied that the same amount of money invested in Baltimore or Philadelphia prop-

erty a wiser measure. I asked him then to make the purchase for me, having a considerable amount of cash on hand from the sale the previous year of ship's biscuits and plantation produce.

We talked long that night. I told him of my visit to Franchot's Folly, of Jeanne's desertion, of my plans to wipe out the kidnapers. While deploring the fact that I should engage myself in what he called a very desperate venture, he agreed with me that it was useless at the moment to look to the law for help. Underneath that quiet, scholarly demeanor of his he was a great libertarian. The manner of Martin's death shocked him profoundly and stopped, I think, the words of protest he would otherwise have had for me. Only he begged me to be careful and take as few risks as possible.

He spoke little of Jeanne, understanding her motives no better than I did. "I cannot advise you, David," he said. "I can see that she still holds you. I wish it were in you to break from all things of her and begin a new life. Even if she returns there will always be a cloud between you. I see no happiness there."

"Common sense tells me that," I returned bitterly. "Yet I am bound to her. I cannot tell you why. Perhaps because I cannot think her evil—only misguided, headstrong, and suffering from her lawless upbringing. You spoke of a new life; I could have that new life with someone for whom I have a great affection, someone I admire and trust, who is lovely and good. I ask myself: Do I love her? In a way, perhaps, if a man can love two women. But even in her presence I am full of stammering and hesitations because I cannot subdue this feeling I have for Jeanne. I will end by losing both."

He put gentle fingers on my shoulder. "You do not deserve this ill luck, David, you who have ever been kind. But it will pass; believe that—it will pass. Nothing long abides, as Shakespeare has so often written. This will not abide. I know no virtue quite so great as patience, though hard for the young to acquire. I do not despair for you."

Though I retired late I was awakened early by the noise of traffic on the street below my room. Carts ground over the



cobblestones; vendors shouted their wares; strident conversations went on. Finding it impossible to return to sleep I arose, dressed, and went downstairs. I was among the first to breakfast and immediately thereafter went out to have a look about the town.

The great market was but a few blocks below me and thither I made my way. Early as was the hour, the place was thronged with women, men, slaves, and freedmen, doing their shopping for the day. I stood in the background, fascinated by the pageant—for it was that. Directly in front of me a dealer in game had his stand. Not even in the huge Philadelphia market had I seen such opulence as his counters displayed. They were piled high with wild ducks and geese, partridges, woodcock, snipe, grouse, heath hens, wild turkeys, larks, shore birds, plover, rails, doves, rabbits, squirrels, haunches of venison. The dealer was a merry little man, of Gallic extraction, I thought; he had a bright smile and a joke for all, with special attention for the young and pretty ladies. I had been watching him some time, and enjoying along with him the brisk trade he did, when I noticed, tacked to a post behind his counter, a pair of pictures in rough frames. Moving closer I saw that they were of game birds and executed in so free and flowing a manner, with such beauty and artistry, that I had never seen their like. The more I looked the more delighted I became and at length resolved to acquire them.

He was a little reluctant to part with his pictures, thinking them, perhaps, part of his stock in trade, but when I reached the sum of fifteen dollars for both he plucked them from the wall and put them into my hands with a flourish. I did not know then the man who had painted them; I was to know later and to be delighted all my life with my purchase. The artist was John James Audubon and these were early copies made by him of two drawings later included in his famous *elephant folio*.

I was making my way slowly from the market when I saw something that banished the smile from my face and sent the blood pounding to my temples. Standing in front of a fish stall, and bargaining with all the intensity of her avaricious

nature, was Celeste! I let her complete her purchases, which she did after long haggling, and then as she walked away, fell in behind her. She led me to the street and up it for several blocks, then turned into a narrow way, and after some distance along it, swung abruptly into a wide and pleasant residential avenue. I had been keeping a discreet distance behind her; now I began to close up the space, and as she turned into a gate before a small house of whitewashed brick, I came forward quickly, vaulted the fence, and seized her by the arm.

The basket fell from her fingers. She looked up at me with a kind of sick horror and despair in her face. She tried to speak but made only a low gurgling in her throat. I said, "Take me to my wife," and propelled her forward for she seemed to have lost the power to move unaided.

Stumbling, halting, she led me to the rear door. I pushed it open and we entered. Jeanne, never slothful, was up. She heard the sound of our entrance and called to Celeste in French. I tightened my grip on the Breton woman's arm. "Tell her to come here," I whispered. Celeste, however, was beyond speaking; she stood there gazing slack-mouthed at me and trembling violently. In a moment I heard steps in the passage, the door swung open, and Jeanne stood before me. She looked first at me and then at the shaking Celeste.

"So you have found me, David," she said calmly, "and in the manner I told Celeste you would." She turned on the Breton woman but without much anger. "Did I not warn both you and Lopez, fool, to be on the watch? Well—what matter now? Stop that trembling. He will not eat you, having accomplished his purpose."

In a moment she sat down, crossing her fine legs indolently and not bothering to arrange the folds of the yellow-silk *peignoir* she wore. "David," she said, "I hear you have begun preparations to move against us."

I asked sharply, "Who told you that? I doubt that any of your people have put foot in our region."

"We have our method," she replied, "of keeping watch on you without involving our own men. I warn you that we are



quite ready for anything you plan!" She made a sudden, small grimace. "La, David, how silly this sounds—this talk of war between us."

"With that I agree," I replied. "So if you will kindly pack your bags we will sail this very afternoon for home."

"So you want me back," she said, and I saw a spot of color appear on each cheekbone. "Have you suffered, David? Have you longed for me?"

"I have suffered," I told her grimly, "and I have longed for you."

"Come," she said at once, rising. "I have some personal matters to discuss with you."

I followed her along the passage and up the stairs to her room.

"A plain place, you see," she said, motioning me to a chair. "I have had no incentive to beautify it nor give it the feminine touches you once so admired." She sat down on the bed and looked me over critically. "You appear well," she said at last, "though a little thin."

"I think," I returned, "that you are not so blooming as when last I saw you."

"I have fretted," she admitted.

All this amiability on her part, being far from what I had expected, threw me into a state of confusion. Here were no strife or bitterness, no harsh argument, no tears or reproaches, and above all, none of that dreadful hardness on her face or in her manner. Looking at her, so soft, sweet, and young, with no mark at all upon her save perhaps a manner of not meeting my eyes for long at a time, it seemed incredible that she had left me to resume that foul connection with the slavers. Cautious I tried to be—as I am cautious when I do not understand a thing—but despite myself my guard came down. I leaned forward and put my hand on her soft, white knee which came through the fold of her robe.

"Jeanne," I said softly, "it is true that I have missed you and longed for you and I am not so dull I fail to see that you have also missed me. It is not too late to break from those at The Folly."

A little pulse began beating in her throat and her voice was unsteady as she replied, "David, must we talk of that right now? There are things to be said, I know, and I will listen. But is this the time? I have not been with you for months. Is not a little tenderness indicated? Be tender before you scold, or ask that I give up far more than you realize, and I will listen the more readily."

"So," I said with stupid satisfaction, "you are not too happy with your choice."

She flashed me a quick glance. "There are things I have missed," she confessed. "I have missed you, and I have missed the manor and our quiet way of life there." She came forward and sat at my feet, resting her head against me.

I put my hand on her gleaming hair. "My dear," I said tenderly, "I have never believed that you were wicked. Only wilful and headstrong and with that overdeveloped love of power some clever women acquire. Emmet believes you have a genius for organization and direction, but I do not think that even he understood why you had chosen what he called the 'trade' against the life you had at Fairhope Manor. And yet maybe it is well that you should have experimented and got that fever out of your blood—if you have entirely."

She pulled herself to her feet and stood before me, her full lips parted in a small smile. "David," she said, "I could wish that you were less prosy and more of a husband. Could you not exchange caresses for words just now? I have been a long time from you yet you sit there and argue like some lawyer."

"I cannot jump so easily," I said, not without bitterness, "from months of despair and heartbreak over you to a pretense that you have never left my side."

"I know," she said and, bending swiftly, kissed me. "But Emmet told you also, as I had instructed him, that I loved you and would ever love you and that no man would take your place in my heart. Come, David, why do you hesitate? I am, after all, your wife, and love between us is right and proper."

She stood erect, unbelted her robe, and shook it from her shoulders so that it fell in a yellow-gold heap at her feet. "Come, David," she said.



At sight of her well-remembered white and lovely nudity all resistance went from me. She pulled me to my feet; my knees shook and there was a painful dryness in my throat and a throbbing in my temples. Her lips came hard against mine and she said once more with feverish urgency, "Come, David."

There is an aftermath to intense passion. It should be one of sweet relaxation—but it can be troubled. Mine was troubled. I raised myself on one elbow and looked down at her. She slept, I thought. Her hair was tumbled about her face and there was a faint dew of perspiration on brow and upper lip. With her great black eyes closed she looked older. I could see now the determination in the line of her chin; there was a set of arrogance and wilfulness to her mouth. She would need a firm hand, I thought, and guidance, and I determined in my fatuity that once I had her at the manor she would have both.

My gaze seemed to disturb her. She turned her head and sighed. I sank back to my pillow wondering at my unease and the lack I had felt in our love-making now that it was over. Some element had been missing which once had glorified it. Had it been a thing of the senses alone, rather than a thing of both senses and spirit? Disliking my thoughts and drawing away from them, I quietly got out of bed.

She awoke before I had finished dressing, sat up, and said with some consternation, "David! You are not going so soon?"

"I shall be back within an hour," I said. "Mr. Samuels is leaving and I want a word with him before he goes."

"Wait for me," she said. "Let me dress and accompany you."

"Accompany me?" I cried. "You want to see my good friend again? Then, Jeanne, you *are* going home with me? You have made up your mind?"

She laughed. "I must not be persuaded too easily," she replied. "I must argue first and ask for concessions."

"Very well," I smiled, catching her mood. "We will on our return enter into great argument. I have been reading Plato and Aristotle lately and I think I will be a match for you." Yet despite her light words and my own, my uneasiness grew

on me. Here was too much casualness on a very grave matter. But, I reflected, women are ever strange.

She put on her robe and departed to have Celeste make coffee for us. She was away some time; I finished dressing, waited a few minutes, and then went downstairs. Jeanne was in the kitchen alone, brewing the coffee. "Celeste has gone out," she explained, "but will be back presently."

I sat at the little table and looked out the window. Strong spring sunshine was splashed over the little back garden; a robin hopped across the grass and a sparrow chipped from a spray of crape myrtle. Jeanne brought me in a small blue cup the strong Louisiana coffee she preferred. She sat down across from me and as she sipped her coffee remarked that I had all but frightened Celeste out of her senses.

"She was not frightened without reason," I growled. "Had it been Lopez in place of her I would have wrung his neck. You do well to leave that foul business else you would soon have that feeling of awful guilt she carries with her always. I am not yet through with her—merely at a loss to devise some proper punishment. It is well for her that she is a woman."

She did not reply. I finished my coffee and said I would walk in the back yard while she dressed—that after the hard winter I could not have enough of the sunshine.

Outside, I strolled back and forth over the grass and under the trees, enjoying the honest warmth of the sun's rays. Spring was less advanced here than at Fairhope; nevertheless there was a pleasant cast of green over all and birds were singing. The breeze was from the water with a hale and salty smell to it. I could never abide towns long and now I thought I had seen enough of Baltimore, interesting though it was. I hoped I could prevail on Jeanne to leave on the morrow. Though wondering, and doubtful about some aspects, I was beginning to believe that she meant to accompany me.

Celeste returned a quarter hour later. She saw me, drew back, then hurried to the kitchen. Six or eight minutes passed; she reappeared and stood on the steps. She had my hat and the pictures I had bought in one hand; with the other she



beckoned to me urgently. I walked to her and asked, "What is this, Celeste?"

"Go, m'sieu," she whispered. "Go away from here at once." She was trembling and her face was gray.

I took the hat and pictures from her hand. Recent experiences had sharpened my wits; I no longer brushed aside matters which seemed at first ridiculous. I said, "Steady yourself. What has happened? What danger is here?"

"Go," she pleaded. "Go at once. Don't wait for her. She goes with you only to try and stop you from destroying The Folly. She and the others planned it that way. If you had not found her she would have gone back to you herself next week. So it was planned. Those at The Folly know what strength you have. They cannot hope to hold out against you. They have not fifteen loyal fighting men amongst them. As for those hangers-on—that *canaille* of the backwoods—the first shot would disperse them!"

She began to sob and gasp again from terror and unsteady nerves. It was useless to press her then for more information. I waited until she got some hold of herself, then said as quietly as I could, "But Jeanne knows she cannot divert me from my purpose."

She managed to articulate clearly enough for me to understand, "If, M'sieu David, her persuasion failed, then other measures were to be taken. Desperate measures, m'sieu."

"I see," I said after a long moment. "Who was to take those desperate measures, Celeste?"

"She, m'sieu. It was put up to her. Though they have a spy down there, they could not entrust the task to him."

"They plan to kill me," I said, and thought how far-off and strange my own voice sounded. "They plan to kill me if I refuse to abandon my attack on The Folly. Is that it, Celeste?"

"Kill?" she repeated. "I have wondered, m'sieu. I do not think so, for in her own way she requires you. I cannot think that she would go so far, no matter how great the need from their viewpoint. I think they plan, if her soft persuasion fails, to render you unable personally to carry out the attack. With-

out you they know there will be no attack. Some 'accident' will happen to you; something of that nature; I do not know the details. You only are actively against them. Without your interference they believe that they will last at least three years more. Therefore, M'sieu David, you must be stopped. It is necessary; it *must* be done."

"So great their greed," I said, and drew my hand across my brow, suddenly wet.

"So great their profits," she said, "that they will stop at nothing to protect them while they last."

"I am grateful to you, Celeste," I said, "but I would like to know one more thing: Why have you turned on them? Why have you told me all this?"

"Because," she whispered, and shook all over, "I am frightened. I want no more of them. This is the end for me. Had I had my way I would have left when Paul did. She prevented me. I want you no longer against me, m'sieu; a dozen times over would I prefer them against me. I think I died today when you seized me. I have been in terror of that moment for months. . . . M'sieu David, in return for this favor I do you, will you forgive me? Will you leave me in peace when I get away from here?"

"The leopard does not change his spots, Celeste," I said dryly. "I do not look upon this shift of yours toward me as a change of heart on your part but as expediency. Yet because you have warned me at risk to yourself, I'll call the matter quits. Furthermore, if the law eventually comes to my aid, I promise not to press charges against you. Go back, as you previously planned, to New Orleans. Break from her if you have to run away."

"I will," she replied, steadier now. "And do you give her up, m'sieu; get her out of your thoughts. She would consume you, if you would let her. *Mon dieu!* I think at times she is insane! Marchand at his worst was never so hard, so driven; I am a lamb in comparison with her. What use has she for you save to pleasure her? None, I assure you, M'sieu David. That she calls love. Love! She has no love for anyone, not for



you, not for Paul. In her are only lust, greed, and cruelty. Cruelty! Have you not yet sensed that in her? It is there—"

I cut off her talk, which was growing hysterical again, with a sharp motion of my hand. "Will she think from my disappearance," I asked, "that you warned me?"

"That chance I will have to take," she replied. "Go now, m'sieu."

"Tell her," I said, "that I decided not to keep Mr. Samuels waiting any longer. Tell her I will return. That message may cover you. It is the best I can do."

"Only go," she begged, her face gray and old. "Go now, I beg of you, before she finds me with you. Go through the alley to the street. That way she cannot see you; her room is in front."

"Yes," I answered.

I went through the rear gate to the alley. I did not doubt Celeste; I could not doubt her. Something inside me told me with finality that she spoke the truth.

## 28

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A MILE above the forge, in a patch of broom-sedge from which I could command the main road, I lay alone at full length, my new rifle at my side. For twenty-four hours I and others had kept that stretch of road under constant surveillance because of something Nobby had told me on my return from Baltimore.

He had, three days earlier, at about the hour when a man starts thinking in earnest of his dinner, been at his anvil. The high, wide doors of the forge were open to admit the bright sunshine. In the rear a freedman artisan worked at a bench; Nobby himself was shaping the glowing end of an iron strap. So intent on his task was he that he was not aware of the intrusion of a stranger until the man spoke. The newcomer wasted no time on salutation. "Blacksmith," he asked, "is your name Nobby Parks?"

Nobby looked up sharply. A stout, bearded man stood just within the forge doors. He had on a low-crowned black hat, a brown coat, and a pair of butternut trousers tucked in high, spurred, cowhide boots. Though not a tall man he was strong and active, with a barrel-like chest and an enormously thick neck. His beard was black, fairly short, and cut square so that in appearance it was like a spade. He wore his hat pulled well down over his eyes and there was to him an air of both bully and braggart.

"I am Parks, the blacksmith," Nobby answered shortly, disliking the stranger at sight and wanting no dealings with him.

A hand came from behind the man's back and in it was a double-barreled pistol. Nobby noticed that it appeared to be a weapon of some excellence and that it was of the latest



percussion-lock type. With great deliberation the man lifted his arm until the pistol was pointed at Nobby's chest. "Don't move," the stranger said, "and tell your black to stay at his bench. I have a barrel for each of you. Now, Parks, listen to me and heed well. This is a warning—and the last warning. If you do not abandon this plan you have against those who live at Franchot's Folly and who seek no war with you—if, I say, you do not abandon this plan and withdraw from it entirely and at once—your life is forfeit. You will not live forty-eight hours from the time we learn that you have ignored this warning."

Little by little he lowered his pistol, and when the weapon was pointed at the dirt floor just in front of Nobby's feet, he pressed the trigger; the ball hit true and flung a shower of earth to Nobby's waist and he even tasted some on his lips. The stranger turned away then and without haste strode outside, mounted his horse, and galloped off.

Of all acts of the slavers this, I think, was the most foolish. For it was not only stupidly melodramatic but a type of bullying and insult no proud and brave man would put up with. And, mark you well, Nobby was both proud and brave. It had thrown him into a blazing rage which waxed hotter with every passing hour; by the time I returned he was in the mood to attack The Folly single-handed. "Let us drill at once, Davy," he begged me. "Let this spy see wot I think o' 'is warnin'! Let 'im come back! I will 'ave 'im by the throat though I take a pistol ball to do it!"

"Go easy," I advised him with some dryness. "You will not find a pistol ball easily digested. Yes, we will drill and you shall be there. But first let us plan to trap this bully. I think they have but one man here and he is a hired spy and assassin rather than one of them. So much I learned from Celeste. Send your freedman now for Taggart—and Dr. Ballard if he is available—and we'll talk the matter over. This is no time to go off half-cocked."

He did as I bade him, and while we waited for our two friends, I told him, with a calmness strange even to myself, most of what had transpired in Baltimore. The anger in him

died down as I talked; when I had finished he shook his head with sadness and commiseration. "It was an hevill hour for you, that hour you met 'er," he said wretchedly.

"I would have her," I replied, "despite the disapproval of all of you and despite my own fears. Now I pay for my headstrong ways and folly."

"It is 'ard to believe o' 'er," Nobby said, "that she, so young and comely, could hact in such a manner. I never thought 'er the one for you, Davy; but likewise I never thought 'er wicked. Yet she is so. You must free yourself from 'er at once. There must be law which permits it."

"Perhaps," I said, "but that must wait."

I saw the disapproval in his face. "Think," I said. "What is to become of her if we destroy The Folly, as we shall? No one will be left to her. Not Celeste, nor her uncle—she dare not come to him at Princess Anne now that she has left me. Paul might care for her, but where is he? She does not know nor do I. I know that nothing binds her to the others save the trade—and there will be no trade when we have finished with them. Quigg, Bollans, Marchand, Emmet—think you the lesson will not suffice them? Even now I warrant you they have their gold in distant banks or hidden far away from The Folly, ready for them when they run. Jeanne is still my wife and in one way has been true to me. That I know. What is left for me to do save stand by?"

"So you see your duty, Davy," he said heavily. "There is nothing more to be said."

Taggart soon joined us, followed sometime later by Dr. Ballard. Nobby had not told them of what had happened to him, preferring to see what I made of it first. Ere I had finished, Taggart's eyes were cold and hard and the doctor was swearing with vigor and abandon. "Now mark you," I said, "Nobby is in no danger. We would be fools to think so. They had some taste of his quality already at The Folly and if they wished his life they would not have warned him. They know he will be ready for this hired spy. If we continue with our preparations no doubt they, through him, will strike again for



they will be desperate. It will not be at me. There are reasons—I cannot give them to you now—which make me sure my life is in no danger here. It will be at one of you they will strike—likely at Taggart as he is best known to them next to Nobby. That we must prevent. I ask you—how?”

“There is only one road to Fairhope,” Dr. Ballard said thoughtfully, “and it ends here. Along it are farmlands with fences, some swamp, thick woodland. A mounted man must come from the east, else be harbored in Fairhope or near by, which is impossible. Granted that he comes from the east, then he must come by the road, maybe in deep of night to hide in the vicinity until it is time for his purpose, *but he must come by that one road*. Therefore let us watch it every moment from now on, day and night. We will get him in time; he cannot escape.”

“You ’ave it!” Nobby cried jubilantly. “We’ll take four-hour shifts, choosing our best men for the job. One man will halways be on watch, night and day, while the rest o’ hus go habout wot business we ’ave to ’and. Ay, we will take this black-bearded man, Davy, and I will hattend to ’im. Remember that; ’e is to be saved for me!”

So it was that I lay in the patch of broom-sedge, taking my turn at watch duty. The sun was warm, even hot; it distilled pleasant odors from the earth and from the brown sedge. I thought how quiet all was. The white road before me lay peaceful and empty; the pines seemed to drowse. There were some small sounds but they seemed part of the noontide silence: the quick, brief tapping of a distant woodpecker, the faint, long-drawn-out shout of a field hand calling to another, the far-off tinkle of a cowbell. I had volunteered that day for a double term of duty in order to permit Nobby, who followed me, to finish an urgent job for Mr. Foxall. Now half my time was up and I was filled with boredom and impatience. I reflected that I would make a rule to the effect that no man should watch longer than four hours because after that he got careless. It was, in fact, a dull task lying

there, ever keeping the road before my eyes and feeling guilty if for a moment I raised them to watch the flight of a bird.

I was wondering what had become of the hot lunch Nobby had promised me when I saw him, on foot, coming up the road accompanied by Prudence. He carried a pail in one hand and a rifle in the other. Drawing abreast of me, he halted, scanned the road before him, then with a quick word to Prudence plunged into the fringing pines. "Well," I said arising, "you have done more than you promised and I will bear the extra watch with fortitude. . . . Prudence, you look as lovely as ever."

"I thank thee, David," she replied and made me a little half-mocking curtsy. "Nobby has brought lunch for the three of us in order to relieve thee for a time of the monotony of watching and being alone."

"That is kind of you both," I said.

Nobby said, "No sign o' the bearded man, Davy? For so great a bully he moves in a perishin' discreet manner. Blow me, from 'is talk I thought 'e would roar down on hus like a lion."

"Having warned you," I returned, "and so put us on our guard, it is not likely he will return in the daylight hours."

"David," Prudence remarked as she seated herself on the blanket I had been using, "Nobby says that thee and the others go soon to The Folly."

"Yes," I said. "We are ready. I am holding up now only because we wish to take this spy."

"Surely," she said, "it will be telltale to ride in a body to the Nanticoke."

I grinned. "So you have been giving it some thought," I replied. "Tell me, then, Madame General, how we may get to the Nanticoke without being telltale to some degree."

"I can do that," she said with calmness. "Leave the horses behind and go by ship. Even though thee has thy party leave here in driblets of two and three yet some will be seen and suspected before reaching the rendezvous chosen. In a bay schooner thee could get to their very door unsuspected."



"Leave the horses?" I protested. "Our drill has been based on the use of horses. We can't do that, Prudence!"

Nobby, who had been gazing at Prudence with an astonished look on his face, suddenly began to laugh.

"Why," I demanded petulantly, "are you braying like a jackass?"

"Because the maid's right, Davy," he replied. "Now, don't be 'asty; just think a little o' the hadwantages o' the plan. Bay schooners come and go on the Nanticoke without comment, touching at Sharpstown, The Folly, and hother places clear hup to Seaford. Suppose one night we ran habove Franchot's Folly a mile or two and dropped hoff seventeen o' our men there. Five would stay on the schooner which would then go back to The Folly and tie hup along o' one o' their brigs. At dawn the seventeen would attack the 'ouse and the five left in the schooner would take the brig and fire 'er. Hafter that go on to their hother ship if she were there—which is not likely. Then, o' course, fire the small boats and the wharf, and later join in the attack on the 'ouse. I tell you, Davy, that Prudence is right. This way we surprise 'em; I doubt we will the hother way."

I was shaken by this reasoning and admitted the fact. Finally I said, "Let us put the plan before Taggart and Dr. Ballard. If they agree to it I will also."

"The wonder is," said Nobby, "that we 'ad not thought of such a plan hourselves. 'Tis because we are more 'orsemen than sailors, doubtless."

Prudence was putting the plate of fried chicken, still hot, on a napkin, along with buttered bread, pickles, half a cake, a bottle of coffee and three cups. I sat down beside her. "Prudence," I said, "you are ever full of surprises to me. Who would have thought of you as a strategist?"

She said nothing, only smiled, and looked at me through half-closed eyelashes. I thought how long they were and how though lowered they curled upward. I thought, too, how fresh her fair skin was and how even the searching sun could not fault it. I thought, above all, how good it was to be there at her side. I helped her to food and we ate, the three of us, in

companionable silence, content with each other and with the lovely April day.

Prudence said at last from the depths of her thoughts, "David, is there much danger in this attack on The Folly?"

"There is always some danger," I admitted, "when rifle balls are flying back and forth."

"If thee accomplishes thy purpose will thee be satisfied?"

"I will be satisfied," I answered. "We go in no bloodthirsty mood. Our desire is to destroy their property and disperse the band, rather than kill or incapacitate them, believing the lesson will be sufficient."

"Has Jim London returned to thee, David?"

"He is back," I returned, "though but half the man he was. There was more than bodily damage done to him. He who was so strong and bold starts now at a shadow. The change is pitiful. Someone at The Folly will pay, I assure you."

She said with a little sigh, "I shall be glad indeed when all this is over."

"I, too," I replied, half fiercely. "All of it—all connected with it. Little enjoyment have I had from life since I inherited the manor. I am beginning to feel like some Ulysses, doomed for long years—"

She cut in swiftly, "No, no, David! Thee must not feel like that. I have a conviction that thy troubles are coming quickly to an end."

"I hope so," I said, "or I will find gray at my temples some morning very soon."

Prudence said to Nobby, "Shall thee ride to Snow Hill before the attack on The Folly?"

"Now, Prudence," Nobby said, aggrieved, "heasy on that rein. Lately you 'ave become worse than Davy, wot with your 'ints and suggestions and harguments hurgung me toward matrimony."

"It is because of my concern for thee," she retorted with an impish grin. "This is Saturday but I did not see Jeremy at the forge. Does thee know where he has gone? No? Then I'll tell thee. To Mistress Swann's. He will make a pretty fare-



well to her, play the hero, and pose and strut. I fear me thee's chances with the widow get less and less. That is why I urge thee on."

Nobby grinned in turn. "That spur does not prick me, pretty maid," he said.

"Meaning, Prudence," I put in, "that he is calloused from your jabs. Which shows that one should use the spur with discretion."

"It is not as if he did not want to marry, David," she returned. "Thee knows the fondness he has for Mistress Swann; thee knows the pother he will be in if he loses her. There is in his mind some small obstruction which keeps him from declaring himself to her. Over that obstruction I wish to push him."

"I think," I said, laughing, "that you will have to heave him over it, and you look to me a trifle fragile for the task. But speaking of Jeremy and the widow calls to mind the medicine man, Prentice Carfax. Have you heard anything of him lately, Nobby?"

"No," Nobby replied, "though I 'ave thought o' 'im hoften. Queer cove, 'e is, Davy—a man o' parts and heducation wastin' 'imself as 'e does."

"I have him on my mind," I said. "Once we return from The Folly I'll get in touch with him. Think you it would be possible to restore him to respectability?"

"You can be sure," he answered, "that 'e thoroughly hen-joys 'is wagabondage. 'E is by nature devious else 'e would not be in that rogue's trade. 'Owever, we would be wrong not to hoffer 'im a chance to reform. I like 'im, Davy. 'E is an hamusin' an' comical chap." He got up and glanced at the sun. "Time to go, Prudence," he added, "else your father will not 'ave 'is plow tonight."

"Yes," she said. I helped her to her feet and she stood for a moment with her hand in mine. "I shall see you soon again, Prudence?" I asked.

"Come to supper tomorrow night," she said. "We have all missed thee of late, David. Come and let us repay some small part at least of the hospitality we owe thee."

"I will come, Prudence, gladly. Those were good times we had despite the snow and cold. I have missed them."

"And I," she replied.

Nobby relieved me promptly at four. You may be sure I did not linger with him; I had my fill of that post. The fickle April sky had clouded over, had become opalescent, and by the time I turned into my own lane a soft, sweet rain had begun. Whether because of Prudence's visit or because of the pattering rain, so gently soothing and beneficent, or, more likely, because of both, I was suddenly sensible of a mounting feeling of hope and well-being such as I had not experienced in months. How friendly all things seemed to me—the rain, the lane, the manor, the birds in the trees and the herds in the fields, the laughing voices of the plantation hands. Every young leaf, bobbing under the raindrops, seemed to call out that trouble does not long abide; every robin had a note of cheer for me; every flower seemed to expand in sympathy and befriend me.

Ere I had reached the manor door I was smiling and my head, long bent, had begun to come up again.

So sound was Prudence's plan of going by ship to The Folly that not only Dr. Ballard and Taggart but all the others consulted accepted it at once. Henry Muir, a waterman himself, was delegated to find and hire a bay schooner, which he did within two days. In the meantime we kept up a ceaseless watch for the bearded man.

I had gone, two days after my day-long vigil at the roadside, to shoot some snipe which had lingered on a small, rich piece of low land belonging to Taggart. He did not accompany me, it being his turn as sentinel. I had good sport for an hour and a half, and having bagged an even dozen fine, plump snipe, walked to the cottage for a chat with Cindy. I arrived in the midst of turmoil. She had Young Taggart by the ear. "Drat you!" she was saying as I came up. "I've a mind to skin you alive! A body can't take her eyes off you one little minute without you gettin' into mischief. A big boy



like you pushin' his sister into the water butt! What comes over you that you do sich things?"

Young Tag denied the accusation indignantly. "I didn't, nuther, push her into the water butt. She was standin' there with her back to it, an' I came round the corner fast and bumped her. Jist the littlest kind of a bump. Kin I help it effen she has limber legs?"

"My legs are not limber," Amanda contradicted him with fury. "You bumped me hard an' you did it deliberate."

Cindy's hand was lifted and Tag was in dire danger of receiving the cuff which, no doubt, he richly deserved, when Amanda saw me. "Ma," she cried, "here's Mr. David!" Cindy released her son's ear and he promptly scuttled away, not without a glance full of gratitude at me.

"He plagues me, Mr. David," Cindy said to me, smiling. "But la, what can a body expect from a young-un so full of high sperits. He's his Pa all over again. Fidgety as a squirrel in a gum tree. Come in, Mr. David, do. Amanda, put a stick on the fire and heat up the coffee."

With Taggart on guard duty it was inevitable that we should soon turn our conversation to the bearded man. Cindy thought that he was hidden somewhere in the vicinity. "What good," she asked with logic I could not deny, "is a spy effen he's so far off he cain't spy nothin'? Why, la!—to be of any use he's got to be where he kin see things. I say he's hid out close at hand."

"Perhaps," I answered, "but we do not think so, Cindy. It is less easy to hide in our thickly settled region than you think—that is, unless someone harbors him. Yet I admit that after all his bluster I do not like his quietness. Has he gone to the Nanticoke for orders? I doubt that—he must know that we intend to attack soon; he dare not leave us for any length of time. If his plan is to hinder us, as it undoubtedly is, he must strike quietly or not at all."

I left her in a few minutes, mounted Kitty, and rode to the village. In Niles' store I met Mr. and Mrs. Foxall and stopped for a word with them. The snipe were a present for Prudence, she having expressed a wish for some, so presently I told Mrs.

Foxall I had the birds and asked if Prudence were at home. Receiving the assurance that she was, I remounted the mare and cantered on.

Prudence was at the dairy, the butler told me. Hurrying there I came upon her suddenly and a very amusing and pretty sight she presented in that spotless, sweet-smelling room. She was scolding one of the maidservants vigorously—obviously for superficial effort in cleaning—while she wielded a broom on the brick floor which had just been flooded with water. Her gown was pinned around her waist, leaving her long and lovely legs bare. If I looked for a time at all this sweet revelation, rising in lovely contour from neat ankles to mid-thigh, it was with a pleasure which I assure you was far removed from lasciviousness.

I backed away in a moment and came again noisily and she was this time ready for me, though with a little more pink than usual in her cheeks and an expression of faint doubt on her face as her eyes probed mine. I made haste to present the snipe. She thanked me absently. "David," she said presently, "thee came rather noisily. Was there reason for that?"

"I am in good spirits," I answered glibly. "I had a good morning's sport."

"Indeed!" she said.

"The snipe," I hastened to put in, "lay well and gave good shooting. But what is this? Of what am I accused?"

"Nay, David," she replied, "thee fools me not by thy assumption of innocence. However, let it pass." She fell in step with me and we walked to the house. I sat on the lawn under a tree while she went inside to change her gown and shoes. About ten minutes later a horseman turned into the lane. He rode at an easy canter, sitting his black gelding well. I recognized him presently and not without unease as young Dennis of Onancock. Not lost upon me was the warmth with which Mr. Foxall's stable hand greeted him, as servants greet a guest very much *persona grata* with the family. He was a handsome young man, was Mr. Dennis of Accomac County in the State of Virginia: dark-haired, dark-eyed, tall, slender, and graceful.



He came up to me, gave me his hand, and smiled the winning smile he had inherited from his Irish ancestors.

"Well met, Mr. Innes," he said cordially. "I have not seen you since your wedding day, though I have heard a deal about you. And how is your charming and beautiful wife?"

"Fine, thank you," I replied. "She is at present in Baltimore."

He cast a quick eye about, obviously looking for Prudence. "Sit down, Mr. Dennis," I said. "Prudence is changing her gown and should be with us presently."

"Having been sitting overlong," he said, "I think I will stand."

"You ride a good horse," I said.

"Well enough, though not up to your Kitty. How is it, Mr. Innes, that you are not racing?"

"I have been caught up in—in certain things," I replied. "Once they are adjusted I intend to race."

"That is well," he said. "You have fine horses and we have missed them at the tracks." He tapped his crop idly against one London-made boot for a time, then went on, "Prudence has told me of your kindness to her during the Great Frost."

"The kindness was on her part," I replied. "It was wonderful to have her."

He smiled. "She is wonderful, isn't she?" he said softly. "I'm sure it is no secret to you that I have been trying for three years to get her to marry me. Frankly, I thought at first my non-success was due to the fact that there was an attachment between you two. Then you married and I saw that I must have been wrong. I've never understood her hesitancy."

"Perhaps," I put in, "she merely does not wish to marry."

"No," he replied positively, "it's not that. If ever a girl was made for marriage that girl is Prudence. Nature made her to be a tender, lovely, and competent wife; why she denies herself this proper position I cannot understand. It is not right. A half dozen of us used to court her. Only I remain. The rest grew discouraged and married elsewhere. Meanwhile she grows no younger in a society where the vast majority of girls marry before or at eighteen."

When I did not reply he continued, "I care for her so much, Mr. Innes, that I want to see her happy, no matter what the cost to myself. Years run away so quickly and with each succeeding year her choice narrows—she who once could choose so widely. Is it not a fact that most of our gentlemen marry at twenty-one? And do they not look for wives younger than themselves? Who will be left for her soon if she persists in this hesitancy?"

"I see your point, Mr. Dennis," I said, "but I'm afraid I have no suggestions for you."

"I was hoping you would have," he returned simply. "I was hoping you could show her that she was wasting precious years—"

"Wasting?" My voice was harsh.

"Wasting," he repeated. "Living, perhaps, for something which has not materialized and which may well never materialize. Spending precious irreplaceable years in so doing."

"It could be," I said, hating my own deviousness, "that perhaps she has not met the right man."

"It has occurred to me," he replied gently, "that perhaps she has met the *wrong* man."

It was a long time before I spoke. He had turned from me and was gazing absently down the tree-lined lane. I got up and strode to his side. "Mr. Dennis," I said, "I do not know that she has met the *wrong* man. I sincerely hope not. But you may be assured that your talk and unselfish attitude are not lost upon me. You must let me think now how best I, too, can serve Prudence."

He said with a self-deprecation I could not fail to like, "I would not attempt to teach one so honest as yourself your duty. If I—"

"Yet you have," I interrupted. "And be assured I shall try to do it."

Prudence came up behind us. "Well, Robert," she said smilingly to Dennis, giving him her hand, "I am glad to see thee again. What is this earnest talk thee and David are engaged in?"



"Just a matter Mr. Innes is going to look into for me," he replied.

Not being equal to small talk in my present state of mind, I soon bade them both *adieu*. Prudence walked with me to the horse rack where I had tied Kitty. As I swung into the saddle she asked, "I shall see thee before thee rides to the Nanticoke, David?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Thee are not vexed, David?"

"Vexed? My dear, I could not be vexed with you."

"Be steady," she advised. "Things will resolve themselves."

"I have need of steadiness," I replied bitterly. "I have not been too steady in the past."

Touching Kitty with a spur, I rode off.

THAT night our long and faithful vigilance was rewarded. The bearded man, whose name was Sugden, walked, or rather rode, into our trap. The time was about eleven and young Tom Ford, mounted as were our sentries at night, galloped down on him as he passed, and taking no chances, clubbed him from his saddle. Thereafter he was marched at rifle's muzzle to the forge where Nobby was awakened.

Sugden, though both bully and braggart, proved no coward. Ere Nobby had full satisfaction from him he was himself marked and cut. Young Ford told me with a wide grin that it was a furious fight, that in the end Nobby had the better of it and Sugden had to be helped to his feet. I saw him next morning. Though badly bruised, and his lips puffed to double their size, he was sullen and defiant, refusing to answer our questions. I stood a half hour of his sneering avoidance, then grabbed him by the coat collar and jerked him to his feet.

"You will talk," I said. "You will answer our questions and truthfully."

"Were I your size," he retorted spitefully, "you would be less free with me, Mr. Bully Innes."

Taggart stood near by. I said to him, "You heard what he said. I think you are more his size. See if you can make him talk."

"Do I get fair play?" Sugden demanded.

Nobby and Dr. Ballard roared with laughter. "We guarantee you fair play," the doctor said. "We'll go farther—if you defeat this man you may mount your horse and ride away."

I released Sugden. "This is on your own head," I said. "It would be simpler—and far less painful I assure you—simply to answer our questions."



"I am afraid of no man my size," Sugden replied. "Had it not been for that clout with a rifle butt I got earlier from one of your men, I would have put the blacksmith to bed for a week." He put himself in a posture of defense. "Come on," he dared Taggart.

We revived Sugden five minutes later by pouring a bucket of water over his head, but it was a full hour before he was in a condition to talk despite Dr. Ballard's attention. Ay, he was meek enough then, the fight gone from him completely. He answered our questions as readily as his cut lips could manage and was so shaken that apparently he held nothing back. We learned only one thing of value—that The Folly was far better manned than Celeste had known. He thought they could muster at least thirty good fighting men. All else he told us was either valueless or we had already known it. We agreed that he had been punished sufficiently. He was, in fact, a fearful sight. In addition to his bleeding, puffed lips, both eyes were almost closed; he was cut severely above the left eyebrow and on the left cheekbone. We had to put him on his horse.

I thought to ask him then which one of us was to have received his attention and the nature of it. He looked at me a moment in a frightened manner and I saw that he was preparing a lie. "Never mind," I said. "And just one word of caution to you. I would not stop if I were you, no matter how painful the ride, this side of Salisbury. If you fall into our hands again I will have you publicly whipped."

"I go south," he said, "not north."

"I remember now," I commented. "They have no use for failures up there on the Nanticoke, have they? Ride south, then, and don't stop this side of Newtown."

He moved his horse off at a walk, groaning softly to himself. We watched him until he was hidden by a turn in the road. Taggart said then, "Well, suh, he is no coward. If they have thuty like him at The Folly I say, gentlemen, that we are shore goin' to have our hands full."

I replied, "We shall see as to that. Now, Taggart, will you

undertake to let all know that we sail for the Nanticoke by noon tomorrow."

Nobby said with satisfaction, "That is well, Davy, for our men grow restless. Best to get the job hover with or we shall 'ave some desertions. Not all 'ave our strong feelings habout it. Tell Taggart where we hassemble."

"At the manor," I said, "by ten-thirty o'clock. The schooner will be at my wharf."

Taggart and Dr. Ballard left at once; I remained to talk with Nobby for a time. Now that the die, so to speak, was cast, there was no particular excitement upon us. We were neither exuberant nor quieter than usual. Long had we considered the task before us as a duty and not as adventure; our delay in getting about it had nagged at our consciences and there was to both of us, I think, a feeling of relief that delay was over. I wanted above all to resume the normal life which had been denied me so long, to give my attention to "the pleasant cares of the earth," to live in our pleasant land in a pleasant and peaceful manner. I wanted to recapture the joy of living a man so young as I should have. There was little joy in this high emotional peak on which I had dwelt so long—mostly misery and hesitancy and sometimes deep despair.

I doubt if any of us is strong enough to come unscathed from a series of emotional misfortunes. Some permanent mark is left, something departs. Time smooths over the hurt but the memory of it remains to bring twinges as from an old wound in a change of weather. We may be made wiser by the hurt but we are neither rendered happier nor more youthful. We pay for such experiences with added years beyond our actual age and a profound apprehension regarding the uncertainties of life which the young positively should not have. Long had I lain awake the previous night thinking of my own conversation with Robert Dennis. What he implied was not new to me; Prudence had admitted it herself that night the Great Frost ended. It was I who had kept her unmarried over the years; it was I she loved, though why I honestly did not know. For if ever a man had been a fool I had been that,



and her clear, calm eyes could not have failed to note the fact. Nor was I yet over my foolishness. I had been deserted, betrayed by my wife; she had abandoned me and all my possessions with incredible lightness and ease for a life of sordidness and—yes—crime, even if not from her viewpoint. I was justified completely in turning to the happiness which I knew Prudence could give me, and I her. But to move in this matter, clear-cut and decisive, seemed beyond me. I must stand by to rescue one who had no real love for me, no need of me save to satisfy her sensually.

And all the while Prudence waited, sacrificing, as young Dennis had said, rich years of her life. He had stung me with that statement. Wasted, irreplaceable years, he had said. I thought of the men who had come courting her, young men of position and wealth and worth, with whom I could find no fault. One by one they had grown discouraged and sought wives elsewhere. Only the faithful Dennis remained, the best of them, and there was, I had seen, discouragement in his handsome face. Soon he, too, would look elsewhere, for a man must live as full a life as he can.

There was little use in debating how much fault was mine and how much Prudence's. I was fully conscious of my own dog-in-the-manger attitude where she was concerned while trying to unsnarl my tangled emotions; I knew well that I should either step out of her life or into it completely. I knew, of late especially, the deepness of my regard for her and the happiness I had when with her. I asked myself a hundred times what it was prevented me from going to her and saying, "I am taking measures to free myself. When I am free I hope you will marry me." So simple, so easy, and yet more than I could manage at the moment.

I said good-by to her the following morning on the steps of Niles' store. She told me serenely, giving me her hand, "God will go with thee, David, on this fine errand. I am not concerned for thee. Only, be not overbold." She dropped her voice so that no one but we two could hear and added, "Hasten back, my dear. Despite my brave words I shall have little rest or sleep until thee returns."

"Never fear," I answered. "I will be back safely." I held her hand a moment before I turned away and mounted Kitty, and was surprised to find a stinging at the back of my eyelids as from unshed tears.

Promptly at noon we embarked, though short two men who had obviously suffered a change of heart. We were not dismayed, having anticipated a loss. The day was a soft and lovely one with a good wind which lay on our port quarter as we rounded into Tangier Sound. The distance from our wharf to the point where we would anchor on the Nanticoke I estimated as roughly fifty miles. Our ship was fast, as are all the bay schooners. We came earlier than I had expected to the mouth of the Nanticoke due to the fine and constant wind and, running up the river some ten miles or thereabouts, anchored above the mouth of Quantico Creek to await the flood tide.

We lay on deck, all of us, in the faintly chill darkness. Tension, which had been noticeably absent all afternoon, began to appear now, and each man showed evidence of it according to his temperament. Some were silent, some ebullient, some spoke with gravity. Only Dr. Ballard and Taggart seemed unaffected. They sat with their backs against the mainmast, exchanging stories of shooting and fishing, punctuated now and then with whoops of laughter when the incident became ludicrous. Nobby, who sat at my side, puffed at his stubby pipe and reflected; Jeremy intoned a hymn softly and nasally; I alternately listened to what went on about me and thought of what might befall us at The Folly. I had no qualms about the bravery of any man with me, so presently I stretched out and tried to sleep.

I did sleep, but only after we had got under way. When I awoke, stiff and sore from my hard couch, the moon was well up. Nobby had awakened me. "There lies The Folly, Davy," he said, pointing. "All seems quiet. I see that one o' their brigs is at hanchor, which was all I hexpected. It would be askin' too much o' luck to hexpect to find both."



I called softly to Taggart and Dr. Ballard, "There is The Folly."

They came to my side and looked eagerly across the water. The old mansion lay serene and lovely in the moonlight; yellow candlelight glowed from many windows. The doctor murmured, "It is beautiful. Seems a pity to destroy it."

"Behind it," I returned dryly, "lies a most unbeautiful barracoon in which stolen slaves and kidnaped freedmen and freedwomen—yes, and freed children—await shipment to the islands of the Indies and to our far-South states. Nobby can give you first-hand information about that barracoon. As for the mansion, I think if it could speak it would ask us to free it from its degradation."

"Ay, Davy," Nobby said solemnly. "You speak the truth."

Northwest Fork lay but a mile or two above us. We dropped anchor two hundred yards below it in a good depth of water. No one hailed us from shore; no boat put out to scrutinize us. A solitary hound bayed us or the moon for a brief period and then subsided.

"What now?" Dr. Ballard asked.

"Nothing now," I replied. "We can sleep. An hour before dawn I, with fourteen men, will go ashore. You, as we previously decided, will stay on board and lead Jeremy, Henry Muir, Tom Ford, and Will Jones against the brig. She seemed deserted as we passed her and I doubt that you will have any trouble. Have you five decided yet whether to fire her or blow her up?"

"We'll blow her up," the doctor said. "We can time that better. If she had been manned we might have had trouble carrying the big keg of powder aboard. As it is we'll tie the schooner to her and be over the rail, keg and all, in a moment."

I nodded. "The explosion, then, will serve as our signal to attack. You will light your fuse at the first streak of dawn in the sky."

Nobby put in with humorous grimness, "Make that fuse long enough to give you time to cast off, Doctor."

Dr. Ballard laughed. "We will not neglect that aspect of

the matter, Nobby, you may be sure. . . . David, the plan then is for us to land as quickly as possible after casting off and come to your assistance, leaving the sinking of the smaller craft until later."

"Yes," I said. "Now let us try and sleep for a while. I'll arrange with the captain to have two of his men stand guard and awaken us."

I doubt if many of us slept. Taggart did and Nobby and perhaps Dr. Ballard. The rest dozed as I did, half asleep, half awake. The night grew quite chill at about two o'clock. Tom Ford went below and found some blankets, one of which he threw over me. I was soon warm again but I failed to sleep and was wide-awake when the watch laid his hand on my shoulder and said that it was time to get up.

Not the faintest sign of dawn showed in the sky as we were rowed ashore in the schooner's big lifeboat. The moon had set; the land lay under that intense darkness which precedes dawn. No lights showed in plantation houses or in slave cabins on either shore. A barred owl called from a patch of wood and his mate, hunting far off, answered. I thought how musical distance made the sounds.

In single file we set off along the shore, its red bluffs lifting high above our heads. The tide was low and our way was easy. Within a quarter mile of The Folly we turned inland, cut across a field, and entered a strip of pines. We felt our way through this wood, Nobby leading, until we came to its edge. "We are just be'ind the stables," Nobby whispered. "I dare not go farther. 'Ere we 'ad better stay until we get some light. Doubtless they 'ave sentries posted."

I sent whispered word down the line for Taggart. When he came I pointed out the dark blot of the stables before us and told him the mansion lay in front. "We wish to take up our position in a big ditch to the right of the mansion," I told him, and pointed out the direction. "You are a mountain man and a deer stalker. Do you think you can locate the sentries? I'd like to get to the ditch before dawn."

He replied that he would locate the sentries.

"And find your way back here?" I asked.



He laughed softly. "'Tis child's play, suh," he said and slipped away.

"Watch out for 'ounds!" Nobby called softly after him.

"He has a way with them," I said. "It is sentries I worry about, not the few mangy hounds I saw thereabout."

How long, how many, how dragging the minutes seemed before Taggart returned! Actually he was gone not more than a quarter hour; I thought it four times that. Day was not far off now; the cool dawn wind had arisen and moved the branches of the pines and soughed through their tips. A cock crowed, and another, and still another. Then, with startling suddenness—as if he were a jinni materializing from a bottle—Taggart was among us.

He whispered that the place was well guarded. Four sentries paced a square which enclosed the mansion and one or two of the outbuildings. There was no sentry on the wharf. Our schooner was already tied alongside the brig. He believed that with care we might make the ditch unsuspected. I passed the word down the line for each man to grasp the coattail of the man in front. We moved off, Taggart leading.

So close did we pass that we heard two of the sentries talking together with only the strength of ordinary conversation in their voices. A sneeze, a cough, a rattle of steel on steel would have betrayed us—even the scuff of boot against boot. Fortunately, nothing of this nature happened though presently hounds got wind of us and began to bay. Not much faith was put in them; I heard a sentry send a loud curse rolling their way and a command to shut up.

Our progress was so slow and cautious, with halts and stooping and meticulous placing of our feet, that we reached the ditch just in time; a band of pale light had begun to spread on the eastern horizon. The early spring rains had run off and no more had fallen recently; the ditch was, therefore, fairly dry.

We lay along its left bank, well protected from the mansion which was but a hundred and fifty yards distant. The ditch was large and its slope was comfortable and of the right height for all save our shortest man, who later contrived to

dig himself a foothold. I spaced the men six feet apart and took my position in the center of the line with Nobby and Taggart on my right and left. Our preparations were scarcely completed when, in the half-light, we saw our schooner gliding down-river. The light strengthened rapidly; soon we could see the slavers' brig. With tense, set faces we watched it. Nor had we long to wait.

Before I heard the explosion I saw—unless my sight played me tricks—the brig swell horizontally in a great and violent bulge, then surge upward so that all of her seemed to leave the water. And now pieces of her flew high in the air and the great detonation clapped against our ears. As she settled back I saw that a great hole had been blown in her side; a minute later she began to fill with water. As we watched, fascinated, a tongue of flame licked through one hatch.

"She's gone," Nobby said soberly. "'Tis a race between fire and water now as to which will finish 'er. She's well ablaze. Ay, David, our lads did their work well." He paused and gestured toward the mansion, where windows were popping up and voices shouting. "Look, Davy, the 'ornets are awake. Shall we give them a wolley?"

"Hold your fire," I said. "I want first to find a way of asking their surrender."

"That's wasting time, Davy," he replied. "If they 'ad hany thoughts of knuckling hunder they would 'ave cleared out o' 'ere by now. No, they mean to fight."

"There are women in the house," I said. "They must be given a chance to leave."

He nodded. "I 'ad forgotten that. Rig me a white flag and I will parley with them."

I tied a large handkerchief to his rifle barrel but stayed him as he began to clamber up the bank. The confusion which had reigned at The Folly had suddenly come to an end. The sentries had been recalled and were running swiftly to the house; the few men who had come out on the porch showed no panic and seemed to understand at once that the explosion on the brig was not accidental—which they might well have thought as they had powder on board—but an attack. All this evidence



of disciplined training, of careful preparation, made me thoughtful. Obviously they had been kept well informed of our movements; they were ready for us. Doubtless they had sent their women away.

While I stood there hesitant, one hand restraining Nobby, a window went up on the second floor. In a moment, to my dismay, the muzzle of a small ship's cannon came through the opening. I heard a startled murmur run along my line of men. Beside me Taggart raised his long rifle. "Not yet," I said.

The cannon belched and the ball whistled high above our heads. It took us all a moment to realize that the slavers were not shooting at us but, presumably, at our schooner below, which would be about this time landing our five reserve men. "Now," I shouted, "let us make it warm for those who tend that cannon. Aim carefully. Fire!"

Our volley rang out, and though a little ragged, poured a hail of well-aimed lead through that window. Thereafter for minutes that empty cannon looked at us and no one attempted to withdraw the piece for reloading. I was exultant. "Fire as each man loads," I commanded. "Fire deliberately. Keep them harassed!"

We could not prevent them from withdrawing the cannon eventually, despite the accuracy of our fire. They drew it back, I think, by means of ropes. When next it appeared it was aimed at the ditch. Expecting a single ball, I was not prepared for the volley of vicious, whining grapeshot which buzzed about our ears like the angry hornets I had stirred up one day in a hedgerow. We tumbled to the bottom of the ditch, pell mell, and sat there looking at each other in astonishment and consternation. Though in no mood for it I could not help bursting soon into a shout of laughter. Whereupon all the other set faces relaxed and began to look sheepish, and we went back to the task of making matters difficult for the cannoneers.

Shortly we were under fire from rifles as well as from the cannon, but thought little of it after our fiery baptism with grapeshot. So amazing is the adaptation of men of courage to all circumstances that before a half hour had passed we had

become accustomed to the high, zipping whine of rifle balls and the deeper buzzing of the grape. None of us had been hit though several came within a hair's breadth of death. Young Carter, of Revelle's Neck, had his rifle shot from his hands and ruined. We had brought along two extra rifles and presently, when the shock was over, he was back in the firing line again.

My chief anxiety at the end of the first half hour's fighting was for Dr. Ballard and his men. We did not know where they were; I thought it likely they were coming toward us, in a wide half-circle, through the woods. So it proved. Eventually they took up a position in the point of pines behind the stables and opened fire on the opposite side of the house. We felt their presence immediately in a lessening of rifle fire as the slavers diverted some of their men to meet this new threat.

The brig had long ago gone to the bottom and her flaming masts had toppled over on the wharf which was now burning fiercely, driven by a wind from the southwest which urged the flames toward shore. Two or three small craft tied to the wharf were already ablaze; if the wind kept up all would go. We had need of this encouragement, for otherwise we were very much at a stalemate. We had, I believed, done no great damage to the slavers within the house and they little to us.

Our one hope of a speedy conclusion to the battle was to fire the mansion. So hot the slavers' fire we dared not attempt the task from our present position. We had a bare field to cross and then a strip of lawn; none of us would have reached the house. There was a way, though—less desperate than the first but desperate enough. The ditch we were in ran to the shore. Once at the river's side we would be in the shelter of the bluff, and unseen, until we reached the front of the house. A short dash would carry us to the porch.

I drew Nobby to the bottom of the ditch and told him that we could not risk a long battle. Already the countryside was aroused by the heavy firing; news would in time get to the sheriff at Cambridge, we being now in Dorchester County. I did not care to have interference from him. Privately I thought he would stay well away from us but I could not be



sure. After this preamble I outlined my plan of setting fire to the mansion from the front. "I will go alone," I concluded. "It is a dangerous venture; I do not feel that I should call on others."

He nodded. "You are right, Davy. It is a desperate venture and we should not call on the hothers."

"We?"

"I go with you," he replied. "I got an account to settle with these rogues."

He had made up his mind; no argument would change him and presently I desisted. We had brought materials for firing the house: a ball of tinder rubbed with gunpowder, an armful of kindling and pine knots, a bottle of whale oil. These Nobby took, leaving his rifle behind, though taking a double-barreled pistol. I took both my rifle and pistol. Command was turned over to Taggart with instructions to keep up a rapid fire against the house until we returned.

There was no trouble in negotiating the ditch or in coming up abreast of the house under the cover of the river bluff. And now we saw with vast satisfaction that smoke in great, thick billows from the burning wharfs and small boats swept toward the façade of the mansion. Nobby said gleefully, "They will not know that they're on fire 'til it's too late, wot with all this smoke."

"If it were a little thicker it would hide us completely," I said. "As it is, however, it is helpful. Let us wait for a particularly thick cloud of it to sweep toward the house and under its cover make our dash."

"Ay," he said.

With the next rolling billow of smoke we were on our feet and over the bluff and running at top speed for the house. How Nobby felt I do not know but every square inch of my flesh was tense in shrinking anticipation of a rifle ball. My bigness was no asset at the moment but a liability on which I dwelt ruefully. My heart beat far faster than my running excused and I had a dryness in my mouth and a sad feeling in the pit of my stomach. I offered sundry promises to Fortune that I would amply return the favor if I were permitted to

reach the shelter of the house, and dwelt a little on how pious I would be in the future. However, on gaining the porch safely and without a shot fired at me, or at Nobby for that matter, this frame of mind left me and I cannot remember that I was the more pious thereafter. Yet I do not think that my memory is shorter than my neighbor's.

Nobby laid the tinder where the porch joined the house and it was with right good will that I showered sparks from flint and steel upon it. The tinder caught and the wind fanned the glow quickly to a blaze. Carefully we laid first slivers of kindling, then kindling; when the flames were leaping we laid on our pine knots and dashed oil against the mansion's siding, though there was little need of that last touch because the boards were tinder-dry. How quickly that small blaze leaped to crackling fury! Many a year has passed since that day but I have only to close my eyes to see the curl of that tongue of yellow flame and its young eagerness, then its savagery when at last it had its fatal hold. Ever since I have feared fire and am most careful with these new matches we have nowadays.

"'Tis done," Nobby said abruptly. "Come, Davy."

Bent low we scuttled off as fast as our feet would take us and flung ourselves over the bluff. I had the wind knocked from me but managed, between gasping and blowing, to tell Nobby to bring the men up to me immediately.

Perhaps because of the great quantity of smoke in the air from the burning wharf or maybe because of the sharpness of our rifle fire from the ditch, I thought the slavers were overlong in realizing that their lair was ablaze. All the porch and a great section of the wall of the main house almost to the second-story windows was a solid mass of flame before a window went up and a voice gave a great shout of terror. At the same moment the firing from the ditch ceased. After that one shout the main part of the house was quiet; the slavers were evacuating it, I thought, going undoubtedly to the smaller wing.

My men came up and we moved along the bluff to take a position opposite the wing. "Now," I told Taggart, "send a



valley into the windows. Reload rapidly and stand by for either rush or surrender."

Our shots brought only a feeble answer.

"Enough," I said. "Stand by. They will come out in a very few minutes or roast. . . . Nobby, I think it safe now to get our hands on a couple of those small sloops before they burn. We may have need of them to get to the schooner."

He sent two men on the errand, warning them to be careful. The rest of us settled down to wait. In ten minutes flames were shooting through the roof of the main part of the house and I knew they would be seen by Dr. Ballard and his party.

"The wing must be full o' smoke," Nobby said. "They can't stand that long, nor the 'eat."

Even as he spoke the door of the wing opened and a man came out waving a white flag. When he had emerged others poured out behind him; I counted twenty-two men, also two women in long cloaks. None carried arms that we could see. The man who had the flag was Emmet. He came across the grass toward us; the rest remained in a group in front of the burning house.

Nobby and I climbed the bluff and awaited him.

"Well, Mr. Emmet," I said as he drew near, "we are back as we promised."

"And, as you promised, you have ruined us," he replied.

"You were warned," I retorted. "But you would persist."

"We have surrendered, Mr. Innes," he said stiffly. "Now what more will you exact from us? We have six or more wounded, two quite badly, and Quigg is dead from failure of his heart."

"I shed no tears for Quigg," I returned sternly, "nor for your wounded rogues. But as for exacting more from you, be assured we want nothing more. You are at liberty to go—all of you. In fact I give you but half an hour to take yourselves off. Have you put a white flag out at back to stop our other force?"

"Yes," he replied.

"We were, I suppose, not lucky enough to take Bollans in this raid?"

"No," he replied, "though Bollans was here yesterday. Yet you have had some luck, Mr. Innes. You have taken your wife. She stands there in the long cloak next to Marchand."

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MY wife," I said and felt neither pain nor distress but only an unutterable dreariness of spirit.

"Your wife, Mr. Innes," Emmet repeated with a sort of sly relish. "She came last evening and was to have left this afternoon."

I said to Nobby, "Take half a dozen men and free those in the barracoon. Burn it. Have Taggart and the rest follow me. I go with Mr. Emmet."

"In good time, Davy," Nobby replied, "but first I go with you." He called to Taggart and fell in step with us. "I 'ave not the trust in Mr. Hemmet or any o' them that you 'ave."

"Have no apprehension," Emmet told him. "We are beaten. You will find that the rest, like myself, have no desire now to do else than to clear out of this cursed hypocritical land."

"'Ad I my way," Nobby growled, "you would go with welts on your back, Mr. Hemmet."

"So you harbor a grudge, blacksmith," Emmet returned. "Yet it occurs to me that from your standpoint we are the injured, not you. Did you not spy on us while accepting our money and hospitality—?"

"Enough, Mr. Emmet," I cut in shortly. "I would have done with speciousness if I were you. We have not forgotten that manhunt you subjected us to on the lower Nanticoke."

He shot me a malicious look but remained silent thereafter. We had come now upon the group. I stopped and looked it over. I saw first Jeanne and a tall woman I had not seen



before, then Marchand, McNab, the Deacon, and one or two others I knew. Most, however, I had never seen before and thought them mercenaries. The fight had gone from them, if there had ever been much of it in them; they were frightened. Some of them had been wounded and two were stretched out on the ground, moaning.

I thought how strange and grim the sight was—wounded men, haggard men, beaten men, evil men still, against a background of roaring, crackling flames. And Jeanne, my wife, her small figure drawn up straight and disdainful, looking at me with open hatred. Little pride in our victory remained to me; I felt drained, flat. I took a step forward and raised my hand. "You are all free to go," I said. "Get your horses, your wagons—however you came—and leave at once. Walk, if you have to, but go. And take your wounded with you."

What they had expected from us I do not know, but they all stood there, staring stupidly at me until I grew angry. "Get them out of here, Taggart!" I cried. "They have but a half hour to be clear of these premises! All, that is, save the ladies, Mr. Emmet, and Captain Marchand."

These four I drew aside while Taggart and his men urgently got the others—stupid, as I said, or perhaps dazed—on the move. They took their wounded and I did not ask for Quigg. Let the flames consume what was left of him; at that he had a more striking and impressive funeral than one so wretched in life deserved.

"I would speak," I said at last to the four in front of me, "to my wife alone."

"I have nothing to say to you," Jeanne blazed at me, "that my comrades may not hear!"

Despite her words, the three withdrew ten or twelve paces. Nobby, who was at my side, stepped back, taking what men of ours were near by with him. And now that Jeanne and I were left alone, I did not know what to say. She gave me no aid for a long time, just looked at me with an insolent smile on her face and let me wallow in my misery and sad embarrassment.

"Well?" she cried at last. "Speak, you great, lumbering lout! Speak and let me get away from you forever!"

"Jeanne," I said, "you know how sorry—"

"Sorry!" she repeated, with hot, scathing sarcasm. "Sorry, you say! Sorry for destroying what I had helped for years to create and what I had held together when no one else could!" She was lashing herself into furious anger; I should have been warned by the queer light in her eyes—a light that did not reflect a rational mind. "Sorry—with our brig destroyed, our wharf on fire, The Folly itself burning to the ground! Sorry—when our best mind, Quigg, lies dead and Bollans even now, doubtless, in flight! Yes, you have broken us for good, even as you said you would. Nor could you wait to do it, nor give me the few years for which I asked. You set a few worthless blacks above me—"

"Hush!" I commanded sternly. "What I set above you was humanity."

She laughed so wildly that I drew back a step. "Hark to him! You mistook your calling—you should have been parson or clerk. You have not only the conscience for that sort of thing but the necessary mealy mouth." She turned once more to look at The Folly and as she looked the roof of the main building fell in and a great shower of sparks soared skyward. The walls gave a moment later and flattened, and where there had been mansion there was none—just a flaming wing half consumed.

Then she turned back to me, the insane light intensifying in her eyes.

"Gone!" she said. "All gone! I curse the day I first set eyes on you, you great fool! And so you have won—yet have you won?"

She whipped from beneath her cloak the double-barreled pistol I had left behind me on my flight from The Folly the previous autumn and before I could move held its muzzle at my heart and pressed the trigger.

The heavy ball knocked me to my knees. I got up again somehow and stood before her. The taste of blood was on my lips. I could not move forward; I could not speak; my sight



was beginning to dim. Waves of pain swept me, riding up on crests of blackness, each one threatening to engulf me. I fought them but I knew that one of them would prevail. Even as my knees bent under that last dark wave rushing upward so swiftly, I saw my wife's face clearly for a moment. I saw horror there now, quickly succeeded by terror and then despair as someone shouted with wild anger behind me. I saw her frantically turn the muzzle of the pistol to her own side, saw her fingers tighten on the second trigger. As I fell I heard, dimly and far off, the jarring report of the heavy charge.

Of the ensuing four or five weeks I have no memories whatever, not even of pain. They were and remain a complete blank to me. I came from stupor or sleep one day in late May to consciousness. I was in my room at the manor. Curtains waved at the windows from the light, sweet wind and outside a mocking bird was singing. Drowsy scents of meadow hay, of thyme, warm earth, and lush shrubbery flowed over me, and when the mocking bird ceased I heard the droning content of myriad bees. They must be, I thought, in the white-flowered bushes beneath my window and if that were so June was not far off. But I did not dwell much upon the thought because of the great weakness upon me; soon I slept.

Night had fallen when I again awoke. There was candle-light in the room and on the side of my bed sat Dr. Ballard. He was not looking at me; he had his chin propped up by one hand, his elbow resting on his thigh, and he was gazing off into space. I tried to speak but could only manage a whisper. "Doctor, is it you?"

He turned quickly, peered into my face, and a great smile spread over his own. "God's truth, Davy," he cried, "you are rational again! Eh, my lad, you have given us some bad weeks. Don't talk; conserve your strength. I will send for Kate who will bring you some broth."

Kate came soon and, of course, wept over me, as is a woman's way; then she fed me the strong chicken broth from a spoon. It tasted wondrously good and I was immediately

the stronger for it. But my voice came so weak and rusty that I had no relish for conversation—which the doctor would not have permitted, at any rate. He soon shooed Kate from the room. "Now, Davy," he said briskly, arising himself, "I know you have much to ask me. And I will answer all—but in due course—perhaps in a few days if you continue to improve. You must conserve your strength."

I moved my head in some sort of a nod and whispered the one word, "Jeanne."

He hesitated, glanced sharply at my face, and finally said, "She is dead, David, as you believe and as you have often said in your delirium."

"Yes," I whispered. "Somehow I knew."

"You must not talk, David," he said. "Compose yourself now and go back to sleep. You are well looked after. Prudence nurses you by day and your Kate by night. Perhaps tomorrow you may see Prudence for a moment though not to talk with her."

"Tomorrow," I said.

"Tomorrow," he returned, "but only if you exercise restraint. *You are not to talk.* Do you understand that?"

Ay, they were strict with me and for more than a week it could not be truthfully said that I had even a moment with Prudence—just glimpses of her bending over me. The moment I tried to speak, or lift a hand toward her, she would put a warning finger to her lips and immediately leave. Kate fed me at the indicated times in silence; once I opened my eyes to see Nobby's red and shining face bent toward me. He spoke not a word, only grinned and gestured to indicate that I was doing well and soon would be about.

I came slowly but surely from the vast weakness which kept me helpless and apathetic. There came a morning of soft rain when Dr. Ballard came to me and, taking his favorite seat on the side of the bed, told me some of the things I wished to know. Jeanne lay buried at The Folly, but Paul, recently returned from the South, was even now at the Nanticoke for the purpose of removing the earthly remains of my



poor, wilful, misguided wife to the family vault in New Orleans.

Our attack had cost us no lives but we had not, as I had thought, escaped with but a few superficial wounds. Unlucky Jeremy had received a ball in the shoulder as he lay prone and was but now recovered and able to work again. Young Carter had a second rifle smashed in his hands and his cheek laid open by a flying piece of steel; Henry Muir had been stabbed by a watchman as he and the others had boarded the brig. Thomas Salter, of the upper Manokin, as yet had no sight in his left eye from a round of grapeshot which had hit just before his nose and had thrown a shower of dirt and chips into his face. Of the slavers no less than eight men had been struck by rifle balls, some superficially, some severely.

Fifty-odd slaves and freedmen had been liberated from the barracoon. An indication of the widespread activity of the band lay in the fact that several of the men had been kidnaped in far-off New England and upper New York. Most, however, came from Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia's Eastern Shore.

Those men, women, and children who lived near by were released immediately and given money to see them home. The others were brought to the manor and one by one were returned whence they had come, passage being arranged by Mr. MacPherson. One can understand the slavers' determination not to give up their trade without a desperate fight; Dr. Ballard estimated that the colored people within the barracoon on that particular day had a value of at least thirty thousand dollars when sold in the deep South.

Of my own wound the doctor said little, merely remarking with some fervor that I was lucky to be alive.

Just before candlelight, Prudence came to me. She wore a tucked and frilled white apron over her gown and in her hand was a cup of broth. I thought to find her tired and drawn from the long strain of nursing me; instead she bloomed like one of my grandmother's roses in the garden of the Little Manor; lovely color was in her cheeks, and her blue eyes were almost a-dance. I thought of the cardinal's

song, "Pretty girl, pretty girl, sweet, sweet." If the red-bird could say so, why not I? And I did, though my hoarse whisper held more of the crow's notes than of the rippling song of my feathered friend.

"Now, David," she said briskly, though the color intensified in her cheeks, "you are to say little, and certainly nothing more until you take this cup of broth." Whereupon she placed another pillow behind my head to raise me a trifle, then began feeding me in dainty spoonfuls. And after I had finished, she laid the cup aside and took the hand I moved to her, a hand now as white as her own with muscles and veins standing out on its great frame like ropes, and not the strength of a child's in it. So we sat there, and while dusk dimmed the room she spoke to me of pleasant little everyday happenings: of how Jeremy was now greater hero than ever and went around with an arm in a sling though quite healed, and that unless Nobby bestirred himself she feared that Mrs. Swann would succumb to his posing and blandishments.

There were things I wanted to tell her but the time had not come for that. I was but beginning to come out from the shadow. Nor do I think words were really necessary, for she knew beyond all doubt what lay now in my mind and my heart.

Long I lay wakeful after she had left, pondering over the devious path of my life which had led me at last to so fair a prospect.

I did well enough thereafter, but it was not until I was permitted an hour or two daily out of doors that I began to show notable progress. I had a chair beneath a magnolia tree. Infinitely pleasant it was to sit there, with the birds flitting to and fro above me and the good smell of earth and sun-warmed vegetation coming strongly to my nose which was as eager as that of a bird dog. I could not have enough of the simple sights and sounds of the plantation, of the free, sweet wind, of the nodding flowers and rippling leaves. The laughter of my people was as much music to me as was the wind in the cedars and the song of the mocking bird. The flight of a



bee was full of interest; I rejoiced with him when he found a nectared blossom. I was one with the great writer who was to set down later that "more than my own clothes to me, ay, and as much as my own skin, are the works of Nature round about, whereof man is the smallest." Like the man of legend I touched the earth and grew strong—though not quite with his immediacy.

And here, under the magnolia, I held court. Here my friends came daily—Prudence, her mother and father, those who had fought under me at The Folly, Mr. MacPherson, Mr. Massingale, Mr. Forbes, Colonel and Mrs. Jardine, and many others. MacPherson told me one day that our destruction of The Folly had caused little comment; many thought that the slavers had quarreled among themselves. There must have been truth in what he said because the Law left us alone and no one called us to account for our summary action. In late July Mr. Samuels arrived and spent four days with me, leaving me a half dozen new books and a lasting memory of his kindness and true friendship.

I was up now and about, though with caution. Jim London rigged an awning for me on the end of the wharf and there I would sit for hours, sometimes alone, sometimes with Prudence or Nobby, and dangle baited lines for hard crabs. My world had narrowed with my illness but how rich was that which remained to me now that I looked into it and discovered what I had previously missed. I was well acquainted with sea, sky, earth, and marsh, yet I had never *known* them until now. I was never lonely when alone, never melancholy. I had no apprehension any longer of the future. There was intense pleasure in living just from day to day. Nor did I mourn what had befallen me, nor the wasted years:

Mourning untimely consumes the sad;  
Few are their days in the land of the living,  
Beautiful daughter of Toscar.

Busy with pleasant occupations, and with my mind completely free, I rapidly grew stronger. I had my first ride on

Kitty in early September. I rode only to the forge that day, but the next increased the distance to Taggart's farm and had a dish of tea with Cindy. By mid-month I was beginning to think again of the business affairs of the plantation.

A few days later I received a note from Paul, saying he was at his uncle's house in Princess Anne and, if I were well enough, would I ride to him? If not, he would come to me. It was not without misgivings that, the following day at noon, I surrendered Kitty to a groom and walked to the house. Mr. Gervaise came first to the room where I had been shown. He was his dry, precise self and spoke with briefness and detachment of Jeanne's death, and informed me that as she had not left a will, all her property came to me.

I shook my head. "I will resign that right to Paul," I said.

He did not argue, merely replied, "As you will. I'll have the necessary papers drawn for you." He excused himself then, saying he would send Paul to me at once.

I was shocked at Paul's appearance. I am sure I looked no more wasted than he. His handsome face was not merely drawn but old, and his eyes, once so bright and lively, appeared dead. But there was no constraint in his manner. He took my hand and held it long in his and I knew he had retained his affection for me despite the tragic event which—as I could see—still haunted him.

"David," he said and tried to manage a smile, "I think you would be no match for Timothy Villen now."

We sat together on the sofa and presently he talked of Jeanne. Though his love for her shone through every word, and would not be alienated by any consideration of what she had done and had become, he had no bitterness toward anyone connected however remotely with her death. It seemed to ease him to talk and in a sense it eased me to listen. He had learned from Nobby and Dr. Ballard the manner of her death; and later Marchand, whom he had encountered in New Orleans, gave his version. "She was beside herself, David," he told me sadly. "She did not know what she was doing when she shot you."

"That I know," I replied. "Had I been wiser I would have



realized that she was not responsible for her actions. Yet it was her very madness, her wild laugh, which caused me alarm enough to take a step backward. Had I been closer I could have struck the pistol from her hand."

"It was meant to be, David," he said, and then added very softly, "And perhaps it is just as well. She rests quietly now. No ambition, no thoughts of power, no driving desires will ever bother her again. Yes, she rests quietly in the vault beside our mother."

He told me later that Celeste, Marchand, and Emmet were in New Orleans. Celeste had bought a small house and, save for a maid, lived alone. Marchand had quarters in the *Vieux Carré*. With empty face he roved the streets or sat at the cafés. He moved, yet he was dead. Emmet was talking of getting into some legitimate business; he would eventually go back to the slave trade once memory of his defeat became less acute, Paul thought. Bollans had fled, with the widow, Mrs. Price, to Florida. Of the rest, Paul knew nothing. He thought that the one piece of operating property left to what remained of the slaver band—that is, the other brig—would in time get into the hands of Bollans and Emmet, as the captain was a close friend of both. Whether this happened or not we were never to learn.

Prudence and I were married at Christmastide in the little Episcopal church at Fairhope, with our good Parson Eames officiating. We took no wedding trip then but went at once to the manor and kept open house for a week. All came to see us, high and low, and never was merrier company, nor happier host and hostess.

Contrary to Prudence's oft-expressed prophecy, Nobby did marry Mistress Swann and that the following spring. She came to live at the forge and Jeremy went to Snow Hill as proprietor of the Swan. And in that position he found his true métier. In green coat and top boots, his great nose redder than ever, he sprinkled his more or less spurious erudition on all comers and flung Latin tags about as recklessly as ever. Yet he was a sharp enough Boniface and the inn thrived

under his management. He never married but he never, either, lost his liking for the softer sex, as many a buxom serving maid at the Swan could testify. Nobby and I went often to see him and I have bright memories of winter nights with the snow flying outside, and inside a great fire burning on the hearth of the inn and Jeremy, fiddle to chin, sawing away merrily.

I write this narrative at the Little Manor, to which Prudence and I retired when our eldest son married a daughter of Robert Dennis, giving up gladly the great manor to him and his bride. Here with perfect contentment we shall spend those years remaining to us. I have ever loved this house and my memory is continually peopling it with those who once dwelt here: my dear mother, my gentle scholarly father, Kate, Judah, Lina, and poor Martin.

It is winter again as I pen these last lines. The first snow of the year is sifting down from a sky so low that it seems to rest on the tips of our tallest trees. Prudence stands at the window watching and thinks, as I think, of the Great Frost so long ago, and puts another log on the fire from the memory. As she dwells upon her thoughts I see her face, fresh and lovely still, grow wonderfully tender.

She asks me soon, "Finished yet, David?" as she has been asking now for a fortnight. But this time I answer with a great sigh of satisfaction, "Finished, my love."



## AFTERWORD & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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THOUGH this book is a Period Romance rather than an Historical Novel, I have spared no effort to present an accurate picture of the times, the place, and the people. My own residence, Schoolridge Farm, is the Little Manor of the book. The fine old brick house remains substantially the same, save for certain conveniences and a new kitchen, as it was in the days of David Innes. The ridge on which it is built slopes away to our water frontage on Hall's Creek, with the sun-filled Big Annemessex River just a stone's throw away.

In what had been originally the small or back parlor of the house—where Lawyer MacPherson had the miserly Quigg by the throat—much of this book was written.

Any research into the history of the lower part of the Eastern Shore of Maryland covering the period of which I write, i.e., 1816–22, brings to light inevitably some mention of the infamous Patty Cannon and her band of cutthroats, thieves, and slaver-kidnapers. In his novel, *The Entailed Hat*, published in the 1880's, George Alfred Townsend wrote in some detail of her and of her notorious son-in-law, Joe Johnson. It is a good novel, despite its circumlocution and elaborate phraseology, and indicates a great deal of research on the author's part. He makes no mention, however, of a legend he must have come on concerning a far more dangerous band of slaver-kidnapers than the ruffianly and illiterate Patty Cannon gang—more dangerous and more successful because the leaders were technically gentlemen, educated, high-spirited, courageous, and adequately financed. The time of their operation

is uncertain; doubtless they preceded Patty Cannon \* in her heyday by thirty and perhaps fifty years.

I have taken the liberty of moving up the activities of this band to the time of which I write. I have also advanced the Great Frost from a much earlier date to the winter of 1821-22. These are the only liberties I have taken with history, legend, and atmosphere.

My thanks are due to many residents of the Eastern Shore who passed on to me legends handed down in their families, and who have permitted me access to old private papers, old maps, old books, old histories. My thanks go particularly to Miss Louise Tyler who sold me Schoolridge Farm and who graciously gave me land patents, deeds, and other papers in connection with the property, dating from 1648.

A. R. Beverley-Giddings

NEW YORK, N. Y.

\* With the arrest of Patty Cannon in April, 1829, the last of the slaver-kidnapers gangs on the Nanticoke River was broken and dispersed. In May of the same year Patty Cannon died in jail at Georgetown, Delaware, from arsenic administered by her own hand. Her equally infamous son-in-law, Joe Johnson, escaped and was never heard of subsequently.





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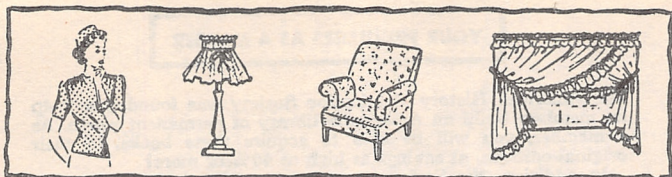
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