

**ROBERT
NEILSON
STEPHENS**

Captain Ravenshaw; Or, The Maid
of Cheapside. A Romance of
Elizabethan London

Robert Stephens

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Robert Neilson Stephens
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Cheapside. A Romance of Elizabethan London

*"Hang him, swaggering rascal!.. He a captain!.. He lives upon mouldy
stewed prunes and dried cakes."*

– King Henry IV., Part II.

PREFACE

Here is offered mere story, the sort of thing Mr. Howells cannot tolerate. He will have none of us and our works, poor "neo-romanticists" that we are. Curiously enough, we neo-romanticists, or most of us, will always gratefully have him; of his works we cannot have too many; one of us, I know, has walked miles to get the magazine containing the latest instalment of his latest serial. This looks as if we were more liberal than he. He would, for the most part, prohibit fiction from being else than the record of the passing moment; it should reflect only ourselves and our own little tediousnesses; he would hang the chamber with mirrors, and taboo all pictures; or if he admitted pictures they should depict this hour's actualities alone, there should be no figures in costume.

But who shall decide in these matters what is to be and what is not to be? Who shall deny that all kinds of fiction have equal right to exist? Who shall dictate our choice of theme, or place, or time? Who shall forbid us in our faltering way to imagine forth the past if we like? The dead past, say you? As dead as yesterday afternoon, no more. "Where's he that died o' Wednesday?" As dead as the Queen of Sheba. But on the pages of Sienkiewicz, for example, certain little matters of Nero's time seem no more dead than last week's divorce trial in the columns of those realists, the newspaper reporters. All that is not immediately before our eyes, whether dead or distant, can be visualised only by imagination informed by description, and a small transaction in the reign of Elizabeth can be made as sensible to the mind's eye as a domestic scene between Mr. and Mrs. Jones in the administration of McKinley. But how can one describe authentically what one can never have seen? You may propound that question to the realists; they are often doing it, or else they see extraordinary things now and then.

But, now that I remember it, Mr. Howells is not really illiberal. He has, upon occasion, admitted a tolerance – nay, an admiration – for "genuine romance." But what is genuine romance? Is psychological romance, for instance, more "genuine" than melodramatic romance? Are we not all – we "neo-romanticists" – aiming at genuine romance in some kind? Shall there not be many misses to a hit? many inconsiderable achievements to a masterpiece? And we suffer under limitations which the great romancers had not to observe. We must be watchful against anachronisms, against many liberties in style and matter which the esteemed Sir Walter, for instance, might take – and did take – without stint. One's fancy was less restrained, in his day. One cannot, as he did, bring Shakespeare to Greenwich palace before the festivities at Kenilworth occurred; or let a shopman recommend a pair of spectacles to a doctor of divinity with the information that the king, having tried them on, had pronounced them fit for a bishop; or make the divine buy them with the cheerful remark that a certain reverend brother's advancing age gives hopes of an early promotion. Fancy such an exchange of jocularities between a shop "assistant" in Piccadilly and Doctor Ingram, while the late Doctor Creighton was Bishop of London! Flow of fancy is easier upon such terms; or, when one may even, as the great Dumas did, be so free of care for details as to have the same character in two places at the same time.

It is not meant to be implied that Mr. Howells is thought to consider the work of Scott or Dumas genuine romance. If he has anywhere mentioned an example of what he takes to be true romance, I have missed that mention. I should like to read his definition (perhaps he has published one which I have not seen) of genuine romance. But I would rather he taught us by example than by precept. What a fine romance he could write if he chose!

But as for us less-gifted ones, the "neo-romanticists," shackled as Scott and Dumas were not, we must work a while under the new conditions, the new checks upon our imagination, ere we shall get a masterpiece. Meanwhile none of us yields to Mr. Howells in admiration of a true romance, and none of us would be sorry to lay down the pen, or shut up the typewriter, some fine afternoon and find it achieved. But until then may we not have indifferent romances, just as we have indifferent realistic

novels? Why not, pray? Again, shall one man, one group, one school, decide what shall be and what shall not? "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

Now, of merits which mere story may possess, and usually does possess in measure greater than the other sort of thing does, one is – construction. Wherefore, the opponents of this sort of thing belittle that merit. But it is a prime merit, nevertheless. Is not the first thing for praise, in a picture, its composition? in a building, its main design? in a group of statuary, its general effect? So, too, in a work of fiction. "Real life does not contrive so curiously," says Professor Saintsbury. Precisely; if it did, what would be the good of fiction? Neither does nature contrive well-ordered squares of turf, with walks, flower-beds, hedge-rows, shrubbery, trees set with premeditation; shall we, on that account, make no gardens for ourselves? Who shall ordain that there be no well-constructed plots in fiction because life, seen in sections as small as a novel usually represents, is not well constructed? It is time somebody put in a word for plot. When all is said and done, the main thing in a story *is* the story.

Mr. Howells said, long ago, that the stories were all told. It is doubtful. But even if it were certain, what of it? Because there was an old tale of a king's wife whose lover lost the ring she gave him, whereupon the king, finding out, bade her wear it on a certain soon-coming occasion, and she was put to much concern to get it in time, was the world to go without the pleasure of D'Artagnan's mission for Anne of Austria? And what though Dumas himself had used the old situation of a real king imprisoned, and his "double" filling the throne in his place, were we to have no "Prisoner of Zenda?" Or even if the story of the man apparently wooing the handsome sister, while really loving the plain sister, had already been told, as it had, was Mr. Howells prohibited from making it twice told, in "Silas Lapham?"

Now, as to this little attempt at romance in a certain kind, I wish merely to say, for the benefit of those who turn over the first leaves of a novel in a bookstore or library before deciding whether to take or leave it, that it differs from the usual adventure-story in being concerned merely with private life and unimportant people. Though it has incidents enough, and perils enough, it deals neither with war nor with state affairs. It contains no royal person; not even a lord – nor a baronet, indeed, for baronets had not yet been invented at the period of the tale. The characters are every-day people of the London of the time, and the scenes in which they move are the street, the tavern, the citizen's house and garden, the shop, the river, the public resort, – such places as the ordinary reader would see if a miracle turned back time and transported him to London in the closing part of Elizabeth's reign. The atmosphere of that place and time, as one may find it best in the less known and more realistic comedies of Shakespeare's contemporaries, in prose narratives and anecdotes, and in the records left of actual transactions, strikes us of the twentieth century as a little strange, somewhat of a world which we can hardly take to be real. If I have succeeded in putting a breath of this strangeness, this (to us) seeming unreality, into this busy tale, and yet have kept the tale vital with a human nature the same then as now, I have done something not altogether bad. Bad or good, I have been a long time about it, for I have grown to believe that, though novel-reading properly comes under the head of play, novel-writing properly comes under the head of work. My work herein has not gone to attain the preciousness of style which distracts attention from the story, or the brilliancy of dialogue which – as the author of "John Inglesant" says – "declares the glory of the author more frequently than it increases reality of effect." My work has gone, very much, to the avoidance of anachronisms. This is a virtue really possessed by few novels which deal with the past, as only the writers of such novels know. It may be a virtue not worth achieving, but it was a whim of mine to achieve it. Ill health forbade fast writing, the success of my last previous book permitted slow writing, and I resolved to utilise the occasion by achieving one rare merit which, as it required neither genius nor talent, but merely care, was within my powers. The result of my care must appear as much in what the story omits as in what it contains. The reader may be assured at the outset, if it matters a straw to him, that the author of this romance of Elizabethan London (and its neighbourhood) is himself at home

in Elizabethan London; if he fails to make the reader also a little at home there in the course of the story, it is only because he lacks the gift, or skill, of imparting.

Robert Neilson Stephens.

London, June 1, 1901.

CHAPTER I. MEN OF DESPERATE FORTUNES

*"Though my hard fate has thrust me out to servitude,
I tumbled into th' world a gentleman."*

– The Changeling.

It was long past curfew, yet Captain Ravenshaw still tarried in the front room of the Windmill tavern, in the Old Jewry. With him were some young gentlemen, at whose cost he had been drinking throughout the afternoon. For their bounty, he had paid with the satirical conversation for which he was famed, as well as with richly embellished anecdotes of his campaigns. Late in the evening, the company had been joined by a young gallant who had previously sent them, from another chamber, a quantity of Rhenish wine. This newcomer now ordered supper for the party, a proceeding at which the captain dissembled his long-deferred pleasure – for he had not eaten since the day before. Moreover, besides the prospect of supper, there was this to hold him at the tavern: he knew not where he should look for a bed, or shelter, upon leaving it. The uncertainty was a grave consideration upon so black and windy a night.

Master Vallance, the gentleman who had ordered supper, had listened to the last of Ravenshaw's brag with a rather scornful silence. But the other young men had been appreciative; it was their pose, or affectation, to be as wicked as any man might; hence they looked up to this celebrated bully as to a person from whom there was much to be learned, and in whom there was much to be imitated.

The group had been sitting before the wide fireplace. But as soon as the roast fowls were brought in, there was a movement to the long table in the middle of the room. The captain was gifted with active, striding legs and long, slashing arms. So he was first to be seated, and, as he leaned forward upon his elbows, he seemed to cover more than his share of the table. He had a broad, solid forehead, an assertive nose, a narrow but forward chin, gray eyes accustomed to flash with a devil-may-care defiance, a firm mouth inured to a curve of sardonic derision. His rebellious hair, down-turning moustaches, and pointed beard were of a dark brown hue. He was a man of good height; below the sword-belt, he was lank to the ground; above, he broadened out well for chest and shoulders. His voice was quick, vigorous, and not unpleasantly metallic. He was under thirty, but rough experience had hardened his visage to an older look. His jerkin, shirt, hose, shoes, and ruff also betokened much and severe usage.

Master Vallance, in spotless velvet doublet and breeches, and perfectly clean silk stockings, looked at him with contemptuous dislike.

"Take heed you scorch not the capon with your nose, roaring Ravenshaw," said the youth, quietly.

It was not Ravenshaw's habit to resent allusions to his character as a "roaring boy;" indeed he encouraged the popular idea which saddled him with that title, at that time applied to bullies of the taverns. But some circumstance of the moment, perhaps something in the young coxcomb's air of aristocratic ridicule, guided the epithet to a sensitive spot.

"*Captain* Ravenshaw, by your leave," he said, instantly, in a loud tone, with an ironical show of a petitioner's deference.

"Forsooth, yes; a captain of the suburbs," replied the young gentleman, with a more pronounced sneer.

Now at this time – toward the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth – and for a long time after, certain of the suburbs of London were inhabited numerously by people of ill repute. There were,

especially, women whom the law sometimes took in hand and sent to the Bridewell to break chalk, or treated to a public ride in a cart, as targets for rotten vegetables, addled eggs, and such projectiles. Many an unemployed soldier, or bully who called himself soldier, would bestow, or impose, his protection upon some one of these frail creatures in the time of her prosperity, exacting from her the means of livelihood. Hence did Ravenshaw see in the title of "captain of the suburbs" an insult little less than lay in that of "Apple-John," or "Apple-squire," itself.

When a gentleman calls another by the name of a bad thing, it is not necessarily implied that he thinks the other is that thing; but it is certain that he means to be defiantly offensive. Therefore, in this case, the captain's part was not to deny, but to resent. Not only must he keep up his reputation with the other gentlemen as a man not to be affronted, but he really was in a towering rage at being bearded with easy temerity by such a youngling.

"What!" quoth he. "Thou sprig! Thy wits are strayed away, methinks. Or has thy nurse been teaching thee to use a pert tongue?"

"Nay, save your own tongue for the tasting of yon capon. I speak only truth. Your reputation is well known."

"Why, thou saucy boy, I may not spit butterflies on my sword, nor provoke striplings by giving them the lie; else – "

The captain finished with a shrug of vexation.

"Look ye, gentlemen, he lays it to my youth," continued the persecutor, "but there's yet a horse of another colour. This captain is free enough with his bluster and his sword; he has drawn quarts of blood for a single word that misliked him, upon occasion; but he will bear a thousand scurvy affronts from any man for the sake of a supper. You shall see – "

"Supper!" echoed the captain, springing up. "Do you cast your filthy supper in my teeth? Nay, then, I'll cast it in thine own."

With this, thoroughly enraged, Captain Ravenshaw seized the particular capon to which the gallant had alluded, and flung it across the table into the gallant's face. It struck with a thud, and, rebounding, left the young man a countenance both startled and greasy. Not content, the offended captain thereupon reached forth to the fowl which had been served as companion to the capon, and this he hurled in the same direction. But he aimed a little too high, moreover the fop ducked his head, and so the juicy missile sped across the room, to lodge plump against the stomach of a person who had just then come into view in the open doorway.

This person showed lean in body and shabby in raiment. He made a swift, instinctive grasp at the thing with which he had come so unexpectedly in contact, and happened to catch it before it could fall to the floor. He held it up with both hands to his gaze a moment, and then, having ascertained beyond doubt its nature, he suddenly turned and vanished with it. Let us follow him, leaving behind us the scene in the tavern room, which scene, upon the landlady's rushing in to preserve order for the good name of the house, was very soon after restored to a condition of peace by the wrathful departure of Ravenshaw from the company of an offender too young for him to chastise with the sword.

The ill-clad person who clutched the cooked fowl, which accident had thus summarily bestowed upon him, made short work of fleeing down the stairs and out into the black, chill February night. Once outside, though he could not see his hand before his face, he turned toward Cheapside and stumbled forward along the miry way, his desire evidently being to put himself so far from the Windmill tavern that he might not be overtaken by any one who could lay claim to the fowl.

The air was damp as well as cold. The fugitive, keeping his ungloved hands warm by spreading them around the fowl, which was fresh from the spit, had to grope his way through an inky wind. He listened for possible footfalls behind him, but he heard none, and so he chuckled inwardly and held his prize close to his breast with a sense of security. Now and then he raised it to his nostrils, in anticipation of the feast he should enjoy upon arriving at the resting-place he had in mind. He would have made a strange spectacle to anybody who might have been able to see him from one of

the rattling casements as he passed; but so dark it was that downlookers could no more have seen him than he could see the painted plaster, carved cross-timbers, projecting windows, and gabled roof-peaks of the tall houses that lined the narrow street through which he fled.

At one place a lantern hanging over a door threw a faint light upon him for a moment, and showed a young man's face, with sharp features and a soft expression; but the face was instantly gone in the darkness, and there was no other night-walker abroad in the street to have seen it while it was visible.

"Surely," he meditated, as he went, "the time of miracles has returned. And even a starved scholar is found worthy of Heaven's interposition. With the temerity of the famished, I enter a tavern, ascend the stairs, and steal into a room which I take to be empty because no sound comes from it, my only hope being to pilfer a little warmth nobody will miss, perchance to fall heir to a drop of wine at the bottom of a glass, or a bone upon an uncleared table. And lo, I find myself in the presence of a gentleman asleep before a pot of mulled canary, which he has scarce wet his throat withal. In three swallows I make the canary my own, just in time to set down the pot before in comes a tapster. I feign I am in search of friends, who must be in t'other chamber. To make good the deceit, I must needs look in at t'other chamber door; when, behold, some follower of Mars, who looks as hungry as myself, pelts me with poultry. It is plainly a gift of the gods, and I am no such ill-mannered clown as to stay and inquire into the matter. Well, *gaudeamus igitur*, my sweet bird; here we are at St. Mary Cole Church, on the steps of which we shall make each other's better acquaintance. Jove! – or rather Bacchus! – what tumult a pint or so of mulled wine makes in the head of a poor master of arts, when too suddenly imbibed!"

He went half-way up the steps and sat down, crouching into the smallest figure possible, as if he might thus offer the least surface to the cold. Sinking his teeth into the succulent breast of the roast fowl, he forgot the weather in the joy of eating. But he had scarce taken two bites when he was fain to suspend his pleasure, for the sound of rapid footfalls came along the way he had just traversed. He took alarm.

"Sit quiet now, in God's name, Master Holyday!" he mentally adjured himself. "'Tis mayhap one in search of the fowl. Night, I am beholden to thee for thy mantle."

The person strode past and into Cheapside without apprehension of the scholar's presence upon the steps. The scholar could not make out the man's looks, but could divine from sundry muttered oaths he gave vent to, and from his incautious haste of movement, that he was angry.

"God 'a' mercy! how he takes to heart the loss of a paltry fowl!" mused Master Holyday, resuming the consumption of his supper on the church steps. "For, certes, 'twas from the Windmill he came; from his voice, and the copiousness of his swearing, I should take him to be that very soldier whom the gods impelled to provide me with supper. Well, he is now out of hearing; and a good thing, too, for there comes the moon at last from the ragged edge of yon black cloud. Blow, wind, and clear the sky for her. Pish! what is this? Can I not find my mouth? Ha, ha! 'tis the mulled wine."

The scholar had indeed struck his nose with the fowl, when he had meant to bring it again between his teeth. He was conscious of the increased effect of the wine in other ways, too, and chiefly in a pleasanter perception of everything, a sense of agreeable comicality in all his surroundings, a warmed regard for all objects within view or thought. This enhanced the enjoyment of his meal. The moonlight, though frequently dimmed by rushing scraps of cloud, made visible the streets near whose junction he sat, so that the house fronts stood strangely forth in weird shine and shadow. The scholar, shivering upon the steps, was the only living creature in the scene. Yet there seemed to be a queer half-life come into inanimate things. The wind could be heard moaning sometimes in unseen passages. The hanging signs creaked as if they now and then conversed one with another in brief, monosyllabic language.

"In the daylight," thought the scholar, "men and women possess the streets, their customs prevail, and their opinions rule. But now, forsooth, the house fronts and the signs, the casements and

the weathercocks, have their conference. Are they considering solely of their own matters, or do they tell one another tales of the foolish beings that move about on legs, hurrying and chattering, by day? Faith, is it of me they are talking? See with what a blank look those houses gaze down at me, like a bench of magistrates at a rogue. But the house at the end, the tall one with the straight front, – I swear it is frowning upon me. And the one beside it, with the fat oriel windows, and whose upper stories belly so far out over the street, – as I'm a gentleman and a scholar, 'tis laughing at me. Has it come to this? – to be a thing of mirth to a monster of wood and plaster, a huge face with eyes of glass? For this did Ralph Holyday take his degrees at Cambridge University, and was esteemed as able a disputant as ever came forth of Benet College? Go thy ways, Ralph; better wert thou some fat citizen snoring behind yon same walls, than Master Holyday, *magister artium*, lodging houseless on the church steps with all thy scholarship. Not so, neither; thou wouldst be damned rather! Hark, who is it walks in Cheapside, and coming this way, too?"

He might have recognised the tread as the same which had some minutes before moved in the opposite direction; though it was now less rapid, as if the owner of the feet had walked off some of his wrath. Coming into view at the end of the Old Jewry, that owner proved to be in truth the very soldier of whom Holyday had caught a glimpse at the tavern. The soldier, turning by some impulse, saw the scholar on the steps; but his warlike gaze had now no terror for Master Holyday, who had put at least half of the fowl beyond possible recovery, and whose appetite was no longer keen.

"God save you, sir!" said the scholar, courteously. "Were you seeking a certain roast fowl?"

"Not I, sirrah," replied Captain Ravenshaw, approaching Holyday. "You are he that stood in the doorway, perchance? Rest easy; the fowl was none of mine. I should scorn to swallow a morsel of it."

And yet he eyed it in such a manner that Master Holyday, who was a good judge of a hungry glance, said, placidly:

"You are welcome to what is left of it here." Which offer the scholar enforced with a satisfied sigh, indicating fulness of stomach.

The captain made a very brief pretence of silent hesitation, then accepted the remainder of the feast from the scholar's hands, saying:

"Worshipful sir, it should go hard with me ere I would refuse true hospitality. Have I not seen you about the town before this night?" He sat down beside Holyday, and began to devour the already much-diminished fowl.

"I know not," replied the scholar, who had a mild, untroubled way of speaking. "'Twas last Michaelmas I came to London. I have kept some riotous company, but, if I have met you, I remember not."

"Slight! you know then who I be?"

"Not I, truly."

"Yet you call me riotous."

"That argues no previous knowledge. Though I be a Cambridge man, it takes none of my scholarship to know a gentleman of brawls at sight, a roaring boy, a swaggerer of the taverns –"

"Why, boy, why! Do you mean offence in these names?"

"No offence in the world. You see I bear no sword, being but a poor master of arts. None so bold of speech as the helpless, among honourable men of the sword."

"Some truth in that. Look ye, young sir, hast ever heard of one Ravenshaw, a captain, about the town here?"

"Ay, he is the loudest roarer of them all, I have heard; one whose bite is as bad as his bark, too, which is not the case with all of these braggadocios; but he is a scurvy rascal, is he not? a ragged hector of the ale-houses. Is it he you mean?"

"Ha! that is his reputation? Well, to say truth, he may comfort himself by knowing he deserves it. But the world used him scurvily first – nay, a plague on them that whine for themselves! I am that Ravenshaw."

"Then I must deal softly; else I am a hare as good as torn to pieces by the dogs."

"Why, no, scholar, thou needst not be afeard. I like thee, young night-walker. Thou wert most civil concerning this fowl. 'Od's light! but for thee, my sudden pride had played my belly a sad trick this night. Thou art one to be trusted, I see, and when I have finished with this bird, I will tell thee something curious of my rascal reputation. But while I eat, prithee, who art thou? and what is it hath sent thee to be a lodger on the steps of St. Mary Cole Church? Come, scholar; thou might do worse than make a friend of roaring Ravenshaw."

"Nay, I have no enemies I would wish killed. But I am any man's gossip, if he have inclination for my discourse, and be not without lining to his headpiece. My name is Ralph Holyday; I am only son to Mr. Francis Holyday, a Kentish gentleman of good estate. He is as different a manner of man from me as this night is from a summer day. He is stubborn and tempestuous; he will have his way, though the house fall for it. He has no love of books and learning, neither; but my mother, seeing that I was of a bookish mind, worked upon him unceasingly to send me to the university, till at last, for peace' sake, he packed me off to Cambridge. While I was there, my mother died – rest her soul, poor lady! After I took my degrees, my father would have it that I come home, and fit myself to succeed him. Home I went, perforce, but I had no stomach for the life he would lead me. I rather preferred to sit among my books, and to royster at the ale-house in company with a parson, who had as great love for learned disputation as for beer and venison. Many a pleasant day and night have I sat with good Sir Nicholas, drinking, and arguing upon the soul's immortality. This parson had sundry friends, too, good knaves, though less given to learning than to tossing the pot; they were poachers all, to say truth, and none better with the crossbow at a likely deer than the vicar. Thus, when I ought to have been busy in the matter of preserving my father's deer, I would be abroad in forbidden quest of other men's; 'twas, I know not how, the more sportive and curious occupation. Well, my father stormed at these ways of mine, but there was no method of curing them. But one day he became fearful his blood should die out. He must have descendants, he swore, and to that end I must find a wife straightway. Here is where we crossed weapons. I am not blind to the charms of women, but I am cursed with such timidity of them, such bashfulness when I am near them, that if I tried to court one, or if one were put upon me as wife, I should fall to pieces for shaking. I would sooner attempt anew the labours of Hercules than go a-wooing for a wife."

"'Tis a curious affliction," remarked the captain, pausing in his feast. "But many men have it; fighting men, too. There was Dick Rokeby, that was my comrade in France; he that fought with Harry Spence and me, each one 'gainst t'other two, upon the question of the properest oath for a soldier to swear by. Harry was one of your Latin fellows, and held for 'the buckler of Mars.' Dick Rokeby said an Englishman could do no better than swear by the lance of St. George. And I vowed by the spurs of Harry Fift' I would put down any man that thought better of any other oath. We fought it out, three-cornered, in Grey's Inn Fields; and the spurs of Harry Fift' won the day. As for women, I am their enemy on other grounds. There was one I trusted, and when I was at the wars she wronged me with my friend. I have sworn revenge upon the sex, curse 'em! So you would not marry?"

"That I would not. The only women I can approach without trembling at the knees, and my face burning, and my tongue sticking fast, are serving-maids and common drabs, and such as I would not raise to a place of quality. So the end was that, after he had raged and threatened for six months, my father cast me forth, swearing I should never cross his doorsill, or have a penny of him, till I should come back with a wife on my arm. And so I came last Michaelmas to London."

"And how hast made shift to live since then?"

"Why, first upon some money my friend Sir Nick thrust upon me; then by the barter of my clothes in Cornhill; and meanwhile I had writ a play, a tragedy, that Master Henslowe gave me five pounds for."

"I would fain see thy tragedy. How is it named?"

"God knows when it may be played; it has not yet been. It is 'The Lamentable Tragedy of Queen Nitocris.' The story is in a Greek history."

"What, you dare not even discourse with a mere gentlewoman, yet write the intimate histories of queens?"

"Yes, friend; there are many of us poor poets do so. We herd with trulls, and dream of empresses. (A passable decasyllabic line, that!) But I have not been able to sell another tragedy, nor yet to have my sonnets printed, whereby I might get ten pounds for a dedication. And so you see me as I am."

"Well," said the captain, having by this time pretty well stuffed himself, "I like thee the better for being a poet. Such as you know me to be, you will scarce believe it; but I am one – or was once – fitted by nature to take joy in naught so much as in poetry, and the sweet pastoral life that poets praise so. But never whisper this; I were a dead man if the town knew the softness underneath my leathern outside. But in very truth, as for books, I would give all the Plutarchs in the world for one canto of 'The Faerie Queene' or ten pages of the gentler part of Sidney's 'Arcadia.' Had I won my choice, I had passed my days, not in camps and battles, taverns and brawls, but in green meadows, sitting and strolling among flowers, reading some book of faery or shepherds – for I never could make up poetry of my own."

"That picture belies the common report of Captain Ravenshaw."

"Ay, Master Holyday; swaggering Ravenshaw is no shepherd of poesy. But hearken to what I promised thee: I, too, am a gentleman's son; the family is an old one in Worcestershire, – observe I call it not *my* family. I was early a cast-off scion, and for no fault of mine, I swear. 'Twas the work of a woman, a she-devil, that bewitched my father. But God forbid I should afflict any man, or rouse mine own dead feelings, with the tale of my wrongs! I was no roaring boy then; I was a tame youth, and a modest. But when I found myself out in the world, I soon learned that with a mild mien, unless a man have a craftiness I lacked, he is ever thrust backward, and crushed against the wall, or trodden upon in the ditch. And so for policy I took the time and pains to make myself a master of the sword, not that I might brawl, but that I might go my ways in peace. In good time, I killed two men or so that were thought invincible; and I supposed the noise of this would save me from affronts after that."

"And was it not so?"

"Perchance it had been, if my manner had comported with the deed. But I still went modest in my bearing, and so my prowess was soon forgot; some may have thought my victories an accident of fortune; besides, strangers knew not what I had done, and saw no daring in me; and so I found myself as unconsidered as ever. And at last, when the woman I loved turned treacherous and robbed me of the friend at court on whom my fortune hung, and malice was hatched in me, I bethought me of a new trick. I took on a bold front, an insolent outside; I became a swearer, a swaggerer, a roaring boy, a braggart; and lo! people soon stepped aside to let me pass. I found this blustering masquerade a thousand times more potent to secure immunity than my real swordsmanship had been. The transformation was but skin-deep at first; but the wars, and my hard life and my poverty, helped its increase, so that now it has worked in to the heart of me. There was a time it made me ill to sink my rapier into a man's soft flesh, but I grew to be of stronger stomach. And when I first put on the mask of brazen effrontery, I was often faint within when I seemed most insolent. But now I am indeed roaring Ravenshaw, all but a little of me, and that little often sleeps."

"But this insolence of thine, real or false, seems not to have made thy fortune."

"Nay, but it has made my poverty the less contemptible. Lay not my undoing to it. When the war lasted, I fared well enough, as long as I kept the captainship my friend had got me ere the woman played me false. A score of things have happened to bring me to this pass. My braggadocio, oftentimes enforced with deeds, hath neither helped nor hindered my downfall; it hath stood me in good stead in fair times and foul. Pish, man, but for my reputation, and the fear of my enmity or violence, could I have run up such scores at taverns as I have done, being penniless? How often have I roared dicing

fools, and card-playing asses, out of the stakes when they had fairly won 'em? Could any but a man who has made himself feared do such things, and keep out of Newgate or at least the Counter i' the Poultry here?"

"Why, is not that rank robbery, sir?"

"Yes, sir, and rank filling of my empty stomach. Tut, scholar, you have been hungry yourself; roofless, too. Be so as oft as I have been, and with as small chance of mending matters, and I'll give a cracked three farthings for what virtue is left in you. Boy, boy, hast thou yet to learn what a troublesome comrade thy belly is, in time of poverty? What a leader into temptation? Am I, who was once a gentleman, a rascal as well as a brawler? Yes, I am a rascal. So be it; and the more beholden I to my rascality when it find me a dinner, or a warm place to sleep o' nights. Would it might serve us now. Who are these a-coming?"

Some dark figures were approaching from up the Old Jewry, attended by two fellows bearing links, for the moonlight was not to be relied upon. The figures came arm in arm, at a blithe but unsteady gait, swaying and plunging. Presently the captain recognised the gentlemen who had been his afternoon companions at the sign of the Windmill. But Master Vallance was not with them, having doubtless taken lodging at one of the inns near the tavern. The sparks, jubilant with their wine, no sooner made out the captain's form than they hailed him heartily.

"What, old war boy!" cried Master Maylands, a spruce and bold young exquisite. "Well met, well met! Hey, gentles, we'll make a night on't. Captain, you shall captain us, captain!"

"Ay, you shall captain us about the town," put in Master Hawes, who spoke shrilly, and with a lisp, for which he would have been admired had it been affected, but for which he was often ridiculed because it was natural. "You shall teach us to roar as loud as you do. What say you, gallants? Shall we go to school to him to learn roaring? He is the master swaggerer of all that ever swaggered."

The proposal was received with noisy approval, the roysterers gathering around the captain where he sat, and grasping him by the sleeves to draw him along with them.

"Softly, gentlemen, softly," said the captain. "Ye seem of a mind here. But do you consider? There is much I might impart, in the practice of swaggering. Would you in good sooth have me for a tutor?"

There was a chorus of affirmative protestation.

The captain thought it politic to urge a scruple.

"But bethink ye," quoth he, "to be a true swaggerer is no child's play. And you are of delicate rearing, all; meant to play lutes in ladies' chambers; court buds, gallants."

"Why, then," said Maylands, "we shall be gallants and swaggerers, too; an you make swaggerers of us, we will make a gallant of you, will we not, boys?"

"Nay," replied Ravenshaw, "I have been a gallant in my time, and need but the clothes to be one again; and so does my friend here, who is a gentleman and a scholar, though out of favour with fortune. Now there be many tricks in the swaggering trade; the choice of oaths is alone a subtle study, and that is but one branch of many. I'll not be any man's schoolmaster for nothing."

"Faith, man, who asks it?" cried Master Maylands. "We'll pay you. For an earnest, take my cloak; my doublet is thick." He flung the rich broadcloth garment over the captain's uncloaked shoulders. "You need but the clothes to be a gallant again? 'Fore God, I believe it! Tom Hawes, I've cloaked him; you doublet him. Barter your doublet for his jerkin; your cloak will hide it for the night; you've a score of doublets at home."

Master Maylands, in his zeal, fell upon the unobjecting Hawes, and in a trice had helped to effect the transfer, the captain feigning a helpless compliance in the hands of his insistent benefactors. It occurred to another of the youths, Master Clarington, to exchange his jewelled German cap of velvet for Ravenshaw's ragged felt hat; whereupon Master Dauncey, not to be outdone, would have had his breeches untrussed by his link-boy, to bestow upon the captain, but that the captain himself interposed on the score of the cold weather.

"But I'll take it as kindly of you," said Ravenshaw, "if you should have a cloak for my scholar friend. How say you, Master Holyday? Thou'lt be one of us? Thou'lt be a swaggering gallant, too?"

Master Holyday, inwardly thanking his stars for the benevolent impulse which had made him share the fowl, and so elicit this gratitude, would have agreed to anything under the moon (except to woo a woman) for the sake of warmer clothes.

"Yes, sir," said he, with his wonted studious gravity of manner; "if these gentlemen will be so gracious."

The gentlemen were readily so gracious. After a few rapid exchanges, which they treated as a great piece of mirth, they beheld the scholar also cloaked and richly doubleted and hatted. He wore his fine garments with a greater sense of their comfort than of his improved appearance, yet with a somewhat pleasant scholastic grace.

The captain strutted a little way down the street, to enjoy the effect of his new cloak; but, as he stepped into Cheapside, the moon was clouded, and he could no longer see the garment tailing out finely over his sword behind. A distant sound of plodding feet made him look westward in Cheapside, and he saw a few dim lanterns approaching from afar.

"Lads, the watch is coming," said he. "Shall we tarry here, and be challenged for night-walkers?"

"Marry," quoth Master Maylands, leaping forward to the captain's side, "we shall take our first lesson in swaggering now; we shall beat the watch."

"As good a piece of swaggering gallantry as any," said the captain. "Come, my hearts!"

And he led the way along Cheapside toward the approaching watchmen.

CHAPTER II. DISTURBERS OF THE NIGHT

"I will have the wench."

"If you can get her."

— The Coxcomb.

The captain gave instructions, as he and his pupils strode forward. The two boys with the lights were left behind to take shelter in a porch, so that the peace-breakers might advance in the greater darkness. It was enough for their purpose that they had the lanterns of the watch to guide them.

The watchmen came trudging on in ranks of two. Presently there could be heard, from somewhere among them, a voice of lamentation, protest, and pleading, with a sound of one stumbling against sundry ill-set paving-stones of the street.

"They have a prisoner," said the captain to his followers. "We'll make a rescue of this. Remember, lads, no swords to be used on these dotards; but do as I've told ye."

In another moment, and just when the watchmen seemed about to halt for consideration, but before their leader had made up his mind to cry, "Stand!" the captain shouted, "Now, boys, now; a rescue! a rescue!" and the roysterers rushed forward with a chorus of whoops.

The watch, composed for the most part of old men, had scarce time to huddle into a compact form when the gallants were upon them. The assailants, keeping up their shouting, made to seize the watchmen's bills, with which to belabour them about their heads and shoulders. One or two were successful in this; but others found their intended victims too quick, and were themselves the recipients of blows. These unfortunate ones, bearing in mind the captain's directions, essayed to snatch away lanterns, and to retaliate upon the watchmen's skulls; and whoever failed in this, rushed to close quarters, grasped an opponent's beard, and hung on with all weight and strength.

The captain's operations were directed against the pair who had immediate charge of the prisoner. Possessing himself of the bill of one, whom, by the same act, he caused to lose balance and topple over, he obtained the other's voluntary retreat by a gentle poke in the paunch. The prisoner himself proved to be a man of years, and of port; he had a fat, innocent face, and he showed, by his dress and every other sign that became visible when the captain held up a lantern before him, to be a gentleman. What such a guileless, well-fed old person could have done to fall afoul of the night-watch, Captain Ravenshaw could not imagine. For the time, the old person's astonishment and relief at being set free were too great to permit his speaking.

Meanwhile, Master Holyday, having been the last to come up, found the *melée* so suddenly precipitated, and so complete without his intrusion, that he stood back looking for a convenient place and time for him to plunge into it. But it seemed impossible for him to penetrate the edge of the scuffle, or to connect himself with it in any effective way. So he hung upon the skirts; until at last two of the watchmen, being simultaneously minded for flight, bore down upon him from out of the hurly-burly. He instinctively threw out his arms to stay their going; whereupon he found himself grappled with on either side, and from that instant he had so much to do himself that he lost all observation of the main conflict. Nor had the other fighters any knowledge of this side matter. But their own sport was over ere their wind was out; the watchmen, being mainly of shorter breath and greater prudence than their antagonists, soon followed the example of flight; and the gallants, soberer by sundry aches, smarts, and bruises, were left masters of the field. None of the watch was too much battered to be able to scamper off toward the Poultry.

"A piece of good luck, sir," began Captain Ravenshaw, to the released prisoner, around whom the gallants assembled while they compared knocks and trophies. "You had been scurvily lodged this night, else."

"Sirs, I thank ye," replied the old gentleman, finding at last his voice, though it was the mildest of voices at best. He was still shaky from having been so recently in great fright; but he gathered force as his gratitude grew with his clearer sense of escape.

"God wot, I am much beholden to ye. You know not what you have saved me from."

"To say truth, a lousy hole behind an iron grating were no pleasant place for one of your quality," said Ravenshaw.

"Oh, 'tis not that so much, though 'twere bad enough," said the gentleman, with a shudder. "'Tis the lifetime of blame that would have followed when my wife had heard of it. You must know, sirs, I am a country gentleman, and I am not known to be in London; my detention would be noised about, and when it reached my wife's ears – 'sfoot, sirs, I am for ever your debtor in thankfulness!" And he looked his meaning most fervently.

"Why did the watch take you up?" inquired the captain.

"Why, for nothing but being abroad in the streets. The plaguey rascals said I was a night-walker, and that I behaved suspiciously. I did nothing but stand and wait at the Standard yonder, for one I had agreed to meet; but when I saw the watch coming I stepped back, to be out of their lantern-light. This stepping back, they said, proved I was a rogue; and so they clapped hands on me, and fetched me along. But now I bethink me, sirs: the person I was to meet – what will she do an she find me not at the place?" The old gentleman showed a reawakened distress, and, turning toward the direction whence the watch had brought him, looked wistfully and yet reluctantly into the darkness.

"Oho! She!" quoth the captain. "No wonder your wife –"

"Nay, think no harm, I beg. Nay, nay, good sirs! Sure, 'tis an evil-thinking world. Well, I must e'en bid ye good night, and leave ye my best thanks. Would I might some day repay you this courtesy. My name, sirs – but no, an ye'll pardon me, I durst not; the very stones might hear it, and report I was in London. But if I might know –"

"Surely. We have no wives in the country, that we must keep our doings from, have we, boys? And we are free of the streets of London, aren't we, boys? My name, sir, is Ravenshaw – Captain Ravenshaw; and this gentleman –"

He was about to introduce his companions by the names of great persons of the court, when, casting his eyes over the group for the first time since the link-boys had come up with their torches, he was suddenly otherwise concerned.

"Why, where's Master Holyday? Where the devil's our scholar?"

The gallants looked from one to another, and then peered into the surrounding darkness, but saw no one; nor came any answer to the captain's shout, "What ho, Holyday! Hollo, hollo!"

"An't please you," spoke up one of the link-boys, "while we waited yonder, the watchmen ran past us; and methought two of them dragged a man along between them; but 'twas so dark, and they went so fast –"

"Marry, that's how the wind lies," cried the captain. "Gallants, here's more business of a roaring nature. A rescue! Come, the hunt is up! To the cage, boys! We may catch 'em on the way."

Without more ado, Ravenshaw led his followers, link-boys and all, on a run toward the Poultry, leaving the grateful old gentleman in the darkness and to his own devices.

They hastened to the night-watch prison, but overtook no one on the way; it was clear that the watchmen had made themselves and their prisoner safe behind doors. An attack on the prison would have been a more serious business than the captain could see any profit in. So, abandoning the luckless scholar to the course of the law, the night-disturbers made their way back to Cheapside, wondering what riotous business they might be about next.

"What asses are these!" thought the captain. "They have warm beds to go to, yet they rather wear out their soles upon the streets in search of trouble. Well, it helps me pass the night, and I am every way the gainer by it; so if puppies must needs learn to play the lion, may they have no worse teacher."

When they came to the Standard, that ancient stone structure rising in the middle of the street, they walked around it to see if the old gentleman was there; but the place was deserted.

"Here were a matter to wager upon, now," observed the captain: "Whether he met his mistress after all and bore her away, or whether he found her not and went wisely to bed."

A few steps farther brought the strollers opposite the mouth of Bread Street. The sound of men's voices came from within this narrow thoroughfare.

"Marry, here be other fellows abroad," quoth the captain. "How if we should 'light upon occasion for a brawl? Then we should see if we could put them down with big words. Come, lads."

They turned into the narrow street and proceeded toward a group whose four or five dark figures were indistinctly marked in the flickering glare of a single torch. This group appeared to be circled about a closed doorway opposite All-hallows Church, at the farther corner of Watling Street, in which doorway stood the object of its attention.

"Some drunken drab o' the streets, belike," said the captain, in a low voice, to his followers. "We'll feign to know her, and we'll call ourselves her friends; that will put us on brawling terms with those gentlemen. They are gallants, sure, by their cloaks and feathers."

The gentlemen were, it seemed, too disdainful of harm to interrupt their mirth by looking to see who came toward them. The heartless amusement on their faces, the tormenting tone of the jesting words they spoke, gave an impression somewhat like that of a pack of dogs surrounding a helpless animal which they dare not attack, but which they entertain themselves by teasing.

The captain stepped unchallenged into the little circle, and looked at the person shrinking in the doorway, who was quite visible in the torchlight.

"Slight!" quoth the captain. "This is no trull; 'tis a young gentlewoman."

His surprise was so great as to make him for the moment forget the plan he had formed of precipitating a quarrel. The young gentlewoman looked very young indeed, and very gentle, being of a slight figure, and having a delicate face. She leaned close against the door, at which she had, as it seemed, put herself at bay. Her face, still wet with tears, retained something of the distortion of weeping, but was nevertheless charming. Her eyes, yet moist, were like violets on which rain had fallen. Her lips had not ceased to quiver with the emotion which had started her tears. Her hair, which was of a light brown, was in some disorder, partly from the wind; for the hood of the brown cloak she wore had been pulled back. It might easily be guessed who had pulled it, for the gentleman who stood nearest her, clad in velvet, and by whose behaviour the others seemed to be guided, held in his hand a little black mask, which he must have plucked from the girl's face.

This gentleman was tall, nobly formed, and of a magnificent appearance. His features were ruddy, bold, and cut in straight lines. He wore silken black moustaches, and a small black beard trimmed to two points.

At the captain's words, this gentleman looked around, took full note of the speaker in a brief glance, and scarce dropping his smile, – a smile careless and serene, of heartless humour, – said, calmly:

"Stand back, knave; she is not for your eyes."

The captain had already thought of the inequality between this fragile damsel and her persecutors; despite his account against womankind, her looks and attitude had struck within him a note of compassion; and now her chief tormentor had called him a knave. He remembered the purpose with which he had arrived upon the scene.

"Knaves in your teeth, thou villain, thou grinning Lucifer, thou – thou – !" The captain was at a loss for some word of revilement that might be used against so fine a gentleman without seeming ridiculously misapplied. "Thou beater of the streets for stray fawns, thou frighter of delicate wenches!"

"Why, what motley is this?" replied the velvet gallant. "What mummer that is whole-clad above the girdle, and rags below? what mongrel, what patch, what filthy beggar in a stolen cloak? Avaunt, thing!"

The gentleman grasped the gilded hilt of his rapier, as if to enforce his command if need be.

"Ay, draw, and come on!" roared the captain. "You'll find me your teacher in that."

At the same moment a restraining clutch was put upon the gentleman's sleeve by one of his companions, who now muttered some quick words of prudence in his ear. Whether it was due to this, or to the captain's excellent flourish in unsheathing, he of the double-pointed beard paused in the very movement of drawing his weapon, and a moment later slid the steel back into its velvet scabbard. In his desistance from a violent course, there was evidently some consideration private to himself and his friend, some secret motive for the avoidance of a brawl.

"Say you so?" quoth the gentleman, blandly, as if no untoward words had passed. "Well, if you can be my teacher, you must be as good a rapier-and-dagger man as any in the kingdom, and there's an end on't. Are you that?"

"Sir, you might have tried me, and found out," said the captain, considerably mollified at the other's unexpected politeness, and putting up his sword.

"Why, marry, another time I may have occasion to see your skill – nay, I mean not a challenge; I should enjoy to see you fight any man."

"But what of this gentlewoman, sir?" said the captain, interrogatively.

"Why, you will not dispute, it is my prize, by right of discovery. You a swordman, and not know the laws of war? Faith, we men of the sea are better learned."

"Nay, but is she of the breed to make a prize of? Methinks she looks it not."

"Pish, man, a pretty thing or so; a citizen's filly, mayhap, that hath early slipped the halter; she will not tell her name; but what we find loose in the streets after curfew, we know what it is, whatsoever it may look."

The girl now spoke for the first time since the captain had seen her. Her voice, though disturbed by her feelings, was not shrill like a child's, but had the fulness of blossoming womanhood, and went with the smoothness common to well-bred voices.

"I was never in the streets at night before," she said, sobbingly. "There was one I was to meet, who was waiting for me at the Standard in Cheapside."

"Eh!" quoth the captain, with a suddenly increased interest.

"Some gallant 'prentice, belike," said the gentleman in velvet, with his singular smile of gaiety and cruelty. "Some brave cavalier of the flat cap, whom we frightened off."

"'Twas not so!" cried the girl. "He was not frightened off. I was going to him, and was near the place, but I could not see him yet, 'twas so dark. And then the watch came, with their lanterns, and I stood still, so they might not observe me. But I saw them go to the Standard, and take my – my friend that waited for me. I knew not what to do, and so I stayed where I was, all dismayed. And then, but not till the watch had gone away with him, came you cruel gentlemen and found me. So he was not frightened by you. Alas, if he had but seen me, and come to meet me!"

"But he was soon free of the watch," said the captain, wondering what such a damsel should have to do in surreptitiously meeting such a worshipful old married gentleman. "Came he not back to the place? 'Tis a good while since."

"How know you about him?" queried the girl, with wonder.

"'Tis no matter," said the captain, forgetting for the nonce to brag of an exploit. "He ought to have come back to the place to seek you; he was no true man, else."

"Belike he did, then," said the girl, quickly, with hope suddenly revived.

"Nay, 'tis certain he waits not at the Standard; we came from there but now. Doubtless his taking up by the watch gave him his fill of waiting there. He seemed a man with no stomach for night risks."

"Then," said the girl, mournfully, "he must have come back after I had run from these gentlemen. Then he would think I could not meet him; 'twas past the time we had set. Oh, villains, that I should run from you, and miss my friend, and yet be caught at last! He would give all up, and go to his inn, and back to the country at daybreak. All's over with me! Oh, ye have much to answer for!"

"How prettily it cries!" quoth the handsome gentleman.

"Faith, sir," said the captain, good-humouredly, "let's see an 'twill laugh as prettily. How if we led this dainty weeper to her friend's inn, and roused him out? Perchance then we shall have smiles for these showers. Where does he lie, little mistress?"

"Alas, I know not. 'Twould be near the river, I think."

"Oho, that he might take boat quicker," said the gentleman. "And now will he fly without thee at daybreak, say'st thou? Never sorrow, sweetheart; I'll boat thee to Brentford myself to-morrow."

"There be scores of inns near the river," said the captain to the girl. "But we might make trial at some of them, an we knew by what name to call for your friend."

"Nay, that I'll never tell! I know not if he would give his true name at the inn. Alas, what shall I do?"

"Why, come to the tavern and make merry," said Velvet Suit, "as we have been inviting you this half-hour."

"I'll freeze in the streets sooner!"

"Is there need of that, then?" asked the captain. "Hast no place in London to go to? Came you not from some place to meet your friend?"

"From my father's house, of course."

"Then why not go back to it? What's to fear? 'Twas late when you came forth, was it not? I'll wager thy people were abed. Did they know you meant to play the runaway?"

"'Tis not like they know it yet," she replied, a little relieved from complete dismay, but still downhearted.

"And sure the way you came by must be open still," went on the captain.

"I locked the door behind me; but I left the key where I can find it, if you gentlemen will let me go. You will, sirs; I'll thank ye so much! I am undone every way, else."

"Of course we'll let you go," said the captain, decisively, with an oblique eye upon the velvet gallant. "We'll be thy body-guard, forsooth; we'll attend thee to thy door."

"Nay, let me go alone, I beg!"

"Why, would you risk more dangers?"

"I have not far to go. Pray, pray, follow me not! Pray, let me be unknown to ye, good sirs! Think, if my mishap this night were noised about, and my name known – think, if my father were to hear it!"

"Ay, true," said the captain. "Go alone, but on condition, if you see harm ahead, you turn back to us; you must cry for help, too. And so we give our words of honour not to –"

"Softly, softly, Master Meddler," broke in the handsome gentleman. "Be not so free with your betters' words of honour. I know not what hath allowed you to live so long after thrusting in upon this company –"

But again he was checked by the man at his elbow. This was a broad-breasted man of medium height, who seemed, as well as his plain dark cloak would show, to be of solid, heavy build; as for his face, its lower part was so covered by a thick, spade-shaped beard, and the upper part so concealed by the brim of a great Spanish hat, purposely pulled down over the eyes, that one could not have obtained a sufficient glimpse for future recognition. He spoke to his gay companion in a brief whisper, but his words had instant weight.

"Tush! 'tis not worth bloodshed," said the gay gentleman, having heard him. "Let the wench go; what is one fawn among so many? But on condition. I crave more of your acquaintance, Sir

Swordman; we may come to a fight yet, with better reason; so my friends and I will let the girl go hang, an you and your party come drink with us."

"We are your men there," replied the captain, warming up within, at such a happy issue; "but the taverns are barricaded at this hour."

"I know where the proper knock will open doors to us. 'Tis agreed, then. Wench, go your ways; good night!"

He moved aside to let her pass, and the girl, stepping from the doorway, with a single look of thanks to the captain, ran swiftly toward Cheapside. She was out of the range of the torchlight in a moment. As soon as her figure was invisible in the night, the gentleman in velvet left his companion, and, taking the captain fraternally by the arm, started toward Knightrider Street.

Ravenshaw, yielding in spite of an inclination to stay and listen for any distant sign of alarm from the girl, strode mechanically along; he heard his own followers and the gentleman's friends coming close behind, and starting up conversations. Lighted by the two link-boys and the other torch-bearer, the party at length stopped before a tavern door in Thames Street.

The handsome gallant knocked a certain number of times, and, while he waited for answer, the party huddled into a close group before the door. Every face was now in the torchlight, and the captain cast a glance over the little company. Suddenly a strange look came into his face.

"What's this?" he said to the gentleman, quickly. "Where's your other friend – he with the hat pulled over his eyes?"

For answer, the gentleman gave a curious smile, showing white teeth; and his eyes sparkled mockingly.

"Death and hell! Gods and devils!" cried the captain, roaring in earnest, and whipping out his sword. "He slunk back and followed the maid, did he? Ye'd trick me, would ye? Now, by the belly of St. George – " At this point, though the velvet gallant had swiftly drawn in turn, the group having opened a clear space at the captain's first exclamation, Ravenshaw broke off to another thought. "Nay, we'll go after that hound first; the scent's warm yet; and then we'll look to you. Come, lads of mine!"

He dashed through the group, and headed for Cheapside; his four pupils and the two link-boys tarried not from following him. The other gentlemen looked to their leader for direction; whereupon he, as the tavern door opened, put up his sword and, laughing quietly, led them into the house.

"They'll be rare dogs an they catch Jerningham," quoth he. "The fools! their noise would warn him even if they should chance upon his track."

The captain and his companions found Bread Street and Cheapside black, silent of human sounds, and, wherever they carried their lights, empty of human forms. They traversed two or three of the side streets, and listened at the corners of others, but without result. Where, in this night-wrapped London, did the two objects of their search now draw breath?

If the girl had indeed not had far to go, she was probably safe; and if she were safe the man's doings mattered little. So, and as the gallants were beginning to show signs of weariness, the inspiriting effect of their last wine having died out, the captain piloted them back to the tavern at whose door he had left his quarrel scarce begun.

He found the tavern door barred; and no amount of knocking and shouting sufficed to open it. The tired gallants were yawning, leaning against one another (they dared not lean against the tavern, lest something might be dropped upon them from an upper window), and talking of bed. Therefore the captain drew off to a safe distance from the tavern, and thus addressed his following:

"Ye have had but a poor lesson in swaggering to-night, masters. To be true roaring boys, we should have forced a brawl on those gallants – rather for the brawl's sake than for the girl's. To help the helpless hath nought to do with true swaggering, save where it may be a pretext. But this lambkin looked so tender, I forgot myself, and behaved discreetly, seeing her cause was best served that way. The essence of roaring is not in concern for the cause, but in putting down the enemy. If you be

in the wrong, so much the greater your credit as a bully. And now, if we wait for those cozeners to come forth – "

"Oh, let 'em come forth and be damned," said Master Clarington, sleepily. "I'm for bed. Light me to my lodging, boy. Who'll keep me company to Coleman Street?"

As the three other young gentlemen had, at the time, their city lodgings in that direction, they were quite ready to avail themselves of Master Clarington's initiative in yielding to the claims of fatigue. The captain was not such a fool as to risk their favour by opposing their decision, seeing how their zest for adventure had oozed out of them. He therefore accompanied them northward through Bow Lane with outward cheerfulness. On the way, he considered within himself whether or not to fish for an invitation to a night's lodging, or for the loan of money to pay for a bed himself. He bethought him that man was fickle, particularly in the case of would-be daredevils who soon grew sleepy on their wine; if he would retain the patronage of these four, he must not go too far upon it at first. He had too much experience to sacrifice to-morrow's pound for to-night's shilling. So, when he came to Cheapside, where his companions should turn eastward, he stopped, and said:

"I must wish ye good night here, gentlemen. You will be at the Windmill again to-morrow, mayhap?"

"What?" said Master Maylands, carelessly. "Go you no farther our way? Where lodge you, then?"

"Oh, I lodge out Newgate way," replied the captain, vaguely. "A good night to ye all! Ye'll find me at the Windmill after dinner. Merry dreams, lads! Faith, I shall be glad to get under cover; the wind is higher, methinks."

A chorus of good nights answered him drowsily, and he was left in darkness, the link-boys going with the four gentlemen, who hung upon one another's arms as they plodded unsteadily along.

The captain trudged westward in Cheapside, in mechanical obedience to the suggestion pertaining to his lie.

"I should better have got myself taken up of the watch," he mused, as he gathered his new cloak about him, and made himself small against the wind. "Then I should have lain warm in the Counter. That scholar is a lucky fellow. But that would have lost me the opinion of my four sparks. Well, it shall go hard but they continue bountiful. Cloak, doublet, and bonnet already – a good night's booty. 'Tis well I found 'em in the right degree of drink. As for that wench – I was an ass, I should have let those roysterers have their way of her; 'twould have served my grudge against the sex. But such a child – ! Hey! What fellow comes here with the lantern and the wide breeches? An it be a constable, I'll vilify him, and be lodged in the Counter yet. How now, rascal! – what, Moll, is it thou, up to thy vixen tricks again?"

The newcomer, who now faced Ravenshaw and held up a lantern to see him the better, wore a man's doublet and hose, and a sword; but a careful scrutiny of the bold features would have revealed to any one that they were those of a sturdy young woman, of the lower class. The daughter of Frith, the shoemaker of Aldersgate, had yet to immortalise herself as Moll Cutpurse, but she had some time since run away from domestic service and taken to wearing men's clothes.

"Good even, Bully Ravenshaw," quoth she, in a hoarse, vigorous voice. "Why do you walk the night, old roaring boy?"

"For want of a lodging, young roaring girl."

"Is it so? Look ye, then; I'm abroad for the night, on matters of mine own. Here's my key; 'tis to the back yard gate of the empty house in Foster Lane, where the spirit walks. Dost fear ghosts?"

"Fear ghosts? Girl, I make 'em!"

"Then you'll find in that yard a penthouse, wherein is a feather-bed upon boards. 'Tis a good bed – I stole it from a brewer's widow."

And so the captain lodged that night in a coal-house, thankfully.

CHAPTER III. MASTER JERNINGHAM'S MADNESS

*"I must and will obtain her; I am ashes else."
– The Humorous Lieutenant.*

Now it happened that while Captain Ravenshaw and his companions were speeding up Bread Street toward Cheapside, the Spanish-hatted gentleman of whom they were in quest was plodding down Friday Street toward the tavern at whose door they had left his friends. When he arrived there, he gave a knock similar to that which had served to open the house to the handsome gallant of the double-pointed beard; and presently, after being inspected through a small grating in the door, he was admitted.

"Is Sir Clement Ermsby above?" he asked the sleepy menial who had let him in.

"Yes, your worship. An't please you, he and his friends came in but a little while ago. They're in the Neptune room. A cold night, your worship."

"How many of his friends?"

"Three, sir. There were e'en five or six more with him outside, at first; but they went their ways. Methinks there was some quarrel, but I know not."

The gentleman pushed his hat back from his brow, and looked a trifle relieved. He stood for a moment with his eye on the servant, as if to see that the man barred the door properly, and then he went up-stairs to a room at the rear of the tavern. The tapestry of this chamber represented the sea, with the ocean god and a multitude of other marine figures. Around the fire sat the newcomer's friends, smoking pipes; they greeted him with laughter.

"Ho, ho!" cried the handsome gallant. "She 'scaped you, after all! The pinnacle was too fleet!"

"I gained all I wished," said the broad-breasted gentleman, coolly, speaking in curt syllables. "I had no mind to close in combat. I did not even let her know I was giving chase. But I saw what port she made into; I know where to seek her when the time is propitious."

With a faint smile of triumph over his comrades, the gentleman, who had thrown off his plain cloak while speaking, stepped close to the fire, removed his gloves, and began to warm his fingers. He was of middle stature, thick-bodied, heavily bearded, of a brown complexion; his expression of face was melancholy, moody, dreamy; as he gazed into the fire he seemed lost in his own thoughts. His momentary smile had brought a singularly sweet and noble light into his face; but that light had vanished with the smile.

"I must thank you, Ermsby, and all of ye," he said, after a short silence. "You drew the fellow away like the best of cozeners. How got you rid of him so soon?"

"Faith, by his taking note of your absence, and guessing what was afoot," replied the handsome gallant. "He's e'en looking for you now. A murrain on him! his ribs should have felt steel, but for thy fear of a brawl, Jerningham."

"Thou'rt a fool, Ermsby," answered Jerningham, continuing to gaze with saturnine countenance into the fire; "and my daring to call thee so tells how much I fear a fight for its own sake. How often must I put it to you in plain terms? If I be found concerned in roystering or rioting, I forfeit the countenance of my pious kinsman, the bishop. With that I forfeit the further use of his money in our enterprise. Without his money, how are we to complete the fitting of our ship? No ship, no voyage. No voyage, no possessing the fertile islands; and so no fortune, and there's an end. Pish, man, shall we lose all for a sight of some unknown rascal's filthy blood? Not I. You shall see me play the very Puritan till the day my ship lifts anchor for the Western seas."

"You have played the Puritan to-night, sooth," said Ermsby. "To steal after a wench under cover of night, and find out her house for your hidden purposes in future, – there's the soul of Puritanism. Where does she live?"

"I'll still be puritanical, and keep that knowledge to myself," said Jerningham, with the least touch of a smile.

"Nay, man, the secret is ours, too!" protested Ermsby. "We helped you to it. Come, you had best tell; that will put us on our honour to leave her all to you. If you don't, by my conscience, I'll hunt high and low till I find out for myself, and then I won't acknowledge any right of yours to her. Tell us, and make us your abettors; or tell us not, and make us your rivals."

Jerningham was silent for a moment, while he motioned the attending servant to pour him out some wine; then, evidently knowing his men, he replied:

"She led me but a short chase; which was well, as I had to go upon my toes – the sound of her steps was all I had to guide me. When the sound stopped, in Friday Street, I heard the creaking of a gate; it meant she had gone into a back yard. I went on softly, feeling the walls with my hands, till I came to the gate; and there I heard a key turning in a door. I had naught to do but find out what house the gate belonged to. 'Twas the house at the corner of Cheapside."

"And Friday Street? Which side of Friday Street?"

"The east side. 'Tis a goldsmith's shop. Does any one know what goldsmith dwells there?"

No one remembered. These were all gentlemen who, when they were not at sea, divided most of their time between the country and the court; at present they lodged toward the Charing Cross end of the Strand, in a row of houses opposite the riverside palaces of the great. But Jerningham himself lived with his kinsman, the bishop, in Winchester House, across the Thames.

"Time enough to learn that, and win a score of goldsmith's daughters, and tire of 'em too, ere the ship is fitted," said Ermsby, losing interest in the subject; whereupon the conversation shifted to the matter of the ship, then being repaired at Deptford.

From this they fell to dicing, – all but Jerningham, who sat looking steadily before him, as if he saw visions through the clouds of tobacco smoke he sent forth. Presently was heard the noise of pounding at the street door below.

"'Tis that rascal come back, ten to one; he has given over hunting you," said Ermsby to Jerningham.

"Then be sure you open not, Timothy," said Jerningham, addressing the tavern drawer who was staying up to wait upon those privileged to use the house after closing hours.

"No fear," replied Timothy. "They may hammer till they be dead, an they give not the right knock. I'll e'en go look down from the front window, and see who 'tis."

Ermsby went with him; and presently returned with him, saying:

"'Tis our man; and Timothy here knows him. It seems he is one Ravenshaw, a roaring captain. I've heard of the fellow; he talks loud in taverns, and will fight any man for sixpence; a kind of ranger of Turnbull Street – "

"Nay," corrected Timothy; "he is no counterfeit, as most of those rangers be. He roars, and brags, and looks fierce, as they do; but he was with Sir John Norris in Portugal and France, and he can use the rapier, or rapier and dagger, with any man that ever came out of Saviolo's school. I have seen him with the foils, in this very room, when he made all the company wonder. And 'tis well known what duels he has fought. One time, in Hogsdon fields – "

"Oh, that is the man, is it?" said Jerningham, cutting off the drawer's threatened torrent of reminiscence. "Then so much the better he has grown tired of beating at the door. He has gone away, I trust. As ye love me, gentlemen, no scandals till the ship is armed, provisioned, manned, and ready every way for the tide that shall bear us down the Thames."

"And look that you bring no scandal in your siege of this goldsmith's daughter," said Ermsby, jocularly.

"Trust me for that," replied Jerningham.

It was several weeks after this night, and the chilling frown of winter had given place to the smile of May, when, upon a sunny morning, Sir Clement Ermsby, followed by a young page, stepped from a Thames wherry at Winchester stairs to confer with Master Jerningham upon the last preparations for their voyage. They were to sail in three days.

Jerningham was pacing the terrace, frowning upon the ground at his feet, his look more moody than ever, and with something distraught in it; now and then he drew in his breath audibly between his lips, or allowed some restless movement of the hands to belie his customary self-control.

"What a devil is it afflicts you, man?" was Ermsby's greeting, while his page stood at a respectful distance, and began playing with two greyhounds that came bounding up. "This manner is something new. I've seen it for a week in you. Beshrew me if I don't think an evil spirit has crept into you. What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter," said Jerningham, in a growling tone. "'Tis my humour."

"'Tis a humour there's no excuse for, then, on a day like this, and with such a prospect before one's eyes." As Sir Clement spoke, he looked over the balustrade to the Thames and the countless-gabled front of the spire-studded city.

The Thames and London were fair to see then. The river was wider than it is now, and was comparatively clean. Swans floated upon its surface, and it was lively with passenger craft, – sailboats, rowboats, tilt-boats, and boats with wooden cabins, gaily decorated barges belonging to royalty and nobility. The Thames, with its numerous landing-stairs, was the principal highway of London. When the queen went from Whitehall to Greenwich, it was, of course, by this water thoroughfare. It was the more convenient way of transit between the city and Westminster, where the courts were held. It had but one bridge at London then, – the old London Bridge of the children's song, "London Bridge is falling down;" the bridge that was a veritable street of houses, and which stood some distance east of where the present London Bridge stands. To many people the better way of crossing to Southwark, when they went to the playhouses or the bear-gardens, was by boat. Water-men were at every landing-place, soliciting custom. When at work, they often sang as they plied the oars. The rich, when they would amuse themselves upon the river in their handsome tilt-boats, took musicians with them. On a fine May day, in the reign of Elizabeth, when the little green waves sparkled in the sunshine, the Thames alone was a sight worth looking at from the terrace of Winchester House, which, as everybody knows, was on the Southwark side, west of the beautiful Church of St. Mary Overie (now St. Saviour's), and which thus commanded a fine view of river and city-front.

Beginning at the far west, where the river came into sight after passing Westminster and Whitehall, its northern bank presented first the long row of great houses that came as far as to the Temple, – houses that were really town castles, with spacious gardens, whose river walls were broken by gates, whence were steps descending to the water. Nearer, grew the stately trees of the Temple garden; nearer yet, rose from the river's edge the frowning walls of the Bridewell, once a palace, and of Baynard's Castle. And here the eye was drawn up and back from the water-front, which henceforth abounded with wharves, by the huge bulk of St. Paul's, which stood amidst a multitude of ordinary buildings like a giant among pigmies, – the old St. Paul's, Gothic, with its square tower in the centre, its crosses crowning the ends and corners, its delicate pinnacles rising from its flying buttresses, its beautiful doorways and rose windows. Coming still eastward, the eye swept a great mass of gabled houses ascending in irregular tiers from the river, the sky-line broken by church towers and steeples innumerable. Directly opposite Winchester House, the river stairs that fell from the tall, narrow buildings were mainly for commercial uses. A little further east, the view was shut in by the close-packed houses on the bridge, so that one could not see the Tower, or the larger shipping off the wharves in the lower river.

But this morning the sight was nothing to Master Jerningham, whose only answer to his friend was to look the more harassed and woebegone. Ermsby suddenly took alarm.

"How now? Has anything ill befallen at Deptford?" he asked.

"No. All goes forward fast – too fast." And Jerningham sighed.

"How too fast? How can that be? Good God, man, have you lost heart for the voyage?"

"Never that. You know me better. But we shall soon be sailing, and the hours go, and yet I am no further with – oh, a plague on secrecy, 'tis that wench. There is no way under heaven I can even get speech of her."

"What wench?" inquired Ermsby, in whose thoughts there had been more than one wench since the reader first made his acquaintance.

"What wench! Gods above, is there more than one? – worth a man's lying awake at night to sigh for, I mean."

"And is there one such, then? Faith, an there be, I have not seen her of late."

"Yes, you have. Scarce three months ago."

"That's three ages, where women are concerned. Who is this incomparable she?"

"That goldsmith's daughter – you remember the night we chased her from Cheapside down Bread Street, and came near a quarrel with Ravenshaw the bully, and I followed to see where she lived?"

"Faith, I remember. A pretty little thing. And she has held you off all this time? Man, man, you must have blundered terribly! What plan of campaign have you employed against her?"

"I have not been able to pass words with her, I tell you. She rarely goes forth from home at all, and when she does 'tis with both parents, and a woman, and a stout 'prentice or two. I have stood in wait night after night, thinking she might try to run away again; but she has not."

"Why, you know not your first letter in the study of how to woo citizens' womankind. Go to her father's shop while she is there, and contrive to have her wait upon you. Flattery, vows, and promises sound all the softer for being whispered over a counter."

"I have watched, and when I have been busy at the ship, my man Gregory has watched. But she never comes into the shop. She has a devil of shrewdness for a father; a rock-faced man, of few words, with eyes on everything. He already suspects me; for now whenever I go near his shop he comes from his business and stares at me as if he offered defiance."

"A plague on these citizens. They dare outface gentlemen nowadays. They are so rich, and the law is on their side, curse 'em! A goldsmith thinks himself as good as a lord."

"This one has taught his very 'prentices to look big at me as I pass. And Gregory – he is a sly hound, as you know, and when I put him on his mettle for the conveyance of a letter to the girl's waiting-woman, he was ready to sell himself to the devil for the wit to accomplish it. But he could not; and they have smelt a purpose in his doings, too. The last time he went near the shop, and stood trying to get the eye of some serving-maid at a window, two of the goldsmith's 'prentices came out and, pretending not to see him, ran hard against him and laid him sprawling in the street."

"And he let them go with whole skins? Had he no dagger?"

"Of what use? They are very stout fellows, all in that shop. And they would have had only to cry 'Clubs,' and every 'prentice in Cheapside would have come to cudgel Gregory to death. They have too many privileges in the city, pox on 'em!"

"You should have begun by making friends with the goldsmith openly, and so got access to his house. Then you could have cozened him when the time came."

"But 'tis too late for that now. Besides, these citizens distrust a man the first moment, when they have wives and daughters. Oh, we have tried every way, both myself and Gregory. Gregory found a pot-boy, at the White Horse tavern, that knew one of the maids in the house, and we tried to pass a letter by means of those two. But the letter got into the father's hands, and the maid was cast off, and I'm glad I signed a false name. I know not if Mistress Millicent ever saw the letter."

"Is Millicent her name?"

"Ay. She is the only child. Her father is Thomas Etheridge, the goldsmith, at the sign of the Golden Acorn, in Cheapside at the corner of Friday Street. And nothing more do I know of her, but that I am going mad for her. And now that I have opened all to you, in God's name tell me what I shall do. Though we sail in three days, I must have her in my arms for one sweet hour, at least, ere I go. Laugh if you will! Call it madness. 'Tis the worse, then, and the more needs quenching. What shall I do?"

"Use a better messenger; one that can get the ear of the maid and yet 'scape the eye of the father; one that can win her to a meeting with you. Such things are managed daily. Howsoever hedged by husbands, or fenced by fathers, the fair ones of the city are still to be come at. Employ a go-between."

"Have I not tried Gregory? Where he has failed, how shall any other servant fare? Not one of those at my command has a tithe of his wit. Nor has any of our sea-rogues."

"Why, the look of being a gentleman's serving-man will damn any knave in the eye of a wary citizen, nowadays. And Gregory hath the face of a rascal besides. Employ none of that degree. As for our sea-rogues, we chose 'em witless, for our own advantage."

"Troth, you might serve me in this matter, Ermsby. You have the wit; and you should find good pastime in it."

"Faith, not I. I know the taste of 'prentice's cudgel. I'll tell you a tale; 'twill warn you that, when love's path leads into the city, you'd best see it made sure and smooth ere you tread it yourself. One day as I was going to the play in Blackfriars, my glance fell upon as handsome a piece of female citizenship as you'll meet any day 'twixt Fleet Street and the Tower. She saw me looking, and looked in turn; and I resolved to let the play go hang, and follow her. She had with her an old woman and a 'prentice boy, and her look seemed to advise me not to accost her in their presence. So I walked behind her, smiling my sweetest each time she turned her head around. She led me into a grocer's shop in Bucklersbury. I could see by her manner there that she was at home; there was no husband in sight, the shop being kept by two 'prentices. Here she forthwith sent the woman up-stairs, and turned as if she would attend upon me herself. Now, thought I, my happiness is soon to be assured; and I was rejoicing within, for each time I had seen her face she had looked more lovely. Sooth, the ripeness of those lips – !"

"Well, well, what happened?"

"I went but to open the matter with a courteous kiss on the cheek; but the more luscious fruit hung too near, so I stopped me at the lips instead, and stopped overlong there. She made pretence – I swear 'twas pretence – to push me away, and to be much angry and abused. But the zany 'prentices knew not this virtuous resistance was make-believe, and they ran at me as if I were some thief caught in the act. I met the first with a clout in the face, but they were stout knaves and made nothing of laying hands upon me. I shook them off, and then, being at the back of the shop, drew my sword to ensure my passage to the street. But that instant they raised the cry, 'Clubs!' and ran and got their own cudgels, and came menacing me again. While I was making play with my rapier, thinking to fright them off, all the 'prentices in Bucklersbury began to pour into the shop, shouting clubs and brandishing 'em at the same time. I saw there was naught to do but cut my way through by letting out the blood of any grocer's knave or 'pothecary's boy that should stand before me. But ere I had made two thrusts in earnest, my rapier was knocked from my hand by a club. A cloud of other clubs rained on my head, shoulders, and body. And so I cowered helpless, seeing nothing before me but the chance of being pounded to a jelly by the crowd."

"And what miracle occurred?"

"The wit of woman intervened. She that I had followed laid hold of some box or bag, and thrust her fingers in, and began flinging the contents by handfuls into the air. It was ground pepper. In a moment every man Jack in the shop was sneezing as if there were a prize for it. Such a shaking, and bending forward of bodies, and holding of noses, was never seen elsewhere. Every fellow was taken with a sneezing fit that lasted minutes, for the woman still threw the pepper about, regardless of the

work it had done. Limp and half-blind as every rascal was, and busied with each new spasm coming on, they paid no more heed to me; and so, sneezing like the rest, I pushed through unregarded to the street. I fled down Walbrook, and came not to an end of sneezing till I had taken boat at Dowgate wharf. I went home, then, and put my bruises to bed; and I know not how many days it was till I had done aching. Be thankful thou hast not fared in the goldsmith's shop e'en worse than I fared in the grocer's; for there is no pepper kept in goldsmith's shops."

"I know not then what kind of emissary to send. As you say, a serving-man is too easily seen through. A gentleman will not risk the cudgel. I know a lawyer, a beggarly knave eager for any sort of questionable transaction."

"Nay, he'll make a botch of it, as lawyers do of everything they set their hands to."

"How if I tried a woman? 'Tis often done, I believe. As thieves are set to catch thieves, so set a woman – "

"Ay, women have zest for the business; especially the tainted ones – they joy to infect their sisters whose purity they secretly envy. They that have spots take comfort in company, as misery doth. Yet they will serve you ill; for they ever bring entanglement on those they weave their plots for, as well as on those they weave against. City husbands and fathers have grown wiser, too; they've learned to look for love-plots in their women's fellowship with other women. Unless you'd risk some chance of failure with this maid – "

"By God, that I will not! I must have a sure messenger."

"I would mine own page yonder had the wit, that I might lend him. But when I choose a servant, 'tis rather for lack of wit in him; else he might take it into his head to outwit his master. My boy there serves well enough to carry sonnets to court ladies; but he would never do for your business. You say this goldsmith is watchful. Therefore, you want a man the most unlike the common go-betweens in such affairs; a man that looks the last in the world to be chosen as love's ambassador."

"Some venerable Puritan, perchance," said Jerningham, with the slight irony of one not quite convinced.

"Ay, if one could be found needy enough to want your money; but that's hopeless. We must seek a poor devil that hath a good wit and can act a part. If we had one such in our ship's company – What, Gregory! Have you been listening, knave?"

Sir Clement's break was caused by his perceiving, upon suddenly turning around, that Jerningham's man stood near, with a suspicious cock of the head. This Gregory was just the fellow to steal up without noise; he had long cultivated the silent footfall. He was a lean man of about thirty-five years; a little bent, and with a long neck, so that his head always seemed hastening before his body, which could never catch up. He had a small, sharp face, of an ashen complexion, and with fishy, greenish eyes; his expression was that of cunning cloaked in calm impudence.

"No offence, sirs," said he, glibly, stepping forward with bowed head. "I couldn't help hearing a little. If I may say so, sirs, my master needn't yet look abroad for one to do his business. I think I have a shift or two still, if I may be so bold."

"You may not be so bold, Gregory," said Jerningham. "Disguises are well enough in Spanish tales and stage plays; but you'd be caught, and all brought home to me and the bishop's ears. He could stay our ship at the last hour, an he had a mind to. Go to; and do and speak when you are bid, not else."

The serving-man stepped back, looking humiliated.

"He's already green with jealousy of the man you shall employ," said Ermsby, with unkind amusement at the knave's discomfiture.

"Ay, he's touchy that way. A faithful dog – and bound to be so, for I know a thing or two that would hang him. But to reach this maid, I must have another Mercury. Where shall I find this witty poor rascal that is to cozen old Argus, her father, and get me access to her?"

"Why, but for going to Deptford, we might seek him forthwith. The hour before dinner is the right time. But – "

"Then let us seek. There's no need we go to Deptford to-day. We cannot haste matters at the ship; all's in good hands there. In God's name, come find me this fellow."

"Bid Gregory hail a boat, then," said Ermsby; and, after the servant had been sent ahead to the stairs on that errand, and Ermsby had motioned his own page to go thither, he continued: "We shall go to Paul's first, where we got so many of our shipmates; there we shall have choice of half the penniless companions, starved wits, masterless men, cast soldiers, skulking debtors, and serviceable rascals in London. Of a surety, you can buy any service there; there's truth in what the plays say."

The two gentlemen, attended by Gregory and the page, were soon embarked in a wherry whose prow the watermen headed against the current, the destination being some distance up-stream on the opposite bank.

"What of Meg Falkner?" Ermsby said, suddenly, in a tone too low for the servants to hear. "Are you rid of her yet?"

Jerningham's brow turned darker by a shade.

"That were as great a puzzle as to reach this goldsmith's wench," he replied. "I would have married her to Gregory; it seemed no mean fate for a yeoman's daughter that had buried a brat; but she'd have none of that. I durs'n't turn her out lest she make a noise that might come to the bishop. I'm lucky she hath kept quiet, as it is."

"She lives still at your country-house?"

"Ay; where else to lodge her? Rotten as it is, it does for that; and that is the only use it hath done me this many a year. There's a cow or two for her maintaining, and some hens. And for company, there's old Jeremy that's half-blind. He can quiet her fears o' nights, when the timbers creak and she thinks it is a ghost walking."

"And what of the house when you are away on the voyage?"

"Troth, all may out then, I care not! Let 'em sell the estate for the debts on it; they'll find themselves losers, I trow. And Mistress Meg will be left in the lurch, poor white-face! As for me, when the ship sails, I shall be quit of that plague."

"Ay, but you'll be quit of this goldsmith's wench, too. Will your 'one sweet hour' or so suffice, think you?"

The faintest smile came into Jerningham's face.

"I will not prophesy," said he, softly. "But, as you well know, when we come to that island, if all goes well, I shall be in some sort a king there."

"Certainly; but what of that, touching this wench?"

"Why, will not the island have room for a queen as well?"

"Oho!" quoth Ermsby, after a short silence. "So the wind blows that way in thy dreams!"

Presently they landed at Paul's Wharf, climbed to Thames Street, which was noisy with carts and drays, and went on up a narrow thoroughfare toward the great church.

CHAPTER IV. THE ART OF ROARING

*"Damn me, I will be a roarer, or't shall cost me a fall."
– Amends for Ladies.*

On the February morning when he rose from bed in the coal-house attached to the haunted dwelling in Foster Lane, Captain Ravenshaw waited about the yard for Moll Frith to return from her excursion of the night. When she appeared, he gave her back the key to the gate, and borrowed two angels from her. Armed with these, he bade her repent of her sins, and hastened to Cheapside, turning eastward with the purpose of finding out how and where his new friend, the scholar, fared in the hands of the law.

Cheapside, which was in a double sense the Broadway of Elizabethan London, was already thronged with people going about their business, the shops and booths of the merchants being open, and the shopmen and 'prentices crying out their wares with the customary "What d'ye lack?" At the great conduit, the captain pushed his way through the crowd of jesting and quarrelling water-carriers who were filling their vessels, and washed his hands and face. Looking about for a means of drying himself, while the water dripped from his features, he espied a woman with a pitcher, to whom the uncouth water-carriers would not give place. The captain knocked several of them aside, gallantly took the woman by the hand, led her to the fountain, and enabled her to fill her pitcher. While she was doing this, he, with courteous gestures, took her kerchief from her head and dried himself therewith; after which he returned it with a bow so polite that, between her amazement and her sense of flattery, she could not find it in her to say a word against the proceeding.

Going on his way refreshed, the captain suddenly met Master Holyday, who looked as unconcerned as if he had never been near a prison in his life.

"What, lad, did not the watch take thee, then?"

"Yes, faith, and kept me all night in a cage, where I think I have turned foul inside with the smell of stale tobacco smoke. I am come but now from the justice's hall."

"Man, you've had a quick journey of it. By this light, you must have found money in those new clothes, and tickled the palm of a constable."

"No; the justice might have sent me back to the stinking hole, for all the money I had to give anybody. When he asked me my name, I bethought me to reply, 'Sir Ralph Holyday;' which was no more than my right at Cambridge, when I became a graduate there. But, seeing me in these clothes instead of in black, the justice thought the 'Sir' was of knighthood, not of scholarship. And so he said he could make nothing out of the watchmen's stories, which agreed not. I then addressed him respectfully in Latin; and, lest it might be seen that he did not understand me, he got rid of me forthwith."

"We'll drink his health – but not yet. While I have money to show, we'll bespeak lodgings, and so make sure of sleeping indoors, for a week o' nights, come what may. These clothes will get us curtseys and smiles from any hostess – except them that have already lodged me."

"Ay, we are fine enough above the waist, but our poor legs and feet are sorry company for our upper halves."

"Why, we must see to that when we meet our four asses again. Meanwhile our cloaks will cover us to the knees, and if we carry our heads high enough, nobody will dare look scornful at our feet. Remember, we are gallants while these clothes last; swaggering gallants, that give the wall to no man. And while we go seek lodgings, I'll tell thee how thou shalt earn thy share of these coxcombs' wastings. Hast ever travelled abroad?"

"No," said the scholar, falling into the captain's stride as the pair went westward.

"No matter. Thou hast read books of other countries, and heard travellers tell of foreign cities?"

"Yes; I've read and heard much; and remembered some of it."

"Then bear in mind, you are a great traveller. Your gentleman that hath not been abroad is counted a poor thing among gallants. Now these four silken gulls have never been out of England, and they look sheepish whene'er a travelled man talks of France or Italy in their company. They would give much to pass for travelled gallants; to talk of French fashions and Italian vices without exposing their inexperience. You shall instruct 'em, so they may fool others as you fool them. I'll broach the matter softly, and in such a way that they shall see the value of it. Thus, while you fill 'em up with tales of the foreign cities you have seen, we shall eat and drink at their cost. And so we shall hold 'em when they be tired of the swaggering lessons I mean to give 'em."

"Well, I will do my best. What I don't know, I will e'en supply by invention. My stomach will inspire me, I trust."

They took lodgings at the top of a house in St. Lawrence Lane, not far from its Cheapside end; and passed the time in walking about the streets till near noon, when they went to dinner at an ordinary where long tables were crowded with men of different degrees, who dined abundantly and cheaply. The two companions finally repaired to the Windmill tavern, where they had to wait an hour before their young gentlemen appeared.

The four were now sober, and showed hardly as much relish in meeting the captain as he might have wished. They cast somewhat rueful glances at the clothes they had given away in their vinous generosity, and which they had now replaced with other articles suitable to their quality. They manifested no eagerness for lessons in swaggering, and seemed at first to have forgotten any understanding they may have formed with the captain in regard thereto.

But Ravenshaw was prepared for this apathy. He took the risk of inviting the gentlemen to drink, and with the air of an accustomed host he bowed them into the room to which a tapster directed him. He trusted they would be of different mood when the time to pay the score should come.

A little drinking, and a few of the captain's tales, warmed them up to some enthusiasm for his society; and in an hour he had them urging him to proceed straightway to their further education in the art of roaring. After some reluctance and some unwillingness to believe that their proposal of the previous night had been serious, he was persuaded to consent. With the faintest grimace of triumph, for the eyes of Master Holyday alone, who smoked a pipe temperately by the fire, he rose and began by illustrating how your true bully should "take the wall" of any man about to pass him in the street.

The arras-hung partition of the room served as a street wall. The captain started at one end, Master Dauncey at the other. When the two met at the middle, the instructor enacted an elaborate scene of disputing the right to pass next the wall and so avoid the mud of the mid-street. He showed how to plant the feet, how to look fierce, how to finger the sword-hilt, what gestures to make; then what speeches to use, first of ironical courtesy, then of picturesque abuse, finally of daunting threat. Master Holyday, looking on from the fireplace, was amazed to see how much art could be displayed in what had ever seemed to him quite a simple matter. The captain went through every possible stage short of sword-thrusts; but there he stopped, saying that roaring ended where real fighting began.

"If your man has not given way by this time," said he, "and you think he may be your better with the weapons, the next thing is to come gracefully out of the quarrel, by some jest or other shift. This is what many swaggering boys do, out of fear. When I do it myself, 'tis because I would avoid bloodshed, or out of mercy to my antagonist. But 'tis, in any case, a most important thing in the art of swaggering; I shall give examples of it in my next lesson."

He then caused the gallants, in pairs, to go through such a scene as he had enacted. They made a foolish, perfunctory business of it at first, though he schooled them at every moment in attitude, gesture, or look, and supplied them with terms of revilement that made the scholar stare in admiration, and sanguinary threats before which a timid man might well tremble in his shoes.

It would not do to carry his pupils too far forward at a step; he must keep them dependent upon him as long as possible. Nor was it safe to tire them with repetitions. So he put an end to the lesson in good time; and then, to hold them for the rest of the day, he set forth the possibility of their learning to pass as men that had travelled abroad. Master Holyday, while modestly admitting the extent of his wanderings in foreign countries, showed some disinclination to the task of imparting the observations he had made.

"For, look ye," quoth he, "I once had a gossip whom I was wont to tell of things I had seen abroad. Like yourselves, he had never crossed the narrow seas; but by noting carefully my talk, he was able to make other people think he had travelled as far as I. There was one thing I had told him, which I had chanced to forget afterward. A dispute arose betwixt us one day, before company that knew not either of us well, touching certain customs in Venice. By my not mentioning the thing I had forgot, and by his parading it as a matter well known, which others in the company knew to be the case, I was made a laughing-stock, and he got reputation as a great traveller. And to this day he keeps that reputation, all at my expense."

This ingenious speech brought the desired insistence; and that very afternoon was begun, at Antwerp, an imaginary journey through the chief cities of Europe, in which were seen many things more astonishing than any foreign traveller had ever observed before.

It took several evenings to go through Flanders and France, and would have taken more, but that, after the gallants had satisfied their curiosity regarding Paris, they were in haste to arrive in Italy as soon as might be. Italy was then the great playground of English travellers; the fashions came from there, so did the inspiration to art and literature; the French got their cookery and their vices from Italy; the English imported some of the vices, but not the cookery.

While the scholar led his four charges from city to city by routes often unusual and sometimes impossible, Captain Ravenshaw conducted them stage by stage toward proficiency in swaggering. He showed them how differently to bully their betters, their equals, their inferiors; how to bully before company, how without witnesses, how in the presence of ladies; how to overbear in every situation, from a simple jostle in the street to a dispute about a woman; how to meet a contradiction in argument, how to give and receive every degree of the lie, how to intimidate a winner out of the stakes at a gaming-table; and finally how, when the opponent was not to be talked down, either to slip out of a fight or to carry one through.

The progress of the four would-be bullies in their fireside travels, and their swaggering education, was accompanied by further improvement in the dress of their instructors. At last the soldier and his friend were able to go clad in breeches, stockings, shoes, shirts, ruffs, and gloves, quite worthy of the cloaks, doublets, and hats they had previously received. The four young gentlemen were now eager to try their new accomplishments about the town. The captain postponed the test as long as he could; but finally their impatience was so peremptory that he had to consent.

Now the captain knew that if his four apes should make a failure of their first attempt at swaggering, his favour with them were swiftly ruined; conversely, a success would warrant his demanding a substantial reward in money. Thus far his only payment, and Master Holyday's likewise, had been in the shape of dinners, suppers, tobacco, and clothes. The two had been compelled, from time to time, to put off payment for their lodgings, and to temporise with their laundress; and now their hostess's face wore a more and more inquiring look each morning as they went out. Ravenshaw had, it was true, obtained a little coin in the card-playing and dicing, by means of which he had illustrated to his pupils the uses of roaring in those pastimes. But this amount, small enough, he decided to lay out in ensuring the desired success of his coxcombs in their first bullying exhibition.

He therefore made a sudden and secret excursion to the suburbs beyond Newgate. After searching the lower taverns and ale-houses about Holborn and Smithfield, he found, in a cookshop in Pye Corner, a man with whom he forthwith entered into negotiation. This man was a burly, middle-aged fellow, with a broken nose, a scarred cheek, a sullen attitude, and a husky voice. While he

talked, he frequently spat in the rushes that covered the floor; and now and again he would finish a remark with the words, added without the least sense, "And that's the hell of it." He wore a dirty leather jerkin over other clothes, and his attire was little better than Ravenshaw's had been before his change of fortune.

After some talk, Captain Ravenshaw handed over some money to this man, promised a further sum upon the issue of the business, received the bravo's assurance that all should go well, and hastened back alone to meet his companions at the sign of the Windmill.

It was evening when the party sallied forth, the four coxcombs as keen for riot as ever was a colt for kicking up heels in a field. They would have barred the street against the first comers, or sought a brawl in the first tavern, but that Ravenshaw bade them save their mettle for adversaries worthy of their schooling.

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