Tracy Louis

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I

"And is there care in Heaven?"

Spenser's Faerie Queene.

"Allah remembers us not. It is the divine decree. We can but die with His praises on our lips; perchance He may greet us at the gates of Paradise!"

Overwhelmed with misery, the man drooped his head. The stout staff he held fell to his feet. He lifted his hands to hide the anguish of eye and lip, and the grief that mastered him caused long pent-up tears to well forth.

His resigned words, uttered in the poetic tongue of Khorassan, might have been a polished verse of Sa'adi were they not the outpouring of a despairing heart. The woman raised her burning eyes from the infant clinging to her exhausted breast.

"Father of my loved ones," she said, "let you and the two boys travel on with the cow. If you reach succor, return for me and my daughter. If not, it is the will of God, and who can gainsay it?"

The man stooped to pick up his staff. But his great powers

of endurance, suddenly enfeebled by the ordeal thrust upon him, yielded utterly, and he sank helpless by the side of his wife.

"Nay, Mihr-ul-nisa, sun among women, I shall not leave thee," he cried passionately. "We are fated to die; then be it so. I swear by the Prophet naught save death shall part us, and that not for many hours."

So, to the mother, uselessly nursing her latest born, was left the woful task of pronouncing the doom of those she held dear. For a little while there was silence. The pitiless sun, rising over distant hills of purple and amber, gave promise that this day of late July would witness no relief of tortured earth by the long-deferred monsoon. All nature was still. The air had the hush of the grave. The greenery of trees and shrubs was blighted. The bare plain, the rocks, the boulder-strewed bed of the parched river, each alike wore the dust-white shroud of death. Far-off mountains shimmered in glorious tints which promised fertile glades and sparkling rivulets. But the promise was a lie, the lie of the mirage, of unfulfilled hope.

These two, with their offspring, had journeyed from the glistening slopes on the northwest, now smiling with the colors of the rainbow under the first kiss of the sun. They knew that the arid ravines and bleak passes behind were even less hospitable than the lowlands in front. Knowledge of what was past had murdered hope for the future. They had almost ceased to struggle. True children of the East, they were yielding to Kismet. Already a watchful vulture, skilled ghoul of desert obsequies, was

describing great circles in the molten sky.

The evils of the way were typical of their by-gone lives. Beginning in pleasant places, they were driven into the wilderness. The Persian and his wife, Usbeg Tartars of Teherán, nobly born and nurtured, were now poverty-stricken and persecuted because one of the warring divisions of Islam had risen to power in Ispahán. "It shall come to pass," said Mahomet, "that my people shall be divided into three-and-seventy sects, all of which, save only one, shall have their portion in the fire!" Clearly, these wanderers found solace in the beliefs held by some of the condemned seventy-two.

Striving to escape from a land of narrow-minded bigots to the realm of the Great Mogul, the King of Kings, the renowned Emperor of India – whom his contemporaries, fascinated by his gifts and dazzled by his magnificence, had styled Akbar "the Great" – the forlorn couple, young in years, endowed with remarkable physical charms and high intelligence, blessed with two fine boys and the shapely infant now hugged by the frantic mother, had been betrayed not alone by man but by nature herself.

At this season, the great plain between Herát and Kandahár should be all-sufficing to the needs of travelers. Watered by a noble river, the Helmund, and traversed by innumerable streams, it was reputed the Garden of Afghanistán. Pent in the bosom of earth, all manner of herbs and fruits and wholesome seeds were ready to burst forth with utmost prodigality when the rain-clouds

gathered on the hills and discharged their gracious showers over a soil athirst. But Allah, in His exceeding wisdom, had seen fit to withhold the fertilizing monsoon, and the few resources of the exiles had yielded to the strain. First their small flock of goats, then their camel, had fallen or been slain. There was left the cow, whose daily store of milk dwindled under the lack of food.

The patient animal, lean as the kine of the seven years of famine in Joseph's dream, was yet fit to walk and carry the two boys, whose sturdy limbs had shrunk and weakened until they could no longer be trusted to toddle alone even on the level ground. She stood now, regarding her companions in suffering with her big violet eyes and almost contentedly chewing some wizened herbage gathered by the man overnight. Strange to say, it was on the capabilities of the cow that rested the final issue of life and death for one if not all. The cow had carried and sustained the woman before and after the birth of the child. Last and most valued of their possessions, she had become the arbiter of their fate.

The Persian, Mirza Ali Beg was his name, was assured that if they could march a few more days they would reach the cultivated region dominated by the city of Kandahár. There, even in this period of want, the boundless charity of the East would save them from death by starvation. But the infant was exhausting her mother. She demanded the whole meager supply of the life-giving milk of the cow, and in Mirza Ali Beg's tortured soul the husband wrought with the father.

That four might have a chance of living one should die! Such was the dreadful edict he put forth tremblingly at last. And now, when the woman saw the strong man in a palsy at her feet, her love for him vanquished even the all-powerful instinct of maternity. She fiercely thrust the child into his arms and murmured: —

"I yield, my husband. Take her, in God's name, and do with her as seemeth best. Not for myself, but for thee and for our sons, do I consent."

Thinking himself stronger and sterner than he was, Mirza Ali Beg rose to his feet. But his heart was as lead and his hands shook as he fondled the warm and almost plump body of the infant. Here was a man indeed distraught. Between husband and wife, who shall say which had the more grievous burden?

With a frenzied prayer to the Almighty for help, he wrapped a linen cloth over the infant's face, placed the struggling little form among the roots of a tall tree, and left it there. Bidding the two boys, dark-eyed youngsters aged three and five, to cling tightly to the pillion on the cow's back, he took the halter and the staff in his right hand, passed his left arm around the emaciated frame of his wife, and, in this wise, the small cavalcade resumed its journey.

Ever and anon the plaint of the abandoned infant reached their ears. The two children, without special reason, began to cry. The mother, always turning her head, wept with increasing violence. Even the poor cow, wanting food and water, lowed her distress.

The man, striving to compress his tremulous lips, strode forward, staring into vacancy. He dared not look behind. He knew that the feeble cries of the baby girl would ring in his ears until they were closed to all mortal sounds. He took no note of the rough caravan track they followed, marked as it was by the ashes of camp fires and the whitened bones of pack animals. With all the force of a masterful nature he tried to stagger on, and on, until the tragedy was irrevocable.

But the woman, when they reached a point where the road curved round a huge rock, realized that the next onward step would shut out forever from her eyes the sight of that tiny bundle lying in the roots of the tree. So she choked back her sobs, swept away her tears, gave one last look at her infant, gasped a word of fond endearment, and fell fainting in the dust.

Amidst the many troubles and anxieties of that four months' pilgrimage she had never fainted before. Though she was a Persian lady of utmost refinement and great accomplishments, she came of a hardy race, and her final collapse imbued her husband with a stoicism hitherto lacking in his despair.

"This, then, is the end," said he. "Be it so. I can strive against destiny no further."

Tenderly he lifted his wife to a place where sand offered a softer couch than the rocks on which she lay.

"I must bring the infant," he muttered aloud. "The touch of its hands will revive her. Then I shall kill poor Deri (the cow), and we can feast on her in the hope that some may pass this way.

Walk, with three to carry, we cannot."

This was indeed the counsel of desperation. The cow, living, provided their sole link with the outer world. Dead, she maintained them a little while. Soon the scanty meat she would yield would become uneatable and they were lost beyond saving. Nevertheless, once the resolve was taken a load was lifted from the man's breast. Bidding the elder boy hold Deri's halter, he strode back towards the infant with eager haste.

As he drew near he thought he saw something black and glistening amidst the soiled linen which enwrapped the little one. After another stride he stood still. A fresh tribulation awaited him. Many times girdling the child's limbs and body was a hideous snake, a monster whose powerful coils could break the tiny bones as if they were straws.

The flat and ugly head was raised to look at him. The beady black eyes seemed to emit sparks of venemous fire, and the forked tongue was darting in and out of the fanged mouth as though the reptile was anticipating the feast in store.

Mirza Ali Beg was no coward, but this new frenzy almost overcame him. There was a chance, a slight one, that the serpent had not yet crushed the life out of its prey. Using words which were no prayer, the father uplifted the tough staff which he still carried. He rushed forward. The snake elevated its head to take stock of this unexpected enemy, but the stick dealt it a furious blow on the tail.

Instantly uncoiling itself, either to fight or escape, as seemed

most expedient, it received another blow which hurled it, with dislocated vertebræ, far into the dust.

The man, with a great cry of joy, saw that the child was stretching her limbs, now that the tight clutch of its terrible assailant was withdrawn. He caught her up into his arms and, weak as he was, ran back to his wife.

"Here is one who will restore the blood to thy cheeks, Mihr-ul-nisa," he cried. And truly the mother stirred again with the first satisfied chuckle of the infant as it sought her breast.

The husband, heedless what befell for the hour, obtained from the cow such slight store of milk as she possessed. He gave some to the two boys, the greater portion to the baby, and was refuting his wife's remonstrance that he had taken none himself as he pressed the remainder on her, when the noise of a commotion at a distance caused them to look in wonderment along the road they had recently traversed in such sorrow.

There, gathered around some object, were a number of men, some mounted on Arab horses or riding camels, others on foot; behind this nearer group they could distinguish a long *kafila* of loaded beasts with armed attendants.

"God be praised!" cried Mihr-ul-nisa, "we are saved!"

This was the caravan of a rich merchant, faring from Persia or Bokhara to the court of the Great Mogul. The undulating plain, no less than their own anguish of mind, had prevented the Persian and his wife from noting the glittering spear points of the warrior merchant's retainers as they rode forward in the morning sun.

Surely such a host would spare a little food and water for the starving family, and forage for Deri, the cow!

"But what are they looking at?" cried the woman, of whom hope had made a fresh being.

"They have found the snake."

"What snake?"

"It is matterless. As I returned for the child, when you fell in a swoon, I met a snake and killed it."

A startled look came into her eyes.

"*Khodah hai*!"[1] she murmured; "it would have attacked my baby!"

Two men, mounted on Turkoman horses, were now spurring towards them. Mirza Ali Beg advanced a few paces to meet them.

One, an elderly man of grave appearance and richly attired, reined in his horse at a little distance and cried to his companion: —

"By the tomb of Mahomet, Sher Khan, 'tis he of my dream!"

The other, a handsome and soldierly youth, came nearer and questioned Ali Beg, mostly concerning the disabled and dying snake, found and beaten into pulp by the foremost men of the caravan.

The Mirza told his tale with dignified eloquence; he ended with a pathetic request for help for his exhausted wife and family.

This was forthcoming quickly, and, while he himself was refreshed with good milk, and dates, and cakes of pounded

[1] "There is indeed a God!"

wheat, Malik Masúd, the elder of the two horsemen and leader of the train, told how he dreamt the previous night that during a wayside halt under a big tree he was attacked by a poisonous snake, which was vanquishing him until a stranger came to his aid.

The snake lying in the path of the *kafila* was the exact counterpart of that seen in his disturbing vision, but his amazement was complete when he recognized in Ali Beg the stranger who had saved him.

So, in due course, Mihr-ul-nisa, with her baby girl, was mounted on a camel, and her husband and two sons on another, and Deri, the cow, before joining the train, was regaled with a copious draught of water and an ample measure of grain.

Thus it came to pass that Mirza Ali Beg and his family were convoyed through Kandahár and Kábul in comfort and safety. They rode through the gaunt jaws of the Khaibar Pass, and emerged, after many days, into the great plain of the Punjáb, verdant with an abundant though deferred harvest.

And no one imagined, least of all the baby girl herself, that the infant crowing happily in the arms of Mihr-ul-nisa was destined to become a beautiful, gracious and world-renowned princess, whose name and love-story should endure through many a century.

In that same month of July, 1588, on the nineteenth day of the month, to be exact, the blazoned sails of the Spanish Armada were sighted off the Lizard. Sixty-five great war galleons,

eight fleet galleasses, fifty-six armed merchantmen and twenty pinnaces swept along the Channel in gallant show. Spread out in a gigantic crescent, the Spanish ships were likened by anxious watchers to a great bird of prey with outstretched wings. But Lord Howard of Effingham led out of Plymouth a band of adventurers who had hunted that bird many a time. Drake, Hawkins, Frobisher and the rest – they feared no Spaniard who sailed the seas.

Their little vessels, well handled, could sail two miles to the Spaniards' one, and fire twice as many shots gun for gun. "One by one," said they, "we plucked the Don's feathers." Ship after ship was sunk, captured, or driven on shore. A whole week the cannon roared from Plymouth Sound to Calais, and there the last great fight took place in which the Duke of Medina Sidonia yielded himself to agonized foreboding, and Drake rightly believed that the Spanish grandee "would ere long wish himself at St. Mary Port among his orange trees."

During one of the many fierce duels between the ponderous galleons and the hawk-like British ships, the *Resolution*, hastily manned at Deal by volunteers who rode from London, hung on to and finally captured the *San José*.

It was no easy victory, for the Spaniards could acquit themselves as men when seamanship and gunnery gave place to swords and pikes. Three times did the assailants swarm up the lofty poop of the *San José* before they made good their footing.

At last, the Spaniards gave way before the ardent onslaught

led by a gallant gentleman from Wensleydale in the North, Sir Robert Mowbray, to wit, who, had he lived, was marked out for certain preferment at court.

Unhappily, in the moment of victory, a young, pale-faced monk, an ascetic and visionary, maddened by the success of his country's hereditary foe, sprang from the nook in which he lurked and struck Mowbray a heavy blow with the large brass crucifix he carried.

The Englishman had doffed his hat and was courteously saluting the Spanish captain, who was in the act of yielding up his sword. One outstretched arm of the image of mercy penetrated his skull, and he fell dead at the feet of his captive.

At once the conflict broke out anew. Nothing could restrain the crew of the *Resolution* when they noted the dastardly murder of their chivalrous leader. The galleon became a slaughter-house. The monk, frenzied as a beast in the shambles, sprang overboard and was carried past another ship, the *Vera Cruz*, which rescued him. This vessel was one of the few storm-wracked and fever-laden survivors of the Armada which reached Corunna.

The Englishmen learnt from wounded Spaniards that the fanatical ecclesiastic was a certain Fra Geronimo from the great Jesuit seminary at Toledo. They remembered the name so that they might curse it. They cried in their rage because Fra Geronimo had escaped them.

A black snake in the plain of Herát, a glittering crucifix on board the *San José* in the Channel off Gravelines – these were

queer links, savoring of necromancy, whereby the lives of gallant men and fair women should be bound indissolubly. Yet it was so, as those who follow this strange and true history shall learn, for many a blow was struck and many a heart ached because Nur Mahal lived and Sir Robert Mowbray died in that wonderful month of July, 1588.

CHAPTER II

"Up then rose the 'prentices all,
Living in London, both proper and tall."

Old Song.

Sir Thomas Cave, of Stanford in Northamptonshire, a worthy Knight who held his wisdom of greater repute at court than did his royal Master, was led by the glamour of a fine summer's afternoon in the year 1608 to fulfil a long-deferred promise to his daughter.

At Spring Gardens, removed but a short space from the King's Palace of Whitehall, that eccentric monarch, James I., had established a menagerie. Here could be seen certain mangy specimens of the wonderful beasts which bulked large in the lore of the period, and Mistress Anna Cave, with her fair cousin, Mistress Eleanor Roe, had teased Sir Thomas until he consented to take them thither on the first occasion, of fair seeming as to the weather, when the King would be pleased to dispense with his attendance.

The girls, than whom there were not two prettier maidens in all England, soon tired of evil-smelling and snarling animals, which in no wise came up to the wonderful creatures of their imagination, eked out by weird wood-cuts in the books they read.

They found the charming garden, with its beds of flowers and strawberries, its hedges of red and black currants, roses and gooseberries, and its golden plum-trees lining the brick walls facing west and south, far more to their liking.

Nor was it wholly unsuited to their age and condition that their eyes wandered from the cages of furtive wolves and uneasy bears to the smooth walks tenanted by a coterie of court ladies with their attendant gallants. Anna Cave, eighteen, yet looking older by reason of her tall stature and graceful carriage, Eleanor Roe, a year younger, a sweet girl, at once timid in manner and joyous in disposition, found much to cavil at in the Spanish fashions then prevalent in high circles. Born and bred in decorous and God-fearing households, they were not a little shocked by the way in which the great dames of the period dressed and comported themselves. Yet, with all their youthful disapproval there mingled a spice of curiosity, and Nellie, the shy one, often nudged her more sedate companion to take note of a specially ornate farthingale or a Spanish mantilla of exquisite design.

Now, despite the reverence in which the stout Sir Thomas held the King, he did not approve of some of the King's associates. Especially was he unwilling that the bold eyes of any of the young adventurers and profligates who clustered under the banner of Rochester should survey the charms of his daughter and niece. Therefore, when the girls would have him walk with them in the wake of Lady Essex, then at the height of her notorious fame, he peremptorily vetoed their design.

"If you are aweary of the kennels," he said, "we will stroll in our own garden. It is fair as this, and the scent of the flowers therein is not aped by the cosmetics of the women."

"Nay, but, uncle," pouted Eleanor, disappointed that the style of the much talked-of Countess should be no more than glimpsed in passing, "we have seen neither lion, nor tiger, nor humpbacked camel. Surely the King's collection is not so meager that one may find as many wild beasts at any May-day fair in Islington?"

"Lions, tigers, and the rest, Got wot! What doth a girl like thee want with such fearsome cattle?"

"'Tis only a few days since I heard one declaiming a passage in Master Shakespeare's play of 'Macbeth,' and he said:

> What men dare, I dare:
> Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
> The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;
> Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
> Shall never tremble.

Now, save a very harmless-looking bear, neither Ann nor I have seen these things, so we know not why they should be held so terrible."

During this recital the knight's red face became wider and wider with surprise.

"Marry, Heaven forfend!" he cried, "what goings on there be behind my back! Anna, can you, too, spout verse as glibly?"

"Indeed, father, Nellie and I know whole plays by heart. Yet

we would not indulge in this innocent pastime if we thought it angered you."

Sir Thomas was as wax in his daughter's hands. Secretly, he feared her greater intellectual powers. He believed that girls' brains were better suited to housewifely cares than to the study of poetry, yet some twinge of doubt bade him keep the opinion pent in his own portly breast.

"Nay, then, if it pleases you and wiles away dull hours, I will not hinder you. But our sweet Nellie should not betray her gifts in public. Folk hereabouts have rabbits' ears and magpies' tongues. I fear me there are neither lions nor horned pigs to hand. They are costly toys, and 'tis whispered that his gracious Majesty obtaineth less credit abroad than among his liege subjects. Further, my bonny girls, I have asked a certain youth, George Beeston by name, to sup with us to-night, and it behooves you – What, Anna, has it come to that? You shrug at the mere mention of him! And he a proper youth – not one of these graceless rascals who yelp at Carr's heels!"

Again was Sir Thomas becoming choleric and red-faced, and the girls' excursion promised to end in speedy dudgeon had not a messenger, wearing the Palace livery, approached and doffed his cap, bowing low as he halted.

"Happily one said your worship was in the gardens," he said. "I am bidden to tell you that the King awaits your honor in his closet. The matter is of utmost urgency."

Now, this announcement had the precise effect on its recipient

calculated by those who sent it. Sir Thomas, inflated with importance, was rendered almost incoherent. Never before had he received such a royal message. All considerations must bow to it. He bustled the girls into a litter in which they could be carried to his brother's house in the city without soiling their shoes or being exposed to the gaze of the throng in the Fleet or Ludgate. He himself hurried off to Whitehall, there to be kept in a fume of impatience for a good hour or more, while the King disputed with a Scottish divine as to the exact pronunciation of the Latin tongue. Admitted at last to the presence, he found that the urgency of his summons touched no greater matter than the cleansing of the Fleet ditch, a fruitful source of dispute between the monarch and the city in those days.

Sir Thomas had wit enough to promise that the King's wishes should be made known to the Common Council, and sense enough to wonder why he was called in such hot haste to attend a trivial thing.

It was a time when men sought hidden motives for aught that savored of the uncommon; the knight, borrowing a palfrey from a merchant of his acquaintance, rode homeward along the Strand revolving the puzzle in his mind. Long before he reached Temple Bar he was wiser if not happier.

Soon after Anna Cave and the sprightly Eleanor entered their litter to be carried swiftly through the Strand, two young men approached Temple Bar from the east. Their distinctive garments showed that while one was of gentle birth the other

was a yeoman; that they were not master and man could be seen at a glance, as they conversed one with the other with easy familiarity, and repaid with ready good-humor the chaff which they received from the cheeky apprentices who solicited custom in the busy street.

Indeed, the appearance of the yeoman was well calculated to stir tongues less nimble than those of the pert salesmen of Fleet Street. Gigantic in height and width, his broad, ruddy face beaming with the delight afforded by the evidently novel sights of London, his immense size was accentuated by a coat of tough brown leather and high riding-boots of the same material which almost met the skirts of the coat. Tight-fitting trousers of gray homespun matched the color of his broad-brimmed felt hat, in which a gay plume of cock's feathers was clasped by a big brooch of dull gold. The precious metal served to enclose a peculiar ornament, in the shape of a headless fossil snake, curled in a circle as in life and polished until it shone like granite.

Though his coat was girt by a sword-belt he carried no weapons of steel, apparently depending for protection, if such a giant required its aid, on a long and heavy ashplant. In other hands it would be a cumbrous stake; to him it served as a mere wand.

His immense size, aided by a somewhat unusual garb in well-dressed London, absolutely eclipsed, in the public eye, the handsome and stalwart youth who, in richer but studiously simple attire, strode by his side.

The apprentices, fearless in their numbers and unfettered in impudence, plied him with saucy cries.

"What d'ye lack, Master Samson? Here be two suits for the price of one, for one man's clothes would never fit thee."

"Come hither, mountain! I'll sell thee a town clock that shall serve thee as watch."

"Hi, master! Let me show thee a trencher worthy of thy stomach."

The last speaker held forth a salver of such ample circumference that the two young men were fain to laugh.

"I' faith, friend," said the giant, with utmost good-humor, "we are more needing meat than dishes. Nevertheless, you have ta'en my measure rightly."

His North-country accent proclaimed him a Yorkshire dalesman, and the White Rose was popular just then in Fleet Street.

"If that be so," said the sturdy silversmith's assistant who had hailed him, "you must hie to Smithfield, where they shall roast you a bullock."

"Come wi' me, then. Mayhap they need a puppy for the spit."

The answer turned the laugh against the apprentice. He bravely endeavored to rally.

"I cry your honor's pardon," he said. "I looked not for brains where there was so much beef."

"Therein you further showed your observation. Ofttimes the cockloft is empty in those whom nature hath built many stories

high."

Again the buoyant spirits of the Colossus won him the suffrages of the crowd. Clearly, he had an even temper in his great frame of bone and sinew, for the easy play of his limbs showed that, big as he was, he held no superfluous flesh, while the heat of the day left him unmoved, notwithstanding his heavy garments.

But his companion caught him by the arm.

"Come, Roger," he said quietly. "We must find our kinsman's house. There is still much to be done ere night falls."

The crowd made way for them. They passed westward through Temple Bar, which was not the frowning stone arch of later days, but a strong palisade, with posts and chains, capable of being closed during a tumult, or when darkness made it difficult to keep watch and ward in the city.

The Strand, which they entered, was an open road, with the mansions and gardens of great noblemen on the left, or south side. Each walled enclosure was separate from its neighbor, the alleys between leading to the water stairs, where passengers so minded took boat to Southwark or Lambeth.

On the north were other houses, some pretentious, but more closely packed together, and, on this hand, Drury Lane and St. Martin's Lane were already becoming thoroughfares of note.

One of these houses, not far removed from the Church of St. Mary-le-Strand, thrust the high wall of its garden so far into the road that it narrowed the passage between it and Somerset House.

Here, a group of young gallants had gathered, and some soldiers, of swarthy visage and foreign attire, were loitering in the vicinity.

"This, if my memory serves, should be the house of Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador," said Walter Mowbray, the elder and more authoritative of the pair.

"Gondomar! Another name for Old Nick! The devil should keep his proper name in all countries, as he keeps his nature in all places."

"Hush, Roger, or we shall have a brawl on our hands. I am no lover of Spaniards, you know full well, yet we must pass Gondomar's men without unseemly taunt. The King loves not to hear of naked blades."

Thus admonished, his wonted grin of good-humor returned to Roger Sainton's face, and, as the swaggering youngsters in the road were paying some heed to a covered litter rapidly approaching from the west, the friends essayed to pass them by taking the pavement close under the wall of the Ambassador's garden.

As luck would have it, a sort of signal seemed to be given for a row to start. Swords were whipped out, men ran forward, and there was a sudden clash of steel.

A laughing fop, for his sins, turned to seek some one with whom to pick a quarrel; he chanced to find himself face to face with Mowbray, Roger being a little in front and at one side.

"I'll have the wall of you, sirrah," cried the stranger, frowning offensively.

Walter stepped back, and his right hand crossed to his sword hilt, so evident was the design of the other to insult him.

But Sainton laughed. He caught the would-be bully by the belt.

"Yea, and take the house, too, if the landlord be willing, my pretty buck," he growled pleasantly, whereon he heaved the swaggerer bodily over the wall, and they heard the crash of his body into the window of a summer house.

Those who stood near were rendered aghast by this feat of strength; they had never seen its like. Young Lord Dereham was no light weight, and his lordship's wriggling carcass had described sufficient parabola to clear coping-stones set ten feet above the pavement.

The incident passed unheeded by the greater mob in the roadway. For no reason whatever a crowd of struggling men surged around the litter. Mowbray, clutching his undrawn sword, planted his back against the wall from which the discomfited aristocrat would have ousted him; he called to Sainton: —

"Stand by, Roger! There is some treason afoot!"

The words had scarce left his mouth when a Spanish halberdier felled the two nearest litter-bearers, and a shriek of dismay came from behind the drawn curtains as the conveyance dropped to the ground.

Another rush, also preconcerted, enabled some of the well-dressed rascals to possess themselves of the litter-poles. The gates of Gondomar's garden were suddenly opened, and a move was made to carry the litter thither.

At that instant Eleanor Roe, thrusting aside the curtains, showed her beautiful face, now distraught with fear, and cried aloud for help.

"Be not alarmed, fair one," said one of her new escort, scarcely veiling his bold stare of admiration by an assumption of good manners. "We have saved you from some roistering knaves, and shall give you a pleasant refuge until the trouble be quelled."

"Where are my father's serving-men?" demanded another voice, and Anna looked forth, though anger rather than fear marked her expression.

"Prone in the dust, miladi," answered the cavalier.

Both girls saw that they were being taken towards Gondomar's house.

"I pray you convey us to Temple Bar," cried Anna, an alarmed look now sending shadows across her dark eyes. "'Tis but a step, and there our names shall warrant us bearers in plenty."

"You are much too pretty to trust to such varlets," said the spokesman of the party, and, before another word of protest could be uttered, the litter was hustled within the gates, which were closed at once.

Now, both Mowbray and his huge companion were assured that the whole business was a trick. The only sufferers from the riot were the unfortunate litter-bearers and the nobleman who was pitched over the wall. All the rest was make-believe, save the unpleasing fact that two young and beautiful girls were left helpless in the hands of a number of unprincipled libertines

such as followed the lead set by Carr, the Scottish page, and maintained, in later years, by "Steenie" and "Baby Charles" in a lewd and dissolute court.

But Mowbray was a comparative stranger in London, and Sainton had never before set eyes on the capital. Common prudence suggested that they should not raise a clamor at the gates of Gondomar, whose great influence with the erratic King was widely known and justly dreaded.

Yet, when did prudence ever withstand the pleading of a pretty face? Mowbray's blood was boiling, and it needed but little to rouse him to action. The impetus was soon forthcoming.

The noise of the disturbance brought people running from Temple Bar. Others hurried up from the direction of Charing Cross. Then, as now, Londoners dearly loved a street row.

Again, by well-planned strategy, the soldiers and some of the exquisites mingled with the crowd and gave lying assurances that the rogues who fought had run off towards the Convent Garden. Roger recognized the silversmith's apprentice among the gapers.

"Here, lad," he said, beckoning him, "ask yon fellow holding a kerchief to his broken head who were the ladies he carried in the litter."

The man, thus appealed to, gathered his wits sufficiently to answer, and the honored names of Cave and Roe acted as sparks on tinder. Forthwith, a number of city youths gathered round Mowbray and Sainton to hear their version of the fray.

As soon as they knew that the girls had been taken into

Gondomar's house, all the race hatred and religious bigotry of the time flamed forth in ungovernable fury.

"'Prentices! 'Prentices! Clubs! Clubs!" rang out the yell, and the war-cry of the guilds quickly reached to the city barrier, whence a torrent of youths poured headlong into the Strand.

"We'll have 'em out, if all the ambassadors in St. James's barred the way," shouted the valiant silversmith, who contrived to keep very close to Roger in the press, and, when reinforcements arrived, a decided move was made towards the garden gate.

And now, indeed, a real fight was imminent. Seeing their ruse foiled, Gondomar's adherents banded together for the defense. The citizens were determined to rescue the daughters of two men respected of all honest burgesses, but, if more numerous, they were not properly armed to attack swordsmen and halberdiers. Hence, blood would be spilt in plenty before they won the gate, had not Roger pulled back Walter Mowbray, who headed the attack.

"Leave 'em to me," he said. "I'll side 'em!"

With that he leaped forward into the space cleared by the halberdiers, and made play with his staff. A steel helmet was cracked like a potsherd, three unarmored gallants dropped beneath one blow, and two halberds were broken across as if they had been pipe-stems abhorred by the King.

Before this raging giant, with the tremendous sweep of his long arms and six-foot staff, ordinary swords and ceremonial battle-axes were of no avail. He mowed down his adversaries as

a scythe cuts grass, and a few lightning circles described by the ashplant, cleared the way to the gate.

The door was really a wide postern, sunk in the wall, built of stout oak and studded with iron rivets. Without a moment's pause, Sainton leaned against it. There was a sound of rending wood-work, and the structure was torn from its hinges.

Mowbray parried a vengeful thrust made at his friend by a fallen Spaniard, and jammed the hilt of his sword into the man's face. Roger, bending his head, entered the garden. Behind him came Walter, and the exulting mob poured in at their heels.

The garden was empty. Leading to the house was a flight of broad steps; at the open door of the mansion stood a tall, grim-looking, clean-shaven priest, a Spaniard, of the ascetic type, a man of dignified appearance, in whose face decision and strength of character set their seal.

At his elbow Mowbray saw the young nobleman who had addressed the girls. He ran forward, fearing lest Roger should open the argument with his cudgel.

"Hold!" cried the ecclesiastic, in good English. "What want ye here in this unbridled fashion?"

"We seek two ladies, daughters of Sir Thomas Cave and Master Robert Roe, who were brought hither forcibly but a few minutes back."

"They are not here."

"That is a black lie, black as your own gown," put in Roger Sainton.

The priest's sallow face flushed. He was of high rank, and not used to being spoken to so curtly. Mowbray, already cooler now swords had given place to words, restrained Roger by a look and a hand on his arm.

"My friend is blunt of speech," he explained. "He only means that you are mistaken. It will avoid riot and bloodshed if the ladies are given over forthwith to the safe conduct of those who are acquainted with their parents."

"Who are you who can venture to speak on behalf of an ignorant and unmannerly gathering which dares to violate the sanctuary of an Embassy?" was the vehement response.

"My name is Walter Mowbray," was the calm answer. "There is no violation of sanctuary intended. We are here to rescue two ladies inveigled into this house by unworthy device. Either they come out or we come in."

"Aye, shaven-pate, 'tis ill disputing with him who commands an army," cried Roger.

The cleric, on whom Mowbray's reply seemed to have an extraordinary effect, shot glances at both which would have slain them if looks could kill. But the impatient mob was shouting for active measures: it would have asked no greater fun than the sack of Gondomar's residence; moreover, the majority of the Spaniards and their allies were routed in the street.

So the priest swallowed his wrath and muttered something in a low tone to the silken-clad person by his side. Then he faced Mowbray again.

"When I said there were no ladies here, I meant that none had been conveyed hither forcibly. Two young ladies were sheltered by his Excellency's retinue, it is true. If they choose they are at liberty to accompany you, and I shall now acquaint them therewith."

A hoarse laugh from the crowd showed that the sophistry did not pass unheeded. Nevertheless, Mowbray's counsel of moderation swayed the mob into quiescence, and, a minute later, Anna Cave and Eleanor Roe, pale and trembling, hardly knowing what was toward, were carried in their litter to the city by an excited but good-tempered escort.

CHAPTER III

"The attempt, and not the deed,
Confounds us."

Shakespeare, "Macbeth."

Anna's father, jogging along comfortably on the borrowed cob, overtook the rearmost of the rabble near St. Dunstan's. Anger made him red, and alarm made him white, when he heard the disjointed tales of those who sought to enlighten him.

That the daughter and niece of one who held high place in his native county, and whose brother in the city was loaded with civic dignities, should be waylaid in the Strand by a number of young profligates aping Rochester's license, was not to be endured. Therefore, Sir Thomas flushed like a turkey, and his right hand, long unaccustomed to more serious weapon than a carving-knife, tightened on the reins in a way that surprised his placid steed.

But it was an equally serious thing that certain youthful hot-heads, led by "a pair of Yorkshire gallants, one of whom was like unto Gog himself," should have stormed the house of the Spanish Ambassador in order to rescue the two girls. The royal prerogative, already in grave dispute, was sadly abused by this disorder, and Gondomar was well fitted, by diplomatic skill and political acumen, to make the most of the incident. When Sir

Thomas thought of the way in which James, with his dagger-proof doublet unfastened and his points tied awry, would stamp up and down his council-chamber in maundering rage, the color fled from his ruddy cheeks and left him pallid, with drawn under lip.

Nevertheless, when he reached the house of Alderman Cave, situate on the north side of Draper's Garden, his natural dread of the King's wrath soon yielded to indignation. He found there not only Anna and Eleanor, but Walter Mowbray and Roger Sainton, with a concourse of friends and neighbors drawn together by news of the outrage.

The old knight's vanity was not proof against the knowledge of the peril from which the girls were saved. He swore roundly that he had been separated from them by a trick, and admitted that the King did not want him at all. With tears in his eyes he thanked the two young men for their timely aid.

"You will be the son of Sir Walter Mowbray who fell in the great sea-fight against the Spanish Armada?" he cried, seizing Walter's hand effusively.

"Yes. I scarce remember my father. I was but five years old when he died. Yet my mother taught me to regard all Spaniards as false men, so I scrupled the less to take part against Gondomar."

"Mercy-a-gad, she might justly have given thee sterner counsel. Thy father was a brave and proper man. I knew him well. Were there more of the like to-day these graceless rogues would not treat as courtezans the daughters of honest folk. And

thy friend, if he be not Goliath come to life, how is he known?"

"Let me present to your worship Master Roger Sainton, of Wensleydale, in Yorkshire."

"Ecod, he is well named. I warrant him sain (wholesome) and I trow he weigheth nearest a ton of any man breathing."

Roger, seldom at a loss for a repartee, waited until the laugh raised by Sir Thomas's jest had passed.

"'Tis an empty tun at this moment, your Honor," said he, glancing plainly at the row of shining tankards which graced a sideboard.

"Where are those lasses?" shouted the knight, glad of the diversion afforded by the claims of hospitality. "Zounds! Here be their defenders athirst and not a flagon on the table."

In truth, Anna and Eleanor, flurried out of their self-possession by the turmoil of the past hour, had escaped to their apartments, whence they sent the excuse that they were engaged in exchanging their out-of-door dresses and cloaks for raiment more suited to the house.

There were servants in plenty, however, to bring wine enough for a regiment, and certain city magnates, arriving about this time, were emphatic in their advice that Mowbray and Sainton should not attempt to traverse the Strand a second time that day in their search for the residence of the North-country nobleman whom Walter meant to visit.

"A bonny tale will have reached his Majesty ere this," ran their comment. "Were the pair of you to be haled before him after

Gondomar had poisoned his mind you were like to lose your right hands within the hour for brawling in the streets."

"Neither Roger nor I broke the peace," protested Mowbray.

"They say that one of you nearly broke Lord Dereham's neck," put in a city sheriff, "and that will be held a grave crime when recited to his Majesty by his crony, Carr (Rochester). No, no, my lads, bide ye in the city until such time as inquiry shall be made with due circumspection. The King hath a good heart and a sound understanding, and I'll wager my chain of office he shall not be pleased to hear that his name was used to decoy my worthy gossip, Sir Thomas Cave, from the company of his daughter and niece."

This shrewd comment was greeted with solemn nods and winks. The timely arrival of Alderman Cave, with the intelligence that Gondomar, summoned from play at Beaujeu's, had ridden furiously to Whitehall, determined Mowbray to accept the safe custody offered to him.

Gradually the assemblage dispersed. A man was sent to the Swan Inn, by Holborn Bridge, where the travelers' nags and pack-horses were stabled. Hence, ere supper was served, Walter wore garments of livelier hue, and Roger was able to discard his heavy riding coat and long boots for a sober suit of homespun.

The girls were discreetly reserved as to their adventure. True, they said that no incivility was offered them. For all they could tell to the contrary the Marquis of Bath and Sir Harry Revel, who made their names known to them, had really saved them from

an affray of rowdies.

"I would I had been there," vowed young George Beeston, who seemed to resent the part played in the affair by Mowbray and his gigantic friend.

"A yard measure is of little avail when swords are drawn," cried Anna, tartly. The hit was, perhaps, unworthy of her wonted good nature, for Beeston belonged to the Linen-drapers' Company.

He reddened, but made no reply, and Sir Thomas took up the cudgels in his behalf: —

"When George weds thee, Ann, thou wilt find that a linen-draper of the city is better able to safeguard his wife than any mongrel popinjay who flaunts it at Whitehall."

"I am in no mind to wed anyone, father," said she, "nor do I seek other protection than yours."

"Nay, lass, I am getting old. Be not vexed with young Master Beeston because he guessed not of your peril."

"I would brave a hundred swords to serve you," stammered George. Better had he remained silent. No girl likes love-making in public. Anna seemingly paid no heed to his bashful words, but her eyes sparkled with some glint of annoyance.

Roger Sainton, ever more ready to laugh than to quarrel, smoothed over the family tiff by breaking out into a diatribe on the virtues of the knight's Brown Devon ale. Mowbray, too, seeing how the land lay, offered more attention to Mistress Eleanor Roe than to her stately cousin.

Herein he only followed his secret inclination. The girl's shy blue eyes and laughing lips formed a combination difficult to resist, if resistance were thought of. She was dressed in simple white. Her hair, plaited in the Dutch style, was tied with a bow of blue riband, nor was her gown too long to hide the neat shoes of saffron-colored leather which adorned her pretty feet.

She wore no ornaments, and her attire was altogether less expensive than that of Anna Cave. His own experiences had given Mowbray a clear knowledge of domestic values. Judging by appearances, he thought that the house of Roe was not so well endowed with wealth as the house of Cave. He did not find the drawback amiss. He was young enough, and sufficiently romantic in disposition, to discover ample endowment in Eleanor's piquant face and bright, if somewhat timid, wit.

Anna, who looked preoccupied, quickly upset an arrangement which threatened to leave her and Beeston to entertain each other.

It was not yet dark when the supper was ended. Anna, rising suddenly when a waiting-man produced a dust-covered flagon of Alicant, assumed an animated air.

"I see you sip your wine rather than drink it, Master Mowbray," she cried. "Will you not join Nellie and me in the garden, and leave to these graver gentlemen the worship of Bacchus?"

"Aye," growled George Beeston, spurred into a display of spirit, "though Venus may be coy the god of wine never refuses

his smile."

"Take an old man's advice, George," said Sir Thomas confidentially, "and never seek to woo a girl with a glum face."

"Better still," said Roger, reaching for the flagon, "wait until she woos thee. Gad, a woman plagues a man sufficiently after he is wed that his heart should ache before the knot is tied."

"If your heart ached, Master Sainton, its size would render the ailment of much consequence," said Eleanor.

"Mayhap 'tis like an August mushroom, which, when overgrown, hath the consistency of hide," he answered, and his jolly laugh caused even young Beeston to smile.

"Roger and I were bred together," said Mowbray, as he walked with the two girls into the small public garden which faced the house. "I vow he never cared for woman other than his mother."

"Belike it is the fashion in Wensleydale," was Anna's comment.

"Nay, Mistress Cave, such fashion will not commend itself anywhere. Certes, I have observed that it does not prevail in London."

This with a glance at Eleanor, but the retort told Anna that although Mowbray came from the shires his wits were not dull.

As his hostess, however, she curbed the inclination to make some one suffer vicariously for poor George Beeston.

"May I make bold to ask if you seek advancement at court?" she inquired civilly.

"Yes, if it help one at court to wish to fight for his Majesty.

That is my desire. After much entreaty, my mother allowed me to travel hither, in the hope that my distant kinsman, the Earl of Beverley, might procure me the captaincy of a troop of horse. As for Roger, his mother was my mother's foster-sister, so the worthy dame sent her son to take care of me."

"What will the good ladies say when they hear that you had not been in London an hour ere you stormed Gondomar's house to succor a couple of silly wenches?" put in Eleanor.

"My mother will remember that my father lamed two men who sought to stop their wedding, but Mistress Sainton will clap her hands and cry, 'Mercy o' me! what manner o' fules be those Spaniards that they didna run when they set eyes on my Roger? They mun be daft!'"

His ready reproduction of the Yorkshire dialect brought a laugh to their lips; it aided Eleanor in no small degree to hide the blush which mantled her fair cheeks when Walter so aptly turned the tables on her.

But Anna, if restrained in her own behalf, thought that this young spark's wooing of her friend should be curbed.

"There was purpose in your father's prowess," she said. "Sir Harry Revel told me he wished us no indignity, so, perchance, you erred in your boldness, though, indeed, I do not cavil at it."

"Sir Harry Revel lied. When I meet the fop I shall tell him so."

"Nay, nay. You take me too seriously. I pray you forget my banter. It would ill requite your service were careless words of mine to provoke another encounter."

"For my part, I plead with you on behalf of the Marquis of Bath. He is but a goose, though he carries the feathers of a peacock," added Nellie.

In their talk they passed along the north side of the garden. Here, a number of trees gave grateful shade in the daytime. A wall beyond, with foliage peeping over it, showed that another smaller enclosure, belonging to some civic dignitary, occupied one of the few open spaces remaining within the city defenses.

At this moment, though darkness had not yet fallen, the gloom cast by the trees rendered persons near at hand indistinct. Their voices must have given warning of their coming, for a tall cavalier, wrapped in a cloak, suddenly stepped from behind a broad-beamed elm.

"Anna!" he said, "and Nellie! But whom else have we here?"

The girls started, and Mowbray would have resented the newcomer's manner had not Eleanor cried: —

"My brother!"

Anna, too, quickly intervened.

"This is Master Walter Mowbray," she said, "and his breeding, no less than the help he rendered so freely to-day, warrants more courteous greeting from Sir Thomas Roe."

The stranger, a young man of dignified appearance, made such amends for the abruptness of his challenge that Mowbray wondered how it happened that so elegant and polished a gentleman should have startled two ladies with a peremptory challenge.

Soon this bewilderment passed. They strolled on in company, and they had not been discoursing five minutes before he discovered that Sir Thomas Roe was favored of Anna if young Beeston was favored of her father.

A certain reluctance on their part to return to the more open part of the garden did not escape him, and, although there was no actual pairing off, he found little difficulty in addressing his conversation exclusively to the bewitching Eleanor.

In the half light of evening she was fairy-like, a living dream of beauty, a coy sprite, who laughed, and teased, and tantalized by her aloof propinquity. It was strange, too, that a youngster who could hold his own so fairly in an encounter of wits with Anna should be suddenly overtaken by one-syllable bashfulness when left alone with Eleanor. Yet, if Master Mowbray's confusion were inexplicable, what subtle craft can dissipate the mystery of Nellie Roe's change of manner? From being shy, she became pert. She seemed to pass with a bound from demure girlhood to delightful womanhood. When Walter strove to rally her with an apt retort she overwhelmed him with a dozen. Her eyes met his and looked him out of face. It might be that the presence of her brother gave her confidence, that the sweet gloaming of a summer's eve enchanted her, that the day's adventures flashed a new and wondrous picture into the undimmed mirror of her mind. Whatever the cause, Mowbray was vanquished utterly, and, being of soldierly stock, he recognized his defeat.

There came to him, in that magic garden, the first dazzling

vision of love. Never before had he met a maid to whom his heart sang out the glad tidings that here was his mate. Somehow, the wondrous discovery, though it thrilled his very soul, sobered his thoughts. And then, with quick alternation of mood, he found his tongue again, and behold, Mistress Roe must fain listen, with many a sigh and sympathetic murmur, whilst he poured forth his day-dreams of founding anew the fortunes of his house.

Ah, those summer nights, when hearts are virginal: they are old as Paradise, young as yester eve!

Unhappily, true love does not always find a rose-strewn path. Absorbed though they were in their talk, and ever drawing nearer until a rounded arm touched by chance was now pressed with reassuring confidence, they could not help seeing, when they met Anna and Sir Thomas Roe in a little open space, that the lady had been crying.

Indeed, she herself made no secret of it, but bravely carried off the situation by vowing that old friends should never say "Good-by."

"Here is your brother, Nell, come to tell us that he sails forthwith for some far-off land he calls Guiana," she cried, striving to laugh in order to hide the nervous break in her voice. "Not content with that, he must need add that he hopes to discover the limits of that wild river of the Amazons, as if there were greater fortunes for men of intelligence in savage countries than in our own good city."

"Can it be true that you leave us so soon?" cried Eleanor,

disengaging her arm from Mowbray's hand in quick alarm.

"It is, indeed, but a matter of hours," he said lightly. "I did but break in on your after-supper stroll to ask your fair gossip for some token which should cheer my drooping spirits by kind remembrance when England shall have sunk below the line."

"A most reasonable request," put in Walter. "Had I another such keepsake from a lady whom I honor most highly I would seek the further privilege of going with you on your travels."

"Lack-a-day! at this rate we shall lose every youth of our acquaintance," said Anna, who found in excited speech the safest outlet for her emotions. "Yet, lest it be said that I would restrain young gentlemen of spirit who would fain wander abroad, I have here a memento of myself which Sir Thomas Roe shall carry as a talisman against all barbarians."

She took from beneath a ruff of lace on her breast a small oval object which was fastened by a tiny gold chain around her neck. Even in the dim light they could see it was a miniature.

"It is the work of that excellent painter, Master Isaac Olliver," she added hastily, "and, from what I know of his skill, I vow his brush was worthy of a better subject."

"Anna, it is your own portrait!" cried Roe.

"Indeed, would any woman give you the picture of another?"

"Not unless she wished me well and gave me yours."

"Have you also sat to this Master Olliver?" whispered Mowbray to Eleanor.

"'Tis clear you come from the country, sir. His repute is such

that to procure one of his miniatures would cost me my dress for a year or more."

"Then he has not seen you, or, being an artist, he would beseech you to inspire his pencil."

Already they were alone again, for Roe and his lady might reasonably be expected to say something in privacy concerning that painting, and there is no telling what topic Walter would have pursued with Eleanor, his dumbness having passed away wholly, had not the noise of some one running hastily in their direction along the gravel path drawn the four together with the men in front.

It was now nearly dark, and they knew not, until he was upon them, that the individual in such urgency was George Beeston.

"Master Mowbray!" he called out, "Master Mowbray, an you be in the company, I pray you answer."

"Here I am. Is aught amiss?"

"But there is another, yet I left your good friend Sainton at the door?"

"We are accompanied by Sir Thomas Roe, with whom you are acquainted," intervened Anna, in the clear, cold accents which were but too familiar in Beeston's ears.

"Ah!"

The little word meant a good deal, but the young man was too single-minded to seek a quarrel with a rival at that moment. Gulping back the bitter exclamation which rose to his lips, he said quietly: —

"I am glad it is none other. Here be ill news to hand. The King has sent officers demanding the instant rendition of two strangers, one Mowbray by name and the other a maniac of monstrous growth, who committed grave default to-day without the confines of the city. The requisition is made in proper form, under his Majesty's sign manual. The sheriff cannot withstand it. He hath sent a privy warning, and he comes hither with some pomp quick on the heels of his messenger."

"Then the King's orders must be obeyed. What sayeth Sir Thomas Cave?" said Mowbray.

"His worship is greatly perturbed. He fears that Gondomar has poisoned the King's mind. You had best consult with him instantly."

"The sheriff did not give warning without motive," said Sir Thomas Roe. "He conveyed a hint that those he sought had better be absent. Unhappily, Sir Thomas Cave would not be pleased by my presence in his house, or I would accompany you. Nevertheless, I advise you to avoid arrest."

"Tell us, brother dear, how this can be accomplished."

There was a tremulous anxiety in Eleanor Roe's question that sent a thrill of joy through one listener at least. Unnoticed in the darkness, Walter sought and pressed her hand.

Again Roe's natural air of domination made itself felt. Even Beeston, who would gladly have run him through the body, found himself waiting for his sage counsel.

"Return, all of you, to the dwelling," said Roe. "Let Master

Mowbray bring his friend hither, and I shall conduct them both to a place of safety. None need know of my presence here. If Master Beeston desires an explanation thereof I shall accord it fittingly hereafter."

"For my part I shall be equally ready to receive it, when these Yorkshire gentlemen are provided for," said Beeston.

"Then these polite rejoinders are needless," cried Anna softly, "for Sir Thomas Roe sails forthwith for the Spanish main. Come! No more idle words. Our feet are more needed than our tongues."

They raced away together, Walter thinking no harm in helping Nellie by catching hold of her slender wrist.

They found Sir Thomas Cave's house in some disorder of frightened domestics. The knight himself was raging at the garden door.

"A nice thing," he roared at the girls, "gadding about among the bushes and gilliflowers when men's lives are at stake. Here be arquebusiers by the score come from Whitehall – "

"Where is Sainton?" demanded Mowbray, wishful to cut short any discussion that threatened to waste time.

"Gone to don his suit of leather. He says he has no mind to see his mother's good homespun cut by steel bodkins. Gad! he is a proper man. But this is a bad business, Master Mowbray. I pray you demand fair trial, yet anger not the King by repartee. He is fair enough when the harpies about him leave him to his pleasure. I have some little favor at court. It shall be exerted to the utmost, and backed by my last penny if need be. Never shall

it be said that I left my daughter's protectors to languish in gaol, maimed for life, without striving with all my power – "

"Never fash yourself about us, most excellent host," roared Sainton, appearing behind the distressed old gentleman. "Friend Mowbray and I can win our way out of London as we won our way into it. Methinks 'tis a place that has little liking for honest men, saving those who, like your worship, are forced to bide in it."

Seizing the cue thus unconsciously given by Roger, Walter said hurriedly: —

"We bid you Godspeed, my worthy friend, and hope some day to see you again. Farewell, Mistress Anna. Come, Roger. I think I hear the clank of steel in the distance."

"My soul, whither will you hie yourselves at this hour?" gasped Sir Thomas.

"We can strive to avoid arrest, and that is a point gained. Forgive me! Lights are dangerous."

He seized a lantern held by a serving-man and blew out the flame. Instantly he clasped Eleanor Roe around the waist and kissed her on the lips. She was so taken by surprise that she resisted not at all, even lifting her pretty face, in sheer wonderment, it might be.

"Good-by, sweetheart," he whispered. "I shall see you again, if all the King's men made a cordon about you."

Then Roger and he vanished among the trees, while a loud knocking disturbed the quietude of the night in the street which

adjoined the gardens.

CHAPTER IV

"The Philistines be upon thee, Samson."

Judges xvi. 9.

For the first time in his life Mowbray felt the tremor of a woman's kiss. Naturally, in an age when kissing was regarded, save by husbands and jealous lovers, as a mere expression of esteem, his lips had met those of many a pretty girl during a village revel or when the chestnuts exploded on the hearth of an All Hallow's Eve. Yet there was an irresistible impulse, a silent avowal, in the manner of his leave-taking of Eleanor Roe that caused the blood to tingle in his veins with the rapture of a new delight. For a few paces he trod on air.

Big Roger, recking little of these lover-like raptures, brought him back to earth with a question: —

"Had we not better seek the open streets than scramble through these uncertain trees, friend Walter?"

"Forgive me. I should have told you that one awaits us here."

"Marry! Is the refuge planned already?"

"I know not. Hist, now, a moment, and we shall soon be wiser."

They stood in silence for a few seconds. They heard the clash of accouterments and the champing of bits from the cavalcade

halted outside Alderman Cave's door.

"I' faith," growled Roger, "his most gracious Majesty hath sent an army to apprehend us. Yet, if you be not misled, he bids fair to be no better off than Waltham's calf, which ran nine miles to suck a bull and came home athirst."

"I pray you cease. Sir Thomas! Sir Thomas Roe!"

At the call a figure advanced from amidst the trees.

"Grant me your pardon, Master Mowbray," came the polite response. "I was not prepared to encounter a son of Anak in your company. I had grave design to climb the wall speedily when I saw your giant comrade dimly outlined. It will be a matter of no small difficulty to pilot him unobserved through the city."

"Show me the North Road and I'll make my own gait," said Roger.

"Nay, that is not my intent. I was, in foolish parlance, thinking aloud. Difficulties exist only that resolute men may surmount them. I do not decry your length of limb, good sir. Rather would I avail myself of it. Behind these bushes there is a wall of such proportions that your height alone will enable us to scale it without noise. Now, Master Mowbray, up on your friend's shoulders. I will follow suit. Between the two of us we shall hoist him after."

Roe's cool demeanor inspired them with confidence. Though it was now so dark, owing to storm-clouds having banked up from the west, that they had to grope their path through the undergrowth, they obeyed his directions. All three were seated

astride a ten-foot wall without much delay.

That they had not acted an instant too soon was evident from the fact that already armed men carrying torches were spreading fan-wise across Draper's Garden from the Caves's house, and they heard a loud voice bellowing from the private doorway: —

"I call on all liege men and true to secure the arrest of two malefactors who have but now escaped from this dwelling."

Mowbray found himself wondering why the hue and cry had been raised so promptly. Some one must have indicated the exact place where he and Roger had disappeared. But Roe dropped from the wall on the other side and whispered up to them: —

"Follow! It is soft earth."

"Hold by the wall," he murmured when they stood by his side. "It leads to a wicket."

Walking in Indian file they quickly passed into a narrow court. Thence, threading many a dark alley and tortuous by-street, stopping always at main thoroughfares until their guide signaled that the way was clear, they crossed the city towards the river. Roe knew London better than the watch. Seemingly, he could find the track blindfold, and Walter guessed that the cavalier often used this device in order to encounter Anna Cave unseen by others. It was passing strange that Nellie should be an inmate of a house where her brother was so unwelcome. However, this was no hour to push inquiries. He was now utterly lost as to locality, and he awaited, with some curiosity, the outcome of this nocturnal wandering through the most ancient part of London.

At last, the close air of the alleys gave place to a fresher draft, and his quick ear caught the plash of water.

"Guard your steps here," said Roe. "The stairs are not of the best, but they will bear your weight if you proceed with caution."

He appeared to vanish through a trap-door in a small jetty. Down in the impenetrable darkness they heard him say: —

"I have flint and steel, yet, if you give me your hand, I can dispense with a light."

Thus, with exact directions, he seated them safely in a boat, and, controlling the craft by retaining touch with the beams of the wharf, after gliding through the gloom for a few yards he was able to ply a pair of oars in the stream. Neither of the others had been on the Thames at night – Roger had not even seen the river before – and so, when the oarsman vigorously impelled the wherry straight into what looked like a row of tall houses, with lights in some of the upper windows, the North-country youths thought for sure they would collide violently with the foundations. They were minded to cry a warning, but seeing that Roe glanced frequently over his shoulder they refrained.

Thus, they shot under one of the many arches of London Bridge, covered then throughout its length by tall buildings, and, once they were speeding in mid-stream of the open river, they saw a forest of masts rising dimly in front.

Ere long, Sir Thomas Roe, who exercised sailor-like skill in the management of his oars, picked out one of the innumerable company of ships and lay to under the vessel's quarter.

"*Defiance* ahoy!" he cried softly.

"Aye, aye," replied a voice, and a rope ladder fell into the boat. Whilst Roe held it his companions clambered aloft, gaining the deck of a fair-sized merchantman where watch was kept by a number of sailors.

It chanced that Sainton mounted first, and a lantern flashed into his eyes. As he became visible, by feet at a time, for he stood nearly seven feet high, the man holding the light fell back in amazed fear.

"Avaunt thee!" he roared. "Up pikes to repel boarders! Here be the devil himself come to murther us!"

"Peace, fellow," said Roger, "when Old Nick visits thee he shall not need to come in the guise of an honest man. Yet, I warrant thee, Sir Thomas Roe shall play the devil when he comes aboard if thou makest such a row without better cause."

Mowbray's appearance, with Roe close on his heels, quelled the excitement of the watch. A few sharp words recalled them to their duties. The ladder was hoisted in and the boat secured with a painter, whilst Roe led the newcomers to the after cabin, where, over a flagon of wine, he sought their better acquaintance.

Mowbray gave him a detailed account of all that had taken place, and Roe's finely-chiseled face flushed deeply when he heard the true extent of the outrage planned by the band of young gallants.

"I have no wish to defend Gondomar," he said slowly, seeming to compel reason to master rage. "He has brought the Inquisition

to England. He carries our worthy King in his pocket. Yet I would fain believe that he is too wary and prudent to countenance such doings at the very gates of the city, which he fears alone in all England."

"To be just, I believe he was not present. Nevertheless, word came to Sir Thomas Cave that when tidings of the affair reached him, he rose instantly from play at Beaujeu's and hastened to Whitehall to demand our arrest."

"Ah, it is a bad business. I am much bounden to you. You know that one of these girls is my youngest sister. The other I prize dearer than life itself. Yet, unless you and Master Sainton agree to sail with me on this ship to the Amazons I fear that naught can save you from the King's wrath. I am powerless, being in ill repute at court. The city is strong, but unwilling, as yet, to openly defy the thieves and adulterers who pander to James's vanities and stop his ears to the representations of God-fearing men. This cannot endure. Our people are long-suffering but mighty in their wrath. If Elizabeth ruled with a strong hand she ever strove to advance the honor of England and to safeguard the liberties of her subjects. Now our flag is trailed in the mud. We are treated with contumely abroad and our protests at home are stifled by the Star Chamber. It must end. It shall end. Monarchy itself shall rot ere England perishes!"

These were dangerous words. They lost none of their tremendous import when uttered by a man of such statesman-like qualities that Anthony à Wood wrote of him long afterwards:

"Those who knew him well have said that there was nothing wanting in him towards the accomplishment of a scholar, gentleman, or courtier."

It was inevitable that the opinion of such an one should weigh deeply with young Mowbray, and impress even the less critical brains of Roger Sainton. Roe's appearance, no less than his impassioned outburst, would have won the credence of any well-bred youths in the Kingdom. In face, in figure, and indeed in many of his attributes, he resembled that gallant and high-minded adventurer of an earlier generation, Sir Walter Raleigh, who was now a close prisoner in the Tower. He had the bright, penetrating eyes, the long, aquiline nose, firm mouth, and well-molded chin which bespeak good birth and high intelligence. A mass of brown hair waved over a lofty forehead and fell in ringlets on his neck. He wore the mustaches and Vandyke tuft of beard affected by gentlemen of the period, and the natural gravity of his expression could be wholly dispelled, when occasion warranted, by a smile of rare humor.

But he was in no smiling mood just then. He leaned his head on his hand and sighed wearily. Mowbray, notwithstanding his own desperate though wholly unmerited plight, now presented to his eyes in all its sinister significance, could not help marveling how it came about that the leader of an expedition to the Spanish Main, which could scarce be undertaken without royal sanction, should avow himself so helpless in that very circle, while it was still more strange that Roe's position and attainments did not

render him a favored suitor in the Cave household.

Moreover, the King had knighted him, and Nellie Roe had said, during their walk in the garden, that her brother was a great friend of Prince Henry, and declared laughingly that Anna should think herself highly flattered, for the gossip ran that Princess Elizabeth was much attached to "Honest Tom," as she called him.

Roe's disturbed reflections and Mowbray's bewilderment alike were put an end to by Roger.

"Ecod!" he cried, thumping the stout table screwed to the floor of the cabin and making the tankards dance under the blow, "Walter and I can ask no better fate than to voyage with you to the Indies. We are in quest of fortune, and folk say that the Spaniards have gold for the taking. Here's to you, Sir Thomas Roe, and here's to all of us! May we never want nowt, none of us!"

He drained his own tankard and caused a gleam of amusement to flicker on Roe's face.

"Had you lost your right hand for brawling, Master Sainton," he said, "you would now lose the left if the King heard your sentiments. Harry a Spaniard, i' faith! That is rankest heresy nowadays. Yet there is no telling what may befall when we set our course west by south of the Canaries. And now, let me see to your comfort for the night."

He called a young negro from the depths of the ship; the sudden appearance of the boy's shining black face in the cabin caused Roger Sainton to start so violently that Roe and Mowbray laughed, while the negro himself displayed all his teeth in a huge

grin. Mowbray, during an earlier visit to London, had seen many a dark-skinned man; it was becoming the fashion to have one or more of these ebony-hued servitors in each household with any pretensions to grandeur. But Roger had never before set eyes on the like, and the apparition was unexpected.

"Gad," said he, reaching for the flagon again, "no wonder the sailor-man thought he saw the devil! 'Tis clear he fancied that this worthy had fallen overboard."

He stood up, to follow Roe, whereupon the negro's astonishment was even greater than Roger's, for the cock's feathers in the Yorkshireman's hat swept the ceiling of the cabin, and his belt was nearly on a level with the other's chin.

"Where him one dam big fighting-man lie, sir?" said the black to Roe. "Dere am no bunk in the ship will hold him half."

Indeed, this was a minor difficulty which had not been foreseen. In his own cabin, which Roe intended to place temporarily at their service, there were two bunks, but each was a full twelve inches too short for Sainton. They were stoutly built, too, of solid oak and abutting on strong lockers. The only way in which one of them could be made to serve his needs was to cut away the partition, and it was now a very late hour to seek the services of the ship's carpenter.

"If that is the only drawback, it is solved most readily," said Roger, and, with his clenched fist, guarded only by a leather glove, he smashed a strong oaken panel out of its dovetailed joints.

The negro's eyes nearly fell out with amazement, and, indeed, Sir Thomas Roe was not prepared for this simple yet very unusual feat of sheer strength.

"That blow would have felled an ox," he cried, and Mowbray told him how Roger once, in the market square of Richmond, had, for a wager, brought down an old bull with a straight punch between the eyes.

Now, the negro not only saw and heard, but he talked of these things to the watch, and they, in their turn, related them to others of the ship's company in the early morning. It chanced that a half-caste Spanish cook, hired because he knew the speech of the natives of Guiana, was among the auditory, and he stole to the cabin wherein the two Englishmen lay sleeping soundly. Mere idle curiosity impelled him to gaze at the man who could perform such prodigies, and, having gaped sufficiently, he went ashore for a farewell carouse with certain cronies in Alsatia.

Not the great men of the world, but their petty myrmidons, are oft the mainspring of the events which shape the destinies not alone of individuals but of nations. Even Pedro, the half-caste, might have dispensed with the day's drinking bout had his cup been fashioned of the magic crystal which enables credulous people to see future events in its shadowy mirror! Assuredly, some of the sights therein would have sated his desire for stimulant.

Mowbray and Sainton were aroused by an unusual movement. At first they hardly knew where they were, and it was passing

strange that the floor should heave and the walls creak.

Mowbray sprang from his bunk quickly and looked through the open door to see if it were possible that the ship had cast off from her moorings during the night. The frowning battlements of the Tower, dimly visible through a pelting rain, showed that his first surmise was incorrect. The *Defiance* was anchored securely enough, but a high wind had lashed the river into turbulence, and the storm which threatened over night had burst with fury over London.

Roger, too, awoke.

"Gad," he cried, "I dreamt I was being hanged as a cutpurse, and I felt the branch of an oak-tree swaying as I swung in the wind."

"You will have many such visions if you mix Brown Devon and Alicant with the wines of Burgundy in your midnight revels," said Walter, cheerfully. To his ordered senses had come the memory of the garden and Nellie Roe's kiss. He hailed the bad weather with glee. Men would be loth to stir abroad, and, if Sir Thomas Roe's arrangements permitted, he could foresee another meeting with Eleanor that evening.

"At times you talk but scurvy sense," grumbled Sainton, pulling on his huge boots. "'Tis the lack of a pasty, washed down by any one of the good liquors you name, that hath disordered my stomach and sent its fasting vapors to my brain. By the cross of Osmotherly, I could eat the haunch of a horse."

"Without there!" shouted Mowbray. "Where is the black

summoned by Sir Thomas Roe to wait on us?"

The negro came at the call. He told them that his master had gone ashore at daybreak, with intent to return before noon, but that breakfast awaited their lordships' pleasure in the cabin.

The hours passed all too slowly until Roe put in an appearance. He was ferried to the ship in some state, in a boat with six rowers. He had learnt that the city was scoured for them all night, and the rumor ran that they had escaped towards Barnet, this canard having been put about by some friendly disposed person.

"I cannot understand the rancor displayed in this matter," he said. "King James must have been stirred most powerfully against you, yet it is idle to think that you have earned the hatred of some court favorite already. Perhaps Lord Dereham is seeking revenge for being thrown into the glass-house, though, if rumor be true, his Lordship dwells in one, being a perfect knave. In any event, you must not be seen, and I shall warn my men to forget your very existence. We sail with to-morrow morning's tide, and, if this wind holds, shall be clear of the Downs by night."

Thinking this speech augured badly for his hopes, Mowbray said nothing of his plan to visit Cave's house after dusk.

The sailors, under Roe's directions, began to warp the ship alongside a wharf, where many bales of merchandise and barrels of flour, salt beef, dried fish, preserved fruit for scurvy, wine, beer, and the mixed collection of stores needed for a long voyage, were piled in readiness to be placed in her hold.

Walter, and Roger especially, were warned to remain hidden

in the after cabin, where none save the ship's officers had business, and Roe felt that he could trust his subordinates, if for no better reason than self-interest, for two such recruits were valuable additions to the ship's company.

Though the confinement was irksome it was so obviously necessary to their safety that they made the best of it.

Walter found in a cupboard a ship-master's journal of a voyage to Virginia, and entertained Roger with extracts therefrom, whilst the latter, at times, stretched his huge limbs and hummed a verse or two of that old song of Percy and Douglas, which, as Sir Philip Sydney used to say, had the power to stir the heart as a trumpet.

The rain ceased with the decline of day. The monotonous clank of the windlass and the cries of stevedores and sailors gave place to the swish of water as the watch washed the deck. For convenience' sake, a supply of fresh water being the last thing to be taken aboard next morning, the vessel was tied up to the wharf. When the tide fell she was left high and dry on the mud.

Roe was much occupied ashore with those city merchants who helped him in his venture, but he undertook privily to warn Anna Cave as to the whereabouts of the two young men to whom she was so greatly indebted, and they might leave to her contriving the transfer of their baggage to the ship at a late hour.

"You shall not see her again, then?" asked Walter, with a faint hope that her lover would strain every nerve in that direction, when he might accompany him.

"No," was the determined answer. "Such a course would be fraught with risk to you. I might be seen and followed. Her father's serving-men, coming hither by night, will pass unnoticed."

"Do not consider me in that respect, I pray you."

Roe shook his head and sighed.

"I am resolved," he said. "We may not meet until I return, if God wills it. I told her as much last night. We said 'farewell'; let it rest at that."

So Walter's heart sank into his boots, for the case between him and Nellie rested on as doubtful a basis as that between Roe and Anna.

He sat down to indite a letter to his mother, which Sir Thomas would entrust to one of his friends having affairs in the north. Roger could not write, but he sent a loving message to Mistress Sainton, with many quaint instructions as to the management of the garth and homestead.

"Tell her," quoth he, "that I be going across seas to reive the Dons, and that I shall bring back to her a gold drinking-cup worthy of her oldest brew."

"A man may catch larks if the heavens fall," commented Walter in Rabelais's phrase.

"Or if he lime a twig he may e'en obtain a sparrow. My auld mother will be pleased enough to see me if the cup be pewter. Write, man, and cheer her. I'll warrant you have vexed Mistress Mowbray with a screed about yon wench you were sparking in

the garden last night."

Indeed, it was true. Walter bent to the table to hide a blush. His letter dealt, in suspicious detail, with the charms and graces of Nellie Roe.

At last the missive was addressed and sealed. It was nearly ten o'clock, and London was quieting down for the night, when the two quitted their cabin and walked to the larger saloon where Sir Thomas Roe, with Captain Davis, the commander of the *Defiance*, was busy with many documents.

They talked there a little while. Suddenly they heard the watch hailed by a boat alongside.

"What ship is that?"

"Who hails?"

"The King's officer."

Roe sprang to his feet and rushed out, for the cabin was in the poop, and the door was level with the main deck. The others followed. In the river, separated from the vessel by a few feet of mud, was an eight-oared barge filled with soldiers.

"'Fore God!" he whispered to Mowbray, "they have found your retreat."

They turned towards the wharf. A company of halberdiers and arquebusiers had surrounded it and already an officer was advancing towards the gangway.

"Bid Sainton offer no resistance," said Roe, instantly. "At best, you can demand fair hearing, and I will try what a bold front can do. Remember, you are sworn volunteers for my mission to

Guiana."

As well strive to stem the water then rushing up from the Nore towards London Bridge as endeavor to withstand the King's warrant. The officer was civil, but inflexible. Sorely against the grain, both Mowbray and Sainton were manacled and led ashore.

"Tell me, at least, whither you take them," demanded Roe. "The King hath been misled in this matter and my friends will seek prompt justice at his Majesty's hands."

"My orders are to deliver them to the Tower," was the reply.

"Were you bidden come straight to this ship?"

There was no answer. The officer signified by a blunt gesture that he obeyed orders, but could give no information.

Surrounded by armed men and torch-bearers the unlucky youths were about to be marched off through the crowd of quay-side loiterers which had gathered owing to the presence of the soldiers – Roe was bidding them be of good cheer and all should yet go well with them – when an unexpected diversion took place.

Standing somewhat aloof from the mob were several men carrying bags and boxes. With them were two closely cloaked females, and this little party, arriving late on the scene, were apparently anxious not to attract attention. But the glare of the flambeaux fell on Roger's tall form and revealed Mowbray by his side.

"Oh, Ann," wailed a despairing voice, "they have taken him."

Walter heard the cry, and so did Roe. They knew who it was that spoke. Roe, with a parting pressure of Mowbray's shoulder,

strode off to comfort his sister, whilst Mowbray himself, though unable to use his hands, hustled a halberdier out of the way and cried: —

"Farewell, Mistress Roe. Though the cordon of King's men be here, yet have I seen you, and, God willing, I shall not part from you so speedily when next we meet."

He knew that the girls, greatly daring, had slipped out with the men who carried his goods and those of Sainton. Though his heart beat with apprehension of an ignominious fate, yet it swelled with pride, too, at the thought that Eleanor had come to see him.

The guard, seeming to dread an attempted rescue, gathered nearer to their prisoners. A slight altercation took place between Roe and the officer anent the disposition of the prisoners' effects. Finally, Sir Thomas had his way, and their goods were handed over to the soldiers to be taken with them.

Then, a sharp command was given, the front rank lowered their halberds, the crowd gave way, and the party marched off towards the Tower.

Roger, by means of his great height, could see clear over the heads of the escort.

"That lass must be mightily smitten with thee, Walter," he said gruffly. "She would have fallen like a stone had not Mistress Cave caught her in her arms."

CHAPTER V

"This is the time – heaven's maiden sentinel
Hath quitted her high watch – the lesser spangles
Are paling one by one."

To understand aright the mixed feelings of anger and dread which filled the minds of the prisoners as they marched through the narrow streets on their way to the Tower, it is necessary to remember how the gross corruption of the court of the first Stuart had inspired Englishmen with a scandalized disbelief in the wisdom of their sovereign. The Tudors reigned over a people who regarded even their mad temper with a half idolatrous reverence. The great poet of the splendid epoch closed by the reign of Elizabeth fittingly expressed the popular sentiment when he spoke of "the divinity that doth hedge a King." But James, a slobbering monstrosity, at once shallow and bombastic, claiming by day monarchical privileges of the most despotic nature, and presiding by night over drunken revels of the most outrageous license, had torn beyond repair the imperial mantle with which a chivalrous nation had been proud to clothe its ruler.

In the Puritan north especially was he regarded with fear and loathing. Hence, Mowbray and Sainton, though prepared to face with a jest any odds in defense of their honor or their country,

could now only look forward to an ignominious punishment, fraught with disablement if not with death itself, because they had dared to cross the path of one of the King's favorites. It was a dismal prospect for two high-spirited youths.

"We have brought our eggs to a bad market, I trow," muttered Sainton, as the gates of the Tower clanged behind them and they halted in front of the guardroom, whilst the leader of their escort was formally handing them over to the captain of the guard.

"I fear me you were ill advised to throw in your lot with mine, Roger," was all that Walter could find to say.

"Nay, nay, lad, I meant no reproach. Sink or swim, we are tied by the same band. Nevertheless, 'tis a pity I am parted from my staff and you from your sword."

"Here, they would but speed our end."

"Like enough, yet some should go with us."

He looked about him with such an air that the halberdiers nearest to him shrank away. Though fettered, he inspired terror. From a safer distance they surveyed him with the admiration which soldiers know how to yield to a redoubtable adversary.

The troops from Whitehall quickly gave place to a number of warders, and the two were marched off, expecting no other lot for the hour than a cold cell and a plank bed. They saw, to their surprise, that some of the men carried their belongings. This trivial fact argued a certain degree of consideration in their treatment, and their hopes rose high when they were halted a second time near the Water Gate. Soon, the sentinel stationed

on the projecting bastion shouted a challenge, the chief warder hurried to his side, and, after some parley, the gate was thrown open to admit the identical boat which they had seen lying alongside the *Defiance*. Moreover, in the light of the torches carried by those on board, they now perceived that the soldiers and rowers were not King's men but Spaniards.

The galley was brought close to the flight of steps leading down to the dark water beneath the arch, and the prisoners were bidden go aboard.

Walter hung back. The slight hope which had cheered him was dispelled by the sight of the Spanish uniforms.

"I demand fair trial by men of my own race," he cried. "Why should we be handed over to our enemies?"

He was vouchsafed no answer. Sullenly, but without delay, the warders hustled him and Roger towards the boat. They could offer no resistance. Their wrists were manacled, and, as a further precaution, a heavy chain bound their arms to their waists. It was more dignified to submit; they and their packages were stowed in the center of the galley; the heavy gates were swung open once more, and the boat shot out into the river. For nearly three hours they were pulled down stream. They could make nothing of the jargon of talk that went on around them. Evidently there was some joke toward anent Roger's size, and one Spaniard prodded his ribs lightly with the butt of his halberd, saying in broken English: —

"Roas' bif; good, eh?"

By reason of his bulk, Sainton seemed to be clumsy, though he was endowed with the agility of a deer. Suddenly lifting a foot, he planted it so violently in the pit of the Spaniard's stomach that the humorist turned a somersault over a seat. His comrades laughed, but the man himself was enraged. He regained his feet, lifted his halberd, and would have brained Roger then and there had not another interposed his pike.

An officer interfered, and there was much furious gesticulation before the discomfited joker lowered his weapon. He shot a vengeful glance at Roger, however, and cried something which caused further merriment.

What he said was: —

"Would that I might be there when the fire is lit. You will frizzle like a whole ox."

Fortunately, the Englishmen knew not what he meant. Yet they were not long kept in ignorance of some part, at least, of the fate in store for them. The galley at last drew up under the counter of a large ship of foreign rig, lying in the tideway off Tilbury Hope. With considerable difficulty, in their bound state, Mowbray and Roger were hoisted aboard, and taken to a tiny cabin beneath the after deck.

Then there was a good deal of discussion, evidently induced by Roger's proportions. Ultimately, a ship's carpenter drove a couple of heavy iron staples into the deck. The big man eyed the preparations, and had it in his mind to pass some comment to Walter. Luckily, his native shrewdness stopped his tongue,

else his spoken contempt for the holdfasts might have led to the adoption of other means of securing him.

Two chains, each equipped with leg manacles, were fastened to the staples, and the bolts were hammered again until the chains were immovably riveted in the center. The prisoners were locked into the leg-piece, and their remaining fetters were removed. These operations occupied some time in accomplishments. They had been on board fully half an hour before the halberdiers left them, and they did not know that a tall man, heavily cloaked, who stood behind the screen of soldiers, was furtively watching them throughout.

A sentry, with drawn sword, was stationed at the door when the others departed. The shrouded stranger imperiously motioned him aside and entered. He threw open his cloak. A tiny lantern swinging from the ceiling lit up his sallow, thin face. The piercing black eyes, hawk-like nose, and lips that met in a determined line, would have revealed his identity had not his garments placed the matter beyond doubt. It was the Jesuit whom they had encountered in the doorway of Gondomar's house.

He regarded them in silence for a moment. Then he smiled, and the menace of his humor was more terrible than many a man's rage.

"You are not so bold, now that a howling crowd is not at your backs," he said, speaking English so correctly that it was clear he had dwelt many years in the country.

"It may well be that your holiness is bolder seeing we are

chained to the floor," said Roger.

"Peace, fellow. I do not bandy words with your like. When you reach Spain you shall have questions enough to answer. You," he continued, fixing his sinister gaze on Walter, "you said your name was Mowbray, if I heard aright?"

"Yes. What quarrel have I or any of my kin with Gondomar that my comrade and I should be entrapped in this fashion?"

"Your name is familiar in my ears. Are you of the same house as one Robert Mowbray, who fell on board the *San José* on the day when St. Michael and his heavenly cohorts turned their faces from Spain?"

"If you speak of the Armada," answered Walter coldly, "I am the son of Sir Robert Mowbray, who was foully murdered on board that vessel by one of your order. Nevertheless," he added, reflecting that such a reply was not politic, "that is no reason why I should be subjected to outrage or that you should lend your countenance to it. My friend and I, who have done no wrong, nor harmed none, save in defense of two ladies beset by roisterers, have been arrested on the King's warrant and apparently handed over to the Spanish authorities because, forsooth, we pursued certain rascals into the Ambassador's garden."

He paused, not that his grievance was exhausted but rather that the extraordinary expression of mingled joy and hatred which convulsed the Jesuit's face told him his protests were unheeded.

"*Domine! exaudisti supplicationem meam!*" murmured the ecclesiastic, "I have waited twenty years, and in my heart I have

questioned Thy wisdom. Yet, fool that I was, I forgot that a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past."

The concluding words were in Spanish, but Walter had enough Latin to understand his exclamation in that tongue. It bewildered him, yet he strove to clear the mystery that enfolded his capture.

"I pray you," he said urgently, "listen to my recital of events as they took place yesterday. When the truth is known it shall be seen that neither Master Sainton nor I have broken the King's ordinance, or done wrong to Count Gondomar."

"'Tis not the King of England, so-called, nor the minister of His Most Catholic Majesty, to whom you shall render explanation. Words are useless with those of your spawn, yet shall your neck bend and your back creak ere many days have passed. Would that my sacred duty did not retain me in this accursed land! Would that I might sail in this ship to my own country! Yet I do commend you, Señor Mowbray, and that gross Philistine who lies by your side, to my brethren of the Seminary of San José at Toledo. They shall tend you in the manner that beseemeth the son of him who sent the miraculous statue of our patron to lie deep beneath the waves which protect this benighted England. *Gloria in excelsis!* Spain is still able, by the Holy office, to revenge insults paid to her saints. *Malefico! Malefico!*"

Turning to the sentry, the Jesuit uttered some order which plainly had for its purport the jealous safeguarding of his prisoners. Then, with a parting glance of utmost rancor, and some Latin words which rang like a curse, he left them.

"I' faith," laughed Roger, quietly, "his holiness regards us with slight favor, I fancy. The sound of your name, Walter, was unto him as a red rag to an infuriated bull."

"I never set eyes on the madman before yester eve," said his astonished companion.

"Gad! he swore at us in Latin, Spanish and English, and 'tis sure some of the mud will stick. An auld wife of my acquaintance, who was nurse to the Scroopes, and thus brought in touch with the Roman Church, so to speak, did not exactly know whether priest or parson were best, so she used to con her prayers in Latin and English. 'The Lord only kens which is right,' she used to say. I have always noticed myself that the saints in heaven cry 'Halleluiah,' which is Hebrew, but, as I'm a sinful man, I cannot guess how it may be with maledictions."

The Spanish soldier growled some order, which Walter understood to mean that they must not talk. He murmured the instruction to Roger.

"They mun gag me first," cried Sainton. "Say but the word, Walter, and I'll draw these staples as the apothecary pulls out an offending tooth."

Here the sentry presented the point of his sword. His intent to use the weapon was so unmistakable that Roger thought better of his resolve, and curled up sulkily to seek such rest as was possible.

Hidden away in the ship's interior they knew nothing of what was passing without. Some food was brought to them, and a sailor carried to the cabin their own blankets and clothes on which they

were able to stretch their limbs with a certain degree of comfort.

They noticed that their guard was doubled soon after the Jesuit quitted them. One of the men was changed each hour, and this additional measure of precaution showed the determination of their captors to prevent the least chance of their escape, if escape could be dreamed of, from a vessel moored in the midst of a wide river, by men whose limbs were loaded with heavy fetters.

With the sangfroid of their race they yielded to slumber. They knew not how the hours sped, but they were very much surprised when an officer of some rank, a man whom they had not seen previously, appeared in their little cabin and gave an order which resulted in their iron anklets being unlocked. He motioned to them to follow him. They obeyed, mounted a steep ladder, and found themselves on deck.

The first breath of fresh air made them gasp. They had not realized how foul was the atmosphere of their prison, poisoned as it was by the fumes of the lamp, but the relief of the change was turned into momentary stupefaction when they saw that the banks of the Thames had vanished, while two distant blue strips on the horizon, north and south, marked the far-off shores of Essex and Kent.

With all sails spread to catch a stiff breeze the ship was well on her way to sea. The prisoners had scarce reached the deck before a change of course to the southward showed that the vessel was already able to weather the isle of Thanet and the treacherous Goodwin Sands. Roger's amazement found vent in

an imprecation, but Walter, whose lips were tremulous with a weakness which few can blame, turned furiously to the officer who had released them from their cell.

"Can it be true?" he cried, "that we have been deported from our country without trial? What would you think, Señor, if your King permitted two Spanish gentlemen to be torn from their friends and sent to a foreign land to be punished for some fancied insult offered to the English envoy?"

The outburst was useless. The Spaniard knew not what he said, but Mowbray's passionate gestures told their own story, and the courtly Don shrugged his shoulders sympathetically. He summoned a sailor, whom he despatched for some one. A monk appeared, a middle-aged man of kindly appearance. He was heavily bearded, and his slight frame was clothed in the brown habit, with cords and sandals, of the Franciscan order.

The officer, who was really the ship's captain, made some statement to the monk, whom he addressed as Fra Pietro, and the latter, in very tolerable English, explained that the most excellent Señor, Don Caravellada, was only obeying orders in carrying them to the Spanish port of Cadiz. Arrived there, he would hand them over to certain authorities, as instructed, but meanwhile, if they gave him no trouble and comported themselves like English gentlemen, which he assumed them to be, he would treat them in like fashion.

"To what authorities are we to be entrusted?" demanded Mowbray, who had mastered the first choking throb of emotion,

and was now resolved not to indulge in useless protests.

A look of pain shot for an instant across Fra Pietro's eyes. But he answered quietly: —

"Don Caravellada has not told me."

"Belike, then, friend, he only needs the asking," put in Roger.

The monk shook his head, and was obviously so distressed that Roger went on: —

"Nay, if it be a secret, let it remain so, in heaven's name. Mayhap I may request your barefooted reverence's good offices in another shape. At what hour is breakfast served on board this hospitable vessel?"

Fra Pietro answered readily enough: —

"It awaits your pleasure. The Señor Capitan bids me offer you, in his name, the best resources of the ship."

"Egad, let us eat first, after which all he has to do to get rid of us is to place Master Mowbray and me in a small boat with oars. 'Twill save us much bother and the ship much provender, for I am sharp set as a keen saw."

Without reply, the monk led them to a cabin where plenty of cold meats, bread, wine, and beer graced the table.

He sat down with them, crossed himself, and ate sparingly of some dry crust, whilst Walter and Sainton tackled a prime joint.

Roger, pausing to take a drink, eyed askance the meager provender which sufficed for Fra Pietro; he made bold to ask him why he fared so poorly.

"It is fast day, and, unfortunately, I forgot to tell the cook to

boil me some salted fish."

"Are there many such days in your calendar?" quoth Roger.

"Yes, at certain periods of the year."

"Gad, if that be so, you ought to follow the practice of a jolly old priest I have heard of, who, having pork but no fish on a Friday, baptized it in a water-butt saying, 'Down pig; up pike!' Then he feasted right royally and without injury to his conscience."

The monk smiled. He was wise enough to see that the hearty giant intended no offense.

"I do not need such sustenance as your bulk demands," he said. "I heard the men speaking of your proportions, but, until I saw you with my own eyes I could scarce credit that such a man lived."

"I take it you are not in league with our captors?" put in Walter, anxious to gain some notion as to the extraordinary circumstances which led up to his present position.

"I am but a poor Franciscan, availing myself of a passage to Lisbon."

"Do you know the Jesuit who visited us last night?"

"I did not see him."

"Perchance you may have heard of him. He appeared to hold a high place in the household of Gondomar, the Spanish Ambassador."

Fra Pietro dropped his eyes and murmured: —

"I think he is Dom Geronimo, Grand Inquisitor of the Holy

Office."

Mowbray pushed away his plate.

"Dom Geronimo!" he cried. "Your priestly titles are unfamiliar. Is he, by any chance, one who was known in former years as Fra Geronimo, a Jesuit from Toledo?"

"The same, I should believe. He is now a dignitary of much consequence."

"He is a foul murderer! He slew my father by a coward's blow, during the great sea-fight off Dover. Oh, to think of it! Not yet two days since he stood in front of my sword."

"I was minded to tap the bald spot on his skull with my staff and you restrained me," growled Roger.

Mowbray's bitter exclamation seemed to horrify Fra Pietro. He placed his hands over his ears.

"Madre de Dios!" he murmured, "speak not thus of the head of the Holy Office. Did anyone else hear you your fate were sealed, and the Lord knoweth your case is bad enough without adding further condemnation."

Sensible that the Franciscan could hardly be expected to agree with the denunciation of his religious superior, Mowbray restrained the tumultuous thoughts that coursed wildly through his brain. He bowed his head between his hands and abandoned himself to sorrowful reflection. A good deal that was hidden before now became clear.

It was not to be wondered at that Sir Thomas Roe should be puzzled by the animosity displayed by an unknown clique

in Whitehall against two strange youths who happened to participate, as upholders of the law, in a not very serious brawl. The expression of the Jesuit's face when he heard Mowbray's name, the determined measures adopted by Gondomar to capture those who had defeated the cleverly planned abduction of the two girls, the remorseless hatred of Dom Geronimo's words when he visited the captives overnight, all pointed to one conclusion. The Jesuit was, indeed, the fanatic who killed Sir Robert Mowbray on board the *San José*, and he was ready, after twenty years, to pursue the son with a spleen as malevolent as that which inspired the assassin's blow that struck down the father.

How crafty and subtle had been the means adopted to crush Roger and himself! Were fair inquiry held, no charge could have lain against them. So an unworthy monarch, already a dupe in the game of king-craft played by Spain, had weakly consented to allow the royal warrant to become an active instrument in the hands of an implacable bigot. Swift and sure was Dom Geronimo's vengeance. They had the misfortune to cross his path without the knowledge even of his identity, and now they were being ferried to Spain for some dread purpose the mere suspicion of which chilled the blood in Mowbray's veins.

And Nellie Roe! She, with her beautiful and imperious cousin, was left in the city which harbored a hostile influence so venomous, so pitiless, and yet so powerful. The suspicion that she, too, if only because a Mowbray was her rescuer, might fall under the ban of the Jesuit, wrung a cry of anguish from his lips.

Hardly knowing what he did, and not trusting himself to speak, he rushed on deck with the mad notion of throwing himself overboard in a vain attempt to swim ashore. As he emerged from the companionway a whiff of spray struck him in the face. The slight shock restored his senses. A heavy sea was running, and the coast was six miles distant. To spring over the bulwarks meant suicide. Moreover, could he desert Roger? It was not to be thought of. Though death might be a relief, he must stick to his loyal friend, no matter what the ills in store.

Meanwhile, Roger, in his homely way, was telling Fra Pietro the story of their adventures. The monk, who seemed to be of a very kind and benignant disposition, said little. But he listened attentively. Later, when Mowbray had steeled his heart to endurance, Fra Pietro spoke gently to him, and, when the pair were stricken with sea-sickness, he tended them like a skilled nurse.

And so the days passed until, with a favoring gale, they neared the Portuguese coast, and the *Sparta*, for thus was the ship named, bore up for Cape Finisterre and thence ran steadily, under the lee of the land, down to the harbor of Lisbon. Fra Pietro, with whom they had contracted a very real friendship, although his beliefs and opinions ran counter to theirs on almost every topic they discussed, was greatly concerned when the captain's edict went forth that during the vessel's stay in port the two prisoners must be chained in their cabin.

Yet he sought and obtained permission to visit them, and twice

he brought them a goodly supply of fresh fruit and a flagon of the famed wine of Oporto. The *Sparta* was not tied to a wharf. She dropped anchor well out in the harbor, and communication with the shore could only be made by means of a boat.

Fra Pietro came to see his English friends for the last time. There were always two sentries on duty at the cabin door now, so it was evident that Señor Caravellada meant to discharge his trust with scrupulous fidelity.

It is natural that the worthy monk, knowing full well the dreadful fate that awaited the two youths at the end of the voyage, should be much downcast during this farewell interview.

Yet there was a hesitancy in his manner that did not escape Walter's eyes. He produced his basket of grapes and peaches and rich pomegranates, while, this time, he carried three wicker-covered flasks of wine.

Then he began to laugh nervously.

"In one of these flagons, that with the broken seal," he said, "the wine is extraordinarily potent. It has the quality of sending a man into a sound sleep if he imbibe even a small measure, yet it tastes like other wine."

"Ah," exclaimed Roger, who had caught a hint from the close attention paid by Mowbray to the monk's words, "that should be a fine liquor if a man wanted to sleep but could not."

Fra Pietro held out a luscious bunch of grapes.

"Within a bowshot from this ship," he said, affecting a gaiety that should hide the serious nature of his words, "there is a

Portuguese vessel, the *Sancta Trinidad*. She sails for the East Indies before dawn. The captain, an honorable man, would give safe asylum to those who were distressed, could they but reach his ship, and in this cluster of grapes is a file. My friends, may God prosper you! Though you are not of my faith I cannot but wish you well. I have striven hard ashore to help you. I have pleaded with those in power, but my words have fallen on deaf ears. Now you know the extent of my poor resources. *Dominus vobiscum! In manus tuas, Domine, commendo juventes.*"

Tears sprang into his eyes, he lifted his hands to heaven as he called down a blessing on them, and the two bowed their heads before this good and true man, in whom the spirit of Christian charity triumphed over narrow conceptions of dogma.

His prayers seemed to abide with them. When night fell the men whose duty it was to maintain the watch indulged in a carouse, as those who had been ashore not only returned full of liquor but carried with them a liberal supply of wine for their less fortunate comrades.

Hence, though Roger drugged two of the guard into torpor, no suspicion was aroused when the relief came, but the sergeant, growling at the drunkards, determined to take a turn himself on duty. Now this circumstance, at first forbidding, turned out to be providential. Walter had plied the file industriously on his shackles, but it was quite certain that several hours of severe labor would be needed before he could cut through his own and Roger's anklets. Sainton, with his great strength, might have pulled the

staples from the floor, but this would be of little avail if they were compelled to swim to the ship described by Fra Pietro. Moreover, their freedom of movement would be so hampered that they might hardly hope to quit the vessel unperceived, even if a boat were moored to the stern.

As a last resource they determined to adopt this expedient, but the presence of the sergeant, in whose pouch rested the key of their leg irons, gave a new direction to their thoughts.

In the most friendly way, Roger plied him with the doctored wine. Feeling himself becoming drowsy the man would have staggered out. At this, the very crisis of a desperate situation, Sainton gave a mighty tug at his chain. The restraining staple came away, tearing with it half a plank.

Startled almost into full consciousness the sergeant sprang towards him, with sword half drawn. So there was no help for it but to assist the action of the wine. Roger grabbed him by the neck and held him, wriggling, until, to say the least, he was willing to lie very still.

In a minute, or less, they were free. They knew that the hour was long past midnight. The dawn would soon be upon them and there was no time to be lost.

Walter seized the sergeant's sword and Roger took the sentry's halberd. They would fight for their lives now, even if they were compelled to face the whole ship's company. But fortune still favored them. The watch on deck were mustered forward, and the clinking of a can, together with the manner of such speech as

they overheard, told them that conviviality was well established there. So they crept to the after part, Roger going almost on all fours to hide his stature. Sure enough, a boat was moored there. They climbed down into her, cast off, and a strong tide quickly carried them away from the *Sparta*.

They looked about for the *Sancta Trinidad*, and guessed aright that a fine brig, moored about a cable's length distant from the *Sparta*, must be the vessel spoken of by Fra Pietro.

Rowing quietly towards her they hailed her by name and were answered. They were hoisted aboard, and a stoutly built, black-bearded man, who came at the cry of the watch, met them cordially: —

"Ah!" he cried, "Eenglish! One dam big fella! I haf wait you dis hour an' fear you no come."

Instantly, though it meant the loss of a good anchor and length of rope, the cable was slipped, a sail or two shaken out, and yards were squared. The ship got some way on her and began to move. In the ghostly light the *Sparta* looked like a great bird asleep on the dim waste of waters. Soon her outlines faded and were lost in the gloom. As the sails filled and more canvas was spread the *Sancta Trinidad*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.