

CYRUS BRADY

THE GRIP OF
HONOR

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Содержание

BOOK I	5
CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	10
CHAPTER III	13
CHAPTER IV	16
CHAPTER V	19
CHAPTER VI	23
BOOK II	25
CHAPTER VII	25
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	28

Cyrus Townsend Brady

The Grip of Honor / A Story of Paul Jones and the American Revolution

BOOK I

THEY MEET AND PART

CHAPTER I

A Stern Chase on a Lee Shore

"The wind is freshening; we gain upon her easily, I think, sir."

"Decidedly. This is our best point of sailing, and our best wind, too. We can't be going less than ten knots," said the captain, looking critically over the bows at the water racing alongside.

"I can almost make out the name on her stern now with the naked eye," replied the other, staring hard ahead through the drift and spray.

"Have you a glass there, Mr. O'Neill?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir, here it is," answered that gentleman, handing him a long, old-fashioned, cumbrous brass telescope, which he at once adjusted and focused on the ship they were chasing.

"Ah!" said the elder of the two speakers, a small, slender man, standing lightly poised on the topgallant forecastle with the careless confidence of a veteran seaman, as he examined the chase through the glass which the taller and younger officer handed him; "I can read it quite plainly with this. The M-a-i-d-Maidstone, a trader evidently, as I see no gun-ports nor anything that betokens an armament." He ran the tubes of the glass into each other and handed it back, remarking, "At this rate we shall have her in a short time."

"She is a fast one, though," replied the other; "it's no small task for anything afloat to show us her heels for so long a time; let me see-it was six bells in the morning watch when we raised her, was it not, sir?"

"Yes, 'tis rather remarkable going for a merchant vessel, but we have the heels of her and will get her soon unless she goes to the bottom on those reefs round the Land's End yonder. It's a nasty place to be tearing through in that wild way," he added thoughtfully.

"Shall I give her a shot, sir, from the starboard bow-chaser?"

"Not just yet; it would be useless, as we are not quite within range, and she would pay no heed; besides, we shall have her without it, and 'tis hardly worth while wasting a shot upon her at present."

The brief conversation took place forward upon the forecastle of the American Continental ship *Ranger*, between her captain, John Paul Jones, and her first lieutenant, one Barry O'Neill, Marquis de Richemont, sometime officer in the navy of his Most Christian Majesty, the King of France. O'Neill was the son of a marshal of France, an Irish gentleman of high birth and position, who had gone out as a mere lad with the young Stuart in the '45, and whose property had been confiscated, and himself attainted and sentenced to death for high treason. Fortunately he had escaped to the Continent, and had entered the service of the King of France; where, through his extraordinary ability and courage, coupled with several brilliant opportunities he had made and enjoyed, he had risen to exalted station and great wealth. He had always continued more or less of a conspirator in the cause of the royal Stuarts, however, and his son, following in his footsteps, had been mixed up in every treasonable

Jacobite enterprise which had been undertaken, and was under the same ban of the British throne as was his father.

When Paul Jones in the historic ship *Ranger* came to France, O'Neill, moved by a spirit of adventure and his ever present desire to strike a blow at King George, received permission to enter the American service temporarily, with several other French officers. The *Ranger* was already some days out on her successful cruise, when, early on a morning in the month of April in the year 1778, they had sighted a ship trying to beat around the Land's End. Sail had at once been made in chase, and the stranger was now almost within the grasp of the American pursuers.

"It seems to me, sir," said O'Neill to the captain, "that unless she goes about presently, she won't weather that long reef over beyond her, where those breakers are."

"Ay," said Jones; "and if she goes about, she's ours, and-" He paused significantly.

"If not, sir?"

"She's God's!" added the captain, solemnly.

The wind was blowing at a furious rate. The *Ranger* had a single reef in her topsails, with her topgallant sails set above them. The masts were straining and buckling like bound giants, and the ship quivered and trembled like a smitten harpstring, as she pitched and plunged in the heavy seas. The wind roaring through the iron-taut rigging, and the wild spray dashing over the sides, rendered conversation almost impossible. The motley crew of the *Ranger* were gathered forward, clustering on the rail and lower shrouds, keeping of course at a respectful distance from their captain and his first lieutenant, and some of the other officers grouped near them.

"She must tack, now," said Jones at last, "or she's lost. I know these waters; I have sailed them many times when I was a boy. I doubt if they can weather that reef even-By heavens! There's a woman on board of her, too!" he exclaimed, as his keen eye detected the flutter of drapery and a dash of color among a little group of men on the deck of the *Maidstone*, evidently staring aft at her relentless pursuer.

"See everything in readiness for quick work here. Gentlemen," continued the captain, "to your stations all. Mr. O'Neill, remain with me." The men hastened to their places at once, and a little silence supervened.

"You may give her a shot now, Mr. O'Neill," said Jones at last; "it may bring them to tacking and save them from wreck. Pitch it alongside of her; we don't want to hurt the woman, and it's not necessary to touch the ship."

"Clear away that starboard bow-chaser," called the lieutenant; and the men, scarcely waiting for his word of command, cast loose the gun. "Aft there, stand by to give her a touch of the helm!" he cried with raised voice.

"Ay, ay, sir," came the prompt reply.

"Price," continued O'Neill to the captain of the piece, "you need not hit her; just throw a shot alongside of her. Are you ready?"

"All ready, sir," answered the old seaman, carefully shifting his quid and squinting along the gun.

"Luff!" shouted O'Neill, in his powerful voice. The quartermaster put the wheel over a few spokes, and the *Ranger* shot up into the wind a little and hung quivering a moment with checked way.

"Give her a touch with the right-hand spike, lads," said old Price. "Steady, shove in that quoin a little; easy there, overhaul those tackles! All ready, sir."

"Now!" cried O'Neill.

A booming roar and a cloud of smoke broke out forward, and the ball ricocheted along the water and sank just under the quarter of the chase.

"Let her go off again," cried O'Neill to the quartermaster, and a moment later, as the sails filled and she heeled once more to the wind; "very well dyce, enough off," he cried.

"A good shot, Master Price, and a glass of grog for you presently in reward," said Jones, quietly "Ah! we shall have some answer, at any rate."

At this moment a small red flag broke out from the gaff of the English vessel.

"Show our own colors aft there, though they can scarcely see them," cried the captain; "he's a plucky one, that fellow. What's he doing now? 'Fore Gad, he's got a gun over the quarter, a stern-chaser. Must have arms on board."

The Ranger was rushing through the water again at a rapidly increasing rate, almost burying her lee cathead in the foaming sea under the freshening breeze, and was now very near the Maidstone, which at this moment discharged the small stern-chaser which had been dragged astern, the shot from which passed harmlessly through the bellying foresail above their heads.

"Give her another, Price," said O'Neill, upon a nod from Jones.

"Into her this time, sir?"

"Yes, anywhere you like."

The Ranger luffed again, losing a little distance as she did so, but weathering appreciably on the stranger, and this time the flying splinters from the stern of the chase showed that the shot had met its mark. There was a sudden scattering of the men upon her quarter, and most of them disappeared, but the young girl could be seen holding on to the weather spanker vang, and apparently looking defiantly at them. O'Neill took up the glass and examined her.

"Faith, sir, she looks as pretty as she is brave. See for yourself, sir," he added, as he handed the telescope to the captain, who took a careful look at her through the glass.

"You have a good eye for the beautiful," he replied, smiling, "even at a long range. Secure the bow-chaser, sir; we are within musket range of her."

While this was being done, the Ranger had crept up on the stranger till her bow began to overreach the weather quarter of the other vessel. As they held on recklessly together, suddenly the speed of the chase was diminished. Her helm was put down, and with sails quivering and swaying she swung up into the wind.

"We have her now," said Jones, springing on the rail and leaning over forward; "nay, it's too late. Missed stays! By Heaven, she's in irons! She's doomed! Aft there! steady with the helm! Give her a good full."

In the next instant, with a crash heard above the roar of the storm even upon the other ship, the ill-fated Maidstone drove upon the reef broadside on. The shock of meeting was tremendous: her masts were snapped short off like pipe stems; the howling gale jerked them over the sides, where they thundered and beat upon the ship with tremendous force. The girl disappeared.

"Breakers ahead!" on the instant roared out a half-dozen voices in the forecabin.

"Breakers on the starboard bow!" came the wild cry from all sides.

"Down with the helm, hard down!" shouted O'Neill, with a seaman's ready instinct, without waiting for the captain. There was a moment of confusion on the deck.

"Steady with the helm, steady, sir!" cried Jones, in his powerful voice, with an imperious wave of his hand. "Silence fore and aft the decks! Every man to his station! Keep her a good full, quartermaster. Keep that helm as you have it. Look yonder, sir," he added, pointing to larboard to another danger. "Ready about, stations for stays! Aft with you, Mr. O'Neill, and see that the helm is shifted exactly as I direct. Make no mistake! Lively, men, for your lives!"

The eager crew sprang to their stations. There was another moment or two of confusion; and as they settled down, the silence was broken only by the wind and the waves. The water was seething and whirling under the forefoot of the Ranger. The reefs upon which the Maidstone had crashed were dangerously near. But the keen eye of the captain had seen on the other side a slender needle of rock over which the waves broke in seething fury as it thrust itself menacingly out of the angry ocean. They were right among the reefs, and only the most complete knowledge and consummate seamanship could save them. It was there.

To tack ship now and come up in the wind would throw them on the rocky needle; to go off would bring them down upon the other reefs. Jones, entirely master of the situation, perfectly cool in appearance, though his eyes snapped and sparkled with fire, leaned out above the knightheads and keenly scanned the sea before him. There was just room for the Ranger to pass between the two reefs. A hair's breadth on either side would mean destruction. As the captain watched the boiling water he seemed to detect, through a slight change in the course, a tremor in the hand on the wheel.

"Aft there!" he shouted promptly, "what are you about? Steady with that helm! No higher-nothing off!"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied O'Neill, standing watchfully at the con; "I will mind it myself."

The crash of the breakers, as they writhed their white-crested heads around the ship's bows and on either side, was appalling to every one. They were right in them now-passing through them. The rocky needle on the larboard hand slipped by and drew astern. The wreck of the Maidstone was lost sight of in the flooding waves and driving spray of a rising gale. The ship was roaring through the seas at a terrific rate; the strain upon everything was tremendous; a broken spar, a parted rope, meant a lost ship.

"Very well dyce," cried the captain, casting a glance aloft at the weather leech of the topsails shivering in the fierce wind, the quivering masts and groaning yard-arms, the lee shrouds hanging slack, the lee braces and head bowlines taut as strung wires, the tacks and sheets and the weather shrouds as rigid as iron bars, the new canvas like sheets of marble. The ship was heeled over until the lee channels were almost awash, the spray coming in, in bucketsful, over the lee cathead. She was ready if ever she would be; their fate was at the touch.

"Now!" shouted Jones, in a voice of thunder "Down with the helm! Over with it! Hard over!"

The old experienced seamen put the wheel over spoke by spoke, slowly at first, then faster, until they finally hauled it down hard and clung to it with all the strength of their mighty arms.

"Helm's-a-lee, hard-a-lee," cried O'Neill at this moment.

"Rise tacks and sheets," roared the captain.

The ship shot up into the wind, straightened herself as its pressure was removed from the sails, lost headway, the jibs swinging and tugging in the gale, as she began to swing to larboard away from the reef on the starboard side. She worked around slowly until the wind began to come in over the starboard bow.

"Haul taut!" shouted the watching captain; "mainsail haul!"

The great yards, with their vast expanse of slatting, roaring, threshing canvas, whirled rapidly around as the nimble crew ran aft with the sheets and braces. The Ranger fell off quickly and drifted down toward the needle, the after-sails aback.

"Board that main tack there! Man the head braces; jump, men, lively! Let go and haul!"

There was a frightful moment, – would she make it? She stopped- Ah, thank God, they gathered way again, slowly, then faster.

"Right the helm! Meet her-so. Steady! Get that main tack down now, tail on to it, all of you, sway away! Get a pull on the lee braces, Mr. O'Neill, and haul the bowlines. Ah! That's well done."

They were rushing through it again; the white water and the breakers were left behind. A sigh of relief broke from the reckless men, and even the iron captain seemed satisfied with his achievement as he walked aft to the quarter-deck.

"Get a good offing, Mr. O'Neill," said the captain, "and then heave to. First send the hands aloft to take in the to'gallant sails, and then you may get a boat ready; we must see if there are any poor creatures left on that ship yonder."

"Very good, sir," replied the lieutenant, giving the necessary orders, when presently the ship, easier under the reduced canvas, was hove to in the beating sea.

"Shall I take the weather whaleboat, sir?"

"Yes," returned the captain, "I think you would better try to board under her lee if it be possible to do anything among that wreckage. I doubt if there be anybody left alive on her, but we can't afford to risk the possibility, especially in the case of that woman whom you found so beautiful," he added with a smile.

"Ay, ay, sir," said the lieutenant, blushing beneath the bronze in spite of himself, as he directed the boatswain to call away the whaleboat, which, manned by six stout oarsmen, with himself at the tiller, was soon cast into the heaving sea. Meanwhile the Ranger filled away again and beat to and fro off the coast, taking care to preserve the necessary offing, or distance from shore to leeward.

CHAPTER II

The Captor Captured

It was a long hard pull, and only the great skill of the officer prevented their capsizing, before the whaleboat finally drew near the Maidstone. The ship had hit the reef hard at flood-tide, and the waves had driven her farther on. Every mast and spar was gone, wrenched away by the storm and the waves. It was manifestly impossible to approach upon the weather side without staving the boat, so O'Neill cautiously rounded the stern of the wreck, and briefly considered the situation.

He did not dare bring the boat near enough to enable him to leap upon the deck through some of the great gaping openings in the sides made by the tremendous battering of the massive spars, and he finally concluded that the only practicable access to the Maidstone was by means of some of the gearing trailing over the side and writhing about snake-like in the water. Intrusting the tiller of the whaleboat to old Price, the veteran gunner, he directed that it be brought alongside as close as consistent with safety; and at exactly the right moment, as they rose upon the crest of a wave, he sprang out into the water, and clutched desperately at a rope hanging over the side of the wreck.

The men swung the boat away from the ship instantly, and he found himself clinging to a small rope wildly tossing about in the tumultuous sea. He was dashed to and fro like a cork, the waves repeatedly broke over his head, the life was almost buffeted out of him, but he held on like grim death. Fortunately, the other end of the rope was fast inboard.

With careful skill, and husbanding his strength as much as possible, he pulled himself along the rope through the water until he drew near the side of the ship. Then, though the operation was hazardous in the extreme, as he saw no other method, he began to pull himself up hand over hand on the rope along the side. In his already exhausted state and with the added weight of his wet, sodden clothing, the effort was almost beyond his strength.

He endeavored by thrusting with his foot to keep himself from being beaten against the side by the waves, but without success, for when he had hardly reached the rail, an unusually large breaker struck him fairly in the back and dashed his head against a piece of jagged timber, cutting a great gash in his forehead. Blood filled his eyes, his head swam, a sick, faint feeling filled his breast, he hesitated and nearly lost his grasp of the rope. The men in the tossing boat a little distance away held their breath in terrified apprehension, but summoning all his resolution to his aid, he made a last desperate effort, breasted the rail, and fell fainting prone upon the deck of the ship.

A few moments in the cold water which was flooding over it revived him somewhat, and he rose unsteadily to his feet, and looked about him in bewilderment. The change from the tossing boat to the motionless rigidity of the vise-held wreck was startling. There was not a sign of life on the ship. She was breaking up fast; rails were stove in, boats were gone, three jagged stumps showed where the masts had been, and only the fact that she had been driven so high on the reefs prevented her from foundering at once. There was a dead body jammed under the starboard five-rail forward, but no other sign of humanity. In front of him was a hatchway, giving entrance to a small cuddy, or cabin, the roof of which rose a few feet above the level of the deck.

As he stood there, striving to recover himself, in a brief lull in the storm he thought he heard a faint voice; it seemed to come from beneath him. He at once turned, and with uncertain steps descended the hatchway. Reaching the deck below, he stood in the way a moment, brushing the blood from his eyes. As he gradually made out the details of the cabin, dimly illuminated by a skylight above, he saw a woman on her knees praying; she had her face buried in her hands, and did not see him until he spoke to apprise her of his presence.

"Madam," he began thickly.

The woman raised her head with startled quickness, and gave him one terrified glance. The glass had told him truly, – she was beautiful, and young as well, scarcely more than a girl apparently;

even the dim gray light could not hide those things. As for him, he was an awful-looking spectacle: wet, hatless, his clothing torn, a great red wound in his forehead intensifying his pallor. He had a heavy pistol in his belt and a cutlass swinging at his side.

She stared at him in frightened silence and finally rose to her feet deathly pale and apparently appalled; he saw that she was a little above the medium height. At the same moment, from an obscure corner, there rang out shriek after shriek, and another woman rushed forward, threw herself on the deck at his feet and fairly grovelled before him.

"Oh, sir, for God's sake, sir," she cried frantically, "good mister pirate, don't hang us, sir! We never hurt nobody. Oh, sir, take us away, we'll do anything, we-

"Silence, you coward!" commanded the other woman, imperiously. "Get up! Prayers are of no avail with such as-

"Nor are they necessary, madam," replied O'Neill; "we are not pirates, and I am come to save you and shall do it. Will you please come on deck?"

"I had rather gone down on the ship," said the girl, defiantly, evidently disbelieving him; "but you are here, and you are master. Give your orders, sir."

"Very well," returned the lieutenant, calmly accepting the situation; "you will go up on deck at once." The girl motioned him forward.

"After you, madam," he said, bowing courteously, and she stepped haughtily up the companion-way, followed next by her shivering, shrinking, terrified maid, and lastly by O'Neill.

"Are there any others left alive on the ship, think you, madam?" he asked.

"No one," answered the girl; "many were thrown overboard or killed when we struck on these rocks here, and the rest abandoned us-the cowards," was the reply.

"Do you wait here a moment, while I take a look forward to assure myself," said O'Neill, stepping rapidly across the raffle of rope about the decks, and making a hasty inspection to make sure that no unfortunate was left. Quickly satisfying himself that they were alone, he returned to the quarter-deck where the two women stood. He looked at them in some perplexity. It would be a matter of great difficulty to get them back in the boat, but he promptly determined upon his course of action; they would not like it, but that would be no matter.

Signing to the coxswain, old Price, the boat which had been riding to a long rope from the ship was skilfully brought alongside again as near as was safe. One end of a long piece of loose gear was thrown over to the boat, where it was made fast. A bight of the rope, properly stoppered to prevent undue constriction, was passed around the waist of the maid, at which all her terrors were resumed.

"Oh, for God's sake, sir, for the love of Heaven, as you have a mother or wife, do not hang us here! If we must die, let us drown on the ship like good Christian people. Oh, please, good mister pirate-

But O'Neill was in no mood to pay attention to such trifling, and he summarily fastened the bight around her waist, and lifting her upon the rail, bade her jump. She clung to him with the tenacity of despair, crying and shrieking in the most frantic manner, until finally her overwrought nerves gave way, and she fainted. That was just what he wanted. Singing out to old Price to haul in on the line, and having taken a turn around a belaying pin with his end of it, he promptly threw the girl into the water. Of course she was dragged under at once, but in a moment was lifted safely into the whaleboat, where she was shortly revived from unconsciousness by the ducking she had received.

"Now, madam, you see you need fear nothing," said O'Neill, peremptorily, to the other woman. "I trust I shall not be compelled to throw you in, too?"

"Not at all, sir," she replied trembling violently, but striving to preserve her self-control; "I presume you reserve me for a worse fate."

The young lieutenant started violently at the insult, and his face clouded darkly at her suspicion.

"I-no matter, I came to save you," he said, as he stepped toward her to assist her to make the leap.

"Please do not touch me," she answered disdainfully; "I am no fainting fool. Give me the rope. What is it you wish me to do?"

"Pass it around your waist. Allow me. Now stand there, madam, and when I say the word, jump!"

"Very well," she said, stepping upon the rail resignedly, where perforce he was compelled to hold her to keep her from falling.

How glorious and splendid she looked, he thought, with her unbound hair floating like golden sunlight in the wind against the background of the gray day, while her sea-blue eyes looked boldly over the black water from her proud, white, handsome face.

"Now!" he said, as the boat rose toward them. Without a moment's hesitation, she leaped into the air, and after a swift passage through the water she was hauled into the boat by the rough but kindly hands of the old sailor. Making the end of the rope fast around his own waist, O'Neill, watching his opportunity, sprang after; but he seemed fated for misfortune that day, for a bit of timber torn that moment from the wreck struck him in the head just as he touched the water, and it was a fainting, senseless man Price hauled into the boat. The old seaman laid his officer down in the stern-sheets where the young girl was sitting with her maid crouching at her feet. Necessarily he lay in a constrained position, – there was nothing to support his head but a boat-stretcher.

She gazed upon his pallid face with its disfiguring wounds; he was a murderous pirate, no doubt, and deserved it all, still he had saved her life; the Maidstone was breaking up; he was so handsome too, and he looked like a gentleman. She was a woman, well-then the womanly instincts of the girl asserted themselves, and she finally moved her position and lifted the head of the unconscious sailor to her knee. Taking a handkerchief from her neck, she dipped it in the salt water and bathed his head and then poured between his lips a few drops from the flask of rum which Price handed her, after the old man had insisted that she take a draught of the fiery liquid herself.

Under these pleasant ministrations O'Neill opened his eyes for a moment, gazed up into her face with a smiling glance, and closing his eyes immediately, lest she should release him, he lay quite still while the men pulled away toward the Ranger, and in that manner they reached her side. His heart was beating wildly; that look had been enough. She was his prisoner-but her captor was captured!

CHAPTER III

A Gentle Pirate

Eager eyes on the ship had noted the every movement of the whaleboat as she drew near the Ranger. Old Price saw that a whip and a boatswain's chair had been rigged on the main-yardarm to swing his passengers on board. The sight of the dangling rope awakened a fresh fit of apprehension on the part of the timorous maid, and it was with great difficulty that the amused seaman persuaded her that she was not to be hanged outright. Entirely unconvinced, but resigning herself to her fate, she finally sat down on the small board and was swung to the gangway.

Her mistress gently laid the head of the prostrate officer against one of the thwarts, and, leaving the handkerchief as a rest for it, followed the maid. Then the old coxswain secured the lieutenant to the chair, and when he had reached the deck, where he opened his eyes and recovered consciousness with incredible promptness, the boat was dropped astern, the falls hooked on, and she was smartly run up to her place at the davits, and the Ranger filled away. O'Neill was at once assisted below to his cabin, and his wounds, which were not serious, were attended to by the surgeon.

When the young woman joined her maid on the deck, her glance comprehended a curious picture. In front of her, hat in hand, bowing low before her, stood a small, dapper, swarthy, black-avised, black-haired man, in the blue uniform of a naval officer. He had the face of a scholar and a student, with the bold, brilliant, black eyes of a fighter. Surrounding him were other officers and several young boys similarly dressed. Scattered about in various parts of the ship, as their occupation or station permitted, were a number of rude, fierce, desperate-looking men, nondescript in apparel. None of the navies of the world at that date, except in rare instances, uniformed its men. On either side of the deck black guns protruded through the ports, and here and there a marine, carrying a musket and equipped in uniform of white and green, stood or paced a solitary watch.

"I bid you welcome to my ship, madam; so fair a face on a war-vessel is as grateful a sight as the sun after a squall," said the officer, elaborately bowing.

"Sir," said the young woman, trembling slightly, "I am a person of some consideration at home. My guardian will cheerfully pay you any ransom if you spare me. I am a woman and alone. I beg you, sir, to use me kindly;" she clasped her hands in beseeching entreaty, her beautiful eyes filling with tears.

At this signal the fears of the maid broke out afresh, and she plumped down on her knees and grasped the captain around the legs, bawling vociferously, and adding a touch of comedy to the scene.

"Oh, sir, for the love of Heaven, sir, don't make us walk the plank!" It would seem that the maid had been reading romances.

The seamen near enough to hear and see grinned largely at this exhibition, and the captain, with a deep flush and a black frown on his face, struggled to release himself.

"Silence, woman!" he cried fiercely, at last. "Get up from your knees, or, by Heaven, I will have you thrown overboard; and you, madam, for what do you take me?"

"Are you not a-a pirate, sir?" she answered, hesitating. "They told me on the ship that you-"

"No pirate am I," interrupted the man, proudly, laying his hand on his sword. "I am an officer, and, with these gentlemen, am in the service of the United States of America, the new Republic-this is the American Continental ship Ranger. You are as safe with us as you would be in your own parlor at home. Safer, in fact; there you would be surrounded by servants; here are men who would die to prevent harm coming to you- Is it not so, gentlemen?"

A deep chorus of "Ay, ay's" rang through the air. The captain continued with sudden heat, -

"Fore God, madam, I don't understand how you could insult me with an offer of money!"

"Oh, sir," said the girl, visibly relieved, "they told me that you were a pirate, and would murder us all. Are you not-"

"Captain John Paul Jones, at your service, madam," interrupted the little officer, with another bow, thrusting his hand in his bosom.

"Yes," said the young woman; "they said it would be you. Why, every news-letter in the land describes you as-as-"

"Pirate, madam, say it; you have not hesitated to speak the word heretofore. A rebel-a traitor-a pirate," he said, throwing up his head proudly, – "'tis a penalty which one pays for fighting for freedom; but you, at least, shall be able to speak unequivocally as to our character, for I pledge you my word you shall take no harm from us, though I doubt not my young gentlemen here will be raked fore and aft by the batteries of your bright eyes. Now will you vouchsafe me your name and some of your story, that I may know with whom I have to do?"

"My name is Howard, sir, – Elizabeth Howard," replied the girl, brightening as her fears diminished. "I am the ward of Admiral Lord Westbrooke, the governor of Scarborough Castle. I have no father nor mother."

"Another claim upon our consideration, ma'am."

"Sir, I thank you. I was going to visit friends in Liverpool when that unfortunate ship there was wrecked. Oh, what will become of me now?" she exclaimed, her eyes filling with tears again.

"Liverpool lies in our way, Mistress Howard, and 'twill give me great pleasure to land you upon some convenient point on the coast in a few days if the wind hold, and no mischance arise; and now may I present my officers to you, since we are to be fellow-passengers all."

Upon receiving the desired permission from the grateful girl, in whose pale cheek the color began to come again, the captain, who was a great stickler for etiquette, brought forward the little group of officers and introduced them one by one. There was much bowing and courtesying on the quarter-deck, which even the seamen seemed to enjoy.

"This is all, I believe," said the captain, having stopped with the smallest midshipman, who announced himself in his boyish treble, in comical imitation of his elders, as, "vastly honored, madam."

"The gentleman who brought me here?" questioned the girl, blushing faintly; "I trust he is not seriously injured?"

"Ah!" replied Jones, "my first lieutenant, Mr. Barry O'Neill, a volunteer with us, and an officer in the service of his most Christian Majesty, my friend, the King of France." On the ship O'Neill had elected to sink his marquise.

"He is not much hurt, Mistress Howard, only battered about a bit and pulled down by the nervous shock and efforts he underwent-why, here he is now! Did I not warn you, sir, to stay below?" said the doctor, shaking his finger, as O'Neill, pale and languid, with his head bound up, came slowly up the companion-way.

"Oh, I am all right, doctor," said the lieutenant, rather weakly, but smiling with the audacity and gallantry of his race as he spied the girl. "Who would stay below with divinity on the deck? The thought of the presence of this lady above him would lift a crusader from his tombstone."

"Allow me to present you in due form to Mistress Howard, Mr. O'Neill," said the captain, somewhat severely, evidently very desirous of observing the proprieties now.

"Sir," said the young girl, looking gratefully at the Irishman out of her violet eyes, "I have to thank you for a most gallant rescue, made doubly hard by my perversity and foolish apprehension, which this gentleman," bowing to the flattered captain, "has most kindly removed."

"'Twas a pleasure to serve you, madam. May I continue to enjoy it. We would sink another ship for such another chance," said the Irishman, lightly.

"Now I propose to give up one of my cabins to Mistress Howard and her maid," said the captain; "and I presume that she will need to rest after the exciting incidents of the day until supper is served. If you are able, Mr. O'Neill, I should like to have you join us there, with Mistress Howard's permission, of course, since the ship is hers." He smiled toward her, and when he smiled he was irresistible.

"I am honored, sir," replied the girl, graciously. "And I thank you. Captain, I shall be delighted," continued the young lady, laying her hand in his own, as he led her aft to the cabin door in the break of the poop. Before she entered, she turned and made a graceful courtesy; her glance swept toward the young lieutenant-O'Neill from that moment was no longer a captive-he was a slave.

"Gentlemen, good-afternoon," she said, comprehending them in one brilliant look, and smiling again-it was enough; that glance had given O'Neill any number of rivals.

CHAPTER IV

Enter Major Coventry

Three days later the *Ranger*, under all plain sail, in a gentle breeze, was slowly ploughing along through the Irish Sea, off the English coast, near the mouth of the Mersey. The whaleboat, manned by six of the smartest seamen, armed with cutlass and pistol, and dressed in their best clothes, old Price being coxswain again, was just being made ready. The ship was presently hove to, and a side ladder was dropped overboard at the gangway where Miss Elizabeth Howard and her maid were standing waiting for the lowering of the whaleboat, and around which the officers of the deck speedily congregated.

They were a sorrowful lot of men, these impressionable sailors, for O'Neill was not alone in his captivity. True to his promise, Captain Jones had shifted his course, and was about to land his fair passenger. He had chosen to put her ashore upon a rocky beach four or five miles away from a fort at Birkenhead, which guarded the mouth of the river which gave entrance to the harbor, not caring to venture his ship in any closer proximity to the fortifications and the war-vessels probably in the river. It was a risky performance at best, but he trusted to the known speed of the *Ranger* and his own seamanship to effect his escape in case the ship should be discovered and pursued in force.

Once on shore, it would not be a difficult matter for the lady and her maid to procure a conveyance to take them to the city a little farther inland. The melancholy duty of landing the two women, by special request, had been allotted to the first lieutenant, much to the disgust of the various midshipmen who conceived that the matter of taking charge of boats appertained more properly to one of their number.

The farewells were soon spoken by the grateful girl to the officers, who had done their very best in making the days pass pleasantly and lightening the tedium of the voyage, and to the captain, who had been kindness and consideration itself. The young lieutenant, still somewhat pale from his adventure, had clothed himself in a handsome full-dress uniform, and, with a splendidly jewelled sword swinging by his side, came on deck from his cabin, the envy of all the others.

The ship had been hove to, the accommodation ladder shipped, the whaleboat was lying at the gangway now, and the three passengers at once took their places in the stern.

"See Miss Howard safely landed, Mr. O'Neill," said the solicitous captain, leaning over the rail, "and assure yourself, as far as possible, of her ability to reach the town without harm, and then return at once; in any event, do not leave the beach. We will watch you, sir."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered O'Neill. "Shove off-out oars-give way!" and the little boat at once shot away from the side, and, under the impetus given by the watchful men, dashed toward the not distant shore.

Miss Howard should have been radiantly happy at leaving the *Ranger*, and in her proximity to Liverpool, where she was about to meet not only friends and family connections, but one who was destined to be something more. This person was Major Edward Coventry, a gallant and distinguished young officer, the son and heir of her guardian, Lord Westbrooke, and to whom for many years-from infancy, in fact-she had been betrothed. But an unaccountable tinge of sadness hovered over her lovely face, though she strove to conceal it under an affectation of lightness and gaiety.

As for O'Neill, he made no effort whatever to hide his misery. The impressionable young Irishman had fallen deeply in love with Elizabeth Howard. He had fallen in love a thousand times before, but not in this way; and the heart which had withstood the successful assaults of the brilliant beauties of the gay court of France had literally succumbed at the first sight of this beautiful English girl whom benignant fortune had thrown across his path.

She, and she only, was his fate, then and thereafter. A new and hitherto unknown feeling had been excited in his heart at the sight of her. In that hour in the boat when he lay with his head upon her

knee, when he had looked up at her, heaven had opened before his gaze, and to his disordered fancy she had seemed an angel. Each passing moment discovered in her a new charm, and he loved her with the impetuosity of a boy, the doting passion of an old man, and the consecration of a devotee.

With the daring of his race, he had not hesitated to acquaint the girl with his passion, either, though it was stale news to her; there is nothing a woman discovers more quickly and more certainly than the feelings of a man who loves her. That she had laughed at his ardor had not in the least deterred him from persisting in his attentions, which she had not found unwelcome, for he thoroughly understood the value of determined pursuit. She had told him that they were like two ships sailing the great sea, whose paths happened to cross for a moment. They meet, nod to each other, and pass on; the deep swallows them up, and they see each other no more forever.

He had vowed and protested that it would not be so; that England was a little country and Admiral Westbrooke a great man; that she could not be anywhere without attracting the attention of the world, – she could by no means hide her light; that he would withdraw from the American service, which he could honorably do at the expiration of the present cruise, and search the whole island until he found her, – all of which was pleasant for her to hear, of course, though it elicited no more favorable reply. She was attracted to the young man: his handsome person, his cultured mind, his charming manners were such that no one-no woman, that is-could be indifferent to them; but she did not love him, at least not yet.

Elizabeth Howard was a woman to make a man fall desperately in love with her, and many men had done so. She was tall and graceful, golden-haired, blue-eyed, and of noble presence. She was proud, she was wise, she was witty, she was tender, she was contemplative, she was gay, she was sad, she was joyous, in different moods. Days, years even, could not exhaust the charms of her infinite variety, though far down beneath the surface of her nature were the quiet deeps of constancy and devotion, – what plummet could sound them, who should discover them? There was about her that indefinable air of one born for homage and command which speaks of generations to whom have been accorded honor and place unquestioned.

It was not a long row to the land; and as they approached the rugged coast, the young lieutenant eagerly scanned the shore for a landing-place. Steering around a little promontory which hid them from the Ranger, he discovered a stretch of sandy beach under its lee, and the boat was sent in its direction until the keel grated on the soft sand. It was a lonely spot, a little stretch of sand ending inland, and on one side in precipitous rocks over which a wandering pathway straggled unevenly to the heights above. The other end of the beach gave entrance, through a little opening, or pass in the rocks, upon a country road which wandered about inland, losing itself under some trees a mile or so away.

On the rocky promontory back of, and at one end of the beach, there was a small lighthouse; and several miles from the beach in the other direction, at the end of the road probably, was a castle or fort, the flag floating lazily from the staff indicating that it was garrisoned. Springing lightly from the boat, O'Neill stepped recklessly into the water alongside. Miss Howard rose to her feet and looked anxiously about her.

"Allow me," said O'Neill; and then, without waiting for permission, he lifted her gently in his arms and carried her to the shore. "Would that all the earth were water, and that I might carry you forever," he said, as he put her down upon the sand.

"You would not like heaven, then?" she replied, jesting.

"I find my present experience of it delightful, madam; but why do you say that?" he asked anxiously.

"Because there, we are told, there will be no more sea!" she answered with well-simulated gayety.

"'Tis a poor place for a sailor, then," he replied gravely, in no mood for badinage, "and I fear few of them will get there."

Price, who had followed his officer's example with the maid, now stepped up to him for his orders, necessarily interrupting the conversation.

"Price," he said to that intrepid old sailor, "you may go back to the boat and shove off, and keep her under the lee of that little point until I call you. Keep a sharp lookout, too."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the old sailor, turning to fulfil the command.

"Now I suppose the time has come for me to say good-bye to Lieutenant O'Neill," said Elizabeth.

"Oh, not yet, Miss Howard; I cannot leave you here alone until I know that you are safe."

"But your duty, sir?"

"A gentleman's, a sailor's, first duty is always toward a helpless woman, especially if she is-

"His prisoner, you would say, I suppose?" she said, interrupting hastily. That was not at all what he had intended to say, but he let it pass.

"You know who is prisoner, now and forever, Miss Howard."

"If you refer to Lieutenant O'Neill, I will release him now and forever as well, at once, sir," she said archly.

"You cannot."

"As you will, sir," she replied; "but as I happen to see several horsemen coming down the road yonder, I imagine you will not be detained from your ship a very long time. Let us go forward to meet them; perhaps they can give us some information."

The horsemen, evidently an officer and two orderlies who were galloping toward the beach, at this moment noticed the boat party and probably the Ranger itself. They reined in their horses at once, and the officer apparently gave some directions to one of the others, for he saluted, turned his horse about in the road, and galloped rapidly back in the direction of the castle. The officer then trotted hastily forward, followed by the remaining man, and looking intently ahead of him until he reached the vicinity of the little group, he dismounted, and handing the bridle to the soldier, bade him wait where he was. He came forward fearlessly, with one hand on his sword, the other holding a pistol which he had taken from the holster. He was a young and handsome man in a new and brilliant scarlet uniform.

CHAPTER V

Swords are Crossed on the Sand

"Lady Elizabeth, you here?" he exclaimed, stopping short in great surprise, when he was near enough to recognize them. "What is the meaning of this?" He stood a moment as if petrified, and then came nearer. "Who is this person?" he demanded imperiously. Elizabeth started violently.

"Major Coventry! Edward!" she cried.

"Are you a 'Lady,' madam?" said O'Neill, in equal surprise, addressing the astonished girl and paying no attention to the officer.

"For what else do you take her, sir?" interrupted the officer, bristling with indignation.

"Faith, sir, I would take her 'for better or worse,' an I could," replied the Irishman, smiling.

"Unfortunately for you, that is a privilege I propose to exercise myself," said the Englishman, sternly.

"The world will doubtless share my regret, sir," said the Irishman, audaciously, a bitter pang in his breast at this unlooked for news.

"Now I wish to know who you are and how you come here and what you are doing, – an explanation, sir!" asked the officer.

"I am not accustomed to give explanations save to those who have the right to demand them," replied O'Neill.

"I have two rights, sir."

"They are?"

"First, I am betrothed to this young lady," said the officer. "Second, this," laying his hand upon his sword.

"Either of these may be sufficient from your point of view, neither of them from mine. As to the first, I refer you to the young lady herself: I will have it from her own lips, or not at all; as to the second, you will see I have a similar right of my own."

"Will you, Lady Elizabeth," said the young officer, addressing her formally, "have the goodness to inform me how you came here and who this person is, or shall I force the knowledge from him?"

"If you wish him to have the information, Miss Howard, you would, I think, better give it him. Otherwise I do not see how he is to get it," said O'Neill, grimly, his dark face flushing with anger.

"This gentleman," said the girl, faintly, pointing to the officer, "is Major Edward Coventry, the son of my guardian, Admiral Westbrooke."

"And your betrothed, Elizabeth; you forget that," added Coventry.

"I almost wish I could," she replied sharply, gathering courage. "You remind me of it too constantly for it to be pleasant, and at no time so inopportunistically as at the present."

The Englishman, in great astonishment and perturbation, opened his mouth to speak, but he was interrupted by the quicker Irishman.

"Why so, Mistress Howard?"

"Lady Elizabeth, if you please, sir," said Coventry.

"Lady Elizabeth, then. I thank you, sir, for the reminder," answered O'Neill, suavely. "Your friends on the Ranger are all interested in your welfare, and I am sure they are glad in my person to meet with and congratulate the fortunate gentleman who aspires to your hand." He smiled bitterly at her as he spoke.

"Will you tell me or not, Lady Elizabeth, who this person is and how you came here?" said Coventry, impatiently, with mounting choler at all this by-play.

"This is a lieutenant of the American Continental ship Ranger, Captain John Paul Jones-

"The d-d, murdering pirate!" exclaimed Coventry, hotly.

"Stop!" cried O'Neill, stepping forward with his hand upon his sword. "You shall neither swear before a lady, nor shall you in this scandalous manner disparage the ship of which I have the honor to be the first lieutenant, nor asperse the character of her captain. Withdraw your words, or you shall answer to me with that which hangs by your side."

"I fight only with gentlemen," said Coventry, coldly.

"My custom," replied O'Neill, promptly, "is in the main the same as your own; but I sometimes make exceptions, which I am willing to do in this instance. I require you immediately, instantly, to apologize to me for your remarks."

"And if I refuse?"

"I shall strike them down your throat with my hand."

"S death, sir! How dare you, a beggarly adventurer, talk thus to me, an officer, a major in the army of his Gracious Majesty King George, a Coventry, a Westbrooke!"

"If you were an angel from heaven 'twould make no difference to me, for I would have you know, sir, that I am of as good a house as-ay, a better than-your own, a descendant of kings-

"An Irishman, I infer?" said Coventry, sneering.

"You are correct, sir, and my people have been chieftains for thirty generations."

"Ah, in Ireland?" The manner of the question made it another insult, but O'Neill restrained himself under the great provocation and answered coldly:

"Where else, sir, and where better? As for me, I am temporarily an officer of yonder ship, the Ranger, flying the flag of the American Republic, but I am a lieutenant in the navy of his Majesty Louis XVI. My father is a marshal of France. Will you draw now?" he cried, stepping forward impetuously.

"A brilliant array of titles surely; pity it lacks other confirmation than your word. I scarcely comprehend the catalogue," replied Coventry, coldly.

"I shall endeavor to enlighten you as to my credibility with this," said O'Neill, drawing his sword. "Now will you fight or not?"

"And if I persist in my refusal?" asked Coventry, who was playing for time.

"At this juncture I shall be under the painful necessity of killing you in the presence of your betrothed, so draw, my dear sir, if not for honor, for-

"What?"

"Life!"

"On guard!" cried the Englishman, whipping out his sword.

"Stop!" cried Elizabeth, springing between their swords. "He saved my life at the risk of his own."

"D-n him!" said the Englishman, grinding his teeth.

"Your condemnation comes too late, sir," said O'Neill, with bitter emphasis, with an expressive glance at Elizabeth, who continued impetuously:

"This gentleman treated me with the most distinguished courtesy."

"I wish that he had exhibited some of it here," interrupted Coventry again.

"I have but followed your own example," retorted O'Neill, calmly.

"Will you hear me in silence, Edward? They are not pirates-"

"I call them so," said Coventry, stubbornly.

"Enough, Lady Elizabeth," said O'Neill, taking his share in the conversation again. "Two lovers are sometimes an embarrassment of riches. This seems to be one of the times. If you will stand aside, I trust that a few moments will rid you of one or the other of them."

"I will not go!" said the girl, defiantly. "You shall not fight; you have nothing to quarrel about."

"We have you, or rather he has," responded the Irishman.

"Withdraw, I beg of you, Elizabeth. This matter must be settled," said Coventry, in his turn.

"I will not, I tell you!" persisted the girl, determinedly. "If you fight, you will fight through me."

"We are doing that now," said O'Neill, savagely. "Will you withdraw, madam?"

"I repeat it, I will not, and I wish to remind you that I do not like your tone. You are not on the deck of your ship now, sir."

"Oh, am I not? Boat ahoy, there! Price," cried O'Neill, waving his hand. A few strokes brought the whaleboat to the shore again. The crew were eager to take a hand in the fray. "Coxswain, come here," said the officer.

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the sailor; and while the other two stood wondering, the veteran seaman rolled up to them and saluted his lieutenant with a sea scrape. "Want us to take a hand in this yere little scrimmage, yer Honor?"

"No. Take this lady and her maid to that clump of rocks yonder."

"That's easy; 'tain't no fightin' at all, that. Come along, yer Laddyship," said the old man, in great disappointment, as the boat shoved off again.

"You monster!" cried Elizabeth, stamping her foot on the sand. "You are a pirate, after all!"

"As you say, madam. Stop, sir!" said O'Neill to Coventry, who made a move to approach the sailor. "My man will do no harm to her Ladyship, and you have other matters to attend to, unless you wish to shelter yourself behind a woman's petticoats."

Coventry had been playing for more time, but this was more than he could stand. "I think you have said enough, sir, and if you are ready," he said, "we will talk in another fashion."

"At your service," said the Irishman, composedly. Two swords flashed in the air simultaneously, and rang against each other with deadly purpose a moment after. Both men were masters of the weapon. Coventry had been thoroughly trained in the more direct English school; while O'Neill was a master of all the graceful tricks of the subtle fence of France and Italy. It was as pretty a play-parry and thrust-as one could hope to see, and for a time the advantage was with neither one of them. Elizabeth stood with clasped hands, her face pale with emotion, her lips parted, eagerly watching. The maid as usual was furnishing a comic side to the scene by her screams of "murder-help!" while the sailors were deeply interested in the two combatants.

Finally, after one especially vicious thrust on the part of Coventry, whose foot slipped a little, a clever parry, followed by a dashing *riposte en quarte*, which was met and returned with less skill than usual, O'Neill, with a graceful turn of the wrist, whirled the Englishman's sword from his hand. It flew up into the air and fell clanging on the rocks some distance away.

Coventry was unarmed and helpless before a bitter enemy. He was the stronger of the two, and it flashed into his mind to spring upon his antagonist suddenly, catch him in his arms, and overcome him by brute force; but the glittering point of his enemy's sword, shivering in the sunlight like a serpent's tongue, effectively barred the way. He had played the game and lost. If he must die in the presence of his love, he would do it like a gentleman, on the sword's point.

"Strike, sir!" he said hoarsely, with one quick glance toward Lady Elizabeth, who stood perfectly motionless, looking on in terror. She would have run forward had it not been for old Price.

"Oh, he will be killed, he will be killed!" wailed the maid.

"Sir Englishman, pick up your sword," said O'Neill, lowering his point.

"Sir Irishman," said the other, bowing, "men may call you pirate-"

"Not with impunity, sir," interrupted the touchy O'Neill.

"That I grant you. I was about to add that, whatever they call you, you fight like a gentleman; and it will give me great pleasure to testify to your personal worth at every convenient season. Will you permit me, though I do not know your name, to call you my friend?"

There is a great educational value in the point of a naked sword, and it may account for the sudden change which came over Coventry.

"I shall esteem myself honored, sir. My name is O'Neill, Barry O'Neill, at your service."

"I shall remember it. You have not only saved the life of Lady Elizabeth Howard, but now you have given me my own."

"Thus am I the prince of match-makers," said O'Neill, bitterly. "I would that I had lost mine in one of the savings!"

"Now, sir," continued Coventry, disregarding this last remark, "if you would be advised by me, withdraw while you may yet do so in safety."

CHAPTER VI

The Master Player takes a Hand

At this moment, a number of red-coated soldiers clambered down the path in the rocks, while a squad of cavalry came galloping upon the beach by the road at the other end, and, at once dismounting, advanced up the strand. The seamen in the boat, in obedience to a wave of O'Neill's hand, swept her in toward the shore, jumped out, and moved toward him, drawing their cutlasses and handling their pistols threateningly; though they were greatly outnumbered, they would not give up without a struggle. It was Coventry's opportunity now.

"I shall not be able to indulge your desire for the loss of your life," he said, stepping back and picking up his sword, "but I fear that duty imposes upon me the necessity of depriving you of your liberty-I regret the necessity, believe me, 'tis a poor return for your generosity, but I have no option."

"What mean you?"

"You are, by your own statements, a rebel against his Majesty. It is my duty as commander of this post and a loyal servant of the king to apprehend you. Indeed, I have been especially charged to look out for you. I will promise you and your men the best of treatment, however, and you liberty of action, if you will give me your parole."

"I am twice captured then, it seems," said the lieutenant, looking at Elizabeth, who had come forward as soon as old Price, who had left her, had sprung to his officer's side. As the girl drew near to him, and Major Coventry turned away his head a moment to give an order, the Irishman said to her:

"Why did you not call out to save your lover a moment since?"

"It was not necessary," she said, looking at him with eyes filled with tears. "I knew what you would do." Delay was dangerous to him, – Coventry was posting his men; he hesitated a moment, however, and taking her hand bowed low over it.

"Thank you," he whispered gratefully. "This word, and you, I shall remember."

"And I," said the girl, her eyes filling with tears, "will never forget-"

"Come, sir," said Coventry, dryly, turning at this moment, having finished his dispositions. "I think you overstep the privileges of a parole; and if you will have your men lay down their arms, we will go up to the castle. I have sent for a carriage for you, Elizabeth, which will be here shortly."

"Do you know," said O'Neill, "that I have a mind to say to you that I might as well die right here as at any place else, and I do not think I shall go to that castle, after all. There are seven of us here-"

"Close in there!" sharply shouted Coventry to his soldiers, who obeyed him promptly. "Make ready!"

"Handle your pistols, men," cried the other, whipping out his own; but again Elizabeth interfered in the fray. She ran between the American seamen and the English soldiers with outstretched hands.

"Stop!" she cried. "There must be no further fighting here. This gentleman came to this spot to do me a favor, to set me free. My life is his-"

"I give it back to you," cried O'Neill.

"And yours, Major Coventry, was his also," she added reproachfully.

"I give it to him as well; and if any more lives are wanted, anybody can have mine for the taking," interrupted the sailor again.

"This must go no further," continued the girl.

"And it shall not, madam," cried a deep, clear voice, as one of the cutters of the *Ranger*, filled to the gunwales with heavily armed men, and with a swivel in the bow and a man standing over it with a lighted match in his hand, came sweeping around the headland and dashing in toward the shore. It was under the command of Jones himself, who had grown impatient at the delay.

"I am sorry to interrupt a *tête-à-tête*, gentlemen," he cried.

"You are beaten again, Major Coventry," said O'Neill, calmly. "The odds are in our favor now. Throw down your arms instantly, you dogs," he shouted to the English soldiers. "Back! Out of the way, Miss Howard."

He sprang to her side, and clasping her around the waist as if she had been a child, lifted her out of the line of fire. The jealous Coventry noticed two things, – he did not release her, nor did she struggle to get away. The sullen soldiers rallied about Coventry and presented their arms threateningly; they had no mind either to yield without a fight.

"Stand by!" shouted Jones to the marines in his boat and to the gunners forward.

"Stop, for God's sake stop, Captain Jones! You have been good to me," cried Elizabeth, now struggling faintly to escape from the grasp of O'Neill. "I know that you are a gentleman. That officer is my betrothed. Withhold your fire. They will retire. There must be no blood shed. You promised to set me free and in safety ashore and leave me there. Go, I entreat you!"

"Steady, lads, steady!" cried Jones, stepping out of the boat. "And you, sir," to the English officer, "will you withdraw quietly, taking your lady with you, of course, if we engage to do the same? You are outnumbered, and we can cut you to pieces. Take the word of an older fighter, your honor will be safe, sir."

"You are right, sir, 'tis best. I must needs submit, I suppose," said Coventry, resigning himself the more gracefully to the inevitable as he could then receive his love again. "Come, Lady Elizabeth."

"Now, why didn't you protest when I was captured?" said O'Neill, releasing her waist, but still holding her hand.

"Could it be because I wanted you to be with me?" she whispered, caught off her guard in spite of herself, with a blush covering her face.

"God bless you for that, and good-bye," he said, bowing over her hand. "A year, give me a year-" he turned and walked away.

"Sir," said Coventry, sheathing his sword, and walking down to where Jones stood upon the sand, "we have been misinformed concerning you. I have had a little interview with your first lieutenant which has convinced me that I was wrong, and this talk has added to my knowledge. As an officer of the king, I offer you my hand. Whatever your political or personal affiliations may be, I am glad to recognize in you gentlemen of merit and distinction. I trust to be able to repay the obligation you have laid upon me and my betrothed on some future occasion. We are friends?"

"Sir," replied Jones, "I love a gallant foe. I shall remember you. I thank you for your courtesy."

"And I as well," added O'Neill.

"It is not the practice of the American Navy," continued Jones, "to force ships of war and bloody battles between loving hearts. Mistress Howard, fare you well; the Ranger, her officers and crew, are yours if you wish. If we should be met by another ship with you in command, we strike to you without a blow."

"Elizabeth," said Coventry, magnanimously, "can you not bid your friends good-bye?"

"I shall ever remember Captain John Paul Jones," said Lady Elizabeth, stepping forward and giving the little captain her hand to kiss, "and I shall never forget Lieutenant O'Neill."

"Will you wait one year for him?" he whispered as he bowed low over her hand.

"Come and see," she answered, and turned away.

BOOK II

THEY MEET AGAIN

CHAPTER VII

After a Long Time

"There are only two men-of-war in the whole lot."

"Right, yer Honor. That 'un near the shore there-away looks like a big frigate. That'll be the Serapis, I'm thinkin'."

"Yes, and that one further out, the Scarborough."

"Ay, ay, sir, an' all the rest on 'em is merchantmen. There ain't a gun on board any on 'em. Nice pickin's them'll be fer us poor sailormen arter we dispose of them war-vessels. Dash my wig! jist think of them fat traders, an' we a-rummagin' among 'em--"

"That will do, Price. Just moderate your transports a little," said the officer, stepping forward to the brow of the hill and taking another long look at the harbor.

"I ain't no transport," muttered the garrulous old man under his breath. "I won't carry no soldiers nowhere. I'm a man-o'-war, I am;" but he took good care that his superior should not hear these somewhat insubordinate remarks.

"Well," said the other, finally turning about after his close scrutiny, "I think we have ascertained about all we have come for. They are the Baltic convoy, without doubt, and you would better make a straight course for the ship at once and report."

"An' you, sir?" asked the old man, respectfully, "won't you come along, sir? I hate to cut cable an' leave you here adrift, alone, yer Honor."

"No," answered the officer, after a reflective pause, "I think I shall go up to that castle on the bluff beyond and find out a little more definitely as to the situation, if possible. Meanwhile, do you get on your horse and ride back to Bridlington Bay. Go aboard the Alert and tell Mr. Lunt, from me, to join the Richard to the southward at once, and notify Captain Jones of what we have seen. Tell him I think it will be perfectly safe for him to come on: there is a great fleet of merchant ships here with only two ships-of-war; he will rejoice at the chance of a fair fight. I will find means to join him at the rendezvous before the rest of the ships can assemble and they can get under way. Now bear a hand; don't let the grass grow under your keel."

"Oh, Lord, yer Honor, have I got to git on board that 'ere four-legged craft agin?" said old Price, ruefully.

"That's what you have to do, my lad," remarked the officer, cheerfully.

"Seems like somethin's wrong with him," said the old sailor. "A animal wot steers by the head is contrary like to natur. Now if I could only git him to go about on t'other tack, or wear him, by shiftin' his tail, I'd understand him perfectly; but this yere tiller rope riggin' over his bows is wot gits me. An', sir, I can't make out with them 'ere stirrups nuther; it's like hangin' onto the yard-arm in a tossin' sea without no foot ropes. Howsomever, if I must, I must, I guess."

"Oh, you won't mind it," replied the officer, laughing at the old man's rueful face. "Besides, the wind's fair, and you'll be going free most of the way. Just give him a touch of your weather heel once in a while, and you'll soon make the harbor."

"I never thought about the wind," said the veteran gunner, thoughtfully, his face brightening as he turned and listened for it. "Yer Honor's right. 'Twill be plain sailin'. Well, sir, anchor's aweigh, an' here goes!"

The old seaman, giving great evidence of his disinclination in spite of the favoring breeze, at last climbed upon the back of his staid old horse, and, resisting the temptation to give him his direction by a pull of the tail, got under way and lurched rapidly down the road. Left to himself, the lieutenant mounted his own horse-surprising to state, for a sailor he was an excellent horseman-and rode down toward the sleeping town nestled around Scarborough harbor, which was filled with a large fleet of merchant ships convoyed by two men-of-war, all riding quietly at their anchors.

Opposite the acclivity on which the two men had stood, and to the north of the town, rose a bold, splendid headland, or scar, almost an island, to the height of about three hundred feet. The rugged crest was crowned by a picturesque old castle. The headland jutted boldly out into the sea, and the wild waters dashed upon its walls from every side. Access to the castle from the town was by means of a causeway and bridge springing over a rocky and otherwise impassable connection between the cliff and the mainland, which was sometimes flooded at high-tide.

Portions of the castle were in bad repair, or had been dismantled in the several wars in which it had played a memorable part since its erection nearly seven hundred years before by a follower of William the Conqueror; but a large part of it was still inhabitable, and had been provided with a sufficient garrison. A heavy water battery, which had been placed in position during the rebellion in 1745, had been recently strengthened and reinforced.

Captain Jones, in the *Bon Homme Richard*, had been cruising around the coasts of the British Islands for some time. He had heard of the expected arrival of the Baltic fleet in these waters, and had presumed that they would make Scarborough harbor. Word had been received from a small trader he had overhauled, that a large number of ships had assembled in that harbor; and in order to ascertain whether he might safely attack them with his small nondescript squadron, he had accepted the voluntary services of Lieutenant O'Neill, seconded by gunner Price of the *Bon Homme Richard*.

They had gone on ahead of the squadron in the cutter *Alert*, and had landed below Scarborough headland, and ridden on to Scarborough to ascertain the facts. The *Alert* was to carry the news back to Jones, on the *Richard*, farther down the coast, and the vessels of his squadron were all to assemble a day or two later at Bridlington Bay, a small and unimportant town with a good harbor within easy reaching distance of the expected prey. Should the report of the scouts be favorable, they would proceed at once to attack the convoy.

On their journey to Scarborough, O'Neill had ascertained from a passing countryman that Lord Westbrooke was still governor of the castle, and he at once surmised that Lady Elizabeth Howard would probably be there with her guardian. Six months more than the year he had asked for from her had elapsed, and many untoward circumstances had prevented him from carrying out his plan of seeking her, but she had ever been in his heart, and time and separation had but intensified his passion. The mercurial Irishman had been deeply smitten by the proud English beauty, and the constancy of his devotion evidenced the depth of the impression she had made upon him.

When Jones had returned with the *Ranger* from his first successful cruise, he and his officers had been fêted and made much of by the French court. The gallant adventures in which he had participated lent a new charm to the fascinating personality of the son of the old marshal, whose entrée was already everything that could be desired; and his heart, accordingly, had been a target for repeated attacks upon the part of the bright-eyed and fascinating dames of France-but to no avail had they attempted its capture.

Something of the story of his devotion had been allowed to leak out, however, to account for his obduracy, and they finally understood why he was so unusually insensible to their charms. This romance naturally only added a piquancy to the feminine pursuit of which he was the object, although the ladies' sportive love chase proved, in the end, unavailing. He had resolved, O'Neill said, to show the world that unusual spectacle, a constant Irishman! This was to attempt the impossible, had been the quick reply, but, nevertheless, he had accomplished it.

Our Celtic mariner did not resign from the American service, however, not because he cared particularly for America, for democratic doctrines could never be acceptable to a follower of the young Stuart, the intimate associate of the young nobles of France; but, primarily, because he saw in it renewed opportunities to annoy and humiliate the stout Hanoverian whom he and his people hated, and from whom they had received much harm, and, secondly, because he was so much attracted by the strong personality of Paul Jones. So great had become his regard for this wonderful man that he had even waived considerations of rank in favor of an American, the gallant Richard Dale, and had consented to serve as second lieutenant instead of first, on the *Richard*, when that famous ship and her ill-assorted consorts started forth upon the memorable cruise.

The tacticians of the French Navy unfortunately were not given to consider downright hard fighting as the end and aim of naval enterprise. Their manœuvres were calculated to annoy and harass the enemy, but their first thought was not to destroy his ships, but to protect their own, – a fatal mistake in policy from which they have ever suffered.

This was not John Paul Jones' way. Whatever else he was, he was a fighter from the beginning to the end, and O'Neill found in him a congenial spirit. The love-lorn Irishman had tried several times to communicate with Lady Elizabeth by letter and messenger, but without success, for he received no reply to his letters, and his messengers had never returned. Therefore, when he found himself in such close proximity to her as on this, the evening of Tuesday, the 21st of September, 1779, he was utterly unable to resist the temptation at least to attempt to see her again.

Jones and the ships were not due at the rendezvous until the day after the next day, that would be Thursday morning. There would be ample time to rejoin them on the next day, Wednesday. O'Neill imagined himself perfectly safe; he had used no disguise except to wear the uniform of a French naval officer, and as France and England were nominally at peace, he persuaded himself that he was in no danger. It was a breach of military propriety, he admitted, of course, but nothing more, – this failure to return promptly to his ship, – and for that he was willing to suffer.

With the delightful casuistry of lovers he persuaded himself against his better judgment and failed to see his action in its true military significance. Trusting to audacity, mother wit, and Dan Cupid for protection, he went bravely on. In fact, he was taking his life in his hand. His love blinded him, – it is the chief function of the cherubic god; without that power most matches he attempts would fail. Meanwhile, with a beating heart-beating not from fear, but with anticipation-he rode slowly down the hill and into the town, where he left his horse at an inn, and made his way on foot, and supperless, such his eagerness, toward the castle.

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