The Story of Jack Ballister's Fortunes

by Howard Pyle

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JACK BALLISTER’S FORTUNES

front

“‘SPEAK UP, BOY, SPEAK UP,’ SAID THE GENTLEMAN.” (SEE PAGE 90.)

THE STORY OF JACK BALLISTER’S FORTUNES

BY

HOWARD PYLE

BEING THE NARRATIVE OF THE ADVENTURES OF A YOUNG GENTLEMAN OF GOOD FAMILY, WHO WAS KIDNAPPED IN THE YEAR 1719 AND CARRIED TO THE PLANTATIONS OF THE CONTINENT OF VIRGINIA, WHERE HE FELL IN WITH THAT FAMOUS PIRATE CAPTAIN EDWARD TEACH, OR BLACKBEARD: OF HIS ESCAPE FROM THE PIRATES AND THE RESCUE OF A YOUNG LADY FROM OUT THEIR HANDS

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JACK BALLISTER’S FORTUNES

JACK BALLISTER’S FORTUNES

INTRODUCTION

ONE of the most important problems that confronted the Virginia plantations in the earlier colonial days was the question as to how to obtain sufficient labor to till the soil and to raise tobacco for the English market.

Some of the colonial planters of Virginia owned thousands of acres of the richest tobacco land in the world—whole tracts of virgin earth where the priceless loam lay open to the rain, the air, and the warm sky; bountifully fruitful loam, only waiting for tillage to be coined into vast tobacco fortunes for the princely owners. All that was needed was human labor to dig the earth, to plant, to hoe, to cultivate, and to prepare the tobacco for market, for there was not a hundredth part enough labor to turn the waiting soil, that lay ready to yield at any time its thousands of hogsheads of tobacco, and the question was, where and how labor was to be obtained.

The easiest and quickest solution of the question appeared to be the importation of negro slave labor from Africa.

The introduction of such slave labor began almost in the earliest days of the provinces. Hundreds of shiploads of African negroes were brought across the ocean and set to work digging and hoeing in the tobacco fields, and slave trade became a regular traffic between the west coast of Africa and the Americas.

But the African slaves, when imported, were found only fit to do the very rudest and simplest sort of labor. They were poor, ignorant savages, who, until they were set to work on the plantations, knew almost nothing at all about such labor as was practised by civilized mankind. When they were told to dig the earth, they dug, but they labored without knowing either why they worked or wherefore. They did just as their masters or their overseers bade them, and nothing more. Beyond this they could be taught little or nothing, for not only were those earlier savages like

children, incapable of learning much of anything; but, in most instances, they could not even speak a single word of the language of their masters, and so could not understand what their owners wanted of them. They were of use only to work as a dumb animal might work, and not as white men could work.

So the Virginia plantations were still without that intelligent labor which white men alone could bring to the tilling of the soil; labor that knew what it was about when it dug the earth, and which, when told to do so, could turn its hand to other things that might be required of it. And so it was that every means was used to bring English men and women to the Virginia plantations.

Even in the last part of the seventeenth century those immigrants who afterward developed our great country into what it now is, were beginning to pour into the colonies. But, of this immigrant labor, the best and the most intelligent did not come to Virginia or other of the southern provinces. It drifted to the New England or the Pennsylvania provinces rather than to those in the South. There, in the North, any man could obtain a farm for himself by hewing it out of the wilderness. In Virginia the land was nearly all owned by the great tobacco planters. Hence it was that only the poorest and least ambitious of these white men and women could in the earlier provincial days be induced to go thither, and hence white labor was so much more in demand in the South than in the North.

A certain class of the immigrants of that time were called “redemptioners” or “redemption servants.” They were so called because they had to redeem by their labor the cost of their passage across the ocean from England to America. Upon their arrival in the New World they were sold for a term of years—seven, eight, nine, ten, as the case might be—and the money received from such sale was paid to the ship captain or the merchant who transported them from the Old World to the New. Thus their debt was redeemed, and hence their name.

Those who came thus as redemption servants from England were generally the

poorest and most wretched of its people—paupers, outcasts, criminals—unfortunates who were willing to do almost anything to get away from their surroundings into a new life, where they hoped something better might be in store for them than that wretchedness which they had had to endure at home.

Thousands of such people were sent across the ocean to the Virginia and other plantations, where, poor and miserable as they often were, the demand for them grew ever greater and greater as the wilderness became more and more open to cultivation.

Every year higher and higher prices were paid for such servants, until, at last, a ship-load of redemptioners (provided the voyage across the ocean had been speedy and no contagious disease had developed aboard the vessel) became almost the most profitable cargo exported from England.

When the transportation of servants became thus so remunerative, the crimps who supplied them to merchants or to ship captains were oftentimes tempted, when other means failed, to resort to kidnapping, or man-stealing, to supply the demand.

During the earlier fifty years of the last century, thousands of men, women, and even children were stolen from England and sent away to the Americas, perhaps never to return, perhaps never even to be heard of again. In those days—“The kidnapper will catch you!” were words of terror to frighten children and gadding girls on all the coastways of England.

CHAPTER I

THE AMERICA MERCHANT

HEZEKIAH TIPTON had been a merchant in the America trade for upwards of forty years. He had shipped hundreds of servants to the Americas; they were as much a part of his cargo as tea or broad-cloth or books or silk stuffs.

Maybe he was not always scrupulously careful to know whence came some of the servants he thus transported. He was reasonably honest in his dealings, as the times went, and he would not often buy a servant from a crimp if he knew positively that the crimp had kidnapped the man. But if he was not positively sure, he would not go out of his way to inquire into things that did not concern him. He would either take the servant offered for sale, or else he would not take him; but he would not trouble himself to ask how the crimp obtained the man, or whether the man himself was or was not really willing to emigrate to the colonies.

There was, for instance, a good deal of talk at one time about three men whom Hezekiah had sent to South Carolina. A Dutchman had brought them into the harbor in his lugger. He said that the men desired to emigrate, and Hezekiah, who at that time had a ship just clearing for Charleston, expressed his willingness to pay the captain something for them, if he did not demand too much. Two of the men were stupefied with drink, and the third had a bloody clout wrapped around his head, and was cut and bruised as though he had been beaten with a club or a belaying-pin. It was an evident case of kidnapping, but nevertheless Hezekiah paid the Dutch captain for the men, and had them sent directly aboard the ship. One of the three men was sober the next morning. Hezekiah had come aboard the ship, and as he was rowed away toward the shore the man leaned over the rail above, shouting out curses after the old merchant, swearing that he would certainly come back to England some time and murder him. “You think you’re safe,” bawled the man after the departing boat,—“you think you’re safe! Wait till you feel my knife in your back this day twelve-month—d’ye hear?—then you won’t feel so safe.” The men rowing the boat to the shore grinned and winked at one another. Old Hezekiah sat immovably in the stern, paying no attention to the man’s threats and imprecations, which continued until the captain of the ship knocked him down, and so silenced his outcries.

This affair created, as was said, a good deal of talk at the time.

In the year 1719, beginning in February and ending in November, Hezekiah Tipton sent away to the American colonies or plantations in all over five score servants.

One day early in March, a company of nineteen men who had volunteered to emigrate to the Virginias was brought up from London to meet the brig Arundel at Southampton. They were quartered at the Golden Fish Inn, and during the morning the old America merchant went to look them over. The men were ranged in a row along by the wall of the inn yard, and the old man walked up and down in front of the line, peering at each man with half-shut eyes and wrinkled face, while a few people from the inn stood looking on with a sort of inert interest. He did not seem very well pleased with the appearance of the servants. There were only nineteen, and there should have been one and twenty. The agent explained that there had been twenty-one of them when he wrote from London, but that one of them had run away during the night, and that another would not sign the papers. "'Twas," said he, "as fine, good a young lad of sixteen or eighteen as ever you see. But his mother, methinks it was, comes in crying at the last minute and takes him away from under our werry noses, so to speak." Hezekiah grunted a reply as he walked up and down along the row of grinning, shuffling men, looking them over. The big knotted joints of the old man's fingers gripped the cracked and yellow ivory head of his walking-stick, which he every now and then tapped, tapped on the stones of the court-yard. "That man," said he, in his cracked, querulous voice, poking his walking-stick as he spoke at a lean little man standing in the line—"that man—why did ye bring him? How much d'ye think he'll fetch in the Virginias? I's warrant me not fifteen guineas."

"Why, Master Tipton," said the agent, referring to a slip of paper which he held in his hand, "there you are mightily mistook. Maybe, like enough, that man is worth more than any of 'em. He's a skilled barber and leecher, and a good man he is, and knows his trade, to be sure, and that werry well. Just you think, Master Tipton, how much he might be worth as a vally or body-servant to one of them there Virginia

planters.”

“Humph!” grunted the old man, and he shook his lean head slowly from side to side. “I’ll tell you what it is, Master Dockray,” he said again, after a while, “they be not nigh so good as those I had last—and only nineteen where there should have been one and twenty.” The agent made no answer and the old man continued his inspection for a while. He did not say anything further, and by and by he turned away and, with the agent at his heels, entered the inn to receipt the papers, and with his going the inspection came to an end.

Finally, in making you acquainted with old Hezekiah Tipton, it may be said that he was a notable miser of his time. To see him hobbling along the street in his snuff-colored coat, threadbare at the seams, and here and there neatly patched and darned, one might take him, perhaps, for a poor decent school-teacher of narrow means, but certainly not for one of the richest men in the county, as he was reputed to be. There were a great many stories concerning him in Southampton, many of them doubtless apocryphal, some of them based upon a foundation of truth. One such story was that every Sunday afternoon the old man used to enter into his own room, bolt the door, and spread gold money out on the floor; that he would then strip himself and roll in the yellow wealth as though taking a bath. Another story was that he had three iron chests in the garret of his home, each chest bolted to the floor with iron bolts. That the one chest was full of Spanish doubloons, the second full of French louis d’ors, the third full of English guineas. The Southampton tradesmen used to say that it was more difficult to collect their bills from Hezekiah Tipton than from almost any one in the town.

CHAPTER II

JACK BALLISTER

JACK BALLISTER at this time was a little over sixteen years old, and had now

been living with his uncle Tipton something over two years.

Jack's father at the time of his death had been vicar of Stalbridge for nearly nineteen years, so that Jack, until he had come to Southampton, had never known anything but that part of Wiltshire which immediately surrounded Stalbridge and Stalbridge vicarage. The only other inmates of the vicarage were old Janet, the housekeeper, and a farmer's daughter who helped about the house, and old Giles Cobb, who came up now and then to work in the garden.

There was, by the way, always a singular charm to Jack in the memories of this garden. Some of his earliest recollections were of playing out in the tangled sunny reaches while old Giles bent, with stooping shoulders and rounded back, over his work, digging and planting and picking about at the weeds in the brown, loamy beds. There was a yew hedge, and two bee hives that stood under a cherry tree, and a row of two or three cucumber frames that lay bright and shining, reflecting in their glassy surface the clouds and the warm sky above. There was always an association of flowers, of birds, and of warm yellow sunlight about the tangled, flowery space, and in the years afterwards, when Jack visited the old vicarage, one of the first places he went to was the garden. It looked strangely familiar yet strangely unfamiliar. It seemed more unkempt and uncared for. The birds were singing in the trees over beyond the hedge, but the two straw-thatched bee hives were gone. Nevertheless he could almost fancy that old Giles with his hunched shoulders and his smock frock might at any moment come in through the gate, trundling his squealing wheel-barrow before him.

Jack was not quite four years old when his mother had died. It seemed to him that he could remember her, yet the image he held in his mind might not have been an actual memory, but only some strong association connected with things that Janet had told him about her. Yet it seemed to him that he really did hold a mental impression of her in his memory of early things, an impression of a large, tender,

shadowy figure, dressed in black, and with a white kerchief or shawl around her shoulders. He could almost fancy that he could remember a peculiar fragrance that lingered about the folds of her dress—a fragrance like that of the old lavender chest where Janet kept the house linen. This recollection of his mother might have been only an image conjured up out of what had been told him concerning her, but, as was said, it always seemed as though it were a real and living memory. It is sometimes difficult to tell where fancy ends and memory begins in those broken fragments of recollections of early childhood.

It seemed to him that the same figure was present in the memory of a certain time when he, as a little, little boy, had fallen down the steps and cut his chin. It seemed to him that it was she who had comforted him, singing to him while she scraped a crisp half-apple and fed him with the pulp from the point of a knife. Janet had said that that fall had not happened until the year after his mother's death, but it seemed to Jack that it was his mother's presence that had filled the memory of the accident, and he always felt that maybe it was Janet who was mistaken, and not his own recollections of the trivial event.

He often thought of his mother, as a motherless boy is apt to think of that missing presence, and it seemed to him that if she had only lived he would have loved her very much, and that his life would have been much sweeter to him.

Janet often talked to him about her. His grandmother, Janet told him, had adopted her as a little girl, and had brought her up with her own daughter, who was now Lady Arabella Sutton. She had been, Janet said, more of a companion than a waiting-maid. Of these stories of by-gone times, that children so delight to have told to them, Jack would make Janet tell him most often of the great family quarrel that had happened when his father had told the others that he and Anne Tipton were going to be married. Janet always made the most out of the story, embellishing it more and more as the years passed by, and as her imagination suggested new details.

“Indeed,” she would maybe say, “you should ha’ seen him stand up before your grandmother, as grand as you please, with his arms folded so. ‘A Ballister, madam,’ says he, ‘can marry where he chooses.’”

Jack could not imagine his father as the hero of any such scene, still less could he image him as riding post-haste to Southampton when his mother had been sent away home from Grampton Hall.

He often heard people say that his father was a great scholar. The vicar was always silent and preoccupied, sometimes deep in his books, sometimes scribbling away with a busy pen, a litter of papers scattered all over the floor about him, and his wig pushed back awry from his smooth, round forehead; sometimes walking up and down the garden paths with his hands clasped behind his back, his head bent forward, and his eyes fixed on the ground. He used especially to walk thus while he was formulating in his mind the outlines of one of the pamphlets he used to write. Jack could not imagine that any one so absorbed in his books and his studies could ever have been the hero of such romance. And then he always seemed so very, very old to Jack. It was hard to imagine that such a dry and sapless life could ever have had the ichor of romance flowing through it.

Before Janet had come to Stalbridge she had been one of the dependents of the other Ballisters. “They be grand, grand folks,” she would sometimes say, “and hold their heads as high as ever the Duke of Newcastle himself.” She sometimes told Jack that if his father had not set his family all against him, he might have been a bishop as like as not. “I’d never come to Stalbridge only for your mother, poor soul,” said she. “But she was fond of me, and I was fond of her, and so I came.”

It seemed to Jack that he could hardly remember the time when his father did not teach him Latin and Greek. One of his first recollections as a little, little boy was of his father teaching him the Greek alphabet. He learned little or nothing else than the two languages, and it is not likely that his father thought anything else was worth

learning. Jack once overheard the vicar say to old Sir Thomas Harding, “Sir, I will make the boy the best scholar in England.” The words remained fixed in Jack’s memory as such fragmentary speeches do sometimes fix themselves, for no especial reason, in the mind of boyhood. The promise of great scholarship was, however, never to be fulfilled, for Jack was only fourteen years old when the vicar died, and in the neglected two years at Southampton he never went to school a day, or studied six words of a lesson, or read a page of Greek or Latin, except one or two times when Mr. Stetson made him read a passage or two of Greek as a matter of curiosity.

Jack’s father never said anything to him about his mother or his relations. His uncle Tipton had come up from Southampton just before his father’s death, but that was the only time that Jack had ever really seen one of his own kindred.

During the fall of the year in which Jack’s father had died, a messenger on horseback, with great jackboots and a suit of green livery turned up with scarlet, rode up to the vicarage and delivered a packet to Janet, who presently brought it in to the vicar, where he sat in the sagging wainscoted study, writing in the midst of a litter of papers scattered on the floor. The vicar set his pen in his mouth and took the letter, and Jack watched him as he broke the great red seal and began reading the packet, now and then frowning, either in the effort of reading the written words or else at the purport of the words themselves. When he had finished the letter he laid it to one side and resumed his writing where it had been interrupted. The messenger who had brought the letter did not immediately go away. Jack could hear now and then the jingle of his bridle or spurs, and now and then the sound of his whistling, as he lounged in the warm sunlight outside. Then there was the noise of voices talking together—the voices of Janet and the messenger—and presently the housekeeper came into the study to say that the man wanted to know when he could have his answer. The vicar looked up with the bewildered air he always wore when he was interrupted. “Eh!” he said, “eh! what d’ye say? Answer? Who wants an answer?” Then remembering, “oh, aye, there’s no answer to send. You may tell him, there’s

no answer.” And then presently the messenger rode clattering away whence he had come.

The letter lay where the vicar had left it until the next afternoon, and Jack, impelled by curiosity, managed to read a part of it. It was from his grand-aunt Lady Dinah Welbeck. She said that she was very ill, and she asked the vicar to come and see her before her end, and that all should be forgiven. The vicar did not go, either because he did not think of the message again, or else because he did not choose to resume his correspondence with his family. The letter lay about until the vicar tore a great strip off from it with which to light a candle in the next room, and the next day the written sheet was gone.

Some time after Lady Dinah Welbeck’s death another communication, long and bulky, was brought to the vicarage. The vicar read it but paid no attention to it. Then another letter came and another. The last letter the vicar did not even open for several days. He was very busy at work upon a pamphlet, and the letter lay neglected upon the writing table until one morning Janet brought it and thrust it into his hand. “Eh!” said he, as though suddenly awakening to things about him, “what is this! what is this?” He took the letter and looked at it. “Why, this letter should have been given me three days ago,” he said.

“So ’twas, master,” said Janet, “but you did not read it.”

“Did I not so?” said Jack’s father, and then he broke the seal and read it. But still he paid no attention to it.

No doubt the vicar’s family would long since have received him back among them if he had cared to have them do so. He and they had drifted far apart in the nineteen years that had passed. During that time all ill feeling—at least on the part of the family—had faded away and died. There was no intimacy, hardly any acquaintance, between the vicar and his brother, Sir Henry, neither was there any longer rancor between them.

Some of the letters written at this time had been written by Sir Henry, and after a number had been sent without eliciting any reply, the baronet sent the Grampton lawyer down to Stalbridge. The attorney and the vicar were closeted together for a long time, and when they at last came out of the study the vicar was very angry. It was the only time that Jack had ever seen him so. “They may keep it all!” he was saying in a great loud voice. “They may keep it all! I want none of it, I say. All that I want of them is to let me alone as I let them alone. I want, I say, none of their money or nothing that belongs to them. They may keep all for themselves.”

Jack was leaning out of an upper window in the sunlight, looking down upon their heads, as they stood just below. Their voices came up to him through the warm air very distinctly.

“But, sir,” said the lawyer, “do you not then consider the welfare of your own son?”

“Sir,” said the vicar in the same loud voice, “that, I believe, is not your affair. I will look after my son’s welfare mine own self. I tell you, sirrah, that those who sent you may e’en keep all of the money for themselves. I want nothing of them, and neither shall my son take aught from them.”

“But, sir,” said the lawyer, “you forget that the money hath been left to you individually. In taking it you do not take anything from them. It was not left to your brother, it is not a gift from him or, indeed, from any one, and it does not belong to any one but you. Your family cannot even receive it from you without process of law, and you cannot help taking it.”

“Aye, but I can help taking it,” cried out the vicar.

“Sir, sir!” said the lawyer, “pray be calm, sir. Pray look at this matter reasonably. Here is this money—”

“I will not hear anything more,” cried out the vicar, “only I tell you I shall not touch a farthing of it.”

Then the lawyer lost his temper. “Sir,” said he, “I must needs tell you that you are

the most unreasonable man that ever I met in all of my life."

The vicar drew himself up to his full height. "Sir," said he, "sure you forget yourself and to whom you speak. You forget who I am, sir. You are welcome to think as you choose about me, but you are not welcome to tell me your opinion of me. Who are you, sirrah, to speak so to James Ballister?" And then he turned upon his heel back into the house, shutting the door behind him.

Jack, as he still leaned out into the sunlight, looking down from above, saw the stranger stand irresolutely for a while, then turn and go slowly out of the gate and mount his horse and ride away.

That winter the vicar died, and Jack went to Southampton to live.

Perhaps one of the bitterest days in Jack Ballister's boyhood life was the first evening after his arrival at his new home. His uncle had had the parlor opened, as though to do some honor to his coming. Jack sat for nearly an hour on the stiff uncomfortable chair, saying almost nothing, but just sitting there by the dim light of a candle. Old Hezekiah had tried to talk, but the conversation had lapsed and dwindled away into silence. Now he sat winking and blinking in the light of the candle, looking as though he were trying to think of something more to say, but yet saying nothing, and Jack, too miserable and depressed to talk, ventured nothing upon his own part. He was very glad when at last he was permitted to creep away miserably to bed and to yield himself fully to the luxury of hot tears and of utter loneliness and homesickness.

It seemed to him that night as though he never would be happy again, but even by the next morning he found himself awakened to a new and fresh hold upon his life. Things appeared bright and cheerful again in the fresh sunlight of a new day, and after he had finished his frugal breakfast he went out into the streets and down to the harbor, full of interest in the new surroundings in which he found himself placed. The harbor and the ships at anchor there seemed very wonderful to the boy fresh

from the inland country. There was a great high-pooped battle-ship lying at anchor in the harbor that morning, and its sloping decks, whence came the distant rattle of a drum, seemed to teem with bustling life, lit every now and then by a spark of sunlight glinting on the slant of a musket-barrel. As Jack stood and gazed, he forgot how lonely he had been the night before.

In a little while—in a few weeks—his life had drifted into all these new circumstances, and had become one with them, and he presently found himself looking back to that old life at Stalbridge as a thing gone by and done with forever. All that remained was the memory of those things as episodes ended and done.

It is wonderful with what ductility life fits itself into new circumstances, becoming so accustomed to them, even in a few days, that they no longer seem to be new.

After that first formal reception in the musty, stuffy parlor, old Hezekiah seemed to consider his duty to his nephew as ended. Thereafter Jack was allowed to go where he pleased and to do as he chose. The old man hardly ever spoke to the lad excepting now and then in some dry and constrained fashion. Old Deborah, the housekeeper, used to send him on errands occasionally, but excepting for such little demands upon him, he had no ties to bind him to his new home except as it was a place wherein to eat his meals and to sleep at night.

He spent nearly all his time lounging about the harbor front, for there was a never-ending delight to him in the presence of the great ships and the rough sailors, who would talk of strange foreign countries—of having been to Calcutta, or to Shanghai, or to Jamaica, or to the Americas or the Brazils, as Jack might have talked of having been to the Isle of Wight. They spoke of the Caribbean Sea, or of the Indian Ocean, as he might speak of the Solent.

He often used to strike up an acquaintance with these sailors an acquaintance that would become, maybe, almost intimate for the two or three days that they were in the harbor.

It was an idle, aimless, useless life that he lived at this time. Sometimes—maybe when he was running on some petty, trivial errand for old Deborah—a sudden feeling of almost nauseating shame for his useless existence would come upon him and weigh him down with a leaden weight. It seemed almost as though an inner voice, as of conscience, would say: “Fie upon you! A great, big, hulking fellow like you to go carrying a little crock of yeast through the streets like this!” Generally when such an inner voice as of conscience would speak, he would satisfy himself by replying as with an inner voice of his own: “Oh, well, ’tis Uncle Hezekiah’s fault. If he’d only set me work to do, why, I’d do the work, and be glad enough of the chance.”

Mr. Stetson, the rector, used sometimes to talk to him almost like an echo of that inner accusing voice. “’Tis a vast pity, Jack,” he would sometimes say, “that such a great, stout fellow as thou art should live so in useless idleness. If nothing else better, why do you not study your books?” And Jack would be very uncomfortable with the heavy feeling that he had left some part of duty undone.

He used often to go to supper at the rectory. He felt more at ease there—less big-jointed and clumsy than almost anywhere else. And besides, he very heartily enjoyed the good things he had to eat at such times, for Deborah set a very poor and skimpy table at his uncle’s house. They generally had preserved ginger and thin sweet cakes at these suppers at the rectory, and Jack used sometimes to contrive to slip a couple of cakes into his pocket to nibble after he got home.

Sometimes, especially if there were visitors present, the good old rector would insist upon talking to Jack about his uncle the baronet, or about Lady Dinah Welbeck, or about his aunt Lady Arabella Sutton. “Indeed,” he would maybe say, “Jack’s poor father was a very learned man, a very learned man. His pamphlet on the apostolic succession was the best that was writ at the time of the controversy. ’Tis, methinks, impossible for a man to be so perfectly ripe a scholar unless he hath good blood in

his veins such as that of the Ballisters or haply of mine own. Why should it not be so? To be sure, you cannot make as good wine out of gooseberries as you can out of currants. Mine own father used often to say to me: ‘Andrew, never forget that you have the blood of Roger Stetson in your veins.’”

Jack always felt a certain awkward constraint when the rector would talk in this way. It made him somehow feel ashamed, and he did not know just where to look or what to answer.

Sometimes Mr. Stetson would make him read aloud in Greek. “You should hear him read ‘The Frogs,’” he would maybe say, and he would almost thrust a copy of Aristophanes into Jack’s not very willing hand. Jack would read a page or two in a perfunctory sort of a way, while the rector would sit smiling and tapping his finger-tips on the table beside which he sat. “Thou hast the making of a fine scholar in thee, Jack,” he would perhaps say, “and ’tis a vast pity thy uncle Tipton does not send thee to school. I will have a talk with him about it when the time comes.”

Several times the rector spoke to old Hezekiah about his nephew. Once he walked all the way back from church with the old merchant, and almost into the parlor. But nothing ever came of such talks. “Hey!” said the old man; “go to school? What does he want to go to school for? Well, well! I’ll see to it, and think it over by and by,” and there the matter would rest.

Another friend whom Jack made was the attorney Burton. One day, as Jack was walking whistling along the street, the little lawyer came running out of his office and called after him to stop. “Master Jack! Master Jack! stop a little bit,” he cried out. “Master Jack Ballister!—I have a word or two to say to you.” He had run out bareheaded, and he was half breathless with his haste and his calling. He held an open letter in his hand. “Who d’ye think, young gentleman,” said he, still panting a little, “I have heard from? Why, from your uncle Sir Henry Ballister, to be sure. He hath writ to me asking about you—how you are, what you are doing, and how

Master Tipton is treating you. What shall I tell him?”

“Why, you may tell him,” said Jack, “that I do very well.”

This was the beginning of Jack’s acquaintance with the attorney Burton. Several times afterward the little lawyer told him that Sir Henry had written about him. “He hath a mind, methinks,” said the attorney, “to be more particular as to what your uncle Tipton is doing for you. Indeed, he hath asked me very especially about what he does for you. I know what I shall tell him, for I have talked to Master Stetson about you, and he tells me what a famous scholard you are. But harkee, Master Jack, if ever you have need of advice, you come to me, for so Sir Henry advised me to say to you.”

Jack stood listening to the little man with a feeling of pleased and fatuous gratification. It was very pleasant to be so remembered by his grand relation. “Why, then, I take it very kind of Sir Henry, Master Burton, and of you, too, for the matter of that,” said he. “And if ever I do have need of your advice, why, I will come to you just as freely as you give me leave to do.”

As he walked away down the street, thinking over what the attorney had said, he almost wished that he had some definite cause of complaint against his uncle Hezekiah, so that he might call upon the aid of Sir Henry and the attorney. How fine it would be to have Sir Henry take his part! He fancied to himself a talk with his uncle Hezekiah, in which he made himself perhaps say, “Sir, you shall not treat me so, for I tell you plain that there are those now to take my part against you, and that it is not just a poor orphaned boy with whom you have to deal.” Boys love to build up in their imagination such foolish scenes and fortunate conversations that never happen. Sometimes such fancyings seem so like the real thing that, like Jack, one almost forgets that they are not really likely to happen. But by and by the time came when Jack really did appeal to the lawyer and when he really did come to an understanding with his uncle.

That spring a young cooper named Dan Williamson had a boat that he wanted to sell. It had belonged partly to his brother, who had died during the fall before, and Dan, who was one of that sort who always had need of money, was very anxious to sell it. Jack's great desire was to possess a boat of his own. It seemed to him that Dan's boat was exactly the one that would best suit him. He used to think with a keen and vivid delight of how glorious it would be to own Dan's boat. And then she was so very cheap. If the boat were his he would give her a fresh coat of paint, and name her the Sea-gull. If he could only get twenty pounds from his uncle Hezekiah, he could not only buy the boat, but add a new suit of sails.

He talked so often to Dan about the boat that at last the cooper began to believe that he might be able to sell it to Jack. "She's the cheapest boat," said Dan, "that was ever offered for sale in Southampton."

"I don't know about that," said Jack; "but I do believe that she's a good boat."

"Good!" said Dan. "She's the best boat in Southampton to-day, and, what is more, she's as cheap as the dirt under your feet. You'd better buy her, for you'll never get such another chance as long as you live."

Jack shook his head. "I do believe she is a good boat, Dan," he said; "but how shall I buy a boat without money to buy it with? I have no money in hand, and am not like to have any."

"Well, well," said Dan, "to be sure, that's too bad"; and then, after a little space, he continued: "But I'll tell you what,—you come down with me, and I'll take you out in her; then you may see for yourself what a fine boat she is."

"I'll go out with you," said Jack; "but I can't buy her, though. I wish I could."

Then they went off together down to the cooper-shops where Dan kept the boat.

Jack helped Dan step the mast. Then they pushed the boat off beyond the end of the shed. As the sail filled, Dan put down the helm, and brought the boat out under the stern of a bark lying at anchor a little distance from the shore. The watch on deck, a

tipsy-looking sailor with his throat wrapped around with a woolen stocking, stood looking over the stern of the bark and down at them as they sailed by. Jack looked up at the towering hulk above him. The name of the bark—the Prophet Elijah—was painted in great, fat letters across the stern. At one side there was a picture of the prophet's head, with his long beard. There was a rushing sound of water under the stern of the vessel. Then they were out in the wide, shining harbor, the warm air blowing mildly and softly about them.

"Look, how she lies up to the wind," said Dan Williamson; "why, I do believe I could sail her straight into the wind's eye if I chose to. I tell 'ee what 'tis, Jack, you'll never find such another chance as this to get what you want."

"Maybe I won't and maybe I will," said Jack; "all the same, I sha'n't buy her, for why, I have no money to buy her with."

"No money!" said Dan Williamson; "why, if I had as much money as belongs to you, I'd give up coopering and live a gentleman all my life, I would. Why don't ye go and ask your uncle Tipton for eighteen pound straight and fair? Sure, the money's your own, and not his. Why don't ye ask him for it?"

"Ask him for it?" said Jack. "And what good would that do? Asking won't do any good. The money's mine, sure enough, yet I can't touch a penny of it till I am of age."

"'T won't do any harm to ask him, anyway," said Dan Williamson. "Here, you come and take the tiller, and see for yourself how close up she sails."

Jack took the tiller, and then they sailed along for a while in silence. By and by Dan spoke again. "I'll tell you what 'tis, Jack, if I was you I'd go straight to Master Burton, I would, and I'd ask him about it. What did you say t' other evening down at the Golden Fish? Didn't you say that he told you to come to him if ever you wanted anything that your uncle Tipton wouldn't give you, and that he said your t' other uncle that's a lord would get it for you? Well, then, why don't you go to him and ask

for eighteen or twenty pound? What you said was true, wasn't it?"

"Why, yes, 'twas true enough, as far as that goes," said Jack.

"Well, then," said Dan Williamson, "there you are."

Jack sat for a little while in silence, then he spoke.

"I tell you what it is, Dan, maybe you don't believe what I told you, but it is true enough. I tell you what—I'm going to go to Master Burton this very day, and ask him about what you say." He did not really entertain any hope, however, that he could get twenty pounds from his uncle Hezekiah.

As soon as he came ashore again, he went straight up to the little lawyer's house.

The little man was in his office—a musty, stuffy little den of a place, smelling of stale tobacco smoke, and set around with dusty cases of worn and yellow-backed books and tin boxes.

The attorney sat in the midst of the litter surrounding him like a little gray mouse. He had black, beady eyes, a long nose, and a thin, leathery face.

He sat looking with his little twinkling black eyes at Jack as he stated his case. "Why, as for your fortune, Master Jack, I must needs tell you plain that it might as well be locked up in the church belfry for all the good it may do you now. For so it is locked up in your father's will, tight and fast as if it were in a box, and your uncle hath the keeping of it for you."

"And can I get none of my money of him, then?" said Jack.

"Why, as for that, I don't say that, neither," said the little lawyer. "It may be a hard matter to get it, and yet, after all, I may be able to get it for you. I'll tell you what to do, Master Jack. Go you to your uncle and ask him plain and straight for what money you need. How much was it you wanted?"

"Well, say twenty pounds," said Jack.

"Well, then, you ask him for twenty pounds, plain and straight, and if he says you

nay, then come back to me, and I'll see what I can do for you. Sir Henry hath asked me to look after you a trifle, and so I will do."

CHAPTER III

JACK AND HIS UNCLE

JACK, following the attorney's advice, had made up his mind to ask his uncle for the money that very night, but when he came face to face with doing it, it was very hard. They were sitting together over their poor frugal supper, and the old miser's utter unconsciousness of what Jack had it on his mind to say made the saying of it very hard. At last he suddenly spoke. "Uncle Hezekiah," said he.

The old man looked up sharply, almost as though startled at the sound of Jack's voice. He did not say anything, but he sat looking at Jack as though inviting him to continue.

"Uncle Hezekiah," said Jack again. He did not know in just what words to frame what he had to say. Then he continued: "I want to—to talk to you about a matter of business."

"Hey!" said the old man, "business! business! What d' ye mean—what d'ye mean by business?"

"Why," said Jack, "I want some money to buy something. I went to see Master Burton to-day, and he told me I had best come to you and ask you for it." Gradually Jack was becoming bolder as he became accustomed to the sound of his own voice. "Dan Williamson hath a boat for sale," he continued. "He wants eighteen pound for it, and if I had twenty pound it would be just enough to fit her up as I would like to have her. I went and talked to Master Burton, and he told me I had best come to you and ask you for the money."

The old man stared blankly at Jack, his lean jaw hanging gaping with speechless

surprise. “Why! why! what’s all this?” he said, finding his voice at last. “Twenty pound! Why, I do believe you’re gone clean clear crazy. Twenty pound! What’s Roger Burton got to do with my giving you twenty pound, I’d like to know? You’ll not get a farden, and that’s the long and the short of it. Master Burton, indeed! What business is it of his, I’d like to know?” He sat looking at Jack for a little while, and then he slowly resumed his interrupted supper again.

Jack sat leaning back in his chair, with his hands in his breeches’ pockets, looking across the table at his uncle. His heart was swelling with a feeling of very choking and bitter disappointment and anger. It seemed to him that he had not expected much, but now that his uncle had denied him, his disappointment was very bitter. He watched his uncle as the old man continued eating in silence. “Very well,” said he at last, “then I know what I’ll do. I’ll go back to Master Burton again. He told me what to do, and that if you said me nay I was to go back to him again. He says that Sir Henry Ballister has been writing to him about me, asking how you treated me and what you did for me, and he told me if you would not give me what I asked for, I was to go back to him, and he’d write to Sir Henry and tell him all about it, and that he’d see if something couldn’t be done on my account.”

Old Hezekiah looked up again. “Sir Henry Ballister?” said he. “What’s he been writing to Roger Burton about, I should like to know! What’s he got to do with it? He’s not your guardeen, is he? I’m your guardeen, and the guardeen of your money as well. As for Sir Henry Ballister, why, he’s got no more to do with you than the man in the moon.” Then he went on eating again, and again Jack sat watching him in silence. In a little while Hezekiah finished his supper, chasing the fatty gravy around and around his plate with the point of his knife. Then he laid down his knife and fork, pushed away his plate, and arose from the table.

“Very well,” said Jack, breaking the silence, “we’ll see about all this business. I tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to write to Sir Henry Ballister myself, and tell

him about the way I'm treated by you. You never give me a farthing to spend, and as for being your own flesh and blood—why, I might as well be a dog in this house as to be your own kin. You keep all my money and use it as your own, and yet you don't speak six words to me in a month." Jack was dimly surprised at his own boldness in speaking. Now that he had made a beginning, it seemed very easy to say his say and to speak out all that lay on his mind. "I'm not going to be treated like a dog by you or by anybody," he said.

"Yes, I do speak to you, too," said Hezekiah, stopping at the door. "What d' ye want me to say to you, anyhow?" he added. "Don't I give you all you want to eat and drink, and never charge you a farden for it? What more d'ye want than that? You're the most ungratefulest nevy that ever lived, so you are, to talk to me that way."

Then he went out of the door, and along the dark passageway, and Jack heard him enter the office, and shut the door behind him. Then he began eating his supper again. He felt very bitter and very angry against the old man.

So he sat eating for a long time in lonely silence, broken only by the sound of Deborah clattering now and then among the pots and pans in the kitchen beyond. Suddenly he heard the office door open again, and the sound of his uncle's steps coming back along the passage. He reached the door, and Jack heard his fingers fumbling for the latch in the darkness, and then the sharp click as it was raised. Then the door opened, and the old man came in. He stood for a moment, and then came straight across to the table where Jack sat. He stood leaning with both hands upon the table. Jack did not know exactly what to expect. He drew himself back, for the first thought that came into his mind was that the old man was going to attack him personally. "Lookee, Jacky," said old Hezekiah, at last, "I've been thinking of that there twenty pound you was speaking of. Well, Jacky, you shall have that twenty pound, you shall."

"What d'ye mean, Uncle Hezekiah?" said Jack.

“Why,” said Hezekiah, “I mean what I said. You shall have that twenty pound, Jacky. I’ve been thinking about it, and what you said, and I’m going to give you what you want. I can’t give it to you just now, for twenty pound is a deal of money, and I haven’t that much to give you straight away. But I’ll give it to you after a while, I will, Jacky. I’ll give it to you—let me see—I’ll give it to you on Monday next. Will that be time enough?”

“Why, yes, it will,” said Jack, “if you really mean what you say.”

“Aye,” said the old man, “I mean it sure enough; but don’t you say anything more to Roger Burton, will ye? Just you come to me when you want anything, and don’t you go to him. I mean to be a good, kind uncle to you, Jacky, I do,” and he reached out a lean, tremulous hand, and pawed at Jack, who drew instinctively away from his approach. “I do, Jacky, I do,” said the old man, almost whining in his effort to be affectionate. “But don’t you be writing to Sir Henry Ballister about me, will you, Jacky?”

“I won’t write to him if you’ll treat me decently,” said Jack.

“Aye, aye,” said the old man, “I mean to do that, Jacky, I do. Only don’t you be talking any more to Lawyer Burton. I’ll give you that twenty pound. I’ll give it to you on—on Monday next, I will.”

Then he turned and went away again. Jack sat looking after him. He felt very uncomfortable. He could not understand why the old man had yielded so suddenly. He did not believe at all that he had yielded, or that he would give him what he asked for. He felt sure, in spite of his uncle’s words, that he had been put off with a barren promise that would never bear fruit.

CHAPTER IV

CAPTAIN BUTTS

ON the evening of the next day a number of boys were gathered at the end of the wharf in front of Hezekiah Tipton’s warehouses. They were throwing stones into the water. Jack went out along the wharf to where they were. They were all of them boys younger than himself.

“Well, if that’s all the better you can throw,” said Jack, “to be sure you can’t throw well. Just you watch me hit yon anchor-buoy out there with this pebble.”

A brig had come into the harbor during the day, and now lay at anchor some distance off from the shore. The sails were half reefed and hung limp from the yards. The men were washing down the decks, and from the shore you could see them busy about the decks, and every now and then a gush of dirty water as it ran through the scupper-holes. A boat was just about putting off from the brig. Presently some one climbed down over the side of the vessel and into the boat, and then it was pushed off. Jack stopped throwing stones and stood looking. The boat came rowing straight toward the wharf where he and the other boys stood. It pulled in around the back of a sloop that lay fast to the end of the wharf, and was hidden from sight. Jack jumped down from the wharf to the deck of the sloop, and went across to see who was in the boat. It had come in under the side of the sloop, and two of the men were holding it to its place, grasping the chains. They looked up at Jack and the other boys as they came to the rail of the sloop and looked down at them. There were two men in the stern of the boat. One was just about to climb aboard the sloop, the other sat still. He who still sat in his place had a knit cap pulled down half over his ears. He held a pipe in his mouth and he had gold ear-rings in his ears. The other, who was about to climb aboard the sloop, was plainly the captain of the brig. He was short and thick-set. He wore a rough sea coat with great flapped pockets and brass buttons. One of the pockets bulged out with a short pistol, the brass butt of which stuck out from under the flap. He wore canvas petticoat-breeches strapped to his waist by a broad leather belt with a big flat brass buckle. His face and as much of the short bull-neck as Jack could see were tanned red-brown like russet leather, and his

cheeks and chin were covered with an unshaven beard of two or three days' growth. He stood up in the boat, with his hand resting on the rail of the sloop.

"Do you know where Master Hezekiah Tipton lives?" he asked in a hoarse, rattling voice.

"Why, yes, I do," said Jack. "This is his wharf, and I'm his nephew."

"Well, then," said the man, "I wish you'd show me to him."

As Jack accompanied the other up the stony street to his uncle's house, he turned to look at his companion every now and then.

"Where do you hail from, captain?" said he.

"I hail from the land where every man minds his own business," said the other in his rattling voice. "Where do you hail from, my hearty?"

Jack did not know just what to reply at first. "Oh, well," he said, "if you don't choose to give me a civil answer, why, then you needn't."

After that they walked in silence till they reached the house. Jack looked into the office, but Hezekiah was not there. "If you'll come into the parlor," said he, "I'll go and tell him you're here, only I don't know who you are, to be sure." He opened the door of the room as he spoke, and showed the captain into the darkened parlor. It always smelled damp and musty and unused, and the fireplace had a cold, dark look as though no comforting fire had ever burned there.

"Tell Master Tipton 'tis Captain Butts of the Arundel wants to see him," said the stranger, laying aside his hat with its tarnished gilt lace and wiping his partly bald head with the corner of his red neckerchief. All the time he was looking strangely about him at his unfamiliar surroundings.

There was the sound of a knife and fork rattling against a plate in the distance, and Jack, following the sound, went along the passage to the room beyond, where he knew Hezekiah was sitting at supper.

“There’s a man in the parlor,” said Jack, “would like to see you. He says his name’s Captain Butts of the Arundel.”

Hezekiah was looking at Jack as he spoke. He laid down his knife and fork immediately, and pushed back his chair and arose. Jack followed him back to the parlor. He stood outside of the door, looking in. The stranger arose as Master Tipton came in, holding out to the old America merchant a big, brown, hairy hand with a hard, horny-looking palm.

“How d’ye do, Master Tipton?” said he in his rattling voice. “I be mightily glad to see you.”

“Well, then, Master Captain Butts,” said Hezekiah, giving him a limp, reluctant hand, “I be mightily glad to see you, too,—more glad than you are to see me, like enough, for I’ve been looking for you these three days past, and wondering where was the Arundel. There be them nineteen servants down at the ‘Duck and Doe’ that should have been took away yesterday morning. Their lodging at the inn is a matter of ten pence a day each. Now, who do you think’s to pay for that there?”

“Well, well, Master,” said the other, “‘tweren’t no fault of mine that I weren’t here yesterday. Wind and tide be to blame, so whatever ye lose ye may just charge up ag’in’ them. We can’t sail without wind, can we? and we can’t sail ag’in’ the tide, can we? As for the men, why, the sooner I get my clearance papers and the men aboard the better ’twill suit me. The tide turns at eight o’clock, and if the wind comes up, as ’tis like to do, why, I’ll drop out and away with the turn o’ the water.”

Master Hezekiah looked around. Jack was still standing in the doorway. “You go in and get your supper, Jacky,” said he, and then he got up and closed the door, and Jack went back into the supper-room.

All the time that Jack sat at his meal old Deborah scolded him ceaselessly for being so late.

“’Tis always so,” said she, her voice growing shriller and shriller. “You be always

late, and think of nobody but your own self."

"No, I'm not always late, neither," said Jack; "I wasn't late to breakfast, or to supper either, yesterday."

"But you didn't come home to dinner at all," said old Deborah, "and I kept it for you, and I kept it for you, and the 'taties all like wax in the oven, and not fit to eat."

"I didn't want any dinner," said Jack. "I had something to eat down at the wharf."

"Well," said old Deborah, "you might just as well have been late as not to come at all, for I kept a-waiting and a-waiting for you till it was all dried up and wasted—aye, all wasted, and it what many a pore body 'u'd'a' been glad enough to 'a' had, too."

In the interval of her scolding Jack could occasionally hear the distant rumbling of Captain Butts's voice in the office.

It grew darker and darker in the twilight gloom of the kitchen, until Jack could hardly see the food upon his plate.

"I wish you'd bring a candle, Deborah," said he, "I can't see to find the way to my own mouth."

"A candle!" said Deborah; "if you'd come to your supper in time you'd not need a candle to see. Now you may just go without."

"Very well," said Jack, "I don't care, for I'm done."

"Then, if you're done, you may go down to the pump and fetch back some water."

Jack took the pail and went off with it. He was gone a long time, and the night was fairly settled when he came stumbling back into the kitchen, slopping the water upon the steps and the floor.

"Why," said Deborah, "I thought you was never coming. Your uncle's asking for you. He's over in the office now, and he wants to see you there."

"Very well," said Jack, "if I'd known that, may be I'd hurried and may be I

wouldn’t.”

In the office he found Captain Butts seated at the tall desk, with a bottle of Hezekiah’s old Jamaica rum before him. They had been looking over some papers, and the Captain had evidently been helping himself very freely to the rum. He smelt strong of the liquor. He was leaning over the desk, his chin resting upon his fists. He looked up at Jack with his keen gray eyes from under his bushy eyebrows. “Is this the boy?” said he. Hezekiah, who sat opposite to his visitor, nodded without speaking.

“Come hither, my hearty,” said Captain Butts, beckoning to Jack. Jack came forward slowly. “And so ye’re a hard one to manage, be ye? By blood! if I had ye aboard the Arundel for a few days, I’d manage ye.”

“Who says I’m hard to manage?” demanded Jack, indignantly.

“That does your good uncle,” said the Captain. As he spoke he reached out suddenly, and catching Jack by the arm held him tight, feeling up and down the length of his arm. “Ye be well put together, my hearty,” said he; “ye’d make a valuable servant in the tobacco-fields,” and he winked tipsily as he spoke. “Now, being as ye’re so hard to manage, how’d you like it if you was to take a cruise to the Americas with old Benny Butts?”

Jack could smell the rum heavy upon the captain’s breath, and he saw that he was a little tipsy. He jerked his arm away from the other’s grasp.

“I am well enough off here as I am, thank you, Master Captain,” said he, “and I don’t choose to go to the Americas at all.”

The Captain burst out laughing. He fetched a thump upon the desk before him that made the bottle of rum and the tumbler hop and jingle. “Harkee to that, now!” said he, “he don’t choose to go to the Americas,” and he gave another roar of laughter.

Master Hezekiah sat looking on at the two, resting his forehead upon his lean fingers, his hand shading his eyes from the light of the candle. Suddenly he cut into

the talk. “Come, come, Captain Butts!” said he tartly, “let there be an end to this! Sure you forget what you’re saying. Come hither,” said he to Jack. Jack came around to him, and the old man lifted the lid of the desk and brought out a bundle of papers and a little bag of money. He counted out a few coins, which he made into a little pile. Then he untied the tape and chose a paper from among the others. Jack stood watching him. “Here be a list of the America servants down at the Golden Fish,” said Hezekiah, “and this”—here he chinked the money between his fingers as he gave it to Jack—“is fifteen shillings ten-pence. I want you to do something for me, Jacky. I want you to go down to the Golden Fish and pay Landlord Evans his account, and then give this release to Dockray, who hath the America men in charge. After that I want you to take them down to the wharf and deliver them over to Captain Butts, and get his receipt. D’ye understand?”

“Why, yes, I do,” said Jack; “but why do you want me to do this when the crimp can serve you so much better than I?” He could not understand why his uncle, who had never before made any demands upon him should suddenly prefer such a request as this.

“Why,” said Hezekiah, “you ask me for money t’other day, didn’t ye? Well, then, if you want money you must begin to do something for to earn it. What I want you to do now is to take these servants down and deliver them over to Captain Butts.”

“Oh, well,” said Jack, “I’m willing enough, but I don’t see why you should choose me to do it. What am I to do with them? Tell me again.”

“You’re to take them down to the wharf, d’ye understand? Then Captain Butts will give you a receipt for ‘em. Then you’ll have nothing more to do with the business.”

“Very well,” said Jack; “methinks I understand. And now if the Captain is ready to go, why, I am, too.”

As he and Captain Butts walked together down the street in the darkness, Jack said again: “I don’t see why he wants me to take his servants down to the wharf. He

never asked such a thing of me before."

Captain Butts, for reply, burst out laughing, and fetched him a clap on the shoulder that jarred him through and through. "Well, I do suppose you'll find out some day why he sends you on his errands," he said.

CHAPTER V

KIDNAPPED

AT THE END of the court the two parted, the Captain going on down to the wharf and Jack up to the Golden Fish. He found the crimp and gave him Hezekiah's release, and then the redemptioners immediately began to make themselves ready. There was something pitiful in the meagerness of their preparation. One or two of them had nondescript bundles tied up in handkerchiefs, and one had a pair of stockings wrapped up in a piece of dirty paper. Beyond this they had nothing at all to take with them to the new world to which they were bound. But they seemed to borrow very little trouble on that score. They were very restless and turbulent at the near prospect of sailing. They had somehow contrived to obtain some liquor, and two or three of them were more than half drunk.

The crimp brought them out into the court of the inn and arranged them in some sort of order, two by two, by the dim light of the lantern. They jostled and pushed one another, and leered in the lantern light at Jack as he stood looking at them helplessly. "I'll never be able to take them down to the wharf by myself," said he.

"Oh, you'll be able to take us," said a big, bull-necked fellow; "a baby'd lead us wherever he chose for to go," and then they all laughed.

"Well, I don't know," said the crimp, shaking his head as he looked them over; "like enough I'd better go with you as far as the wharf. I don't know why he should have sent you to take 'em, anyhow. Lookee!" said he to the huddled line of servants, in a suddenly-changed voice; "I won't have none of your tricks, d'ye understand? D'ye

see this?" and he fetched a bludgeon out of his pocket and showed it to them. "The first man as tries any of his tricks, I knocks him on the head, d'ye understand?"

"Why, master," said one of the men, "you wouldn't hurt us, would you? We be your lambs."

"Never you mind," said the crimp, shaking his head. "Don't you go trying any of your tricks on me. Come along now, march!"

"Hurrah for the Golden Fish and Johnny Waddels!" cried out one of the men.

The others gave a broken and confused cheer as they marched away out of the court, the crimp walking beside the first couple, and Jack coming after to keep a lookout upon them. They marched along for a while, first down one street and then another until they had come to the water-front. The wind was blowing chilly. The bull-necked fellow had begun to sing. They walked along for some little distance and then crossed the street. Here the storehouses stood dark and deserted as they passed by them. At last they came to the wharf, across which the night wind swept without shelter.

"Well," said the crimp, "I'll leave you here. 'Tis no use my going any further."

"Yes," said Jack, "I can manage them very well now by myself, I suppose."

"I'll just wait under the lee of the shed here," said the crimp, "till I see you're all right."

"Very well," said Jack. "Come along," said he to the men as they stood shivering in their thin, ragged clothes. The bull-necked fellow had ceased his discordant singing. At Jack's bidding they now marched out along the wharf. There were lights out in the darkness at the end of the wharf, where the sloop lay black and shapeless in the night. When Jack came to where the light was he found two dark figures standing waiting for him on the wharf. One of them was Captain Butts, the other was the man in the knit cap, who now carried a lantern hanging over his arm. There were two or three men, two of them also with lanterns, standing on the deck of the sloop. Jack

knew that the boat that had brought the Captain off from the brig was lying in the darkness beyond, for he could hear the sound of voices, and then the sound of the rattle of an oar.

Captain Butts had twisted his handkerchief well up about his throat. “Well,” said he, “I thought you was never coming.”

“I came as soon as I could,” said Jack.

“Just bring the men out to the boat, across the sloop here,” said the Captain; and at Jack’s bidding the men, one after another, jumped down from the wharf to the deck of the sloop below. Jack followed them, and the Captain and the man with the lantern followed him. “Where’s your list?” said the Captain, and then, as Jack gave it to him: “Hold the lantern here, Dyce. That’s it.” He held the list to the dull light, referring to it as he counted the shivering transports who stood in line. “Sixteen—seventeen—eighteen—nineteen—nineteen all told. That’s right. Now, then, look alive, my hearties, and get aboard as quick as you can!”

Jack stood with his hands in his pockets and his back to the chill night breeze. The wharf and the sloop, deserted in the night, seemed a singularly dark and lonely background to the dimly moving figures. The water, driven by the wind, splashed and dashed noisily around the end of the wharf. One by one the redemptioners clambered clumsily over the rail of the sloop and down into the boat alongside, stumbling over the thwarts in the darkness and settling themselves amid the growling and swearing of the sailors. “Are you all right?” asked the Captain.

“All right, sir,” said Dyce.

Suddenly the Captain turned sharply toward Jack. “Now, then,” said he, “you get aboard too!” Jack gaped at him. “You get aboard too!” said Captain Butts again.

“What do you mean?” said Jack.

“I mean that you’re going aboard too,” said the Captain, and as he spoke he reached out and caught Jack by the collar. “That’s why you were sent here,” said he, “and

that’s what I’m bound to do. I’m bound to take you to the Americas with me.”

Then Jack saw it all in a flash. He stood for one stunned instant, and then he began struggling fiercely to loosen himself from the Captain’s grasp upon his collar. The next instant he felt himself jerked violently backward and he heard the Captain’s voice saying: “You get into the boat down there! You’ll do as I tell you, if you know what’s good for you!”

Jack twisted and struggled desperately and frantically, but still the Captain held him in a grip like a vise. “Let me go!” gasped Jack. “Let me go!”

“Into the boat, I tell ye!” he heard the Captain’s voice growling in his ear, and at the same time he found himself flung forward violently toward the rail of the sloop. The boats and the dark waters were just below. He saw dimly, his sight blurred with the fury of his struggles, the dark figures of the men in the boat below. He flung out his feet against the rail, bracing himself against the Captain’s hold; at the same time he clutched hold of the stays. “Here, Dyce, loose his hand there,” said the Captain’s voice, panting with his struggles. “The young villain! What d’ye mean, anyhow?”

The man with the knit cap sprang forward at the Captain’s bidding, and, still holding the lantern, began to pluck Jack’s fingers loose from the stays. Then suddenly Jack screamed out, “Help!—Help!—Help!” three times, and at the same time he kicked backward violently against the Captain’s shins.

“You will, will you!” wheezed the Captain. As he spoke he jerked Jack violently backward. Jack had just time to see a whirling flash in the light of the lantern. Then there came a deafening, blinding crash. Ten thousand sparkling stars flew whirling around and around him. He felt a hot stream shoot down across his face, and he knew that it was blood. There was another crash, this time duller and more distant, then a humming that droned away into stillness—then nothing.

“By blood! Captain,” said Dyce, “I believe you’ve killed the boy.”

The Captain thrust the pistol with which he had struck Jack back again into his

pocket. “The young villain!” he said, panting with his late efforts. “He’ll kick me, will he? And he’d’a’ had the town down on us if I hadn’t shut his noise.” He lowered down upon Jack’s figure lying deathly still and in a dark heap on the deck. Dyce bent over the senseless form, holding the lantern to the face. Jack’s eyes were upturned. His legs and body twitched; his head was streaming with blood and his face was bloody. Captain Butts stooped over him. “Oh! he’s all right,” said he roughly; “he’ll come to by and by; he’s only stunned a trifle. Get him aboard and be quick about it! There’s somebody coming along the wharf now. Here; here’s his hat. Catch it there.”

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“‘HE’LL COME TO BY AND BY; HE’S ONLY STUNNED A TRIFLE,’ SAID THE CAPTAIN.”

CHAPTER VI

ABOARD THE ARUNDEL

FOR a long while Jack was very light-headed and sick. He did not seem to have any strength. It seemed to him that several days passed while he lay in his berth, now partly waking, now partly sleeping. When he was partly awake his mind seemed to wander, and he could not separate the things he now saw from the things he had seen before. Both seemed grotesque and distorted. It seemed to him that his father was nearly always with him. He had a line of Greek to construe, but he could never get the words correctly. He kept trying and trying to get the words in their proper order, but always, when he would get the line nearly correct, it would fall to pieces, and he would have to begin all over again. He felt that his father was very angry with him, and that he was driving him on to complete the line, and he felt that if he could only finish the task he would have rest and be well again. But there were three words that never would fit rightly into the line, and he never could make them fit

into it. With these several fancyings there commingled the actual things about him. His father seemed to him to be waiting and waiting for him to complete his task; but at the same time he saw the sloping deck of the vessel and the berths upon the other side, and could feel the brig rising and falling and rolling upon the sea. There was ever present in his ears the sound of creaking and groaning and rattling and sliding, and there were men talking together and smoking their pipes, the pungent smell of the tobacco helping to make him feel very sick. If he could only fit these words together into the line, then his father would go away, and he would be well and could go up on deck. Oh, how his head ached! He wished he could get away from these words that would not fit into the sentence.

Then the night would come, and he would be partly asleep. Sometimes he would lie half dreaming for an hour or more, and in the darkness the things of his fancy were very real.

Very soon after he had been brought aboard he had a dim, distorted vision of Dyce, the mate, coming with a lantern to where he lay, bringing somebody along with him. It seemed to him that the two men had leaned over him talking about him while a number of other people had stood near. The man who had come with the mate must have been Sim Tucker, a thin, little man, with a long, lean chin, who was a barber-leech. Jack had felt some one trim his hair, and then do something that had hurt him very much. It seemed to be a grotesque nightmare that the barber-leech had sewed up his head. Afterward a bandage was tied around his head, and then he felt more comfortable.

Jack knew very well that it had all been a dream, and he was always surprised to wake up and find the bandage around his head.

Now and then Sim Tucker would come and speak to him. “How d’ye feel now?” he would maybe say.

“Why,” said Jack, “I would be all well if my father would only go away. But I can’t

construe that sentence."

"You can't what!"

"I can't get those Greek words right, and my father won't go away."

"Why, your father says they're all right."

"Does he?"

"Aye."

"But there are those four words. They won't fit."

"Why, yes, they fit all right. Don't you see?" Then it seemed to Jack that they did fit into the sentence, and for a little while he was more easy in his mind.

After a while he began to get better, and his head got clearer. Then one day he was so well that he was able to crawl up to the deck. He had not eaten anything at all and was very weak. He climbed up the companion-way and stood with his head just above the scuttle. He looked aft almost along the level of the deck. In the distance was the rise of the poop-deck, with a man at the wheel just under the over-hang. The first mate, Dyce, still wearing his knit cap pulled down half over his ears, was walking up and down the poop-deck, smoking. With the rise and fall of the vessel, Jack could catch every now and then a glimpse of the wide, troubled ocean, moving and heaving with ceaselessly restless, crawling waves, cut keenly and blackly at the sharp rim of the horizon against the gray sky. Every now and then there was a great rush of air from the vast hollow sails overhead, that swept back and forth, back and forth across the wide, windy sky. The sailors looked at him as he stood there with the bandage wrapped around his head. He began to feel very sick and dizzy with the motion of the vessel, and presently he crept down below, back to his berth again.

"Be you feeling better?" said one of the men, coming to him.

"Yes, I think I am," said Jack, "only it makes me sick and faint-like to stand up."

"Well, you've been pretty sick," said the man, "and that's the sacred truth. I thought

the Captain had killed you for sure when I saw him hit you that second crack with the pistol. I thought he'd smashed your head in."

Several of the other men had gathered about his berth and stood looking down at him. Jack wished they would go away. He lay quite still, with his eyes shut, and by and by they did leave him.

He felt very lonely and deserted. A great lump rose in his throat when he thought of all that had happened to him. "I have not a friend in the world," he said to himself, and then the hot tears forced themselves out from under his eyelids.

When next he opened his eyes he saw that Sim Tucker was standing over him. "How d'ye feel now?" said the barber-leech.

"Oh, I feel better," said Jack irritably. "I wish you'd go away and let me alone."

"Let me look at your head," said the leecher. He unwound the bandage deftly with his long, lean fingers. "Aye," said he, "ye're getting along well now. To-morrow I'll take out them stitches. He must have hit ye with the cock of the pistol to make a great, big, nasty cut like that."

CHAPTER VII

ACROSS THE OCEAN

THE next morning Jack was up on deck again for a while, feeling very much better and stronger than the day before. In the afternoon Mr. Dyce came down into the steerage and told him that the Captain wanted to see him.

Jack, although he was now out of his bunk, was still very weak, and not yet accustomed to the rolling heave and pitch of the vessel at sea. He followed the mate along the deck in the direction of the round-house, balancing himself upon the slanting, unsteady plane, now and then catching at the rail or at the shrouds or stays to steady himself. Everything was still very fresh and new to him, so that, even

though his mind was heavy with leaden apprehension concerning the coming interview with Captain Butts—the thought which weighed down his spirit with dull imaginings—even though his mind was full of this, the freshness and newness of everything was yet strong in his consciousness—the tumultuous noise of the sea, the sun shining bright and clear, the salt wind blowing strong and cold. Every now and then a cresting wave would flash out a vivid whitecap in the sunlight against the profound green of the limitless ocean; the sky was full of clouds, and purpling shadows dappled the wide stretch of ever-moving waters. The brig, plowing its way aslant to leeward, plunged every now and then with a thunderous clap of white foam into the oncoming wave, and the broad shadows of sail and rigging swept back across the sunlit deck with the backward and forward sweep of the masts against the sky high overhead. Of all these things Jack was strongly conscious as he walked along the deck, wondering, with that dull and heavy apprehension, what Captain Butts was going to say to him.

Two men on the poop-deck were heaving the log, one of them keeping tally with a slate; a third, with a red bandana handkerchief knotted about his head, stood gripping the wheel, holding the yawing vessel steadily to its course. The man with the slate looked at Jack as he came along the deck, clinging to the rail for support.

Captain Butts was waiting in the round-house, leaning with elbows upon the table. A bottle of rum and a half-emptied tumbler stood on the table at his elbow, and the cabin was full of the strong, pungent odor of the liquor. A chart, blackened and dirty as with long use, lay spread out on the table. Part way across it stretched a black line which the Captain had drawn—probably the supposed course of the vessel—for Captain Butts sailed by dead reckoning. He looked up from under his brows as Jack entered, frowning until his partly bald forehead swelled with knotted veins, but he did not immediately say anything. Jack had come forward and stood at the end of the table. The mate, who lingered close to the door, had taken out his pipe and was filling it with tobacco. Jack did not know how pale and thin he was, how sick he

looked; he was conscious only of the weakness that seemed not only to make him unsteady upon his legs, but to unnerve him of all strength of spirit. As he stood there now, facing the Captain, he felt an hysterical choking in his throat, and he swallowed and swallowed upon the hard, dry lump that seemed to be there.

“Well, my hearty,” said the Captain, breaking the silence at last with his hoarse, rattling voice, “well, my hearty, you got your dose that time, or else I’m mistook. By Blood!” he continued with sudden savageness, “I’ll teach you to play with Benny Butts, I will, and to kick at his shins. By Blood! When you’re dealing with me, you’re not dealing with your poor old uncle as ye can bully and blatherskite as you please. By Blood! I’ll break your back if you go trying any of your airs with me, I will.” And as his anger rose with his own words, he opened his eyes wide and glared upon his victim. Jack did not dare to reply. He stood looking down, holding tight to the edge of the table and striving to balance himself to the lurching of the ship.

“Your uncle told me all about you, he did,” said Captain Butts, beginning again; “how you threatened him with the law and tried to make mischief atwixt him and your t’other folks. He told me how you stole his money away from him for to—”

“I never stole a farthing in my life,” said Jack hoarsely.

“D’ye give me back talk?” roared the Captain, smiting his palm upon the table. “By Blood! if ye answer me any of your back talk, I’ll clap ye in irons as quick as look at ye. I say ye did steal money from your uncle.” Again he glared at Jack as though defying him to reply, and Jack, conscious of his utter powerlessness, did not venture to answer. “I say ye did steal money from your uncle,” repeated the Captain, “and that again and again. He might have sent ye to jail had he been so minded, and maybe he would ha’ done so only for the shame o’ the thing. Now I tell ye what you’re going to do. You ‘re going to the Americas to be put to work under a master who’ll keep you out o’ mischief for five years. That’s what you’re going to do. After you’ve served out your five years in the Americas under a master, why, then, maybe,

you'll know how to behave yourself arter you get back home again."

The brig gave a sudden heaving lurch that sent the bottle and glass sliding across the table. The Captain caught them with a quick sweep of his hand, while Jack, losing his balance, partly fell, partly sat abruptly down upon the seat beside him. He was up again almost instantly and stood once more holding by the side of the table.

"Now, you listen to what I say. You behave yourself decent while you're aboard this here brig, and you'll be treated decent, but you go a makin' any trouble for me, and by Blood! I'll clap you in irons, I will, and I'll lay ye down in the hold, and there ye'll stay till we drop anchor in Yorktown. D'ye hear that?"

Jack nodded his head.

"Well, then, if ye hear me, why don't ye answer me?"

"Yes, sir," said Jack.

"Very well, then, you go and remember what I've said."

Jack, so dismissed, went out of the round-house and into the wide, bright sunlight again. Nor was it until he had returned half way back across the slanting deck that anything like a full realization of his fate came upon him. Then suddenly it did seize upon him, gripping him almost like a physical pang. He stopped short and caught at the foremast stays under that sudden grip of despair, and bent leaning over the rail of the ship. Then, in an instant the sky and the ocean blurred together and were lost in the blinding flood, and hot tears went raining down his face in streams. He stood there for a long time facing the ocean and crying. No one knew what he was doing, and he was as much alone as though he stood all by himself in the midst of the empty universe, instead of aboard a brig with footsteps passing around him and the grumbling growl of men's voices as they talked together sounding in his ears.

It had seemed to Jack at that time, when he stood there crying out into the face of the sea and the sky, as though life had no hope and no joy, and as though he never could be happy again. It was not so, however, and it never is so. We grow used to every

sorrow and trouble that comes to us. Even by the next day he had begun to grow accustomed to the thought of his fate. He awoke to an immediate consciousness of it, and all day it stood there, a big, looming background to the passing events of his life, while he helped the other redemptioners wash down the decks, pattering about in the wet with his bare feet in the slushing slop of water; all the while he stood leaning over the rail, dumbly joying in the consciousness of the sweep and rush of wind and water—looking out astern of the vessel at the wake that spread away behind, over which hovered and dipped and skimmed the little black Mother Carey's chickens. In all the things of his life it was thus present with him, but he did not again suffer a despair so poignant and so bitter as had struck him down that time he had stood there crying out toward the sky and the ocean with his back to the ship's company. So it is that time so quickly wears away the sharp edges of trouble, until it grows so dull and blunted that it no longer hurts.

The crew had come somehow to know something of Jack's history. The first day he was out on deck after a spell of stormy weather into which the Arundel sailed, Tom Roberts, the carpenter, asked him if he had not an uncle as was a lord. "He's a baronet," said Jack, and Roberts said he knowed he was summat of the kind. The same day, as Jack was standing in line with the others waiting for his dinner to be served out to him, the carpenter passed close to him with a wink. "You come over along o' we," he said, "and you shall have a taste o' grog with your victuals," and Jack, after a hesitating moment, had, with a feeling of gratification and pleasure, followed him over to the forecastle scuttle, where a part of the crew sat eating in the sunshine that shone aslant under the foresail. After that he nearly always messed with the crew, and by the end of the voyage it had become a regularly established thing for him to do so.

Some of the crew had either lived in the Colonies, or had sailed from one to the other in coasting vessels, and Jack learned much about his future home from them. Roberts himself had lived for two years as ship-carpenter in Boston, in the province

of Massachusetts, and one of the men, named Dred—Christian Dred—had lived for a while in North Carolina with Blackbeard, the famous pirate. He had been one of the pirate's men, and had sailed with the renowned freebooter in his famous ship, the Queen Anne's Revenge.

During the voyage Jack became better acquainted with Dred than with any one aboard the Arundel, and before they had reached Virginia the two had become very intimate. Dred was a silent, taciturn man, speaking but rarely to any one and saying what he had to say in as few words as possible. But he seemed pleased with Jack's friendship. He questioned Jack much as to his former life, and in return told a good deal about himself. He said he had left Blackbeard the year before and had surrendered upon the King's Proclamation of Pardon. He always carried his pardon about with him rolled up in oil-skin and hung about his neck by a bit of string, and he showed it to Jack one day, unrolling the oil-skin very carefully and gingerly, and then rolling it up again with just as particular care as he had opened it. He told Jack that after he had surrendered to the Pardon, Blackbeard and others of the pirates had also surrendered. He said that Blackbeard was now living on a farm down at Bath Town, in North Carolina, and had married a fine young "gell" of sixteen or thereabouts. He once told Jack that he had begun his "h—cruising," as he called it, when he had sailed from New York in a "Red Sea Trader" in '95, and that ever since then he had "smelled brimstone."

(The Red Sea Traders, it may be explained, were those who carried supplies of stores, chiefly of rum and gunpowder, to the pirates who then so infested the west coast of Africa, exchanging their commodities for plunder captured by those freebooters.)

Dred told Jack that he was only eighteen years old when he had sailed in the Red Sea trade. "Not much older than you be now," he added.

Once, when Dred was overhauling his gunny-bag, he brought out a string of a dozen

or so jingling coins hung on a bit of silver wire. He held the trinket out at arm's length. "D'ye see this here string o' money?" said he; "I gave that to a Spanish gell once down in Port Royal, Jamaicy, and what's more, I took it off of her neck again arter she had died of yellow fever, and no one else'ld go nigh her."

Jack grew to like Dred very heartily. He did not think of him as being a red-handed and wicked pirate. It did not seem to him that his new friend was, after all, very different from other men—excepting that he had had very wonderful adventures happen to him.

And yet Dred was indeed a red-handed pirate.

It was toward the latter part of the voyage that he told Jack the story of the taking of the English ship that Blackbeard afterward used as the flag-ship of his pirate fleet, and which became so famous under the name of the Queen Anne's Revenge. Dred's was almost the most important part in that tragedy. He told the story almost naïvely, and did not at all seem to appreciate the significance of what he had done.

They—the pirates—had, he said, been cruising in the West Indies. Then they sailed northward until they came to Charleston. (Here he told incidentally how they had blockaded the town for over a week, stopping and searching all incoming and outgoing vessels, and how they had even gone up boldly into the town in search of a chest of medicine.) After they had left Charleston, they had, he said, cruised away off shore with two sloops and a bark which they had taken. They "made no purchase," as he phrased it, until one morning they sighted a sail, which proved to be an armed ship of some six or seven hundred tons burden, bound apparently for the Chesapeake Capes.

When they had come to within hailing distance of the vessel they ordered her to heave to. But she would not, and there was some exchange of shots before she would finally surrender. The ship had only one passenger aboard, a young Virginia gentleman, Mr. Edward Parker, who had been to college in England and who was

now returning home, having finished his education. Dred said that the supercargo, on being threatened by Blackbeard, told the pirates that the young gentleman had in his charge a valuable chest of money and of goldsmiths' bills of exchange. On hearing this Blackbeard and two or three of the pirates ran aft to the cabin, only to find that the young gentleman had locked himself in and refused to come out.

After some parleying the pirates tried to break in the door, but it was braced from within, and the young gentleman at once began firing at them through the panels. Two of the pirates were shot. "One on 'em," said Dred, "was Abraham Dolling, and he was shot that bad through the neck that we had to hale him off by the legs, and he died a little bit after just at the bottom of the poop ladder."

His own part in the tragedy that followed Dred told somewhat thus:

"Seein' as how we was makin' nothing of it at all by the way we was doing, I climbs up on the poop-deck, thinking maybe to get a sight of my young gentleman through the sky-light. But no; he had blocked up the sky-light with mattresses from the captain's berth. So then I went across the poop-deck to the stern falls. The boat had been shot away from the lee davit by our fire, and the lines hung loose from the falls over the stern. I lashed two on 'em together and let myself down from the davits with one hand, holding my pistol with t' other. I eased myself to one side until I was low enough, and then I peeped in at the stern window. There I could see my young gentleman off beyond in the captain's cabin standing close by the door, and I can see him now as plain as I can see this here hand o' mine. He had pulled a couple of sea chists to the door, and he had a plank from the captain's berth set agin 'em and propped agin the braces of the table. He was in his shirt sleeves, and he had a pistol in each hand. The captain o' the ship was a' talkin' to him from t' other side of the door, telling him he'd better gin up and surrender the money, and I could hear my young gentleman swearing by all that was holy that he would never gin up the money. He had his head turned to one side, and he didn't see me, so I crawled in

through the window. But I'd no more 'n set foot on deck than all on a sudden he wheels around like a flash, and afore I knowed what he was at—Bang!—he fires his pistol fair for my head. I felt the wind of the ball and it smashed into a chiny closet just behind me. Then, seeing he had missed me, he ups with t' other pistol and arter that 'twas either him or me. So I let fly, and down he went all of a heap acrost the chist afore the door."

"Was he dead?" asked Jack.

"I think he were," said Dred. "Leastways he was dead afore we could get him out of the cabin."

Dred told this story to Jack one afternoon as they were sitting together up under the lee-forecastle rail, and then he showed him the pardon in the oiskin bag hung around his neck.

In the intimacy between the two Jack talked much to Dred about his own prospects, and his new friend advised him to submit to his fate with patience. "Arter all," he said, "five year be n't so werry long—not nigh as long as death. And then you'll see a deal o' the world, and arter that you goes back home agin, an' there ye be," and the illogical words brought a good deal of comfort to Jack.

CHAPTER VIII

TO THE END OF THE VOYAGE

ON a long sea voyage you come to lose all sense of time. One day melts and blends into the other so that you can hardly tell them apart. They stretch along into weeks, and the weeks, perhaps, into months which can neither be called long nor short, but only just a monotonous reach of time.

The only thing that brings its change to the ceaseless monotony are the changes that happen in the weather. Twice they had a spell of heavy weather during the voyage;

the first time, a few days after Jack had become well enough to be about on deck, Jack was very seasick, and so were nearly all of the transports.

It was quite a heavy storm, lasting for three or four days, and at one time Jack thought that the brig must really be in danger. As he lay prone in his bunk his heart quaked with every tumultuous lift of the vessel. Some of the crew were in the forecastle beyond, and the deep sound of their talk and now and then a burst of laughter came to him where he lay. He did not see how they could be so indifferent to the loud and incessant creaking and groaning of the ship’s timbers, alternated now and then with the noise of distant thumping and bumping, and always the gurgling rush of water, as though it were bursting through the straining timbers and streaming into the hold. It seemed to him sometimes as though the vessel must capsize, so tremendous was the mountainous lift and fall of the fabric, and so strenuous the straining of its timbers. Sometimes he would clutch tight hold of the box-like side of his bunk to save himself from being pitched out bodily upon the deck. The steerage became a horrible pit, where the transports rolled about stupefied with sickness, and when, by and by, he himself began to recover, it became impossible for him to bear it.

So the afternoon of the second day of the storm he crawled up to the decks above. The level stretch lay shining with sheets of drifting wet. Jack stood clinging dizzily to the shrouds looking about him. A number of the crew were strung out along the yard-arm high aloft, reefing the fore-topsail, clinging with feet and hands to the lines and apparently indifferent to the vast rush of the wet wind and the gigantic sweep of the uncertain foothold to which they clung. The hubbub of roaring wind and thundering waters almost stunned Jack as he stood clinging there. The voice of Dyce shouting his orders through a trumpet from the quarter-deck seemed to be upborne like a straw on that vast and tremendous sweep of uproar. One of the crew came running along the wet and slippery deck in his bare feet, cursing and swearing at Jack and waving to him to go below. The next moment, and before Jack could move

to obey, the vessel plunged down into a wave, with a thunder-clap of sound and a cataract of salt water that nearly swept him off his feet and wet him to the skin.

Perhaps of all the actual events of the voyage, this episode and the two or three minutes' spectacle of the storm lingered most vividly of all in Jack's memory.

It was at this time that he first began to get better acquainted with the crew. When, at the bidding of the sailor, he went down below, wet and dripping, he could not bear to go back into the steerage, and the crew let him lie out in the forecastle. They laughed at him and his plight, but they did not drive him back into the steerage.

Then there were many other days of bright sunlight and of smooth breezy sailing; and still other times of windy, starry nights, when the watch would sit smoking up under the lee sail, and Jack would sit or maybe lie stretched at length listening to them as they spun their yarns—yarns, which, if the truth must be told, were not always fit for the ears of a boy like Jack.

So the days came and went without any distinct definition of time, as they always do in a long voyage such as this, and then, one soft warm afternoon, Jack saw that there were sea-gulls hovering and circling around the wake of the brig. One of the crew told him that they had come within soundings again, and when he looked over the side of the vessel he saw that the clear, tranquil green of the profounder depths of the ocean had changed to the cloudy, opalescent gray of shoaler waters.

Then it was the next morning and Jack felt some one shaking him awake. "What is it?" said he, opening his eyes heavily and looking up into the lean face of Sim Tucker that was bent over him.

The little man was all in a quiver of excitement. "'Tis land!" he cried in a shrill, exultant voice—"'tis land! We're in sight of land! Don't you want to get up and see it? You can see it from the deck." His voice piped shriller and shriller with the straining of his excitement.

Jack was out of his berth in an instant; and, almost before he knew it, up on deck,

barefoot, in the cool brightness of the early day.

The deck was wet and chill with the dew of the early morning. The sun had not yet risen, but the day was bright, and as clear as crystal. The land lay stretched out sharp and clear-cut in the early morning light—a pure white, thread-like strip of sandy beach, a level strip of green marsh, and, in the far distance, a dark, ragged line of woodland standing against the horizon.

Jack had seen nothing but the water for so long, and his eyes had become so used to the measureless stretch of ocean all around him, that the land looked very near, although it must have been quite a league away. He stood gazing and gazing at it. The New World! The wonderful new world of which he had heard so much! And now he was really looking at it with his very living eyes. Virginia! That, then, was the New World. He stood gazing and gazing. In the long line of the horizon there was an open space free of trees. He wondered whether that was a tobacco-plantation. There was a single tree standing by itself—a straight, thin trunk, and a spread of foliage at the top. He wondered if it was a palm-tree. He did not then know that there were no palm-trees in Virginia, and that single, solitary tree seemed to him to be very wonderful in its suggestion of a strange and foreign country.

Then, as he stood gazing, a sudden recollection of the fate that now, in a little while, awaited him in this new world—of his five years of coming servitude. The recollection of this came upon him, gripping him with an almost poignant pang; and he bent suddenly over, clutching the rail tightly with both hands. How would it be with him then? What was in store for him in this new world upon which he was looking? Was it hope or despair, happiness or misery?

Captain Butts and Mr. Dyce were standing on the poop-deck, the Captain with a glass held to his eye looking out at the land. By and by he lowered the glass, and said something to the mate. Then he handed the glass to the other, who also took a long, steady look at the distant thread of shore.

Some of the crew were standing in a little group forward. Among the others was Dred, the red bandana handkerchief around his head blazing like a flame in the crystal brightness of the morning. As Jack, still possessed by that poignant remembrance of his coming fate, went up to where they stood, Dred turned and looked at him, almost smiling. The light of the rising sun glinted in his narrow black eyes, and cut in a sharp seam the crooked, jagged scar that ran down his cheek. He nodded at Jack ever so slightly; but he did not say anything, and then he turned and looked out again toward the land. Just then the mate shouted an order, and then the group of sailors broke asunder, some of them running across the deck in their bare feet, throwing loose the ropes from the belaying-pins, others scrambling up the ratlines higher and higher, until they looked like little blots in the mazy rigging against the blue, shining sky overhead.

It was after sunset when the brig, half sailing, half drifting, floated with the insweep of the tide up into the York River. Jack stood with the other redemption servants gazing silently and intently at the high bluff shores. Above the crest of the bluff they could see the roofs and brick chimneys of the little town. A half-dozen vessels of various sorts were riding at anchor in the harbor, looming darkly against the bright face of the water, just ruffled by the light breeze. The line of a long, straggling wharf reached some distance out across the water to a frame shed at the end. Along the shore toward the bluff were two or three small frame-houses and a couple of big brick buildings. Somebody had told Jack that they were the tobacco warehouses, and they appeared very wonderful to him. A boat was pulling off from the wharf—it was the custom officer’s boat. Other boats were following it, and a sail-boat came fluttering out from the shore into the bright stretch of water. Suddenly there was a thunderous splash. It was the anchor dropped. There was a quick rattling of the cable and a creaking as it drew taut. Then the Arundel swung slowly around with the sweep of the tide, and the voyage was ended.

A minute later the boat with the custom officer came alongside. Captain Butts met

him at the gangway and took him into the cabin. In a little while boats, canoes, and dug-outs came clustering about the Arundel. They all seemed strange and foreign to Jack. Nearly everybody wanted to come aboard, but the mate, who stood at the gangway, allowed only a few to come up on deck. These he directed to the cabin, whither Captain Butts had taken the custom officer. The others remained in their boats below, looking up at the redemption servants who stood crowded at the rail, staring down at them. A ceaseless volley of questions and answers was called back and forth from those below to those above. “Where d’ye come from?” “Gravesend and Southampton.” “What craft is this?” “The Arundel of Bristol.” “Comes from Gravesend, d’ye say?” “Be there any man aboard that comes from Southwark?” “Hey, Johnnie Stivins, here be a man asks of Southwark.” “Hi, there! what are ye doin’, d’ye want to stave us in?”—a babel of a dozen voices at a time.

Jack stood looking down through the now falling twilight to the figures below, dim and shadowless in the pallid light. Just beneath where he stood was a dug-out that had come off from the shore among the first. It was rowed by a negro naked to the waist. A white man sat in the stern. He appeared to have a kind of hat of woven grasses upon his head. He wore loose cotton trousers and was smoking a leaf of tobacco rolled into a cigarro, the lighted tip of which alternately glowed and faded in the dimming light. How strange and wonderful it all was!

Just then Captain Butts came out of the cabin with the custom officer. He did not then pay any attention to the group of redemptioners gathered at the rail. He stood looking at the custom officer as he climbed down into the boat. Then he turned sharply around. “Here, Dyce!” he roared to the mate, “send those men down into the steerage. We’ll have half on ‘em running away in the dark next we knows on.”

The transports grumbled and growled among themselves as they were driven below. One or two of them were disposed to joke, but the others swore as they climbed stumblingly down the forecastle ladder.

The day had been warm, and the steerage was close and hot; a lantern hung from the deck above, and in the dim, dusky light the men stood crowded together. Presently one of them began singing a snatch of a scurrilous song. Other voices joined in the refrain, and gradually the muttering and grumbling began to change into a noisy and rebellious turbulence. The singing grew louder and louder, breaking now and then into a shout or yell.

Jack had crept into his berth. It was close and stuffy and it smelt heavy and musty after the fresh air above. He felt very dull and numb, and the noises and tumult in the close confines of the steerage stunned and deafened him.

Suddenly Captain Butts's voice sounded from the open scuttle of the forecastle companion way. "What d' ye mean below there?" he roared; "are ye all gone drunk or crazy? Stop that there noise or I'll put a stopper on ye that'll be little enough to your liking! D' ye hear?"

A moment's lull followed his voice; then one of the men gave a shrill cat-call. It was, as a signal, instantly followed by a burst of yells and whistles and jeers. Jack expected to see Captain Butts down among them bodily, but he did not come, and for a while the transports whistled and yelled and shouted unchecked. Presently there was the noise of some one coming down into the forecastle beyond. It was Joe Barkley—one of the sailors. He came into the steerage, and at his coming an expectant lull fell upon the tumult. He carried a cocked and loaded pistol in his hand. His face was stolid and expressionless, and he looked neither to the right nor to the left. "What be ye going to do, Joe," called out one of the redemptioners. He did not answer; he went straight up to the lantern, opened it, blew out the light, closed it again, and then turned away without saying a word. He went into the forecastle and blew out the lantern there, and then everything was instantly engulfed in an impenetrable and pitchy darkness. A burst of derisive yells followed Joe as he climbed clattering up the forecastle ladder again, but he paid no attention to the jibes

and jeers, and the next moment Jack heard the rattling of the slide of the scuttle as it was closed, and then the snapping of the lock. For a while after the lights were put out the uproar was louder than ever. The men thumped and banged and kicked. But in time the pitchy darkness quelled their spirits in spite of themselves, and little by little the turmoil ceased. It broke out intermittently, it quieted again, and then at last it subsided into a muffled grumbling.

Jack lay in his berth staring into the darkness; his ears seemed to hum and tingle with the black stillness that surrounded him. He felt intensely wide awake as though he could never sleep again. Teeming thoughts passed vividly through his brain. Visions of all he had seen during the day—the sandy shore, the distant strip of pine woods, the restless, crawling waters between—he could almost see the water. But gradually thoughts and visions intermingled, and almost before he knew it he had drifted off into the ocean of sleep.

CHAPTER IX

IN VIRGINIA

SINCE the capital of Virginia had been removed from Jamestown to Williamsburg, and since the Governor’s palace and the Government House had been established there, it had become the center of fashion in the colony. Just now the Court was in session, and the Council sitting, and Governor Spottiswood was holding court every Thursday.

The day was rather close and warm, but there was an unusually large representation of the provincial aristocracy present. It was still not late in the afternoon, but there had already been a good many arrivals, and the gabbling sound of talking filled the assembly room. The Governor, where he stood at the end of the room, was the center of a group of gentlemen who were clustered about him and in his immediate vicinity. It was almost difficult for one to get past them to pay respect to his

Excellency. A group, perhaps, would move a little aside to make way for newly arriving ladies and gentlemen, but such as were now coming in could only get to the Governor with a sense of discomfort and of being crowded. In parts of the room more distant from the Governor the talk was, perhaps, more of social matters, but near his Excellency the knots of men discussed things relating to colonial affairs.

Just then the talk was about a renewed trouble with pirates, who had begun again to infest the mouth of the bay and the North Carolina sounds.

It was just about this time that Blackbeard had broken his pardon and was again stopping vessels sailing between Virginia and the Carolinas.

The Pearl and the Lyme, ships of war, were then lying at Jamestown, and some of the officers had come over to pay their respects at the palace. Some of them were standing near listening to Councillor Page, who was just then speaking of the latest depredations of Blackbeard. “He was lying down at Ocracock,” said Mr. Page. “I had a sloop coming from the Tar River with some shingle thatch for my new warehouse. Well, the villains stopped her and came aboard of her. They overhauled her cargo, and I do believe if they’d known ‘t was for me they would have thrown it all overboard. But Williams said naught about that, and so they did not know whose ‘t was. There was nothing on board to serve the villains’ turn, and they might just as well have let the sloop go; but no, there that wretch, Blackbeard, held her for nearly two days, so that she might not give the alarm of his being there to any incoming vessels. Williams—he was the captain of my sloop—Williams said that while he was lying there under the pirates’ guns, he himself saw Blackbeard stop and levy upon some nine vessels of different sorts, rummaging all over their cargoes. He said it was chiefly rum and cloth the villain was after. Williams said that ‘t was reported the villains held every boat that came through the inlet, and would neither let them go in nor come out, but made ‘em all lie at anchor under his guns. He hath two armed sloops now and a crew altogether of some forty or sixty men, and twice or

thrice as many more to call upon if he chooses."

Lieutenant Maynard, of the Lyme, was standing by, listening to the talk.

"Why, zounds!" said he, "Why then do you people here in the provinces put up with such a rascal as this Teach or Blackbeard or what-ye-call-him? I'd blow him out of the water, were I in his Excellency's place. Aye, I would fit out an expedition and send it down there and blow the villain clean out of the water and have done with him."

"What was that?" said the Governor, turning around smiling toward the speaker. "Tut, tut! Lieutenant, that shows how little you men of war know about civil affairs. How could I, as Governor of Virginia, fit out an expedition and send it down into North Carolina. Ocracock is under Governor Eden's jurisdiction, not under mine, and 'tis his place to move against pirates in the waters of his own province. They're inland waters, and under the jurisdiction of North Carolina."

"Well, your Excellency," said Lieutenant Maynard, "to be sure I know naught about the law, and only about fighting. But if a villain stood at my neighbor's door and stopped my own people from coming out and going in upon my business, and robbed them, By Zounds! your Excellency, I would have it out with him, even if I had to chase him into my neighbor's house to do it." The Governor laughed, and the little group around him joined in the laughter. Then his Excellency turned again to meet some new-comers who made their way toward him through the circle surrounding him.

"I do declare," said Mr. Dillworth, "methinks Governor Eden of North Carolina is as bad as ever was Fletcher of New York at his worst times. 'Twas through this Blackbeard that poor Ned Parker was murdered—the first young gentleman of Virginia. 'Tis currently known everywhere—and yet Eden grants the villain the King's pardon as soon as he asks for it. 'Tis said his Excellency—Eden, I mean—has more than once had his share of the booty that the pirates have taken.

Why, would you believe it, the villain pirate was only last year up here at Norfolk, coming and going as he pleased, carrying his Majesty's pardon in his pocket and flaunting it in the eyes of everybody. Well, if ever we catch him, now he hath broken his pardon, 't will be a short enough shrift he'll get of it, I'll promise him."

"How is Colonel Parker now?" asked Mr. Page.

"He's about well now," said Mr. Cartwright, a cousin of Colonel Parker's. "I was at Marlborough last week, and his gout seems to have fairly left him."

"Methinks he hath never been the same man since poor Master Ned was murdered," said Mr. Dillworth. "I never saw anybody so broken by trouble as he was at that time."

"His daughter, Miss Nelly, is a great beauty, I hear," said Lieutenant Maynard.

"The girl is well enough," said Mr. Cartwright briefly.

A group of some half dozen ladies and two gentlemen were gathered at one of the open windows, into which the warm air blew widely. One of the gentlemen was Mr. Harry Oliver, a young man about eighteen years old. He wore his own hair curled and hanging to his shoulders, and he put it back with his hand every now and then as he talked. He showed his white teeth when he smiled, and his large, dark eyes moved restlessly hither and thither.

"Yonder comes Dick Parker," said he suddenly.

"Why, so it is," said Miss Peggy Oliver. They all looked toward the new comer. "Upon my word," she continued, "he is a man I can't abide for the life of me. As proud, haughty a man as ever I saw. He turns me to a block of ice whenever I am near him, and I can't find a word to say for myself."

"Why, Peggy," said Oliver, "that, then, must be why you can't abide him," and thereupon the group broke into a laugh.

Mr. Richard Parker, who had just come into the room, was standing quietly waiting

to speak to the Governor. He did not try to push his way through the circle that surrounded his Excellency, and for a while nobody saw him. His handsome, florid face, surrounded by a fine powdered wig, looked calmly and steadily in the direction of the Governor. He stood quite impassive, waiting an opportunity to go forward when he would not have to push his way through the crowd. Presently some one saw him and spoke to the others, and they made way for him almost as with deference. He went forward calmly and paid his respects in a few brief words. He spoke with the Governor for a little while, or rather the Governor spoke to him, and he replied. All the time the Governor was speaking, Mr. Parker was looking steadily and composedly around the room, glancing back toward his interlocutor every now and then to reply. Presently there was a pause, and then at last Mr. Richard Parker bowed and withdrew to a little distance.

“Why, only look at him now,” said Peggy Oliver, “even his Excellency is not good enough for him.”

“Well, to be sure, Peggy,” said one of the elder ladies, “if Mr. Parker is proud, he hath enough to make him proud when you think what a great man of fashion he hath been in his day. ‘T is not every man who hath had the luck to be a friend of the Duke of Marlborough. ‘T is a wonder to me that he should ever have come here to the provinces, seeing what a great man of fashion he was at home in England.”

The two gentlemen burst out laughing. “Why,” said Will Costigan, “for that matter, ‘t was Hobson’s choice betwixt Virginia or the debtor’s prison, madam.”

“They say old Dunmore Parker when he was alive used to send a fortune every year to England for him to spend,” said one of the ladies. “Tom told me t’ other day that he one time played a game of piquet for four days on end. ‘T was with a Frenchman; a nobleman—I forget his name—who was a prisoner at Malplaquet. Indeed it must have been mightily hard upon him after his father died to find that all the estate, except the Dunmore Plantation, was left to his brother.”

Just then Mr. Parker approached the group and the talk ceased. He nodded to Oliver and then passed by and stood at a little distance looking about him. Presently Harry Oliver edged over toward him. “How d’ ye do, Parker,” said he.

Mr. Parker turned his eyes toward the young man with an answering “How d’ ye do, Oliver.”

There was a moment’s pause. “That’s a prodigious handsome piece of lace you’ve got there, Parker,” said the young man, looking at Mr. Parker’s cravat.

“‘T is good enough,” said Mr. Parker briefly.

“Is it Flemish?”

“Yes, sir.”

“We don’t come across any such lace as that here in Virginia,” said the young man.

“Don’t you?”

Oliver stood for a while in silence. Almost unconsciously he assumed somewhat of the older man’s manner, standing with his hands behind him and looking indifferently around the room. “Tell me, Parker,” said he, “do you go down to Parrot’s to-morrow?”

Again Mr. Parker looked slowly toward him. “To Parrot’s?” said he. “What d’ ye mean?”

“Why, have you not heard?” exclaimed the young man eagerly, glad to have found something that promised to interest the other. “Why, to-morrow there’s to be fought seven as fine mains as ever were pitted in Virginia. There are to be six mains fought between the Gentlemen of Surry and the Gentlemen of Prince George’s. Will Costigan yonder hath brought his red cock over from t’ other side of the Bay. The bird hath been all the talk for six months past. He offers to pit it against the winner of all the mains. I heard say, too, that Ned Williamson purposes to bring down a three-year horse that he hath broke, and will run it in the afternoon, perhaps, against

Tom Lawson’s Duke of Norfolk.”

Mr. Parker listened impassively. “I had not heard anything about it,” said he; “I only came down yesterday. What time do you go down to Parrot’s?” he asked presently.

“To-morrow morning. I’m going to stay at my uncle Tom’s over night. Will you go along?”

“Why,” said Mr. Parker, “I hadn’t thought of it before. Maybe I will go.”

“I start in the morning,” said Oliver, eagerly; “I’ll come over for you if you’ll go.”

“Very well,” said Mr. Parker, “you can come over, and if I find I can, I’ll go with you. Is not that Mistress Denham and her daughter coming into the room?”

Then Mr. Parker moved away across the room to speak to the two Maryland ladies.

It was early twilight of the next evening when Mr. Richard Parker and Harry Oliver rode up to Parrot’s house. The house itself was the largest of a cluster of unpainted frame buildings that stood just beyond a clearing, overlooking the bay from a low, sandy bluff. A number of outbuildings and sheds surrounded it to the rear. Three pine trees stood not far from the low porch that sheltered the doorway, and a dozen or more horses stood clustered around the shaggy resinous trunks. Near by them lounged a group of men, black and white, talking together with now and then the break of a laugh. They fell silent, and some of them took off their hats as Mr. Parker and Mr. Oliver rode up to the door and alighted. Mr. Oliver nodded in reply, but Mr. Parker paid no attention to any one. “Where is Parrot?” asked the younger man.

“He’s inside, Mr. Oliver,” answered one of the group. “They were at cards awhile ago, sir, and I reckon they be at it yet.”

The two gentlemen went directly into the house. Tom Parrot’s wife met them in the hallway, where was a scattered heap of hats and riding coats. From the room to one side came the deep sound of men talking, and then a sudden outburst of voices. “I be mortal proud to see ye, gentlemen,” said Mrs. Parrot, dropping them a courtesy.

“Indeed, Mr. Parker, you do honor us in coming. You’ll find Tom and the gentlemen in yonder.”

“You go ahead, Oliver,” said Mr. Parker.

Another loud burst of voices greeted the two as they entered the room, so dense with tobacco smoke that at first they could see nothing at all. The room was full of the smell of rum. A great bowl of punch stood on the side-table, and there was a continual tinkle and jingle of glasses. Tom Parrot pushed back his chair noisily and rose to meet the new comers. He was a little stout man with a red face. It was redder than ever now, and bedewed with drops of sweat. He had laid aside his wig, and his bald head glistened with moisture. He wore no coat, his waistcoat was opened, and his breeches loosened at the waistband. He wiped his face and head with his shirt sleeve as he spoke. “Why, Mr. Parker,” said he, “who’d a-thought to see you! You be mighty welcome, Mr. Parker. Won’t you take a hand at the game, sir? Tim (to the negro), push up that there chair for Mr. Parker. Fetch a clean glass and fill it with punch. You know all the gentlemen here, don’t you, Mr. Parker?” And then he stopped abruptly as though struck by a sudden thought.

Mr. Richard Parker looked briefly around the table. He did know, at least by sight, all who were there but one. That one was a stranger to him; a tall man with a long, thick, perfectly black beard tied into a knot with a piece of string. His thick, black hair was parted in the middle and brushed smoothly down upon either side of his head, and was trimmed squarely all around his neck. The locks at his temple were plaited into long strings, that hung down in front of his ears, in which twinkled a pair of gold ear-rings. His face was tanned by exposure to a leathery russet, but deepened to a bricky red in his cheeks. At the name of Parker the stranger had looked up sharply for an instant, and then had looked down again at the cards he was in the act of shuffling. A sudden hush as of expectancy had fallen upon the room. Everybody was looking attentively at Mr. Parker and at the stranger.

“Who is your friend yonder, Parrot?” asked Mr. Parker, “I don’t know him.”

“Him?” said Parrot, “why, he’s no more a friend of mine than he is a friend of all the rest of us, Mr. Parker.”

Seeing the other’s hesitation, the stranger spoke up boldly and loudly. “My name is Teach,” said he, “Captain Teach, and I hail from North Carolina. It’s like enough you’ve heard of me before, as I’ve heard of you, sir. Well, then, I’m glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Parker.” He reached a brown, hairy hand across the table toward Mr. Richard Parker, looking up at him as he did so with the most impudent coolness and steadiness. Mr. Richard Parker made no sign of having recognized the stranger’s name. He and the pirate seemed to be the only self-possessed men in the room. He calmly ignored the proffered hand, but said in a perfectly equal voice: “Why, then, I am obliged to you for telling me who you are,” and then coolly and composedly took his seat. “What game do you play, Parrot?” said he.

“Why, Mr. Parker,” said Parrot eagerly, “’tis lanterloo, and Captain Teach is holding the bank just now. Will you take a hand, sir?”

By midnight the bowl of punch had been emptied and filled, and emptied again, and at times the uproar was stunning. Mr. Richard Parker had laid aside his coat and unbuttoned his waistcoat. His shirt was opened at his handsome, round throat, and the sweat trickled down his smooth red neck. “Harkee now, Captain Teach,” he called across the table in a loud, rather hoarse, voice, “I know very well who you are, you bloody villain! You’re a bloody pirate, d’ ye hear?”

The other glowered with tipsy truculence back at him for a moment or two in silence. “You can’t prove me pirate, Mr. Dick Parker,” said he at last, “and no man can prove me pirate now. Maybe I am a pirate and maybe I’m none, but how can you prove I’m a pirate?”

Mr. Parker’s flaming face did not change a shade in the heavy haughtiness of its expression. “A pirate you are,” said he, “and what’s more, you’re at your tricks

again. I've heard all about you, and I know all about you, d' ye see? Well, you've been losing at your cards all night, Mr. Pirate. You may do well enough in your villainy afloat, stabbing poor coasting captains and murdering young gentlemen of blood like my nephew Ned, but what a poor figure do you make ashore when you try your luck with the gentlemen at play. See what I've won of you! Look 'ee now, sirrah, I'll play you a game of hazard man to man, and clear you out o' all you have left if you dare to play me."

"Dare! Why should I not dare to play you, Dick Parker! D'ye think I'm afeard of you? I'll play you as long as ye can see. Why not?"

Harry Oliver pushed back his chair and rose. He came rather unsteadily to where Mr. Parker sat. "Don't do it, Dick," said he, thickly. "Don't you play that man. He's a bloody villain, Dick, and 'tisn't fit you should play him. D'ye forget what everybody knows, and that he had a hand in Ned's death?"

"Sit down, Oliver!" the other replied, wiping his face with his sleeve. "Here, Parrot, clear the table of these cards and hand the dice over here. There's your cup, you villain!" and he tossed the box across the table. "And now set your stakes and throw your cast."

Everybody gathered around the two to watch the game, and for a while nothing was heard but the rattle and fall of the dice. At first the luck ran all in Mr. Parker's favor, and Teach's face grew blacker and blacker. Then suddenly fortune changed, and in a little while the winner had lost everything he had gained. Again and again he threw, and again and again he lost. He played more and more desperately, and his opponent grinned at every cast.

"Don't play any more, Parker!" cried Harry Oliver. "Your luck's against you, and you've lost too much already." But the other only pushed him aside with his elbow, and gathered up the dice with trembling fingers. At last he dashed down the dice and box furiously, and thereupon Captain Teach burst out laughing. "And have ye had

enough?" he exulted hoarsely.

Mr. Parker stared haughtily at him without deigning any reply. "Did you order out the horses, Oliver?" he said, pushing back his chair and rising.

"Yes, I did. They're waiting outside now, and have been this hour."

"Then, come along, let us go; 'tis nearly morning now."

The moon, nearing its last quarter, hung in the east like a flattened globe of white light. The air was chill and smelt rank of marsh and woodland. The mocking birds were singing in ceaseless medley from the inky-black thickets beyond. Blackbeard followed the two gentlemen as they came out of the house. "And when may I look for you to settle your losses, Mr. Parker?" said he.

"I'll talk with you to-morrow," said Mr. Parker, as he set his foot in the stirrup.

"But you'll give me some written obligation of some sort, won't you?"

"I tell you, sirrah, I'll talk with you to-morrow. Do you hear me? To-morrow." And then the two gentlemen rode away into the night, leaving the other standing looking after them.

CHAPTER X

INTO BONDAGE

IT was the morning after the arrival at Yorktown. Jack was awake and up on deck bright and early. The sun had just risen upon a clear and cloudless day, and the brisk, fresh wind drove the crisp waves splashing against the brig as she rode at anchor. The foliage of the trees on shore whitened to the breeze, and the smoke blew sharply away here and there from some tall brick chimney. The town looked fresh and strangely new in the brightness of the morning. Three of the vessels that had lain in the harbor over night were getting under way. The yo-hoeing of the sailors, and the creaking and rattling of block and tackle, as the sails rose higher and higher

apeak, sounded sharp and clear across the water. One large schooner, heeling over before the wind, slid swiftly and silently past the Arundel. Three or four sailors, clustered along the rail, were looking over toward the Arundel as they passed the brig, but the man at the helm—he wore a red woolen monteray cap—gazed out steadily ahead, stooping a little so as to see under the boom of the mainsail.

Several of the redemptioners had come up on deck; one or two of them, doubtless remembering the tumult and disorder of the night before, wore a hang-dog doubtful look. Suddenly Jack saw the mate coming toward them from aft. “What are ye doing up here on deck!” he called out. “Weren’t you ordered below last night? Very well then, you go down below now, and don’t ye come up till you’re sent for; d’ye hear?” The men, though sullen and lowering, had no thought of disobeying the mate’s orders, and Jack, with the others, climbed down the ladder into the forecastle again.

It was well toward the middle of the day, and Jack was lounging in his berth, when Dred suddenly appeared in the steerage. He stood looking silently around for a moment or two, and then, seeing Jack, beckoned to him. Dred did not speak until they were out in the forecastle. “The agent’s come from shore to take you all off, lad,” said he; “he’s with Captain Butts in the cabin now, and in a minute or two you’ll be sent for.”

“To take us ashore?” said Jack. A sudden, keen pang gripped his heart, followed instantly by an utter falling away of the spirits, that left him almost physically weak. “To take us ashore?” Had the time then come at last?

“Aye,” said Dred, “ye’ve got to go ashore now, lad. But sit you down there a bit,” and he pointed to a sea-chest. “I’ve a notion to try and tidy ye up a bit. I don’t choose to have ye looking like they riff-raff,” and he jerked his head toward the steerage. “D’ye see, we two ha’ been mates, ha’n’t we?” He had taken out his gunny-bag, and he now brought out of it his needle and thread. He looked up at Jack from under his brows and then looked away again. Jack did not return the look but

sat with dry and choking throat, his breath coming hot and heavy from him. “Well, then,” said Dred, “seeing as we’re messmates, I won’t have ye going ashore looking like nothing but trash. Give me your coat and waistcoat.” He had threaded his needle and waxed the thread deftly. Jack stripped off his coat and waistcoat, and without a word Dred began mending the frayed and tattered edges of the waistcoat. Jack sat silently in his shirt-sleeves watching him. He knew that Dred was talking for the sake of talking. He felt almost stifled with his hot and labored breathing as he sat watching the other’s busy fingers.

“There, that looks betterish,” said Dred, holding the waistcoat off and looking at it, still carefully avoiding Jack’s eyes as he did so. “Here, take it,” and he tossed it to Jack. “And now for the coat. I be a wonderful man at mending clothes, ben’t I? Lord! what a hole is here, to be sure.” There was a long time of silence, Dred busily sewing away at the coat. “There,” said he at last, “what d’ ye think of that for a bit of mending? Well, well, lad, the time comes to all on us to part some time, so what matters it soon or late? Harkee, Jack; don’t you go making trouble for yourself. You be a good boy, and you’ll be treated well enough, I dare say. You’re mightily young yet, and five or six year won’t matter so much to you, and then think o’ what a deal you’ll see in that time.” He was talking very briskly, meantime putting away the needle and thread neatly.

Five years! Jack stood watching Dred fumbling in his gunny-bag. Presently he fetched out a pair of yarn stockings. “Here, put these on,” said he, “the ones you got be all full of holes. Give ‘em to me.”

Jack did not dare to trust himself to speak. He began dumbly changing his stockings, Dred standing over him.

Suddenly the boatswain appeared at the companion-way of the forecastle, and piped all hands up on deck. Jack and Dred went up together. Captain Butts and the agent were standing waiting for the men, the agent holding a little packet of papers in his

hand. Jack, in a glance, saw that the agent was a tall, lean man dressed in rusty black, wearing a long, black coat, and with the flaps of his hat tied up with leather thongs. His lips moved as he counted the redemptioners, one by one, as they came up out of the companion-way and were formed in a line before him by the boatswain. A great, flat boat, rowed by four negroes and with a white man in the stern, had been made fast to the side of the brig. “Nineteen, twenty—that’s all of ‘em, Captain,”—the agent had counted Jack in with the others,—“and very lucky you’ve been with ‘em. Now, Bo’s’n, get ‘em down as soon as you can.”

“Aye, aye, sir,” said the boatswain; and then to the men, “Now then, look alive, my hearties, and don’t take all day about it!”

Then, suddenly, Jack went straight up to where the agent stood. “Sir,” said he, hoarsely, “I have been ill-used. I was knocked down and kidnapped, and brought away from home against my will. Will you not listen to me and hear what I have to say?”

“Hold your noise!” roared the captain.

“No, I won’t, neither,” said Jack. He did not expect much, indeed he felt that he had no hope of escape, but still the effort was worth making. He stood chokingly looking at the agent, and he felt that his heart was beating very heavily within him.

“I don’t know anything about what you say,” said the agent. “The bill calls for twenty men shipped from Southampton, and your name must be among them. What’s your name?”

“Jack Ballister.”

“Yes, here ’tis—John Ballister—shipped for five years. If there is something wrong, you’ll have to hold Captain Butts and Mr. Hezekiah Tipton to answer. I’m only an agent, and ’tis none of my business.”

“I wish I had ye for a couple of days longer,” said Captain Butts, “I’d answer ye, I would. I’d put my answer upon your back, I would, afore I let ye go.”

“But Master Hezekiah Tipton is my own uncle,” said Jack.

“I don’t know anything about that,” said the agent, “’Tis none of my business.”

Jack did not say another word. He crossed the deck, hardly knowing what he was doing, and climbed down into the boat, where the other transports were already seating themselves. A moment or two, and the agent followed, and then immediately the boat was cast loose. As it pulled away toward the shore, Jack gave one look back across the widening stretch of water. It was almost like a dream; it seemed to him as though that which was passing was not really happening to him. Dred’s red handkerchief gleamed like a flame against the blue sky as he stood on the rail looking after the departing boat. Then Jack turned his face quickly away. He could not trust himself to look again, lest he should break down before all the boat-full of men.

A little scattered cluster of men stood upon the wharf waiting for the flat boat as it drew nearer and nearer, and when it struck the piling with a bump half a dozen willing hands caught the line that was thrown them and made it fast. Jack scrambled with the others to the wharf under the curious gaze of those who stood looking on. They were formed into a line, two by two, and then marched down the wharf toward the shore. The loungers followed them scatteringly. Beyond the wharf they crossed a narrow strip of beach, and climbed a sloping, sandy road cut through the high bluff. At the crest they came out upon a broad, grassy street, upon which fronted the straggling houses, one or two built of brick, but most of them unpainted frame-structures, with tall, sharp-pointed roofs and outside chimneys of brick. A curious smoky smell pervaded the air. People stood at their doors looking at Jack and his companions as they marched two by two down the center of the dusty street.

So at last they reached and were halted in front of a large brick warehouse. Then the agent opened the door, and they entered. Within it was perfectly empty, and smelt damp and earthy from disuse. The board floor was sunken unevenly, and the plaster

was broken from the walls here and there in great patches. The two windows, which looked upon the rear of the adjoining houses, were barred across with iron. Jack heard his companions talking together. “Well, Jack,” said Sim Tucker, “here we be at last.”

Jack sometimes wondered whether the two days that followed passed very quickly or very slowly. Food was sent over three times a day to the warehouse by the agent, and twice a day all hands were allowed to walk about for a few minutes in a little yard back of the building. It seemed to him that he slept nearly all the rest of the time, except now and then when he stood on an empty box looking out of one of the windows. The windows overlooked a yard and a shed, beyond the roof of which was a cluster of trees, and beyond that again two tall chimneys. Nearly always there were pigeons on the roof of the shed. Now and then there was the noise of their clapping flight, but the gurgling coo of the strutting males sounded almost continuously through the warm silence.

About eleven o’clock of the third day, they were brought out of the storehouse, formed into line in front of the building, and then marched away in the hot sun down the street about a hundred yards to the custom-house. Jack saw a lounging, scattered crowd of men there gathered in a little group, and he guessed that that was where they were to be sold.

The agent and the auctioneer stood by a horse-block talking together in low tones as the man who had marched Jack and the others down from the warehouse formed them in line against the wall of the building. The agent held a slip of paper in his hand, which he referred to every now and then. At last the auctioneer mounted upon the horse-block.

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“‘NOW THEN, GENTLEMEN, HOW MUCH DO YOU BID FOR THIS BOY?’ SAID THE AUCTIONEER.”

“Gentlemen,” Jack heard him say, ”I have now to offer as fine a lot of servants as hath ever been brought to Virginia. There be only twenty, gentlemen, but every one choice and desirable. Which is the first one you have upon your list, Mr. Quillen?” said he, turning to the agent.

The agent referred to a slip of paper he held in his hand. “Sam Dawson,” he called out in a loud voice. “Step out, Sam Dawson!” and in answer to the summons a big, lumbering man, with a heavy brow and dull face, stepped out from the line and stood beside the horse-block.

“This is Sam Dawson, gentlemen,” said the auctioneer, addressing the crowd. “He hath no trade, but he is a first-rate, healthy fellow and well fitted for the tobacco fields. He is to be sold for five years.”

“They’re all to be sold for five years,” said the agent.

“You have heard, gentlemen,” said the auctioneer—“they’re all to be sold for five years. This is a fine big fellow. How much have I bid for him? How much? Ten pounds is bid for his time—ten pounds is bid, gentlemen! I have ten pounds. Now I have twelve pounds! Now I have fifteen pounds!”

In a minute the price had run up to twenty pounds, and then a voice said quietly: “I will give you twenty-five pounds for the man.”

“Mr. Simms bids twenty-five pounds for the man’s time in behalf of Colonel Birchall Parker,” said the salesman. “Have I any more bids for him?” But Mr. Simms’s bid seemed to close the sale, for no one appeared to care to bid against him.

Jack had been so dazed and bewildered by coming out from the dark and chill warehouse into the sunlight and life, that he had scarcely noticed anything very particularly. Now he looked up at the man who had bought Sam Dawson’s time, and saw that he was a stout, red-faced, plain-looking man, dressed very handsomely in snuff-colored clothes. As Jack wondered who he was, another man was called out from the line of servants. Again the bids had run up to ten or twelve pounds, and

then again Mr. Simms made a bid of twenty-five pounds, and once more no one bid against him. Another man and another man were sold, and then Jack heard his own name.

“Jack Ballister!” called the agent. “Stand out, boy, and be quick about it!” and Jack mechanically advanced from the others and took his place beside the block, looking around him, as he did so, at the circle of faces fronting him and all staring at him. His mouth felt very dry, and his heart was beating and pounding heavily. “Here is a fine, good boy, gentlemen,” said the salesman. “He is only sixteen years old, but he will do well as a serving or waiting-man in some gentleman’s house who hath need of such. He hath education, and reads and writes freely. Also, as you may see for yourselves, gentlemen, he is strong and well built. A lively boy, gentlemen—a good, lively boy! Come, boy, run to yonder post and back, and show the gentlemen how brisk ye be.”

Jack, although he heard the words, looked dumbly at the speaker. “D’ye hear me!” said the agent. “Do as I bid ye; run to yonder post and back!”

Then Jack did so. It seemed to him as though he were running in a nightmare. As he returned to his place he heard the agent saying: “The boy is strong, but doth not show himself off as well as he might. But he is a good boy, as you may see for yourselves.” The next thing he knew was that Mr. Simms had bought him for twenty pounds.

CHAPTER XI

MARLBOROUGH

MARLBOROUGH was the house of Colonel Birchall Parker. It was in its day, perhaps, the finest house in Virginia, not even excepting the Governor’s palace at Williamsburgh. It stood upon the summit of a slope of the shore rising up from the banks of the James River. The trees in front nearly hid the house from the river as

you passed, but the chimneys and the roof stood up above the foliage, and you caught a glimpse of the brick façade, and of the elaborate doorway, through an opening in the trees, where the path led up from the landing-place to the hall door. The main house was a large two-storied building capped by a tall, steep roof. From the center building long wings reached out to either side, terminating at each end in a smaller building or office standing at right angles to its wing, and, together with the main house, inclosing on three sides a rather shaggy, grassy lawn. From the front you saw nothing of the servants' quarters or outbuildings (which were around to the rear of the house), but only the imposing façade with its wings and offices.

Now it was early morning; Colonel Birchall Parker had arisen, and his servant was shaving him. He sat by the open window in his dressing-gown, and with slippers on his feet. His wig, a voluminous mass of finely curled black hair, hung from the block ready for him to put on. The sunlight came in at the open window, the warm mellow breeze just stirring the linen curtains drawn back to either side and bringing with it the multitudinous sounds of singing birds from the thickets beyond the garden. The bed-clothes were thrown off from a mountainously high bed, and the wooden steps, down which Colonel Parker had a little while before descended from his couch to the bare floor, were still standing beside the curtained bedstead. The room had all the confused look of having just been slept in.

Colonel Parker held the basin under his chin while the man shaved him. He had a large, benevolent face, the smooth double chin just now covered with a white mass of soap-suds. As he moved his face a little to one side to receive the razor he glanced out of the open window. "I see the schooner is come back again, Robin," said he.

"Yes, your honor," said the man, "it came back last night."

"Were there any letters?"

"I don't know, your honor; the schooner came in about midnight, and Mr. Simms is not about yet." The man wiped the razor as he spoke and began whetting it to a

keener edge. “Mr. Richard came up with the schooner, your honor,” said he.

“Did he?”

“Yes, your honor, and Mr. Simms fetched up a lot of new servants with him. They’re quartered over in the empty store-house now. Will your honor turn your face a little this way?”

The noises of newly awakened life were sounding clear and distinct through the uncarpeted wainscoted spaces of the house—the opening and shutting of doors, the sound of voices, and now and then a break of laughter.

The great hall and the side rooms opening upon it, when Colonel Parker came down-stairs, were full of that singularly wide, cool, new look that the beginning of the morning always brings to accustomed scenes. Mr. Richard Parker, who had been down from his room some time, was standing outside upon the steps in the fresh, open air. He turned as Colonel Parker came out of the doorway. “Well, brother Richard,” said Colonel Parker, “I am glad to see you; I hope you are well?”

“Thank you, sir,” said the other, bowing, but without any change in his expression. “I hope you are in good health, sir?”

“Why, yes,” said Colonel Parker, “I believe I have naught to complain of now.” He came out further upon the steps, and stood at a little distance, with his hands clasped behind him, looking now up into the sky, now down the vista between the trees and across the river.

There was a sound of fresh young voices echoing through the upper hall, then the noise of laughter, and presently the sound of rapid feet running down the uncarpeted stairway. Then Eleanor Parker burst out of the house in a gale, caught her father by the coat, and standing on her tip-toes, kissed both of his cheeks in rapid succession.

Two young girl visitors and a young man of sixteen or seventeen followed her out of the house, the girls demurely, the young man with somewhat of diffidence in the presence of Mr. Richard Parker.

“My dear,” said Colonel Parker, “do you not then see your uncle?”

“Why, to be sure I do,” said she, “but how could you expect me to see anybody until I had first kissed you. How do you do, Uncle Richard?” and she offered him her cheek to kiss.

Mr. Richard Parker smiled, but, as he always did, as though with an effort. “Why, zounds, Nell!” said he, “sure you grow prettier every day; how long do you suppose ’twill be before you set all the gentlemen in the colony by the ears? If I were only as young as Rodney, yonder, I’d be almost sorry to be your uncle, except I would then not have the right to kiss your cheek as I have just done.”

The young girl blushed and laughed, with a flash of her eyes and a sparkle of white teeth between her red lips. “Why, Uncle Richard,” said she, “and in that case, if you were as handsome a man as you are now, I too would be sorry to have you for nothing better than an uncle.”

Just then a negro appeared at the door and announced that breakfast was ready, and they all went into the house.

Mistress Parker, or Madam Parker, as she was generally called, followed by her negro maid carrying a cushion, met them as they entered the hall. The three younger gentlemen bowed profoundly, and Madam Parker sank almost to the floor in a courtesy equally elaborate.

She was a thin little woman, very nervous and quick in her movements. She had a fine, sensitive face, and, like her daughter, very dark eyes, only they were quick and brilliant, and not soft and rich like those of the young girl.

The morning was very warm, and so, after breakfast was over, the negroes carried chairs out upon the lawn under the shade of the trees at some little distance from the house. The wide red-brick front of the building looked down upon them where they sat, the elder gentlemen smoking each a long clay pipe of tobacco, while Madam Parker sat with them talking intermittently. The young people chatted together in

subdued voices at a little distance, with now and then a half-suppressed break of laughter.

“I hear, brother Richard,” said Colonel Parker, “that Simms brought up a lot of servants from Yorktown.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Parker, “there were about twenty altogether, I believe. And that brings a matter into my mind. There was one young fellow I would like very much to have if you can spare him to me—a boy of about sixteen or seventeen. I have no house-servant since Tim died, and so, if you have a mind to part with this lad, sir, I’d like mightily well to have him.”

“Why, brother Richard,” said Colonel Parker, “if Simms hath no use for the boy I see no reason why you should not have him. What hath Simms done with him?”

“He is with the other servants over at the old store-house, I believe, sir; Simms had them sent there last night. May I send for the lad, that you may see him?”

“I should be glad to see him,” said Colonel Parker.

Jack had come up from Yorktown packed with the other servants in the hold of the schooner. The hatch was tilted to admit some light and air, but he could see nothing of whither he was being taken, and his only sense of motion was in the slant of the vessel, the wind, and the rippling gurgle of the water alongside.

He had been wakened from a deep sleep to be marched past a clustering group of darkly black trees, across a grassy stretch of lawn, in the silent and profoundly starry night, to a brick building into which he and his companions were locked, as they had been locked in the old warehouse at Yorktown.

Now, as he followed the negro through the warm, bright sunlight, he gazed about him, half bewildered with the newness of everything, yet with an intense and vivid interest. He had seen really nothing of Marlborough as he had been marched up from the landing place at midnight with his companions the night before. As the negro led him around the end of the building, he gazed up curiously at the wide

brick front. Then he saw that there was a party of ladies and gentlemen sitting in the shade across the lawn. He followed the negro as the other led him straight toward the group, and then he halted at a little distance, not knowing just what was expected of him.

Mr. Richard Parker beckoned to him. “Come hither, boy,” said he, “this gentleman wants to see you.” Jack obeyed, trying not to appear ungainly or uncouth in his movements, and feeling that he did not know just how to succeed.

“Look up, boy; hold up your head,” said a gentleman whom he at once knew to be the great Colonel Parker of whom he had heard—a large, stout, noble-looking gentleman, with a broad, smooth chin and a diamond solitaire pinned in the cravat at his throat. As Jack obeyed he felt rather than saw that a pretty young lady was standing behind the gentleman’s chair, looking at him with large, dark eyes. “Where did you come from?” asked the gentleman.

Jack, with the gaze of everybody upon him, felt shy of the sound of his own voice. “I came from Southampton,” said he.

“Speak up, boy, speak up,” said the gentleman.

“I came from Southampton,” said Jack again, and this time it seemed to him that his voice was very loud indeed.

“From Southampton, hey?” said the gentleman. He looked at Jack very critically for a while in silence. “Well, brother Richard,” said he at last, “’tis indeed a well-looking lad, and if Simms hath no special use for him I will let you have him. How long is he bound for?”

“Five years,” said Mr. Parker. “They were all bound for five years. I spoke to Simms about him yesterday, and he said he could spare him. Simms gave twenty pounds for him, and I will be willing and glad enough to pay you that for him.”

“Tut, tut, brother Richard,” said Colonel Parker, “don’t speak to me of paying for him; indeed, I give him to you very willingly.”

“Then, indeed, sir, I am very much obliged to you. You may go now, boy.” Jack hesitated for a moment, not knowing clearly if he understood. “You may go, I said,” said Mr. Richard Parker again. And then Jack went away, still accompanied by the negro.

The gloomy interior of the store-house struck chill upon him as he reëntered it from the brightness and heat outside, and once more he was conscious of the dampness and all-pervading earthy smell. The transports, huddled together, were dull and silent. One or two of them were smoking, others lay sleeping heavily, others sat crouching or leaning against the wall doing nothing—perfectly inert. They hardly looked up as Jack entered.

CHAPTER XII

DOWN THE RIVER

IT was the next morning that the door of the store-house in which Jack and his companions were confined was suddenly opened by a white man. He was a roughly-dressed fellow, with a shaggy beard and with silver ear-rings in his ears. “Where’s that there boy of Mr. Richard Parker’s?” said he.

“D’ ye mean me?” said Jack, “I am the only boy here.”

“Why, then, if you are the only boy here, you must be the one,” said the man with a grin. “Come along with me,” he added, “and be quick about it.”

“Am I going for good and all?” asked Jack.

“I reckon ye be.”

The other redemptioners had roused themselves somewhat at the coming of the man and were listening. “Good-by, Jack,” said one of them, as he was about to go, and the others took up the words: “Good-by—good-by, Jack.” “Good-by,” said Jack. He shook hands with them all, and then he and the man went out into the bright

sunlight.

His conductor led the way down back of the great house, and past a clustered group of cabins, in front of which a number of negro children played like monkeys, half naked and bareheaded, who stopped their antics and stood in the sun, and watched Jack as he passed, while some negro women came to the doors and stood also watching him.

“Won’t you tell me where I’m going to be taken?” said Jack, quickening his steps so as to come up alongside of his conductor.

“You’re going with Mr. Richard Parker,” said the man. “I reckon he’ll be taking you down to the Roost with him.”

“The Roost?” said Jack, “and where is the Roost?”

“Why, the Roost is Mr. Parker’s house. It’s some thirty or forty mile down the river.”

As they were speaking they had come out past a group of trees at the end of the great house, and upon the edge of the slope. From where they were they looked down to the shore of the river, and upon a large flat-boat with a great square sail that lay at the landing place, a rod or so away. There was a pile of bags, and a lot of boxes and bundles of various sorts lying upon the wharf in the sun. Three or four negro men were slowly and indolently carrying the bags aboard the flat-boat.

“Are we going down the river in that boat?” asked Jack, as he descended the slope at the heels of the other.

“Yes,” said the man briefly.

On the bank at the end of the wharf was a square brick building, in the shade of which stood Mr. Simms and Mr. Parker, the latter smoking a cigarro. Mr. Simms held in his hand a slip of paper, upon which he kept the tally of the bags as they were carried aboard. Jack went out along the wharf, watching the negro men at

work, until Mr. Simms called out: “Get aboard the boat, young man.” Thereupon he stepped into the boat, climbing over the seats to the bow, where he settled himself easily upon some bags of meal, and whence he watched the slow loading of the boat.

At last everything was taken aboard. “We’re all ready now, Mr. Simms,” called out the man who had brought Jack down from the storehouse.

Mr. Parker and Mr. Simms came down the wharf together. Mr. Parker stepped aboard the scow, and immediately it was cast loose and pushed off from the landing.

“Good-by, Mr. Parker, sir,” called Mr. Simms across the widening stretch of water, and he lifted his hat as he spoke. Mr. Parker nodded a brief reply. The boat drifted farther and farther away with the sweeping stream as the negro rowers settled themselves in their places, and Mr. Simms still stood on the wharf looking after them. Then the oars creaked in the rowlocks and the head of the boat came slowly around in the direction intended. Jack, lying upon and amid the meal bags, looked out astern. Before him were the naked, sinewy backs of the eight negro oarsmen, and away in the stern sat the white man—he was the overseer of the North Plantation—and Mr. Parker, who was just lighting a fresh cigarro. Presently the oars sounded with a ceaseless chug, chug, in the rowlocks, and then the overseer left the tiller for a moment and came forward and trimmed the square, brown sail, that now swelled out smooth and round with the sweep of the wind. The rugged, wooded shores crept slowly past them, and the now distant wharf and brick buildings, and the long front of the great house perched upon the slope, dropped further and further astern. Then the flat-boat crept around the bend of the river, and house and wharf were shut off by an intervening point of land.

Jack could not but feel the keen novelty of it all. The sky was warm and clear. The bright surface of the water, driven by the breeze, danced and sparkled in the drifting sunlight. It was impossible that he should not feel a thrill of interest that was like delight in the newness of everything.

About noon the overseer brought out a hamper-like basket, which he opened, and from which he took a plentiful supply of food. A couple of cold roast potatoes, a great lump of Indian-corn bread, and a thick slice of ham were passed forward to Jack. It seemed to him that he had never tasted anything so good.

After he had finished his meal he felt very sleepy. He curled himself down upon the bags in the sunlight, and presently dozed off.

The afternoon sun was slanting when he was aroused by a thumping and bumping and a stir on board. He opened his eyes, and sat up to see that the boat had again stopped at a landing-place. It was a straggling, uneven wharf, at the end of which, upon the shore, was an open shed. Thence a rough and rugged road ran up the steep bluff bank, and then turned away into the woody wilderness beyond. A wagon with a nondescript team of oxen and mules, and half a dozen men, black and white, were waiting beside the shed at the end of the wharf for the coming of the flat-boat.

Then followed the unloading of the boat.

Mr. Parker had gone ashore, and Jack could see him and the overseer talking together and inspecting a small boat that lay pulled up from the water upon a little strip of sandy beach. Jack himself climbed out from the boat upon the wharf, where he walked up and down, stretching himself and watching those at work. Presently he heard some one calling, “Where’s that young fellow? Hi, you, come here!”

Then Jack saw that they had made ready the smaller boat at which they had been looking, and had got the sail hoisted upon it; it flapped and beat in the wind. A little group stood about it, and Jack saw that they were waiting for him. He ran along the wharf, and jumped down from it to the little strip of sandy beach. They were in the act of pushing off the boat when he climbed aboard. As it slid off into the water Mr. Parker stepped into it. Two men ran splashing through the water and pushed it off, and as it reached the deeper water, one of them jumped in over the stern with a dripping splash of his bare feet, catching the tiller and trimming the sail as he did so,

and bringing the bow of the boat around before the wind. Then there was a gurgling ripple of water under the bows as the wind filled the sail more strongly, and presently the wharf and the flat-boat dropped rapidly astern, and once more Jack was sailing down the river, while wooded shores and high bluff banks, alternating one another, drifted by, and were dropped away behind.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ROOST

THE sun had set, and the dusk was falling rapidly. The boat was running toward a precipitous bluff shore, above the crest of which, and some forty or fifty yards inland, loomed the indistinct form of a house, the two tall chimneys standing out sharply against the fading sky. There was a dark mass of trees on the one side, and what appeared to be a cluster of huts on the other. The barking of two or three dogs sounded distantly across the water, and a dim light shone from one of the windows. The boat drew nearer and nearer to the dark shore; then at last, with a grinding jar of the keel upon the beach, the journey was ended.

A flight of high, ladder-like steps reached from the sandy beach to the summit of the bluff. Jack followed Mr. Parker up this stairway, leaving the man who had brought them to furl and tie the sail. Excepting the barking of dogs and the light in the window, there was at first no sign of life about the place as they approached. Then suddenly there was a pause in the dogs’ barking; then a renewed clamorous burst from half a dozen throats at once. Suddenly the light in the room began to flicker and move, and Jack could see a number of dim forms come around the end of the house. The next minute a wide door was opened, and the figure of a woman appeared, holding a candle above her head. Instantly half a dozen hounds burst out of the house from behind her and came rushing down toward Jack and Mr. Parker, barking and baying.

Mr. Parker paid no attention to the dogs, but led the way directly up the flight of tall, steep steps and into the hallway. He nodded to the woman as he passed, speaking briefly to her, and calling her Peggy.

She was rather a handsome woman, with a broad face and black hair and eyes. She stood aside and the master passed her into the house, Jack following close at his heels. “Here are two letters for you,” said the woman, and she gave them to him from the table; and Mr. Parker, without laying aside his hat, took them, tore one of them open and began reading it by the light of the candle which she held for him. As he read, his eyebrows drew together into a knot of a frown, and his handsome florid face lowered.

Meantime Jack stood gazing about him at the large, barren hallway barely lit by the light of the candle. At the further end he could just distinguish the dim form of a broad bare, stairway leading up to the floor above. It seemed to be very cheerless, and he felt strange and lonely in the dark, gloomy space. Several negroes were standing just outside of the door, looking in; he could see their forms dimly in the darkness. They appeared weird and unreal, with their black faces and shining teeth.

Suddenly Mr. Parker looked up from the letter he was reading and bade the woman, Peggy, to take Jack out to the kitchen and to give him something to eat.

When Jack entered the kitchen he found the man who had brought him and Mr. Parker down the river in the boat, sitting at the table eating, while a barefoot negro woman, with necklace and bracelets of blue glass beads, waited upon him. The man looked up and welcomed Jack as he came in, and then almost immediately began asking him questions about England. The feeling of loneliness and depression was settling more and more heavily upon Jack’s spirits, and he replied vaguely hardly knowing what were the questions asked him, or what he said in answer. After he had ended his supper, he went and stood in the doorway, looking out into the starlit night. He thought he saw the dim forms of human figures moving about in the

gloom, and the black outlines of rude buildings. The warm darkness was full of the ceaseless whispering noises of night, broken now and then by the sudden sound of loud gabbling negro voices. The mockingbirds were singing with intermittent melody from the dark stillness of the distant woods. His feeling of depression seemed to weigh upon Jack’s soul like a leaden weight. He could almost have cried in his loneliness and homesickness.

When Jack woke at the dawning of the next day, in the little bare room at the end of the upper hall where he slept within easy call of Mr. Parker’s voice, he did not at first know where he was. Then instantly came recollection, and with it a keen longing to see his new surroundings. He arose, dressed hastily, and went down-stairs and out of doors. Everything looked very different in the wide clear light of early morning. The buildings he had seen in the blackness of the night before resolved into a clustered jumble of negro huts,—some of frame, some of wattled sticks,—about which moved the wild figures of the half-savage black men, women, and children.

Jack walked out into the open yard, and turned and looked back at the house.

It was a great rambling frame structure, weather-beaten and gray. Several of the windows were open, and out of one of them hung a patchwork bed-coverlet, moving lazily now and then in the wind. A thin wreath of smoke curled away from one of the chimneys into the blue air. Everything looked very fresh and keen in the bright light of the morning.

A lot of negro children had been playing about the huts, some of them entirely naked. They ceased their play and stood staring at Jack as he came out into the open yard, and a negro lad of about his own age, who was standing in the door of a wattled hut at a little distance, came over and spoke to him. The black boy was lean and lanky, with over-grown, spider-like legs and arms. He had a little round, nut-like head covered with a close felt of wool. “Hi, boy!” he said, when he had come up

close to Jack, “what your name?”

“My name’s Jack Ballister,” said Jack; “what’s your name?”

“My name Little Coffee,” and the negro boy grinned with a flash of his white teeth.

“Little Coffee! Why, to be sure, that’s a very queer name for any Christian soul to have,” said Jack.

The negro boy’s grin disappeared into quick darkness. “My name no queer,” he said, with a sudden childish sullenness. “My name Little Coffee all right. My fader Big Coffee—I Little Coffee.”

“Well,” said Jack, “I never heard of anybody named Coffee in all my life before.”

“Where you come from?” asked the negro boy.

“I came from England,” said Jack; “we drink coffee there; we don’t give Coffee as a name to Christian souls. Where do you come from, Coffee?”

“Me come nowhere,” said Coffee, with a returning grin. “Me born here in yan house.”

Beyond the row of negro huts was a small wooden cabin of a better appearance than the others. Suddenly a white man came out of the door of this hut, stood looking for a moment, and then walked forward toward Jack. It was Dennis, the overseer. He—unless Peggy Pitcher be excepted—became almost the most intimate friend Jack had for the two months or so that he lived at the Roost; and in this curiously strange fragment of his life, perhaps the most vivid recollections that remained with him in his after memory were of intervals of time spent in Dennis’s hut; of the great black, sooty fireplace; of the shelf-like floor at the further end of the cabin, where was the dim form of the bed with the bright coverlet; of Dennis’s negro wife, pattering about the earthen floor in her bare feet, her scant red petticoat glowing like a flame of fire in the shadowy interior; of Dennis himself, crouching over the smoldering ashes, smoking his Indian clay pipe of tobacco. As Dennis now

approached, Jack thought that he had hardly ever seen a stranger-looking figure, for a pair of gold ear-rings twinkled in his ears, a broad hat of woven grass shaded his face, he wore a pair of loose white cotton drawers, and a red beard covered his cheeks and chin and throat. “I do suppose,” said Dennis, when he had come close enough to Jack—“I do suppose that you are the new boy that came last night.”

“Yes,” said Jack, “I am.”

CHAPTER XIV

IN ENGLAND

IT is not to be supposed that Jack could have disappeared so suddenly and entirely as he had done without leaving behind him much talk and wonder as to what had become of him.

One day, for instance, Mr. Stetson stopped old Hezekiah in the street and began asking after Jack. “I know nought of him, Master Stetson,” said the old man. “He always was a main discontented, uneasy lad as ever I see. Time and time again have he talked to me about running away to sea—and that, whenever I would tell him ’twas time for him to be earning his own living by honest, decent work.”

“But, Mr. Tipton,” said the rector, “I do hear talk that he hath been kidnapped.”

“Mayhap he have been,” said Hezekiah; “but I know naught of him.”

“And are you not, then, going to do anything to try to find him?” cried out the good old rector. “Sure, you would leave no stone unturned to discover what hath become of your nephew.”

“What can I do, master?” said Hezekiah, almost whining. “I’m main sorry Jacky be gone, and am willing to do whatever I can for to find him again, but what can I do?”

“Why, Master Tipton,” said the rector, “that, me-seems, is your affair and not mine. I can hardly tell you how to set about doing your own duty in this thing. But sure am

I you should do whatever you can to find what hath become of your poor nephew."

It was the very general opinion that Jack Ballister had been kidnapped, and nearly every one surmised that old Hezekiah himself had had a hand in it. If any of this talk reached Hezekiah's own ears he paid no attention to it, but went his way either unconscious of or indifferent to all that his neighbors said about him.

Then, one morning, the old America merchant received a communication from the little attorney, Burton, telling him that if he would stop at his (the attorney's) office, betwixt the hours of three and five in the afternoon, he should receive certain news in re John Ballister that might be of interest to him.

The old man came promptly at three o'clock, and found the little lawyer rustling among a litter of papers like a little gray mouse. He had a great pair of barnacle glasses perched astride his nose, and he pushed them up on his sharp bony forehead, where they gleamed like two disks of brightness as he turned around to face the old man. There was a moment or two of silence, broken at last by the old America merchant.

"Well, master," said he, lifting his wig and wiping the bald pate beneath with a red handkerchief—"Well, master, here I be; and what is it you have to say to me about my nephew—about Jacky? I be in a vast hurry this art'noon, master, and wait here with great business upon my hands."

"Perhaps so, but I dare say you have time to listen to me, though," said the attorney. "For what I have to say concerns you very nearly, Master Tipton."

Then he opened the lid of the desk and brought out from a pigeonhole a bundle of papers tied up with a piece of tape. "Some time ago, Master Tipton," he said, "Sir Henry Ballister, who is an honored client of mine, gave me instructions to look after his nephew, John Ballister, who was left by his father in your ward. When the young man disappeared I wrote to Sir Henry to that effect, and received from him further instructions to inquire into the affair."

The little lawyer had been untying the packet while speaking. He now spread the papers out in front of him, touching them one by one as he continued: “First of all, Master Tipton,” he said, “I heard it reported that, when last seen, Master John Ballister was in company with one of your own crimps and a party of redemption servants you were shipping to the Americas. I found, further, that the crimp’s name was Weems—Israel Weems. Here is a letter from Weems in answer to one from me, in which letter he acknowledges that Master John Ballister was with him the night that the servants were shipped, and that he did not again see the young man after leaving him at the wharf. Here is another communication from John Barkley, merchant, of London, relating to the cargo of the Arundel, in which it is supposed the young man was carried away. He specified that there were but nineteen servants to be shipped from this port to the Virginia plantations. These are my notes taken during a cursory examination of Jonah Doe, landlord of the Golden Fish Inn.” And so the little man continued, recapitulating his evidence, and touching, as he spoke of them, the different papers spread out on the desk before him. “The result of all this, Master Hezekiah Tipton,” he concluded, “is that it is perfectly conclusive to my mind that Master John Ballister hath been kidnapped and carried away to the Virginias. I don’t say that you had a hand in the business, Master Tipton—I would be loath to suppose so, and to so accuse a fellow-townsman and an old acquaintance; but ’tis my belief your nephew hath been stole, and I would like to hear what you yourself have to say about it.”

Old Hezekiah did not reply immediately. He sat for a while staring absently at the other as though not seeing him. Then suddenly he aroused himself almost as with a start. “Hey?” he said, “How? Oh, ay! what you say appeareth all very true, Master Burton. But—will you let me see them papers?”

“To be sure I will,” said the other; “and if you can explain the business satisfactorily, Master Tipton, and if you can satisfy Sir Henry Ballister that his nephew is safe and sound, and shall be duly fetched back again with no ill having

befallen him, why, I, for one, will be as glad as glad can be."

"That's right, that's right," said the old man, almost briskly. He adjusted his spectacles as he spoke, and then opened the first paper of the packet and began slowly and deliberately reading it. Then he took up the second and gave it a like close and deliberate scrutiny, and so on through the packet.

"Well, Master Hezekiah," said the attorney, when the other had finished the perusal of the packet, "now you've read these papers, what do you think of 'em, and what do you intend to do about this business? I will report to Sir Henry Ballister just what you choose for me to say."

The old man did not reply immediately. He had taken up his spectacles again, and was rubbing them and rubbing them with his red bandana handkerchief. "Those papers, Master Burton," said he, at last, "bear mightily hard upon me. They make it appear like I kidnapped Jacky myself. Here be you spending all your time a-hunting up evidence to make it look like as though I had dealt foul with my own flesh and blood—and you a neighbor of mine, and I one who hath put many and many a good guinea's worth of work into your way."

"That last is true enough, Master Tipton," said the little lawyer; "and, as I said before, I, for one, have no wish to do aught to harm you. Just you think, Master Tipton,—that was why I sent for you to come and see me; else I would have sent these papers straight to Sir Henry Ballister instead of showing them, first of all, to you."

"I be much beholden to you, neighbor," said the old man. "But these papers look mightily ill for me. Suppose anything should happen to you, and those papers should fall into strange hands; how would it be with me then? Ha' ye thought of that?"

"Ay, ay," said the little lawyer, "I have thought of it, and it is all arranged for, Master Tipton. If aught should happen to me, I have so arranged it that only a part of these papers go to Sir Henry Ballister. All that concerns you is cared for, so that no

harm shall happen you."

"I be much beholden to you, neighbor," said the old man again.

"And now," said the attorney, after another little pause of silence, "what have you to say, Master Tipton? What am I to write to Sir Henry Ballister?"

Then the old America merchant arose: "Well, master," said he, "all this be so sudden that, to be sure, I don't know what to say. Give me time to think over it, and then I will talk to you in full some other day. Let me see; this be Wednesday. On Friday next I'll meet you here, and tell you all that I have to say. Can you give me so long as that?"

"To be sure I can," said the lawyer. "Take your own time, and 'twill suit me."

"Very well, then, on Friday next," said the old man.

It was the next day that the little lawyer returned home by night from the King's Arms Coffee-House, where he used to spend an occasional bachelor's evening gossiping with his cronies over his toddy, or talking politics.

It was maybe ten o'clock when he left the coffee-house. There was a chill drizzling rain falling, and the little lawyer shuddered as he stepped out into the darkness, gathering his wrap-rascal more closely about him and turning up the collar about his ears. The night, coming as he did into it from the lights of the warm coffee-house, appeared as dark as pitch. The little lawyer took the middle of the street just lit by the occasional dim light of a corner lamp. There were few folks stirring, and only now and then the sound of a voice or a distant footstep. The far-away baying of a dog sounded from out the more distant hollow of the wet night. The little attorney was recapitulating in his mind the points of an argument he had had with the writer Willowood during the evening. He had had the better of the question, and he felt a warm glow of pleasure as he went stumbling through the night, as he thought, point by point, of the advantage he had had in the discussion. There was some one walking behind him, and it came into his mind to think how easy it would be for

some one to knock him upon the head without his neighbors being any the wiser. Then he began again thinking of how he had answered Master Willowood.

The thought of a possible attack upon himself came into his mind again as he reached the mouth of the dark court upon which fronted his own house, and he paused for a moment before he turned into the black and silent street. In the stillness he could hear the rain pattering and dripping everywhere, and there was a light shining dimly from an upper window of a house further down the court.

The attorney thought he heard soft footsteps near him, and he was in the act of turning to satisfy himself that he was mistaken, when in the instant there came a crash as though the heavens had burst asunder. There was a flashing flame of livid fire and a myriad sparkling points of light. The thought had time to shoot through his brain, “What has happened to me?”—the thought and a hundred possibilities of answer,—before the sparks had vanished, and the roaring in his ears had hummed away into the silence of unconsciousness.

It all passed in a moment; there was no struggle and no outcry. Excepting for a quivering twitch, the attorney Burton was lying as though dead, a dark and indistinguishably motionless heap upon the ground, and two men were bending over him, looking down at him.

CHAPTER XV

LIFE AT THE ROOST

JACK’S after recollections of this earlier part of his life in America while he lived at the Roost always remained with him as singularly fragmentary memories of things passed. The various events that then happened to him never, in those recollections, had a feeling of keen and vivid reality as a part of his own life. It was almost as though they might have somehow happened outside of the real things of his life. Nearly every one who has reached manhood and who looks back thence to the

earlier periods of his adolescence, feels such strangeness of unfamiliarity in certain fragmentary parts of his younger life.

Maybe Jack felt this lack of reality in the events of that time because that just then he was passing from boyhood into manhood; perhaps the memory of those times seemed strange to him and lacking of vitality because of the many changes of scene and circumstance that then happened to him, and because he did not have time to become intimately acquainted with any especial arrangement of his surroundings before it was changed for some other surroundings of a different sort.

For Jack's master was very often away from home, and generally he would take Jack with him, and so it was that during this period there were successive memories of queer rambling Virginia towns—level streets of earth fronted by gray wooden buildings with narrow windows and wide brick chimneys, in the midst of which lesser buildings there towered here and there maybe a more pretentious mansion of brick, set back in a tangled garden, approached by a steep flight of stone steps. The towns were nearly all of this nature:—Yorktown, Jamestown, Williamsburg and the lesser courthouse towns, more or less inland, up the river; and they always remained in Jack's memory as so many pictured scenes rather than as various settings of his actual life.

At other times Mr. Parker would maybe take Jack with him on his periodical visits to the plantation houses of his friends; nearly all wide, rambling, barn-like structures, where wild company sometimes gathered, and where, during the time of his master's visits, Jack would live in the company of the white servants and negroes who lounged about, ready to run at any moment at the owner's call. Jack made many acquaintances among these people, but no friends.

This life was so varied and so entirely different from anything that he had known before that he never got to feel as though it were perfectly a part of himself. Even the Roost, with its bare, rambling rooms and hallways, never entirely lost this

feeling of unfamiliarity.

Nearly always there was more or less company at the old house—the same sort of wild, roistering company that gathered at the other plantation houses; men who came riding fine high-bred horses, who fought cocks, who gambled, drinking deeply and swearing with loud voices, and with an accent that was not at all like the English speech that Jack had known at home.

One of his earlier experiences of this new life of his in the strange new world into which he had come was of such a company that one day came riding up to the gray old wooden mansion with a vast clattering of horses' hoofs, a shouting of voices and laughter, and a cloud of dust. The party was accompanied by a following group of negro servants, one of whom carried a fighting-cock on a saddle before him. Jack and Little Coffee and another negro boy ran out to hold the horses, and Dennis and two negroes came over from the stable to help. Mr. Parker came out and stood on the upper step in the doorway, looking on as the visitors dismounted. The scene was always very vivid in Jack's memory.

The most prominent of the visiting party was young Mr. Harry Oliver. He had been drinking, and his smooth cheeks were dyed a soft, deep red. He dismounted with some difficulty, and then with uncertain steps went over to his negro servant, who still sat on his horse, holding the cock before him on the horn of the saddle. "Give the bird to me, Sambo," said the young man in a loud, unsteady voice.

"He strike you, mea-asta, you no take care," said the negro warningly.

"Better let me take him, Mr. Oliver," cried out Dennis.

The young man paid no heed to either warning, but took the bird from the negro. It struggled, and one of the spurs caught in the lace of Mr. Oliver's cuff, tearing a great rent in it. Everybody laughed but Mr. Parker, who stood looking calmly on at the scene. "Ouch! Look what he's done to me," cried out Mr. Oliver. "Here, Dennis, you take him." And again the others laughed loudly at the young man's mishap.

Dennis took the bird, seizing its narrow cruel head deftly, and holding it so that it might not strike him.

“Hath Mr. Castleman been here yet?” asked one of the visitors of Dennis.

“No, your honor,” said Dennis.

“Aha!” shouted Harry Oliver, “what do you think of that, Tom? I tell you he’ll not come. His black cock’s no match for Red Harry. I’ll bet you five pounds he doesn’t come at all. I knew he was only talking for talk’s sake last night when he said that he would match his bird against Harry.”

The others, ready to be amused at anything the tipsy young fellow said, again laughed loudly.

“If you want to bet your money, I’ll cover your five pounds that the gentleman is here in the hour,” said one of the party, who was a stranger to Jack.

“Let him alone, Phillips,” said Mr. Parker, coming down the steps. “The boy is not cool enough to bet his money now. Won’t you come in, gentlemen?”

“Yes, I am cool enough, too,” cried out Oliver. “I’ll bet my money as I choose; and you shall mind your own business, Parker, and I’ll mind mine.”

Then they all went into the house and to the dining-room, where the rum and the sugar stood always ready on the sideboard.

Jack, as was said, was still new to all this life. “What are they going to do?” he asked of Dennis as he led the horse he held over toward the stable.

“Do?” said Dennis; “what d’ye think they’d do but fight a cock main?”

About an hour after the arrival of the first party of guests, Mr. Castleman and four of his friends came in a body. Mr. Castleman’s negro also brought a cock, and almost immediately the birds were pitted against one another in the bare and carpetless hallway.

Jack did not see the beginning of the fight. He was up-stairs helping Mrs. Pitcher

make up some beds for the night. When he heard that they were fighting the cocks down in the hall, he hurried down-stairs, boy-like, to see what was going on. A burst of loud voices greeted his ears as he descended the stairway. A number of the negroes and some white servants were clustered on the steps, looking over the banister and down below. There was another loud burst of voices dominated by Mr. Oliver's shrill boyish tones crying out, "Why, then! Why, then! That's my hero! Give it to him again! Why, then! 'Tis Red Harry against them all! Where's your fifty pounds now, Castleman?"

Jack at the head of the stairs could look down upon the tragedy being enacted on the floor below. He stood for a second—two seconds—gazing fascinated. The black cock—a dreadful bloody, blinded thing—was swaying and toppling to death. The red cock towered above him, cruel, remorseless, striking, and striking again; then poising, then striking its helpless dying enemy again. Harry Oliver was squatted behind his bird, hoarse with exultation. The end was very near. Mr. Parker sat calm and serene, looking down at the fight. The others stood or squatted around in a circle, tense and breathless with excitement. All this Jack saw in the few dreadful seconds that he stood there, and the scene was forever fixed upon his memory. He awoke to find that his mouth was clammy with a dreadful excitement. Peggy Pitcher had followed him out on the landing. Suddenly she burst out laughing. "Look at Jack!" she cried. "'T hath made him sick."

Jack saw many cock-fights after that one, but the circumstances of this time always remained the most keenly stamped upon his memory as one of the most vivid of those unreal realities of that transition period.

Another memory of an altogether different sort was of one time when Mr. Parker was away from home, and when he himself went with Dennis, and Little Coffee, and two other negroes, down the river to the Roads, fishing. Mrs. Pitcher had advised him not to go. "His honor may come back," said she; "and if he does and finds you

away he'll be as like as not to give you a flaying with his riding-whip."

"A fig for his honor!" said Jack. "I'm not afraid of his honor. And as for being away when he comes back, why, that I shall not. He'll be sure not to be back from Annapolis for a week to come."

The memory that followed was of a long sail in the open boat of some forty miles or so in the hot sun and the swift, brisk wind; a memory of sitting perched on the up-tilted weather-rail listening to Dennis and the negroes chattering together in the strange jabbering English that was becoming so familiar to him now.

It was pretty late in the afternoon when they approached the fishing-ground. Dennis leaned over the rail every now and then, and peered down into the water, as the hoy drifted along close-hauled to the wind. One of the negroes stood ready to drop the sail, and the other stood in the bow to throw over the stone that served as an anchor when Dennis should give the order. "Let go!" shouted Dennis suddenly, and the sail fell with a rattle of the block and tackle, and in a heap of canvas. At the same time the negro in the bow threw the stone overboard with a great loud splash.

Jack and Little Coffee were the first to drop their lines into the water. Jack sat watching the negro boy; he hoped with all his might that he might catch the first fish, but it did not seem possible that he could catch a fish in that little open spot of the wide, wide stretch of water. Then all of a sudden there came a sharp, quivering pull at the hook, and he instantly began hauling in the wet and dripping line wildly, hand over hand. He thought for a moment that he had lost the fish; then there came a renewed tugging at his line, and in another second he had jerked the shining thing into the boat, where it lay flashing and splashing and flapping upon the boards of the bottom. "I caught the first fish, Little Coffee!" he shouted.

"Look dar, now," said Little Coffee, testily. "Fish just bite my hook, and you talk and scare 'um away."

Jack jeered derisively, and Dennis burst out laughing, while Little Coffee glowered

at Jack in glum sullenness.

They fished all that afternoon, and it was toward evening when they hoisted up the anchor stone. Two of the negroes poled the hoy to the shore. Jack was the first to jump from the bow of the boat to the white, sandy beach, littered with a tangle of water-grasses and driftwood, washed up by the waves. A steep bluff bank of sand overlooked the water, and Jack ran scrambling up the sliding, sandy steep, and stood looking around him. For some little distance the ground was open, and there was a low wooden shed, maybe fifty or sixty paces away; beyond it stood the outskirts of the virgin forest. He stood and gazed about him, realizing very keenly that this was the new world, and sensing a singular thrilling delight at the wildness and strangeness of everything.

This, too, was a very vivid memory fragment of that strange and distantly impersonal period of his life.

CHAPTER XVI

JACK’S MASTER IN THE TOILS

JACK had been living nearly a month at the Roost before he saw anything of those money troubles that so beset and harassed his master. He was afterward to learn how fierce and truculent Mr. Parker could become at those times when he was more than usually tormented by his creditors.

It was about noon, and Jack was busy getting ready the clothes that his master was to wear for the morning. There had been company at the Roost the night before, and Mr. Parker, who had sat up till past midnight, and who had only just risen, sat at the open window in his nightcap and dressing-gown, with his half-eaten breakfast beside him, smoking a long pipe of tobacco out into the warm, soft air.

Suddenly there came the sound of horses’ hoofs approaching from the distance, and then the opening of the gate. Mr. Parker craned his neck and peeped out of the

window cautiously. Immediately he laid down his pipe of tobacco, and turning to Jack,—"Harkee," said he, in a voice instinctively lowered, "yonder is a man coming whom I don't choose to see, so you just go down and tell him I'm not at home, and that I won't be back till next Thursday; d' ye understand?" Jack nodded his head. "Well, then, do as I tell you, and don't you let him guess I'm at home."

Even as the master spoke there came a loud knocking at the door. Jack ran down-stairs and through the hall, and opened it before any of the slower negroes could reach it. There were two men outside, one of them held a pair of horses, and the other had just knocked. The man with the horses had the look of a servant. The other was a lean, wizened fellow with smoothly brushed hair tied behind with a bit of string, a flapped hat, and a long-skirted gray coat—he looked like an attorney or a money-lender. "Well, master," said Jack, "and what'll you have?"

"I want to see your master," said the man shortly.

"Who?" said Jack.

"Your master."

"My master?"

"Yes; what's the matter with the oaf? Where's your master? Why don't ye answer me and tell me whether Mr. Parker is at home."

"Oh, Mr. Parker! So 'tis him you wish to see, to be sure."

But, after all, Jack did not have to tell the lie Mr. Parker had bidden him to tell. A voice suddenly sounded from overhead—a keen, shrill voice. "What d'ye want, Master Binderly? Who d'ye come to see?"

The man at the door stepped back a pace or two and looked up, and Jack craned forward and looked up also. Mrs. Pitcher was leaning out of the window just above their heads. She wore a morning wrapper, and a cap very much the worse for wear, which gave her a singularly frowsy, tousled appearance.

“Why, you know what I want, Mistress Pitcher, just as well as I do,” said the man. “I want to see Mr. Richard Parker, and by zounds! I will see him, too! Here have I been running after him and looking for him up and down the Province these two weeks past. Here are obligations of his which have come into my hands for over a thousand pounds, and he won’t pay any attention to me, and he won’t renew his notes, and he won’t do anything.”

Jack stood in the doorway listening with very great interest, and two or three grinning negroes had gathered at the end of the house, looking on with a vague and childish curiosity. “Well, Master Money-Shark,” said the woman, “I don’t know what you are talking about; all I know is that you won’t find Mr. Richard Parker here, and so you may as well go about your business.”

“Why, what are you talking about?” bawled the money-lender. “If this is not my business, what is my business?” and Jack could not help laughing at his loud voice.

“Well, that I don’t know anything about, or don’t care anything about,” Mrs. Pitcher answered shrilly. “All I know is this here—Mr. Parker ain’t about, and won’t be about till next Thursday.”

“I don’t believe what you tell me,” answered the man roughly; “anyhow, I’ll come in and wait—and I’ll wait till next Thursday, if I have to. Either I’m going to have my money, or I’m going to have satisfaction for it.”

“No, you won’t come into the house, neither,” cried Mrs. Pitcher; and then, as the money-lender made as though to enter, she called, “Shut the door, there, Jack!” and Jack at her bidding banged the door in the man’s face, shooting the bolt and locking it.

The man kicked and pounded upon the door, and Jack could hear the housekeeper pouring vituperation down upon him from above. He himself, now having nothing more to do, went up stairs and leaned out of another window to see what the outcome of it all would be.

The housekeeper was just saying: “If you don’t go away from there, now, I’ll pour a kittle of hot water on ye.” Whereupon Mr. Binderly seemed to think it best to quit his knocking. He went out into the roadway in front, and stood there for a while talking in low tones to his servant.

“Very well, then, Mistress Pitcher,” said he at last. “You’ve got the power on me here; but you tell your master this for me, that he may hide himself from me as he pleases, but for all that there is law to be had in the Province of Virginia. And that ain’t all, neither, Mrs. Pitcher; you tell your master that I ain’t going to law till I try other things first. I’m going to his brother, Colonel Birchall Parker, first, and see what he’ll have to say to this here. He’s the richest man in Virginia, and he ain’t got the right to let his brother ruin a poor man like me.”

Peggy Pitcher made no answer to the money-lender, but snapped her fingers at him. Then she leaned on the window-sill watching him as he clambered on his horse and rode away again as he had come, with his serving-man at his heels.

There were several other occasions when creditors came pressing Mr. Parker for money, but never any that had such a smack of comedy about it.

It was somewhat more than a month later when another sort of visitor than poor Mr. Binderly appeared at the Roost. Again the master was at home, and alone, but upon this occasion it was after nightfall when the visitor arrived. Jack was reading aloud the jokes from an old almanac to Mrs. Pitcher, who sat idly listening to him. Mr. Parker was in the room beyond, and every now and then in the intervals of his muttered reading, Jack would turn and glance toward the half-opened door. The master was very quiet, and very intent upon what he was doing. He sat by the light of a candle, smoking a pipe of tobacco, and shuffling and dealing to himself and an imaginary opponent a hand of cards which he turned face up upon the table. Then, leaning with his elbows upon the board, he would study and calculate the combinations of the two hands until he was satisfied, and then again would shuffle

and deal the cards. A bottle and a glass of rum and water stood at his elbow, and every now and then he would take a sip of it.

Then a loud, sudden knock upon the door startled the stillness of the house. Jack pushed back his chair, grating noisily upon the bare floor, and hurried to open to the visitor. It was a tall, brown-faced man with a great, heavy, black beard hanging down over his breast. His figure stood out dimly in the light of the candle from the darkness of the starlit night behind. The brass buttons of his coat shone bright in the dull yellow light. “Is Mr. Richard Parker at home, boy?” he asked in a hoarse, husky voice.

“I—I believe he is, sir,” said Jack, hesitatingly.

“Hath he any visitors?”

“Why, no,” said Jack. “I believe not to-night.”

Then the stranger pushed by into the house. “I want to see him,” said he, roughly; “where is he?”

Mrs. Pitcher had arisen and had managed to quietly close the door of the room in which Mr. Parker sat. “And what might be your business with his honor, master?” she said.

“Well, mistress,” said the man, “that’s my affair and not yours. Where is Mr. Parker?”

At that moment the door that Mrs. Pitcher had closed was opened again and Mr. Parker appeared. He wore a silk nightcap upon his head, and carried his pipe in his hand. “’Tis you, is it, captain?” said he. “Well, I hadn’t looked to see you so far up the river as this; but come in here.”

He held the door open as the other entered, and then closed it again. “Sit down,” said Mr. Parker, pointing toward the table with the stem of his pipe. “Sit down, and help yourself.”

As the stranger obeyed the invitation, Mr. Parker stood with his back to the great empty fireplace, looking with his usual cold reserve, though perhaps a little curiously, at his visitor. The other tossed off the glass of rum and water he had mixed for himself, and then wiped his mouth with the palm of his hand. Then, thrusting his hand into an inside pocket of his coat he brought out a big, greasy leather pocket-book, untied the thongs, opened it, and took from it a paper. “Here’s that note of hand of yours, Mr. Parker,” said he, “that you gave me down at Parrott’s. ’Tis due now some twenty days and more, and yet I have received nothing upon it. When may I look for you to settle it?”

“Let me see it,” said Mr. Parker calmly, reaching out his hand for it.

The other looked at him quizzically for a moment, and then without a word replaced the paper in his pocket-book, retied the thongs, and thrust the wallet back into his pocket again. “Why,” said he, “methinks I’d rather not let it go out of my own hands and into yours, if it’s all the same to you.”

Mr. Parker’s expression did not change a shade, but he shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly. “Why, Mr. Captain Pirate,” said he, dryly, “methinks then you’re mightily careful of small things and not so careful of great things. If I were of a mind to do you some ill turn, what do you think is to prevent me from opening this window and calling my men to knock you on the head, tie you up hand and foot, and turn you over to the authorities? Governor Spotteswood and my brother would be only too glad to lay hands on you, now you’ve gone back to your piracies and broken your pardon and fallen under the law again, as I hear you have done. What’s to prevent me from handing you over to my brother, who would rather than ten thousand pounds have the chance of hanging you?”

The other grinned. “Why,” said he, “I’ve taken my chances of that. I dare say you could do me an ill enough turn if you chose—but you won’t choose.”

“Why, Mr. Pirate?” said Mr. Parker, looking down at his visitor coldly.

“Because, Mr. Tobacco-planter, I’ve made my calculations before I came here! I know very well how you depend upon your honorable brother for your living, and that he’d cut you off to a farthing if he knew that you’d been so free and easy with me as to sit down quietly at table with me and lose four or five hundred pounds at play. You can afford to give your note to anyone but me, Mr. Gambler-Parker, but you can’t afford to give it to me and then lord it over me! Come! come! Don’t try any of your airs with me,”—this with a sudden truculence—“but tell me, when will you settle with me in whole or part?”

Mr. Parker stood for a while looking steadily at his visitor, who showed by every motion and shade of expression that he did not stand in the least awe or fear of the other. “I don’t know,” said Mr. Parker at last. “Suppose I never pay you, what then?”

“Why, in that case I’ll just send the paper to your brother for collection.”

Another long space of silence followed. “Lookee, sirrah,” said Mr. Parker at last, “I’ll be plain with you. I can’t settle that note just now. I have fifty times more out against me than I can arrange for. But if you’ll come—let me see—three days hence, I’ll see what I can do.”

The other looked suspiciously and cunningly at him for a moment or two. “Come! come! Mr. Tobacco-planter,” said he, “you’re not up to any tricks, are you?”

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“MR. PARKER STOOD LOOKING STEADILY AT HIS VISITOR.”

“No; upon my honor.”

The other burst out laughing. “Upon my honor,” he mimicked. “Well, then, I’ll be here three days from now.”

Jack and Mrs. Pitcher, as they sat in the next room, heard nothing but the grumbling mutter of the two voices and now and then the sound of the stranger’s laugh. “What

d’ ye suppose he’s come for, Mrs. Pitcher?” asked Jack.

“Like enough for money,” said Mrs. Pitcher, briefly.

CHAPTER XVII

JACK RIDES ON A MISSION

IT was the next morning after this visit that Jack, coming at Mr. Parker’s call, found his master lying propped up in bed, clad in his nightcap and dressing-gown. As Jack entered he thrust his hand under the pillow and brought out a letter. “Harkee,” said he, “d’ ye see this letter?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“Very well, then, now listen to me. This is to go to my brother, Colonel Parker, and I choose that you shall take it. Go out to the stables and tell Dennis that I say he is to give you a good fresh horse. Ride to Marlborough and back as soon as you can. You can make the South Plantation to-night if you post along briskly, and they will give you a change of horses. I want you to be back by Friday night, so lose no time, and see that Colonel Parker gets this letter from your own hand, d’ ye understand?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jack. “Shall I fetch you your breakfast first?”

“No, Peggy will attend to that.”

Jack hurried off to the stables, stopping only long enough on his way to tell Little Coffee where he was going. Then the black boy and the white boy went down together to find Dennis. Little Coffee was distinctly displeased. “What for he send you, anyhow?” said he. “You no find um way—you get lost in woods, boy. I find um way if he send me.”

Jack burst out laughing. “Why, to be sure,” said he, “that would be a pretty thing to do! How could Mr. Parker send you to Marlborough, Coffee? Why, you’re nothing but a black boy. You couldn’t do what he wants to have done.”

“You call me black boy all um time,” burst out Little Coffee. “I no like you call me black boy. Black boy good as white boy, anyhow.”

“No, he ain’t, neither,” said Jack; and just then Dennis came out of the stable, and Jack told him the master’s bidding.

As Jack, mounted upon one of the best horses in the stable, trotted down past the house with Little Coffee running along beside him, Peggy Pitcher stopped him to give him some food wrapped up in a paper, and Jack tucked it into the saddle-bag. “You lose um way,” shouted Little Coffee after him as he cantered away, but he did not deign any reply but galloped on down the dusty road toward the woodland, into which the ragged roadway plunged, presently to be lost in a jungle of trees and bushes and undergrowth.

In the woods all was still and warm and fragrant with the spicy odors. A squirrel ran across the way; further on a rabbit scurried out of the bushes and along the road. At one place a great wild turkey ran down across the open path. Jack shouted at it as it plunged into the thickets again, and he could hear it rustling thunderously through the bushes for a long while as he sat peering in through the dense screen of leaves whither it had gone. At another place he came upon a black snake that lay motionless in a sunny patch in the road, watching him with its bright, diamond-like eyes, and shooting out its quivering tongue. The horse shied and refused to pass the snake, and Jack, following the instinct of all men, got off his saddle and killed it. Once he forded a great, wide, shallow creek, the horse splashing and thundering through the water, and the fish darting swiftly away from either side. He had some trouble in finding the road on the further shore, but by and by he regained it and drove the horse scrambling up the steep, bluff bank. At this time the noon sun was shining straight down through the leaves overhead, and Jack dismounted, tied his dripping horse to a sapling, and took out his lunch. He sat in a little open, grassy spot, with the waters of the ford spread out before him. The solitude of the woods

was full of a ceaseless stir and rustle and the resonant singing of wood birds; it seemed to Jack as though there was nobody in the whole world but himself. The horse plucked at the leaves every now and then with a loud rustle of the branch, and then chewed them, champing upon the bit.

It was nearly sundown before Jack came to the end of the first stage of his journey. Then suddenly, almost before he knew it, he was out from the woods into an open clearing where there was a growing field of maize, the harsh, crisp leaves glinting and rattling dryly in the wind. Beyond the field of Indian corn was a great and wide stretch of tobacco-fields, bordered, in the distance, by woodlands, nearly a mile away. In the mid-distance he could see a low log house surrounded by what appeared to be huts and cabins of various sizes and sorts.

Jack dug his heels into the horse’s side and galloped down the straight, dusty road that stretched away between the unfenced fields toward the houses, the horse pricking up his ears and whinnying.

At last he drew rein in front of the largest of the log houses. A number of half-naked negro children ran out as he approached, and, as he reined up his panting and sweating horse, a barefoot negro woman with a string of beads around her neck, and another around each of her wrists and each of her ankles, came to the door and stood looking at him. Her tall, conical turban blazed like a flame in the light of the setting sun and against the dark interior of the cabin. “Is this the South Plantation?” asked Jack.

“Um! Um!” assented the woman, nodding her head.

“Where’s the master?” asked Jack. “Where’s the overseer?”

The woman stared at him, making no attempt to answer his question. “Where’s your master?” said Jack again; and then, the woman still not replying, he said: “What’s the matter, don’t you speak English?”

“Iss,” said the woman with a grin; “me Ingiss.”

“Well, then,” said Jack, “where’s your master, where is he, eh?” and he waved his hand off toward the plantation field in a general way. Perhaps the negro woman understood the action better than the words. “He dar,” she said, pointing with her fingers. “He beat white man.”

“What?” said Jack.

“He beat white man—he dar,” and she pointed again. Jack did not understand what she meant, but he knew that the overseer was in the direction indicated, so he rode off toward the long row of huts that stretched away beyond, some built of boards and bark, and some of wattled sticks smeared with clay. Turning the end of the last hut he came suddenly upon an open space fronted by the outbuildings. A little crowd of men—black and white—stood gathered in this open. A man, evidently the overseer, was mounted upon a barrel and was addressing the group clustered before him. He carried one arm in a sling, and the sling was stained with fresh blood. Two assistant helpers, or overseers, stood behind the speaker.

The crowd of slaves in front of the overseer—black and white—barefoot, half-clad, wretched, low-browed, made a motley group. The overseer was evidently just finishing his harangue to them when Jack came up around the corner of the cabin. He stopped for a moment in his speech and turned his head as Jack appeared upon the scene, and the listening crowd turned their eyes toward him from the speaker as with one movement. Jack recognized the overseer as the man who had come down with him and his master in the flat-boat from the Hall. Then the overseer went on with his speech, concluding, perhaps, rather more abruptly than he otherwise would have done. “And don’t you forget this here what I’ve been telling to you,” said he; “I be one of the best drivers in the province of Virginia if ye did but know it—and what be ye, I should like to know? Why, the very dirt of the earth under my feet. How many drivers d’ ye suppose there be in this here Colony, but what would have killed that there Will Dickson if they’d been in my place, and been struck with a hoe

in the arm and cut to the bone? But I tell you, I've got my eye on ye all, and the first man that lifts his hand ag'in' me again had better never been born. And now you go about your business, all of ye, and remember what you've seen." Then he stepped down from the barrel and came across to Jack. "Well, master," said he, "and who be ye?"

"I'm Master Richard Parker's serving-man," said Jack. "Don't you remember me? I came down with you in the flat-boat from the Hall."

"Ay, to be sure," said the other. "Now I remember you very well. But what brings you here?"

"Why," said Jack, "I take a letter up to Colonel Parker, and his honor—that is Mr. Richard Parker—told me I was to stay here all night and then be on again to-morrow."

"Did he?" said the overseer. "Then we'll go on to the house and tell Chloe to fit ye up a room. How long ha' ye been over from the old country?" he asked as they walked off together.

"I was just brought here when you saw me in the boat," Jack answered.

"Ay, to be sure," said the other. "And what part o' England do ye hail from?"

"I was fetched from Southampton," said Jack. "I was kidnapped."

"So?" said the man. "I came from Hampshire myself, and I was kidnapped, too. That's been more than twelve year ago. I had a cousin in Southampton. D' ye happen to know anything of her—Polly Ackerman?"

"Yes, indeed," said Jack, "I do know a Mistress Mary Ackerman. She lives in Kennel Alley. Her husband's a tailor-man. A tall, thin man with a wart on his chin."

"Ay," said the man, "that's Polly Ackerman's husband to a T, and to think it's been twelve year since I see 'em. Well, here we are; walk in. Here, Coffee, take this horse and put it up in the stable. Walk in." And Jack entered the barren interior with its

earthen floor and its rude, home-made furniture.

That evening, after supper, Jack and his host sat out in front of the house in the gloaming. Three of the overseer's helpers came over from their cabins to sit with them and smoke their pipes. Jack, being a new-comer, was questioned and cross-questioned about the old country until he was wearied of telling what he knew. It was all very quiet and restful after the day's journey. Some voices from the servants' quarters sounded loud in the stillness of the hot, breathless evening. The night-hawks flew high, circling with piping cries, and now and then dropping with sudden booming flight. The frogs from the distant swamp piped and croaked ceaselessly, and a whippoorwill perched on the edge of the roof in the darkness, and uttered its hurried repeated notes over and over again in answer to one of its kind in the more distant thickets. Once or twice Jack wondered aimlessly how it was faring with the poor servant whom he had only just missed seeing whipped an hour or two before, but he did not ask the overseer about him.

CHAPTER XVIII

MISS ELEANOR PARKER

IT was nearly noon the next day when Jack rode up to the front of Marlborough. A group of negroes came gathering about the horse, and Jack asked of them whether Colonel Parker was at home.

"Iss, he be at home," was the grinning answer; but no one made any offer to help him in any way. Just then Mr. Simms came to the door of his office in one of the wings of the house, and then, though bareheaded, walked directly across in the sun to where Jack stood holding his horse.

"What d' ye want?" said the factor, and Jack answered that he brought a letter from Mr. Richard Parker to his honor.

"Humph!" said Mr. Simms, and his face fell somewhat. "You don't know what your

master wants, do you?"

Jack looked at the factor somewhat cunningly. "How should I know?" said he.

"Well, then, give me the letter," said Mr. Simms, "and I'll take it to Colonel Parker. You came just in time to find him at home, for he's going to Williamsburg this afternoon. You may go into the hall and wait for your answer there, if you choose. Here, Blackie"—to one of the negroes—"take this horse over to the stable. Come in, young man, come in!"

The great empty, shady hallway, open from one end to the other, felt and looked very dark and cool after the glare of the morning sun outside. The great doors stood open from the rear to the front, and from where he sat Jack, through the vista of trees, could catch a glimpse of the wide river stretching away in the sunlight, sparkling and glittering in the warm breeze. The strong wind swept through the space, and it was very cool and sweet. Jack sat there waiting and waiting. Somewhere a mocking-bird in a cage was singing its mimic notes, and now and then he could hear the noise of voices echoing loudly through the summer stillness of the great house. There was the sound of an occasional banging of a door, a distant snatch of a high-pitched, monotonous negro song. Through all these he could hear the ceaseless tinkling and jingling of a spinet played in one of the more distant rooms. As Jack sat listening, holding his hat in his hand, he knew that it must be Miss Eleanor Parker who was playing the spinet; and thinking of her he recalled that first day of his servitude, in which he had come out across the lawn and had seen her standing behind her father, looking at him. It seemed as though all that had happened not two or three months ago but two or three years ago, in some far-away time of the past. Suddenly the music ceased—a door opened, and the young lady came into the hall fanning herself. As she came forward Jack rose and stood waiting for her to pass by. She glanced toward him and was about to do so, when she suddenly recognized him and stopped. "Why," said she, "are you not the young man

that papa gave to Uncle Richard for a servant some while ago?"

"Yes, lady," said Jack, and he blushed hotly.

"Methought I remembered your face," she said; "and tell me, how do you like to be with my uncle?"

"I like it—that is, I like well enough to be with him," said Jack, "if I have to be with any body. I wouldn't be anybody's servant, if I could help it."

"But sure," said she, "you must be somebody's servant. Why else did you come from England except to be a servant?"

"I could not help coming," said Jack. "I was knocked in the head and kidnapped."

"Why, then," said she, "it was a very great pity, indeed, for you to have been treated so. What is your name?"

"Jack—that is, John Ballister."

Just then Mr. Simms came down-stairs to where Jack and the young lady stood. "Colonel Parker wants to see you up-stairs in his closet, young man," said the factor; and then to the young lady, "By your leave, Mistress Nelly," said he, "I'll have to take him up-stairs with me, his honor wishes to speak with him."

"He tells me, Mr. Simms, that he hath been kidnapped and fetched here to Virginia against his will," she said.

"Like enough, Miss Nelly. 'Tis the only way we can supply enough servants nowadays. If they did but know it, they are a thousand times better off here living at ease than they are at home living in poverty."

"I wasn't living in poverty," Jack said, indignantly.

"There, Mr. Simms, you hear what he says?" said the young lady.

"Well, Miss Nelly, you can talk about this some other time, maybe, for now by your leave I must take the young man away. His honor wants to see him."

When Jack was ushered into Colonel Parker's presence he found him seated in a

large, double-nailed armchair at an open window. Some books and a lot of letters and papers lay upon the writing-desk near at hand. His head was covered by a silk nightcap, and he wore a silk dressing-gown. A sealed letter lay upon the window-sill beside him. “Come hither, young man,” he said to Jack. “Haven’t I seen you before?”

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“I DON’T WANT TO BE ANYBODY’S SERVANT, LADY, AND WOULDN’T IF I COULD HELP IT.”

“Why, yes, your honor,” said Jack. “You gave me as a servant to Mr. Richard Parker.”

“He was one of the servants I fetched over from Yorktown when the Arundel came in,” said Mr. Simms.

“Oh, yes, I remember now,” said Colonel Parker. “How long have you been with your master?”

“Between two and three months, sir.”

“Two or three months, hey? Well, tell me now, how does your master live—what does he do?”

“I don’t know what you mean, sir,” said Jack hesitatingly, and then he looked in the direction of Mr. Simms.

“You need not mind my agent,” said Colonel Parker, “and I want you to speak plainly. Tell me, does your master play much at cards or dice?”

“Yes—yes, sir,” hesitated Jack, “he does play sometimes.”

“You see, Simms,” said Colonel Parker. “I knew ’twas so. That is where the money all goes.” Mr. Simms did not reply, and Colonel Parker turned to Jack again. “Tell me,” he said, “is my brother often away from home?”

“Methinks, sir,” said Mr. Simms, very respectfully but firmly, “you do your brother

an injustice in thus questioning his servant behind his back."

"I mean to do him no injustice, Simms," said Colonel Parker, impatiently, "but I mean to do myself justice. Tell me, boy," he continued, turning to Jack, "do men come pushing your master for money?"

"Sometimes, sir," said Jack. "There was a man came once saying that Mr. Parker owed him a thousand pounds, and last night—"

"A thousand pounds!" interrupted Colonel Parker. "'Tis enough. I will not ruin myself, Simms, for him or for any other man. Take this letter, sirrah, and give it to your master," and he handed Jack the sealed letter that lay in the window place beside him. "And now get you gone."

It was the middle of the afternoon of the following day when Jack finally reached the Roost. Mr. Parker himself came to the door as he galloped up and leaped to the ground, and the housekeeper looked down from an upper window. Jack's master snatched Colonel Parker's note from his fingers and tore it open violently. He hesitated for a moment, and then he began reading it, running his glance rapidly down the letter. As he did so, his face gathered into a heavier and heavier frown, and his strong, white teeth bit deep into the end of the cigarro. At last he crushed the letter in his hand. Jack, for fear he should appear to notice anything, had turned and had begun to stroke and rub the neck of the sweating horse. When he looked again, he saw that Mr. Parker had reopened the crumpled letter and was reading it through once more, this time very carefully. Then, having finished it the second time, he tore it sharply across, and then across again and again and into little pieces that fell at last in a white fluttering shower.

CHAPTER XIX

THE VISITOR AGAIN

IT was the next day after Jack had returned from Marlborough. The night was still

and sultry, with just a breath of hot breeze blowing. Jack and Little Coffee were sitting together on the door-step, and Jack was telling about Miss Eleanor Parker. The moon had risen full and round, and bathed all the dark, hot, panting earth with a flood of shimmering silver. The fireflies, which were now just beginning to illuminate the night, flashed and twinkled here and there in clusters out over the damper places. Jack's coat lay upon the step beside him, and now he sat in his shirt sleeves. Every now and then he slapped at the mosquitos that sang persistently in his ears. He had been speaking of Miss Eleanor Parker.

"I see her once myself," said Little Coffee.

"And she spoke as kind as could be to me, and asked me all about myself," continued Jack, without paying any attention to Little Coffee. "I told her how I had been kidnapped. I do believe she'll speak to her father about me. M—m—m—!" he groaned, stretching himself. "I'm that sore with riding that if I'd had a beating I couldn't be sorer. Drat that mosquito!" and he slapped his cheek violently.

"I see her once," said Little Coffee again. "Ai! she a beauty! Um! You ain't de only one in de world see her. She came down de ribber in de big boat and stopped yan at de landing. I stand up on de bluff and I see her with three, four fine people, all going down ribber. Dey stop here for de ma—aster."

They were so intent upon their talk that they did not notice the approach of a stranger through the milky brightness of the night, until he was close to them. Then he was there. Jack jumped up from the step as the visitor approached, his feet rustling in the long, dry, moon-lit grass. Jack did not know him at first; then he recognized him. It was the man with the long black beard who had come at night three days before to see the master. He was trigged out now with a sort of tinsel finery that made a great show in the moonlight. He wore petticoat canvas breeches and a short-skirted coat, trimmed, as was the hat, with gilt braid. He wore a satin waistcoat, and across his breast a silken sling, from which dangled a brace of pistols.

A broad leathern belt, from which hung a cutlass, was fastened at his waist by a brass buckle. The moonlight shone upon a gold chain about his neck, and his beard, which before had hung loose over his breast, was now plaited into three plaits.

Jack looked at him with wonder, and Little Coffee stared with mouth agape and shining eyes. The stranger, perfectly indifferent to them, spoke directly to Jack. “Is your master at home, boy?” he said, in his hoarse, husky voice.

“Yes, he is,” said Jack.

“Well, then, just tell him I’m here,” said the visitor, “for he’s expecting me.”

The doors and windows of the house stood wide open in the warm night. Jack led the stranger into the hall, the man’s heavy shoes clattering loudly in the silence. Mr. Parker sat at the desk in the room beyond, looking over some papers by the light of a candle. The warm breeze came in at the window, and the candle flickered and wavered. The insects flew around and around the light, and great beetles droned and tumbled in blundering flight. The room was full of the sooty smell from the empty fireplace. Mr. Parker sat in his shirt sleeves. He looked up as Jack tapped upon the door, and his fine florid face glistened with sweat. “Here’s a man wants to see your honor,” said Jack.

The stranger pushed roughly by Jack and entered. “I thought it must be you, captain,” said Mr. Parker, coldly; “I’ve been looking for you all the afternoon. Here; take this chair and sit down,” and he pointed to a seat as he spoke, turning his own chair around so as to bring his back to the candle and his face into shadow. “You may go,” said he to Jack, “and shut the door after you.”

Mr. Parker waited, after the door closed, until he heard Jack’s departing footsteps quitting the house. Meantime, he looked his visitor over with perfectly cool indifference, but with a sort of dry interest in his singular costume—his eyes lingering particularly upon the plaited beard and the chain around the neck. “I suppose, my good man,” said he at last, “that you’ve come for the settlement of that

paper of yours?”

“Why, yes, I have,” said the other. “Why else d’ ye suppose I’d come?”

“Well, then,” said Mr. Parker, “I’m sorry for you, for I can’t say that I’m ready, after all, to settle it, or even a part of it. And what’s more, I won’t be for four weeks or more yet, nor until my brother’s agent pays me my quarterly allowance.”

“Not ready!” exclaimed the other, and he stared with bold anger at Mr. Parker. “What d’ ye mean by that? Why should you tell me last week that you’d pay me to-day, and then in so short a time change your mind and blow t’other way?” Mr. Parker shrugged his shoulders coolly, but did not condescend to explain how he had been disappointed in getting money from his brother.

“And don’t you intend to pay me at all, then?” the stranger asked in a loud voice.

“Why, fellow,” said Mr. Parker, “it will do you no good to lift your voice and to bluster at me. You can’t squeeze blood out of a stone, and you can’t squeeze money out of a man who hath none.”

“And when will you pay me, then?”

“That I cannot tell you either, except, as I said, I will settle something upon the paper when my allowance is paid me, and that will be four weeks from next Monday.”

“Why, then, Mr. Parker,” said the other, speaking more and more violently, “you know very well that I can’t be here four weeks from now. You know very well what danger I stand in here in Virginia as it is, and that I can’t come and go as I please, or as you please for me. You was pleased to tell me, last time I was here, that I’d broke my pardon, and you know I come here with a halter around my neck. Come, come, Mr. Parker, if you know what’s good for you you’ll make some reasonable settlement with me, and by—— you must make it to-night.”

“Must? Must, Mr. Pirate?”

“Yes, must, Mr. Gambler. Lookee, wind and weather permitting, I sail for North Carolina the day after to-morrow. If by that time you don’t make some settlement of this paper of yours, I’ll send it to your brother for collection, and tell him how I came by it. D’ ye understand?”

Mr. Parker, who from the first had not seemed to be keenly alert to the importance of the business in hand, sat fingering the papers upon his desk, looking intently at the other, but as though he did not hear what he was saying. After his visitor had ended speaking he still sat gazing at him for a little space of silence. At last, as though suddenly arousing himself, he said: “Pull your chair up here, I want to say something in your ear.”

“What d’ ye mean?” said his visitor, suspiciously.

“I mean that I have to say something privately to you. So pull your chair up here close to me.” And then the other obeyed, drawing his chair close to the desk in front of which Mr. Parker sat. “I have something in my mind,” said Mr. Parker, presently, breaking the silence and speaking in a lower voice, “I have something in my mind that may be of advantage to us both if you are the man to help me carry it out, and ’tis of that I want to speak to you.”

The other sat looking intently at Mr. Parker as he spoke. “D’ ye mean,” said he, “that you and I shall go into some venture together?”

“I mean something of that sort,” said Mr. Parker, and as he spoke there was more than the usual haughtiness in his tone and bearing.

“Well, what is it you have to propose, then?” said the visitor, in no way overawed. Again there was a little time of silence, and then Mr. Parker suddenly said: “I have a mind to be plain with you, Pirate, and I will be so, for I am driven to it. The case is just this”—and then, as with some effort—“I am a ruined and a desperate man. I am pushed fairly to the wall, and know of nowhere to get a single farthing of money to help me out of my pinch.” Even with his back to the candles the other could see that

his handsome, florid face had flushed to a redder red than usual, and that he frowned a little as he spoke. “I will tell you plain,” he said, “I am in such straits that only some desperate chance can set me to rights again. So far as I can tell, I owe some five or six thousand pounds to one and another here in Virginia, besides something in Maryland, and something more in South Carolina. ’Tis not so very much, but ’tis enough to give you and others a chance to push me hard. The time was—that was when I was living in England—that my father would send me that much money in a lump, and did so two or three times. But now my brother Birchall hath everything and I have nothing; and ten thousand pounds is more to me now than fifty thousand pounds was to me then. If I could by some chance get seven thousand pounds, methinks I could set myself to rights. But where can a desperate man get seven thousand pounds except by some desperate chance?”

He did not say all this sequentially, but with many breaks and pauses, and it was so he continued, pausing every now and then, and then speaking suddenly again as though with an effort. Now he had stopped in his speech and was playing, fiddling with a pen. Then he began his broken talk again: “Well, I’d as leave say this to a rascal like you as to any other man—I am a ruined, desperate man. Day before yesterday I sent a letter to my brother Birchall asking for an immediate loan of five hundred pounds, and offering any sort of security that he might demand, and that I could give, if he would loan me five thousand pounds. I set forth to him how desperate were my circumstances, but no, he would not consider or think of anything, but sent me a letter—“ He ceased and sat frowning at the other. “You see,” he said, resuming, “when I came back from England four years ago I came a ruined man. My father had given me all that I had asked for while I was living in England, but when he died he left everything to my brother Birchall, and nothing to me except this plantation, which is not a tenth part, I may say, of what had been the estate. He said that he had given me my share, and more than that, while he lived, and so he gave the estate to my brother, who had married a great heiress and needed it not. I

had to run away from England to escape my debts, and still they followed me up. Then I was forced into asking my brother for help. I spoke pretty roundly to him, telling him what I thought of such injustice, that gave him everything and me nothing, and so in the end he paid my debts for me. But he talked to me in such a way as showed plainly enough that he thought, in paying my debts, he had bought me body and soul, and might treat me as he chose, and say things to me as he pleased. I bore from him what I would not have borne from any other man in all the world. Well, this letter which he hath sent me in answer to my request for a loan of money, is such as hath driven me clean to the wall, and with no help left to me, and I am a desperate man. He comes as near to calling me a rogue as he dares to do, and tells me in so many words that I am a disgrace and a dishonor to him. Well, then, if he thinks that I am a dishonor to him, I may as well be so."

All this time the stranger had been sitting motionlessly listening to what the other said, his eyes fixed intently upon the shadowed face of the master of the Roost. Presently Mr. Parker resumed:

"His letter is of the kind that makes me feel easy to do what I can to get from him what he will not give me, and what, if my father had but been just to me, would have been mine by rights. 'Twould have cost him nothing to have spared me five hundred pounds, or five thousand pounds, either; but now I will get it from him if I can, let him suffer from it ever so much." He checked himself suddenly, and then said, "Why, do you suppose, am I telling you all this that I would not tell to any other man in all the world."

"Why, that is the very thing I'm waiting for you to let me know," said the other.

Mr. Parker hesitated for a moment, and then he said, "Will you have something to drink?"

"Why, yes," said the other. "If you have it handy here, I would like right well to have a glass of grog."

Mr. Parker turned as though to summon Jack, then, as if thinking better of it, he himself arose, went to the closet at the side of the fireplace, and brought thence a bottle of rum and a glass. “Can you do without water?” said he.

“Yes, I can if I must,” said the other.

Mr. Parker pushed the papers aside on the desk and set the bottle and glass within reach of his visitor, who poured out nearly half a tumblerful of the liquor.

Mr. Parker looked coldly on as he filled his glass. “Well, then, my plan is, as I said, to get from my brother Birchall by force what he would not give me of his own free will. Are you listening?” The other nodded briefly, raised the glass to his lips, and drank off the rum he had poured out. “You know perhaps that my brother has only one living child?”

The visitor seemed struck by Mr. Parker’s sudden question. He looked at him for a second or two in an almost startled silence, and then again nodded briefly.

“His child is a daughter,” said Mr. Parker, “and a very beautiful and charming young lady, and one of whom I am very fond. Now, if some desperate pirate—one, for example, like yourself”—and he looked his visitor steadily almost scornfully in the face as he spoke—“should kidnap this young lady, and carry her away, say to somewhere in North Carolina, I know very well that my brother would give ten, yes, maybe twenty thousand pounds by way of ransom to have her safe back again.”

A pause of perfect and unbroken silence followed. “I never did anything of that kind before,” said Mr. Parker’s visitor at last, “and I wouldn’t know how to manage it.”

“Why, as for managing it,” said Mr. Parker, “it could be managed easily enough. You would only have to go up the river some time when my brother was away from home and when nobody was there, and carry off the young lady. You live down in North Carolina, and you could take her home until her father could ransom her.” Then, after a moment or two of brooding silence, he continued almost with a flash: “But, understand, she is my niece, and if anything of the kind is done she is to be

treated in every way as befits a lady of such rank and quality in the world. There shall be no needless roughness, nor anything said or done after she is taken away from home that may be unfit for her to hear or to see. I have naught against my niece. I am very fond of her. If her father suffers, 'tis his own fault, but I will not have her suffer. D' ye understand?"

"Yes," said the other with a sort of sullen acquiescence, "I understand."

"You have a home down in Bath and you have a wife there, I understand. The young lady shall be taken to your wife and waited upon by her."

The other nodded his head, but made no reply. Presently he asked: "But how is the rest to be managed? How is your brother to be approached, and how is the money to be handled that is to redeem the young lady?"

"I am about to tell you that," said Mr. Parker, curtly. "I understand that Mr. Knight, the Colonial Secretary in North Carolina, is a friend of yours. Now it shall be arranged that Mr. Knight shall send, by some decent, respectable merchant-captain, a letter addressed to me. The letter will be of a kind to tell me that my niece hath been taken by some of the Pamlico pirates, who hold her for ransom. Then I will approach my brother, and the matter will be arranged—I acting as my brother's agent and Mr. Knight as the agent of the pirates."

The other listened closely and attentively. "And what share of the money might you expect when the matter is settled?" he asked.

"I shall expect," said Mr. Parker, "to have the half of it. You and Mr. Knight can settle the balance betwixt yourselves."

The other whistled and then arose, pushing back the chair noisily. "Why, Mr. Parker," said he, "I am not used to doing business that way. If the thing is done at all, I take it, it is done at the risk of my neck and not at the risk of your neck. The danger falls all upon me and none of it upon you, and yet you expect the half of all the gain for yourself. My terms are these: I shall have half of what comes of the

venture, and not you; and you and Mr. Knight, as agents, shall share the balance betwixt you."

Mr. Parker also pushed back his chair and rose. "Then, sir," said he, "if you choose to quibble so, the business is all over between us, for I tell you plainly that I shall not abate one single jot or tittle. I shall have the half of what is made of this venture for my share, or there shall be no venture and nothing to share at all. As for that paper of mine you hold, you will get not a farthing upon it as it stands, and you may send it to my brother if you choose, for, after all, I can't be worse ruined than I am now," and he shrugged his shoulders.

The other looked into his face for a moment or two, but there was not a shade or sign of yielding in it. Then he burst out laughing. "Well, Mr. Tobacco-Planter-Gambler," said he, "you do drive a mightily hard bargain, to be sure. Well, as you won't come to me I must come to you. I tell you what it is, I will think over all that you have said, and then let you know your answer."

"Very well," said Mr. Parker, "and when will that be?"

"Well, I will let you know it on Wednesday next."

"Very well," said Mr. Parker, "I will be down at Parrott's on Wednesday next, and then we can settle the matter one way or the other."

"At Parrott's, on Wednesday next," repeated the other. "That will suit me very well indeed."

"And now, is there anything more?"

"Why, yes, there is," said the other. "How about this note of hand that you was to settle this evening?" and he tapped the breast of his coat.

"That," said Mr. Parker, "must go without settlement. You shall keep it for the present as an assurance of good faith upon my part. But when Mr. Knight sends the letter to me, as I have planned for him to do, the paper must be inclosed in it and

sent to me."

"And how about settlement upon it?"

"It must," said Mr. Parker, "go, as I told you, without settlement, for I tell you plainly that I won't conclude this business with you if you hold any paper with my name signed to it. I don't choose so to put myself into the hands of any man, much less into your hands."

Then once more the other burst out laughing. He clapped Mr. Parker upon the shoulder. Mr. Parker drew himself a little back, though he chose to show no resentment at his visitor's familiarity. "Methinks you had better go now," said he.

"Very well," said the other, "very well, I'll go."

He stopped only long enough to pour for himself another half-glass of rum while Mr. Parker stood by watching him; then he opened the door and walked across the hall and out of the house. Mr. Parker followed him and stood upon the door-step watching him as he stalked away through the white moonlight toward the bluff overlooking the misty distance of the river beyond.

CHAPTER XX

THE WILD TURKEY

THE ending to that strange and unsettled life that Jack led at the Roost came as suddenly and as sharply as though the one part of his existence had been severed from the other part by the keen cut of the knife of fate.

Mr. Parker had been away from home for nearly a couple of weeks. He had not taken Jack with him, so that during that time the lad had little or nothing to do excepting such light work about the house as Peggy Pitcher demanded of him.

A great deal of his time he spent in or about Dennis's cabin, maybe sitting in the great sooty fireplace talking ramblingly to the overseer, while the negro wife

pattered about the bare earthen floor in her naked feet, her face always stolid and expressionless as with a sort of savage, almost resentful reserve.

When the master was away from home, Dennis, as has been said, sometimes went off fishing or hunting. He had an old musket hidden away in his cabin, and now and then he would fetch home a raccoon, an opossum, a half-dozen squirrels, or some other such bit of fresh meat from the forest or the clearing. One hot and sultry afternoon during this memorable time of the master's absence, he and Jack started off to a clearing about a mile away, where of a morning or in the slant of the day a flock of turkey-cocks, banished now from the company of their hens, would gather together to feed in the long, shaggy grass.

Peggy Pitcher was very angry at Jack's going with Dennis instead of staying at home to attend to his work. She and Jack were very good friends, but there were times when she would become very provoked with him. "I just wish his honor would come home and find you gone," she said. "I'd just like him to give you a good leathering some fine day. Then maybe you'd learn to stay at home and 'tend to your own work."

She was very angry, and Jack burst out laughing at her as he ran away out of the house and into the hot yellow afternoon sunshine.

Dennis, with his musket balanced over his shoulder, was waiting for Jack, and the two struck off together across a shaggy field of last year's Indian corn, toward a dark belt of pine woods in the distance. There were some half-dozen negroes hoeing in a neighboring field under guard of a half-breed overseer, and they stopped from their work and stood looking as the two passed by. Before they reached the woodland, Little Coffee came running after them. He reached them panting, the sweat running down his black face in bright drops. Dennis did not order him home again, but without seeming to perceive his presence, walked away, straight across the shaggy field, striking into the edge of the clearing that bounded the deeper growth of woods

beyond, Jack keeping pace with him on one side and Little Coffee upon the other.

“When I rode over to Marlborough t’other day,” said Jack, “there was a great big turkey came out and crossed over the road just in front of me. I believe I could have knocked it over with a stick or a stone if I’d had one in my hand.”

“Aye,” said Dennis, “there be a many of them through the woods.” He was chewing upon a piece of spice-wood which he had broken off from one of the bushes as he passed by.

“Me see heaps of turkeys lots of times,” said Little Coffee, but neither Jack nor Dennis paid any attention to him.

To Jack the woods presently became an impenetrable maze of trees and undergrowth, but Dennis walked straight on without any hesitation. It was very warm under the still shadows of the pines. Now and then there were patches of underbrush, and now and then they had to stoop low to pass through the thickets; Little Coffee was sometimes obliged to pick his way so carefully through the cat-briers that he was left far behind. At a certain place they came to a morass in the woods which seemed to be the head waters of some creek—a cluster of smooth, glassy pools, surrounded by trees and bushes. Here the ground was soft and spongy under foot, and Dennis picked his way carefully along, Jack following in his footsteps.

“Look at that snake!” cried out Dennis sharply, and Jack started violently at the quick words breaking upon the silence. Dennis made a thrust at the reptile with the butt of his gun, but it slipped quickly into the water and was gone.

“‘Twas a moccasin-snake,” said Dennis.

Jack laughed. “I’m glad I haven’t Little Coffee’s bare legs, anyhow,” he said. Dennis grinned and looked at Little Coffee where he stood with rolling eyes, seeing another snake in every coil of roots.

Jack never forgot these minute particulars of that day’s adventures; that which

happened afterward seemed to stamp them indelibly upon his memory.

So, at last, they came out into an open space of some twenty or thirty acres in extent where the trees had been cleared away. Here and there were little patches of bushes, and here and there the tall trunk of a tree, blackened and seared by fire, stood stark and erect. Across, beyond the clearing, was a strip of blue river, the distant further shore hazy in the hot sunlight.

“Is this the place where the turkeys feed?” Jack asked.

“Aye,” said Dennis. “Phew!” he continued, wiping his streaming face with his shirt-sleeve, “it surely be mortal hot this day.”

Jack looked all around the wide spread of clearing. There was not a sign of life in all the vast shimmering expanse, except a few turkey-buzzards sailing smoothly through the air and two or three others perched upon a blackened limb of a tree.

“There’s something dead over yonder,” observed Dennis.

“Where do you find the turkeys, Dennis?” said Jack.

“Find ‘em!” said Dennis. “Why, you find ‘em here. Where else should you find ‘em?” Jack did not ask further questions, and presently Dennis explained: “They won’t come out of the woods till toward the cool of the afternoon, when they come out to feed. Then we’ve got to creep upon ‘em or lay by till they come to us.” As he spoke he wiped his face again with his sleeve.

By and by he began loading his musket, measuring the powder very carefully, wrapping the bullet in a piece of greasy cloth, and ramming it down with some difficulty into the gun.

Jack sat upon a fallen log, watching him, and Little Coffee sat squatted upon his hams, also looking on. After Dennis had loaded his musket, he propped it carefully upon the log and then stretched himself out at length upon a little grassy place under the shade of a tree. “By smoke!” he said, “I wish I had a drink of water.”

Jack had not realized until Dennis spoke how thirsty he himself was. “I wish I had one, too,” he said.

“Well, you can just wish for it,” said Dennis, “and so can I, and that’s the best we can do. You keep a sharp lookout now,” he said, “and the best pair of eyes sees the turkeys first.”

He stretched himself out as he spoke and closed his eyes, as though to sleep.

The sun had sunk further and further toward the west, and the shadows of the trees were growing longer and longer. Jack sat listening and enjoying the warm solitude. How strange and wonderful it all was; how far remote from that old life he had left behind in England. England! his mind went backward feeling around amid the things of the past, and measuring them with the present. That was England—this was America.

“Yan de turkey, Massa Dennis!” Little Coffee whispered, suddenly, and Jack came sharply back to the consciousness of things about him with a sudden keen thrill that was almost painful in its intensity.

Dennis had started up from where he lay and was looking in the direction in which Little Coffee was pointing. Jack raised himself cautiously and also looked in the same direction. His heart was beating very quickly. The turkeys had come out from the woods without any one of the three having seen them until that moment. They were feeding in the open about a furlong away, and maybe fifty or sixty yards from the edge of the woods.

Dennis arose, and, without speaking, took up his gun. Then, partly crouching, he skirted back into the woods and along the edge of the clearing, Jack following him and Little Coffee following Jack. So they went on for some distance, and then Dennis turned sharply out again toward the edge of the woods. He went forward now very slowly and cautiously, and Jack still followed him, half crouching. He was intensely excited, his mouth was dry and clammy, and his pulse beat heavily in his

ears. He did not notice the sweat trickling down his face. Would Dennis really shoot one of the turkeys?

“Wait a little,” said Dennis, without turning around, “till I see where I be.”

Jack could now see between the thickets that the clearing was just ahead. Dennis crept cautiously forward and Jack stood watching him. Presently he saw that the other was beckoning for him to come forward. He did so, approaching very carefully. Dennis was crouched down, looking out through the bushes, and Jack came close to him, Little Coffee following. He peered out from between the leaves; there were the turkeys, perhaps fifty or sixty yards away—a half a dozen or more great cock turkeys. To Jack’s eyes they looked very big and very near.

“’Tis like if we went on a little furder,” whispered Dennis, “’twould bring us nigher to them, but I have a mind to risk a shot from here.” He was crouched, gazing at the turkeys. Then he carefully raised the musket and thrust it out through a fork of the bush in front of him. He took a long, steady aim. Jack waited, hardly daring to breathe, every nerve tensely braced to meet the shock of the discharge.

Something must have alarmed the birds, for one great cock suddenly raised his head and looked sharply this way and that, and then they were all standing with their necks stretched high, looking intently about them. Then suddenly there came the stunning, deafening report of the musket. A cloud of pungent smoke hid everything for a little while; then it had dissolved.

Could Jack believe his eyes? One great turkey cock was flapping and struggling upon the ground.

He leaped up with a shout and ran out into the clearing. He heard Little Coffee shout behind him as he ran forward through the long, shaggy grass, jumping over the stumps, and he had a vision of the rest of the turkeys scattering with shrill, piping cries toward the woods—half-flying, half-running—then he was standing over the turkey cock where it lay upon the ground in the tall, brown grass. It was nearly

motionless when he reached it, and its half-closed eyes were still bright with the life that was just leaving them. There it lay, and Jack looked down at it in an ecstasy. The sun shone upon the burnished, metallic luster of its neck-feathers—purple, blue, green. Its great horny foot gave a futile, scratching struggle, and then it was quite still.

Dennis was coming hurrying forward at a trot, carrying his musket hanging at his side. Little Coffee was capering around. Dennis came up to where Jack stood. He hid whatever exultation he might have felt under an assumed air of indifference. "'Twas a pretty long shot," he said, "and methought I'd miss it. But 'twas the only chance I had."

As he spoke he wiped his face with his sleeve. He picked up the bird and held it out at arm's length. Its wings fell open as he did so. Then he dropped it again heavily upon the ground. "Well," he said, "there's fresh meat for Nama, anyhow."

"I'll carry it home for you, Dennis," said Jack.

"You may if you choose," said Dennis.

The shadows were growing longer and longer as they plunged into the woods again with their faces turned homeward. Jack soon found his load was very heavy, and presently he was glad to share it with Little Coffee. He tied the feet of the great bird together with one of his shoe-strings; then he slung it over a branch, he taking one end upon his shoulder and Little Coffee the other. Then again they went onward, Dennis leading the way.

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"HE PICKED UP THE BIRD AND HELD IT OUT AT ARM'S LENGTH."

The sun had set and the first shade of twilight was beginning to fall when they came out again from the woods and in sight of the Roost. As they came up to the row of cabins Kala came out to meet them. "De master he came home while ago," he said. "He be axing for you."

Jack stood stock-still. “What’s that, Kala?” said he.

“De master he came home,” repeated Kala. “He been axing for you.”

Somehow Jack could not believe what he heard. “D’ye mean Mr. Parker’s come back?” he said.

“Hum-hum,” said Kala, nodding his head.

CHAPTER XXI

THE STRUGGLE

JACK and Little Coffee had laid the dead turkey down upon the ground. Without another word he ran away toward the house. He heard voices as he approached; they ceased at the sound of his footsteps as he entered the house. He found Mr. Parker standing in the middle of the hall with his hat upon his head; Peggy Pitcher stood leaning over the lean, rickety banister-rail, half-way up the stairs. “There he is now,” she said as Jack entered. “And ’tis no use to bluster and swear at me any more. I told you ’twas none of my doings that he went.”

Jack had never before seen Mr. Parker in one of his humors. He had heard others about the Roost speak of those times when the master would be in one of his fits of temper, but he himself had as yet never beheld one of those dreadful moods. Now he saw that the master’s eyes were bloodshot. Mr. Parker had not been drinking, but his face was congested to a purple-red, and the veins in his neck and forehead stood out full and round. He turned a dull, heavy, truculent look upon Jack as he came in, and Jack, under that heavy and forbidding glare, stood still and looked down upon the floor.

“Come hither,” said Mr. Parker at last, in a gloomy voice, and at his bidding Jack advanced slowly and reluctantly. “Come hither, I say,” he repeated, as Jack hesitated at a little distance, and again Jack advanced. When he had come near enough Mr.

Parker reached out and caught him by the collar of his coat. Jack made no effort to resist him; he stood perfectly quiet, his soul heavy with a dumb apprehension as to what was about to happen to him.

“Mrs. Pitcher hath told me that she bade you not to go away from home,” said Mr. Parker; “but that in spite of all she could say you did go, leaving your work undone behind you. Well, then, I’ll lay my mark on you, by——, and in such a way that you’ll not forget it soon, nor run away again when you’re told to stay at home.”

He drew Jack across the room as he spoke, and Jack, fearing to resist, yielded himself to be led as the master chose. It was not until Mr. Parker had taken down the heavy riding-whip from the wall that he fully understood what his master intended to do to him. His first instinct was of defense, and as Mr. Parker raised his arm he too reached up, hardly knowing what he did, and caught the other by the sleeve, holding it tightly. “Your honor!” he cried, and he recognized that his voice was hoarse and dry—“your honor, I’m mightily sorry for what I’ve done, and I promise you I’ll never do the like again. I’ll never run away again, your honor, indeed I won’t! Pray don’t strike me, your honor!”

“Let go my arm!” cried Mr. Parker, harshly. “What d’ye mean by holding my sleeve like that?” He strove to break away from Jack’s hold, but Jack clung to him more closely than ever.

“I promise you,” he cried panting, “I promise you—I’ll never go away again. I promise you after this I’ll do just as you would have me, but—but—don’t beat me. I’m mightily sorry for what I’ve done—I am—but don’t try to beat me!”

“Let go my arm, I tell you!” cried Mr. Parker, and he tried to wrench himself loose. But still Jack held him tightly. Then Jack felt that Mr. Parker had let go his grasp upon his collar and was trying to pluck away the hold of the fingers that clutched the sleeve. “Let me go, I tell you!” he cried out again. “Are you mad to handle me thus?—What do you mean?—Are you mad?—Let me go!” The next moment he had

torn his arm free. He struck at Jack with the whip, but Jack clung to him so closely that the blow was without effect, and before he could strike him again Jack had caught him once more.

He heard the rasping sound of ripping cloth, and he knew that he must have torn some part of his master's dress. "You sha'n't beat me!" he gasped. "You sha'n't beat me!" Mr. Parker tried to thrust him away with his elbow, but he clung all the more tightly. As Mr. Parker pushed him partly away, he could see the other's handsome face flaming purple-red, but in the violence and excitement of the struggle he only half knew what he was doing. He could feel the struggling movements of his master's body as he clutched him, and he was conscious of the soft linen of his shirt and the fine smell of his person. Then he felt that some one had caught him by the collar, and, in the turmoil of his excitement, he knew that it was Mrs. Pitcher who held him, and he heard her voice crying in his ear: "Let go, Jack! Are you clean gone crazy? What are you doing? Let go, I say."

"No, I won't!" cried Jack, hoarsely, "he sha'n't beat me!" He hardly knew what he was doing; his only instinct was of self-defense. In his struggles he felt himself strike against the edge of the table, and then against a chair. Then he stumbled against another chair, overturning it with a loud clatter. At the same instant, Mr. Parker tripped over it and fell, rolling over and over on the floor. In the fall his hat and wig were knocked off, but he still held the whip clutched in his hand. Jack stood panting, and Peggy Pitcher still had hold of him by the collar of his coat. In the sudden cessation of the tumult of the struggle, Jack could hear the blood surging with a ceaselessly beating "hum-hum-hum" in his ears.

Mr. Parker lay still for a second or two as though partly stunned by his fall, then he scrambled up from the floor. He picked up his wig and put it on his head. He did not seem to see his hat where it had fallen under the table. He put his hand to his head and stood so for a second or two. Then he flung the riding-whip down upon the table

and walked to the door without looking at Jack. Dennis, who was on his way to his cabin, had heard the sound of the struggle and loud voices, the scuffling of feet upon the bare floor, the clattering overturning of the chair. He had stopped, and now stood with the musket over his shoulder, Little Coffee carrying the turkey. He was still so standing when Mr. Parker came to the door. “Dennis!” cried the master hoarsely, “bring three or four men and come over here directly.” Then, without waiting for a reply, he came back to the table and poured out a glass of rum for himself, the bottle clinking and tinkling against the edge of the glass with the nervous trembling of his hand.

Jack heard Mr. Parker’s words to Dennis, and then he realized for the first time how utterly and helplessly powerless he was, and into what a pit of trouble he had fallen. His heart sank away within him and he stood without moving, numb with despair, the rapid pulse-beats still thumping and surging in his ears. “Your honor—your honor,” he said huskily, “I—I didn’t know what I was doing—I didn’t. I didn’t mean to tear your dress. Pardon me, your honor, I didn’t mean it!” He almost choked, swallowing upon a hard lump in his throat. Mr. Parker paid not the slightest attention to him. “Won’t you listen to me, your honor?” he cried despairingly. He heard the approaching footsteps of Dennis and those whom he had brought with him, and the sound lent a still heavier agony of despair to his apprehension. “I didn’t mean to do it, your honor,” he cried, with a final effort to placate that implacable one, and then the next moment Dennis and three negroes came into the house.

“I want you to take that boy,” said Mr. Parker, pointing to Jack, “and lock him up in the cellar for the night. I’ll flay you alive to-morrow,” said he, turning with a flash upon Jack and grinding his white teeth together. “I’ll spare you for to-night, but to-morrow I’ll murder you, I will,” and then he turned and went out of the room.

“What have you been doing, Jack?” said Dennis.

“Oh! I don’t know, Dennis,” Jack panted—almost sobbing. “He was going to beat

me and I tried to keep him from doing it, that was all."

"He fought with his honor like a wild-cat," said Mrs. Pitcher, "and he threw him down over a chair onto the floor."

"Why did you do that, Jack?" said Dennis. "You must have been clean gone crazy to do such a thing as that." Jack tried to reply, but he could not do so for the choking in his throat. "Well," said Dennis, "there is nothing left now but to do as his honor said. You had better come along now, and not make any more trouble."

"Oh, I'm not going to make any more trouble," said Jack, hoarsely.

Dennis and Mrs. Pitcher stood looking at him. "Well," said Dennis, as though giving himself a shake, "'tis a bad, bad piece of business. I can't do anything to help you. Come along, and I'll make it as easy for you as I can."

"I'll send you down something good to eat," said Mrs. Pitcher.

"I don't want anything to eat," said Jack, despairingly.

The cellar was a vault-like dungeon of a place, built solidly of brick, with only a narrow, barred window and the door from the kitchen opening into it. Indeed, it had once been used as a place of confinement or retention for the slaves in olden days, and there was a pair of rusty unused shackles with chains yet hanging from a staple in the wall. Jack could not tell how long it was he sat there, in the cold dampness of the place, thinking and thinking, and yet with a mind inert and dull as to any precision of consciousness. He could hear distant sounds through the house, and now and then the echo of footsteps passing overhead. All around him was a dead and muffled silence of darkness. It must have been nightfall when Mrs. Pitcher came, bringing some food wrapped up in a napkin. "Here," she said, "you eat this, and you'll feel the better for it." Jack shook his head. "Well, I'll put it down here, and maybe you'll eat it after a while." And then she went away, leaving him once more to the darkness and the silence.

By little and little the sounds of moving in the house above were stilled. Jack's ears

hummed and tingled and buzzed, and he sat there thinking, thinking, thinking, and yet not thinking with any set purpose of thought. What was to happen to him? Oh! if he had not resisted his master! Why had he resisted? If there were only some way in which he could set himself right with that master! If he could only beg and obtain some pardon! And then he realized with despair that there was no way in which he could undo what he had done; that there was no possible pardon for him. He saw as in a mental picture his master rolling over on the floor, and he knew that he would never be forgiven such an insult. Now and then he thrilled almost as with an agony—if he could only escape the inevitable to-morrow! But, no! There was nothing for him to do but to sit there all night waiting for the day. Oh! if he could only stop thinking about it. He might have sat there thinking thus for an hour; he might have sat there ten hours; there was no sequence of thought by which he might measure the length or the shortness of time—nothing but a level stretch of dull and numb despair. Then, suddenly, he felt that he was parched and dry with thirst. He wondered if Peggy Pitcher had brought him anything to drink. He reached over, fumbling in the darkness, and opened the cloth in which was wrapped the food she had brought him. There was a bottle with something in it. It was rum and water, and Jack, as he drank a long draught of it, felt an almost animal gratitude in the quenching of his parching thirst. Presently he began eating some of the food, and before he knew it he had made a hearty meal.

For a while the eating distracted his mind, and his troubles lay big and dumb, brooding within him; but after he had finished the food and sat again in the humming silence, it all came back to him with a renewed and overwhelming keenness. He bowed his head over on his knees. Recollections of the warm, bright day that had just passed—a recollection of the dead turkey as it lay in the grass—came vividly to him. The trivial recollection seemed to make the terror of that which afterward happened all the more tragic by contrast. He felt the hot drops well bigger and bigger under his burning eyelids, and then one fell upon his hand

and trickled slowly down across it.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ESCAPE

IT had not seemed to Jack that he had been asleep, but vision-like recollections of the happenings of the day skimmed ceaselessly in a panorama-like vision through his tired brain. Now he saw the hot stretch of clearing as he had seen it that afternoon—the quivering, pulsing air, the slanting sun, the distant river, the blue further shore. Again and again he thought he struggled with his master. Sometimes he dreamed that the next day had come, and that his master had forgiven him. But through all these vision-like dreams there ever loomed, big and terrible in the background of his half-consciousness, the unknown fate that awaited him in the morning, and he would awaken to find those dreams dissolve into a black and terrible reality in which there was no spark of hope.

Suddenly he was startled from one of these half-waking visions by the sound of footsteps passing overhead, and then by the noise of a key rattling furtively in the lock. It sounded loud in the death-like silence. Then the door at the head of the cellar-steps opened, and the yellow light of a candle slid slanting down along the wall. Jack looked with straining eyes, and then he saw that it was Peggy Pitcher who was coming. She was in her stocking feet, and wore a loose wrapper and a mob-cap tied under her chin. “Why, Mrs. Pitcher,” whispered Jack, tremulously, “is that you?”

“Yes,” she said, “’tis I, but you be quiet.”

“What time of night is it?” Jack whispered.

“Why, ’tis early yet—not more than nine o’clock, I reckon.”

“Is that all?” said Jack.

She did not reply, but set the candle down upon the floor and stood for a while regarding Jack, her arms akimbo. “Well,” she said at last, speaking angrily, “’tis all your own fault that you’re here, and ’tis none of my business. I told you not to go away from home with Dennis, but you did go in spite of all, and now you see what’s come of it. By rights I should let you alone; but no, here I be,” and she tossed her head. “Well,” she continued, “I’m not going to stand by and see you beat to death, and that’s all there be of it.”

Jack’s very heartstrings quivered at her latter words. “What do you mean, Mrs. Pitcher?” he said, hoping dumbly that he had somehow misunderstood.

“Why,” said she, “I mean that his honor’s in that state of mind I wouldn’t trust him not to have you whipped to pieces out of pure deviltry. I never saw him as mad as this before, and I don’t know what’s got into him. He’s been away from home somewhere, and something’s gone wrong, and the very black evil’s got into him. I’ve been talking to him ever since he sent you here, but he won’t listen to anything. I’ve seen him in bad humors, but I never saw him in as black a humor as he’s in to-night. If he sets on you to-morrow he’ll never stop till he finishes you, and that I do believe.”

Jack could not speak. He sat looking at her in the light of the candle.

“Well,” Mrs. Pitcher burst out at last, “I’ve thought it all over and I’ve made up my mind. I dare say I’m a fool for my pains, but I’m going to let you get away. For the long and short of it is that I sha’n’t stay by and see ye beat to pieces like he beat one of the blackies last summer. After Dennis had locked you up, his honor must needs send for him and ask where you was, and if you was safe; and then he must needs have the key of the cellar in his own pockets. He was dead tired, and so went to bed a while ago, and I’ve just contrived to steal the keys out of his pockets. Now I’m going to let you go, I am.”

“Oh, Peggy!” cried Jack, hoarsely. His mouth twitched and writhed, and it was all he

could do to keep from breaking down. “But how about you?” he said, wiping his hand across his eyes.

“Never you mind about me,” said Mrs. Pitcher, angrily. “You mind your own business, and I’ll mind my business. I ain’t going to see you whipped to death—that’s all there is about it. So you just mind your business and I’ll mind mine.”

“But where shall I go after you let me out, Mrs. Pitcher?”

“Why,” said she, “that you’ll have to settle for yourself. ’Tis as much as I can do to let you go. All I know is, you must get away from here. Now go, and don’t you lag about any longer. If his honor should chance to wake and find his keys gone, and suspicioned you’d got away, ’twould be a worse lookout for you than ever, not to speak of myself.”

Then Jack realized that he was free to escape. “I’ll—I’ll never forget what you’ve done for me,” said he in a choking voice, “as long as ever I live.”

“There, you go now,” she said, and she pushed him roughly toward the cellar stairway. “As for me, don’t you think anything about me, Jack; I’ll do well enough for a poor wicked creature, and even if his honor does find out that ’twas I let you go, why, he won’t murder me. But then he won’t find out,” she added. “So, now you go.”

“Good-by, Mrs. Pitcher,” said Jack; “won’t you say good-by?”

“No, I won’t,” said she. “You go, and don’t you lose any more time about it.”

But it was not until he was fairly out into the starlit night that he realized that he had really escaped. He ran some little distance away before he stopped. Then he stood looking about him. Where was he to go now? Where was he to escape to? He stood still thinking. He wondered if Dennis would help him. Then without any especial object he crept around back of the group of huts. He could see that there was a faint light in Dennis’s cabin, but he was afraid to approach closer. Some one was singing

in the darkness beyond, and he knew that it was Little Coffee chanting in his high-pitched voice. He crept slowly and cautiously toward the sound of the singing, and presently he could distinguish the outline of Little Coffee's form against the sky. He was sitting perched upon the fence. "Coffee!" whispered Jack, "Little Coffee!" But Little Coffee did not hear him and continued his barbaric chant, which seemed to consist chiefly of a repetition of the words, "White man came to de green tree, black man, he go 'way." "Little Coffee!" whispered Jack again, and then instantly the singing ceased.

There was a moment or two of listening silence. "Who da?" said Little Coffee presently, and Jack could see that he had turned his face toward him in the darkness.

"Hush!" whispered Jack, "'tis I, Jack."

"Who?—Jack?—Dat you, boy?" said Little Coffee.

"Yes," answered Jack.

Little Coffee jumped down instantly from the fence and came in the darkness toward Jack's voice. "How you git away?" said he to Jack, "dey say Massa Dennis lock you up in de cellar. How you git out, boy?"

"Never mind that," said Jack; "'tis enough that I got out, and here I am. Come out here, Coffee, away from the cabins; somebody'll hear us."

He led the way down toward the edge of the bluff, and Little Coffee followed him for a while in an amazed silence. "What you go do now, boy?" he asked after a little while.

Jack did not answer immediately. "I'm going to run away," he said at last.

"You no run away," said Little Coffee, incredulously. Jack did not reply. "How you going to run away, anyhow?" asked Little Coffee.

"I am going to go off in the boat," said Jack.

"You no run away, boy," said Little Coffee again.

“Yes, I will, too,” said Jack; and then he added, almost despairingly, “I’ve got to run away, Little Coffee. I wonder if the oars are down by the dug-out?”

“Yes, ‘im be,” said Little Coffee; “I see Kala prop de oars up ag’in’ de bank when he come in from de pot-nets! Where you run away to, anyhow?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” said Jack; and then, as the thought came to him, he said: “First of all, I’m going over the river to Bullock’s Landing. I don’t know where I’ll go then—most likely down to North Carolina. That’s where all the runaways go. I’ll try to get to England from there.”

Little Coffee looked at him in the darkness for a while. “I be no more ‘fraid to run away dan you be ‘fraid to run away,” said he at last.

“Wouldn’t you be afraid?” Jack cried out eagerly; “then you shall go along with me if you choose.” He grasped at the chance of a companion in his escape; for now, that every step brought him more nearly face to face with what he had to do, he began to see what a thing it was to undertake. It seemed to him that if he had someone with him it would make it easier for him.

The two stood looking out across the water. From the edge of the bluff bank where they stood the water stretched away, vast and mysterious, into the distance. The rude dug-out canoe in which Kala had rowed over to the nets was lying drawn up on the shore. Jack could see its shapeless form below in the darkness. He descended the steps to the beach, followed by Little Coffee. The oars still stood leaning against the bank where Kala had left them. Jack gathered them up and carried them down to the dug-out. Some water had leaked through the cracks into the boat, and before he pushed it off he baled it out with the gourd dipper. Little Coffee stood looking silently at the preparations he was making. “You going to run away for sure, boy?” he said at last.

“Why, don’t you see I am?” said Jack.

“Den you berry foolish,” said Little Coffee. “I no run away with you, boy.”

“What’s that?” said Jack, standing up abruptly and facing Little Coffee. “What’s that? Why, you just now said you’d run away with me if I went.”

“I no say dat,” said Little Coffee, “I say maybe I run away.” And then he burst out indignantly, “Guess you tink me fool, boy!”

“And so you’d let me go alone, would you?” said Jack bitterly. Little Coffee made no reply. “Well, then, help me push the boat off, anyhow,” Jack said.

Little Coffee sprang eagerly enough to lend him a hand, and as the two pushed the clumsy boat off into the water, Jack stepped into it. He placed the oars carefully in the rowlocks, and then spat upon his hands. All around him was the night and the water. The bluff bank loomed big against the sky. He could see Coffee’s dim form standing upon the shore, but still he sat resting without pulling the boat off. “Won’t you go with me, Little Coffee?” he said, making a last appeal.

“Um!—um!” Little Coffee grunted in negative.

The water lapped and gurgled against the side of the boat, and the current drifted it slowly around against the shore. Jack still hesitated and lingered. For one moment of failing courage he told himself that he would go back and face what he would have to face the next day, and then, with a rush of despair, he recognized how impossible it would be to face it. “I believe you be ‘fraid to run ‘way, after all,” said Little Coffee from where he stood.

The jar of the words roused Jack to action. “Good-by, Little Coffee,” said he hoarsely, and then he dipped the oars into the water and pulled off from the shore into the night.

CHAPTER XXIII

A MEETING

BULLOCK’S LANDING, the settlement of which Jack had spoken, was a little

cluster of poor frame houses on the other side of the wide river from the Roost. You could see it easily enough from the high bluff bank, but not what sort or condition of houses they were. But there were people living there, for now and then boats stopped at the little straggling landing. Jack's first plan was to cross the river to this place. From there he thought he might be able to find some road through the woods to North Carolina. Or if he were not pursued he might find a chance to work a passage down to Norfolk, and thence, perhaps, to England. Anyhow, the first thing was to get away from the Roost, and Bullock's Landing was the nearest habitable place. He remembered now that a sloop had been lying there for two days. If it had not left, maybe he could work a passage in it down to Norfolk.

He rowed steadily away into the river, and in a little while the shore he had left behind him disappeared into the darkness of night. All around him was the lapping, splashing water of the river. He guided his course by the stars, still pulling away steadily. His mind drifted aimlessly as he rowed, touching a dozen different points of thought that had nothing to do with his present trouble. Now and then he wondered what he would do when he reached the further shore; but generally he let his thoughts drift as they chose. He planned indefinitely to himself that, when he got to the further shore, where, no doubt, he would find somebody awake, he would, in the morning, go aboard of the sloop and ask the master or captain to let him work his passage to Norfolk. Or, if the captain of the sloop should seem to show any signs of dealing dishonestly with him, and if there appeared to be any danger of his being kidnapped again, he would try to get away into the interior of the country. He could very easily beg his way from house to house until he reached North Carolina. There was a splash in the water, very loud in the stillness—it sounded like a fish. It startled Jack for a moment, and he lay on his oars, listening breathlessly. Presently he began rowing again. He did not doubt that he could easily escape, if need be, into North Carolina. Plenty of people had escaped thus from the plantations, and he was sure he could do the same.

So his scattered thoughts drifted as he continued rowing with almost instinctive regularity. Every now and then he stopped to rest himself for a little while, and then the breathless silence would brood over him, broken only by the ceaseless lap and gurgle and splash of the water all around him.

It was an hour or more before he came to the further shore of the river. At the point which he reached there was nothing to be seen but the black pine forest coming down close to the water's edge, and two stunted cypress trees that stood out in the stream. In the darkness of the night he could not tell whether the settlement to which he was directing his course lay above or below the point he had reached. The woods brooded dark and still. Millions of fireflies spangled its blackness with quick pulsing sparkles of light, and a multitudinous whisper and murmur of woodland life breathed out from the dark, mysterious depths. He unshipped his oars, rattling loudly in the dark stillness, and stood up in the boat, looking first up the stream and then down, then up again. He thought he saw a dim outline that looked like a group of houses and the sloop far away up the river, and then he sat down, replaced the oars, and began rowing up the shore.

It was the sloop he had seen. Gradually it came out more and more defined from the obscurity. Then he could see the outline of the long, narrow landing. There were signs of life about the sloop, and up on the shore. The door of one of the houses stood open, and there was a light within. By and by he could hear the noise of laughing and singing and of boisterous voices coming from it. As he came nearer and nearer to the landing some one suddenly hailed him through the night. "Ahoy! Who's that? Who be ye?" He did not reply, but rowed up under the wharf and lashed the dug-out to one of the piles. Three or four men came over across the wharf from the sloop, one of them carrying a lantern. They stood looking down at him as he made the boat fast. Then he climbed up to the wharf. The man with the lantern thrust it close to his face, and almost instantly a voice, very familiar to his ears, called out: "Why, Jack, is that you? What are you doing here?"

Jack looked up and, in the dim light of the lantern, saw who it was. It was Christian Dred. “Why, Dred,” he cried out, “is that you? What are you doing here?”

“That’s what I axed you,” said Dred. “What be you doing here at this time of night.”

“I’ll tell you,” said Jack. “I’ve been treated badly, and I’m running away from my master, Dred. He used me mightily ill, and I had either to run away or to be whipped to-morrow. But, O Dred, I’m glad to find you here, for I didn’t know what I was to do without a friend to help me.” For suddenly the joy and relief of having thus unexpectedly found his friend began to grow so big in Jack’s soul that he could hardly save himself from breaking down before them all. Every instant the wonder of it grew bigger and bigger within him—the wonder that he should so have met Dred face to face in the boundless spaces of the new world—thus at midnight in the wild depths of the Virginias. Then he heard Dred asking, “Who was your master?”

“My master?—His name was Richard Parker,” Jack answered.

“But, O Dred; how is it you were to be here? ’Tis the wonderfullest thing I ever heard tell of.”

Dred burst out laughing, “I’ll tell ye that by and by,” he said. A little crowd had gathered about him by this time, and more were coming over from the sloop, aboard of which there seemed to be a great many men. They crowded closely about, listening curiously to what was said. “But Richard Parker!” said Dred. “Was then Mr. Richard Parker your master? Why, he was here this very arternoon. He and the captain are great friends. Why, the captain came up here just to see Mr. Richard Parker, and that’s why I be here, too.”

Jack, as he looked about him at the faces dim in the lantern-light, wondered dumbly who the captain was, but he was too bewildered and confused to think with any sharpness or keenness of intelligence.

“What are you going to do now?” asked Dred.

“I don’t know,” said Jack. “I thought maybe I might work a passage to Norfolk in

this sloop, for I'd seen it yesterday from t'other side of the river and remembered it when I ran away. If I couldn't do that I was going to try to get down into North Carolina, afoot. What is this sloop, Dred?"

Dred took Jack by the arm. "Never mind that, now," he said, "you come along with me. I'll be back again in a trifle or so, Miller," he said to the man who carried the lantern. Then he pushed his way through the group that had surrounded them, and led Jack along the landing toward the shore. Suddenly as they walked along together he spoke. "Look 'ee," he said, "did you ever hear of Blackbeard the Pirate?"

"Yes," said Jack, "I have, and that not a few times."

"Well, then," said Dred, "I'm going to take you to him now. He's the captain, and if ye wants to get away from your master, the only thing I can do for to help you is to get the captain to take ye along of us. Arter you left the Arundel I disarted and ran away to North Caroliny ag'in, and so here I be now. You'll have to join with us if you want to get away, and that's all I can do for you. Will you do that?"

"Indeed I will," cried Jack. "I'm glad enough to get away to be willing to go anywhere. And then, do you see, you'll be along, Dred."

Dred was still holding him by the arm, and he gave it a squeeze. "Well then, we'll just go up to Bullock's and have a talk with the captain about it," he said.

They had left the landing by now and were ascending a little rise of ground to the house, the door of which stood open, and from which was coming the sound of loud voices, and now and then a burst of laughter. Dred, still holding Jack by the arm, led him up to the door of the house and into it. It seemed to be a sort of store, or drinking-house—a wide, barrack, shed-like place. There was a kind of bench or counter, some shelves seemingly empty, and two or three barrels, apparently of spirits. It was reeking hot, and full of men who were drinking and talking with loud voices. Some of the men had the appearance of being planters or settlers; others looked like sailors.

Dred, still holding Jack by the arm, looked around for a brief moment, then he elbowed his way through the crowd toward the other end of the room, almost dragging Jack with him. “Who have you got there, Dred?”—“Who’s that, Dred?” was asked by a dozen voices as Dred pushed his way up the length of the room. Dred did not reply; he led Jack up to a man who sat upon a barrel, swinging one leg and holding a glass of spirits in the hand that rested upon his knee.

Jack knew the man as soon as he saw him. It was the stranger who had twice come to the Roost. He was still dressed in the sort of sailor dress in which Jack had last seen him, and his beard was plaited into three plaits that hung down and over his breast. Jack saw that he had been drinking, perhaps a great deal. He did not move, except to raise his eyes sullenly as Dred led Jack up to him. “Captain,” said Dred, “this young man’s just come ashore down at the wharf. I know him very well, seeing as how he came over from England with me and that we was, so to say, messmates. He’s run away from his master, and says he’d like to ‘list with us. He’s a good, able-bodied lad, and very willing too.”

“Don’t you come from Mr. Parker’s?” said the captain, in his hoarse, husky voice.

“Yes, I do,” said Jack. “He was going to have me whipped, and I ran away from him.”

“I thought I knew your face,” said the pirate. “And so you’re running away, are you? And he was going to beat you, was he? Well, I dare say you deserved it. What were you doing to have him beat you?”

The strange, shaggy crowd pressed up close around them, and Jack gazed about him at the half-drunken faces. “I was doing naught to be whipped for,” he said. “I went away with the overseer, and while I was gone Mr. Parker came back. He tried to whip me with a riding-whip, and while I was keeping him off he fell down. He was going to have me beaten for that to-morrow, and so I ran away.”

The pirate captain stared at him for a little while of gloomy silence, shaking his head

slowly from side to side the while. “Well, then,” he said, “Mr. Parker and I are very good friends, and I don’t choose to help his servants to run away from him. So I’ll just make across to his place to-morrow, and drop you on our way up the river.”

Jack saw that the pirate was not sober, and he turned to look to Dred. Dred had let go his hold upon Jack’s arm; now he leaned over toward the pirate captain, and began whispering in his ear, the other listening gloomily and sullenly, and Jack watching them both with an anxious intentness. “Well, I can’t help that,” the pirate said aloud to something that Dred urged; and he raised his elbow and tried to push the other away. Dred leaned forward to whisper some last words as the other thrust him off. “I wish you wouldn’t come here troubling me this way, Chris Dred,” he said. “I don’t care anything about the fellow, he won’t be any use to me. Well, then, take him aboard if you choose, and I’ll think about it to-morrow morning. Now you go back to the sloop. You shouldn’t ha’ left it, as ’tis.”

Again Dred took Jack by the arm. “Come along, Jack,” he said, “’tis all right now.”

“But he said he was going to send me back,” said Jack, as they made their way back through the room, and toward the open air.

“Oh, that’s all very well; he won’t send you back; you just set your mind at rest on that. I know him as well as I know my own hand. He’s give in so far now, he won’t send you back.” Then, as they came out of doors once more—“Lord!” drawing a deep breath, “but it do feel good to get a breath of fresh air.”

“Tell me,” said Jack, as they walked down to the wharf together, “was that Blackbeard?”

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“HE LED JACK UP TO THE MAN WHO SAT UPON A BARREL.”

“Ay,” said Dred, “that’s what they call him hereabouts.”

“Why, then,” said Jack, “I’ve seen him before. He was over to the Roost twice in the

last two weeks, but I never thought ’twas Blackbeard.”

When, after a deep and profound sleep, Jack awoke almost at the dawn of the following day, he looked about him, at first not knowing just where he was. The hold of the sloop was full of the forms of sleeping men huddled into groups and clusters. The air was heavy and oppressive. He sat for a while staring about him, then suddenly he remembered everything—his surroundings, and how he had fallen asleep there the night before. He roused himself and, stepping cautiously over the sleeping forms without disturbing them, climbed up the ladder to the deck above.

A thick fog had arisen during the night, and everything was shrouded in an impenetrable mist that drifted in great clouds across the deck. The ropes and sheets were wet and fuzzy with the moisture that had settled upon them, and the sails looked heavy and sodden with dampness, the decks and the two boats hanging from the davits wet and shining with moisture. Two or three of the crew were upon watch in the early morning. One of them, his hair and woolen cap white with particles of the drifting mist, lay stretched upon the top of the galley deck-house, a carbine lying beside him. He was smoking his pipe, a faint, blue thread of smoke rising into the mist-laden air. He raised himself upon his elbow and stared at Jack as he came up on deck. The cook, who was also awake, was busy in the galley, and every now and then the clatter of pans sounded loud in the damp silence. A cloud of smoke from the newly-lighted galley fire rolled in great volume out of the stovepipe and drifted slowly across the deck and through the ratlines. In the brightening light Jack could see more of his surroundings. There was a large cannon in the bow of the sloop, partly covered with a tarpaulin, and there were two carronades amidships. The sloop still lay lashed to the end of the wharf. The shore was hidden in the fog, which opened now and then, just showing a dim, fleeting, misty outline which, the next moment, would be again lost in the drifting cloud.

A figure, dim and white in the distance, stood looking over the stern down into the

water. It was very familiar to Jack, and then presently it turned toward him and he saw it was Christian Dred. As soon as Dred saw Jack he came directly forward to where he was. “Well,” he said, catching him by the arm and shaking it, “here we be together again, hey?”

Jack laughed, and then he asked, “Are you sure he—Captain Teach—won’t send me back to Mr. Parker again?”

“Why, no,” said Dred, “in course he won’t. That was only his talk last night while he was in his drink. He don’t care nothing for Mr. Parker, and he won’t bother to send you back again. Just you rest your mind easy on that, Jack. If I’d thought there was any chance of his sending you back there, I wouldn’t ‘a’ kept you aboard here, last night, and you may be sure of that. But ’tis mightily queer, Jack, to think that Mr. Parker was only with us yesterday art’noon, and here you comes and finds your way aboard in the night. What did you come over here for, anyhow?”

As Jack stood, giving Dred a brief account of his adventures and of his plans of escape, the signs of awakening life began gradually to show aboard the sloop. The men were coming up from below, and after a while the captain himself came up on deck, from the cabin aft. He stood for a while, his head just showing above the companion-way, looking about him with eyes heavy and bleared with sleep. Then he came slowly up on deck. He beckoned to one of the men—a negro—who ran in his bare feet and hauled up a pail of water from alongside. Jack, from a distance, watched the pirate captain as he washed his face in the water, puffing and splashing and spluttering, rubbing it into his shaggy hair. Then he fished out a yellow and greasy comb from his pocket, and, with a great deal of care, parted his hair in the middle and smoothed it down on either side. Then he began plaiting the two locks at his temples, looking about him all the while with his heavy lowering gaze. Presently his eyes fell upon Jack. “Come here,” he said, without stopping his toilet, and Jack came forward and stood before him. “What’s your name?” he asked. He had

finished plaiting the first long, thin lock, and was winding a bit of string around it.

“Jack Ballister.”

“You waited on Mr. Dick Parker, didn’t you?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jack.

“Well, d’ye think you could wait on a gentlewoman?”

“I don’t know,” said Jack; “I believe I could.”

“Well, I expect a lady aboard here, maybe to-night, and it may be I’ll call on you to wait upon her now and then. D’ye think ye could?”

“I believe I could,” said Jack.

“Very well, that will do now. You can go.”

The sound of hissing and sizzling was coming from the galley, and as Jack went forward again, the air was full of the smell of cooking pork.

During the early part of the morning a rude cart drawn by two oxen came out along the wharf. It was driven by a negro, and two men with carbines over their shoulders marched beside it. There were two barrels full of fresh water in the cart, and a half dozen of the crew presently rolled them aboard the sloop.

A breeze had come up as the sun rose higher, and in an hour or more—it was about the middle of the morning—the fog began to drift away in bright yellow clouds, through which the disk of the sun shone thin and watery. Now and then the outline of the houses on the shore stood out faint and dim; they looked very different to Jack in the wide light of day. Then the sun burst out in a sudden bright, hot gleam. The pirate captain had gone below, but Dred and the sailing-master, Hands, were on deck. The boatswain’s whistle trilled shrilly, and the great patched, dingy mainsail, flapping and bellying sluggishly, rose slowly with the yo-hoing of the sailors and the creaking of block and tackle. The lines were cast loose, Dred standing directing the men as they pushed the sloop off with the sweeps. Some of the settlers had come

down to the shore, and stood watching. “All away!” called Dred, and Hands spun the wheel around. The sloop fell slowly off, the sail filling out smooth and round. The men on the wharf shouted an adieu, and two or three of the men aboard the sloop replied, and then they were out in the wide expanse of the river.

CHAPTER XXIV

AT MARLBOROUGH

SOME time a little after noon the sloop sailed into the wide mouth of a lesser stream that opened into the broader waters of the James.

The pirate captain lounged upon the rail not far from Dred, who held the wheel, stooping as he looked out ahead under the boom of the mainsail. The gunner, a man named Morton, joined the pirate captain, with whom he stood talking for a while in low tones, Dred every now and then turning to speak to them. The sloop, close hauled to the wind, drifted slowly into the tributary river. “I reckon they’re going to bring her up back o’ the p’int yonder,” said one of the pirates to Jack, where nobody’ll be like to see us till we gets our young lady aboard.

“Isn’t that a house over on the other side of the river?” asked Jack. “Those look like chimneys over the top of the trees.”

“Why, yes,” said the other, “that’s a place they call Marlborough. They say ’tis a grand, big, fine house.”

“Marlborough!” said Jack, “and so ’tis a big, fine house, for I’ve been there myself and have seen it; ’tis as grand a house as ever you would wish to see.”

“Do you, then, know it?” said the other. “Well, ’tis there the captain’s going to-night to bring off a young lady he’s going to fetch down to North Caroliny.”

Jack listened to the man, not for a moment supposing anything else than that the young lady of whom the pirate spoke was to be a willing passenger. He only

wondered vaguely why she should choose to go with Blackbeard.

The sloop lay in the creek all that afternoon. Dred was in the cabin nearly all the time, and Jack saw almost nothing of him. Meantime the crew occupied themselves variously. Six of them near Jack were playing cards intently; sometimes in silence, sometimes breaking out into loud bursts of talking and swearing. Jack lay upon the forecastle hatch watching them. Every now and then the trum-trumming of Blackbeard's guitar sounded from the cabin. As the dealer dealt the cards around, one of the pirates snapped his fingers in time to the strumming of the music. "I tell you what 'tis, messmates," he said, "the captain be the masterest hand at the guitar that ever I heard in all my life."

"To be sure," said another, "he plays well enough, but Jem Willoughby down at Ocracock can give him points how to play."

"Did ye ever hear Jem Willoughby play the fandango?" said one of a half-dozen men who lay at a little distance under the shade of the rail.

"Never mind Jem Willoughby and the fandango now," said the dealer, as he took up his hand of cards and, wetting his thumb, ran them over; "you play your game, messmates, and never mind Jem Willoughby."

Again they played with silent intentness. Meantime a negro was dancing in the forecastle below. From above, Jack could see his dim form obscurely in the darker depths, and, as he watched the hands of cards that the others played, he could not but hearken to the shuffling and pat of the dancing feet sounding in rhythmical time to the clapping of hands. Then, after awhile, there was a sudden burst of talking from the card-players, and the dealer reached out and raked in the half score of silver pieces that lay upon the deck-house.

The afternoon slowly waned; the sun set, and a dim gray of twilight seemed to rise from the swampy lagoon. Then the dusk shaded darker and darker to the dimness of early nightfall. Suddenly the pirate captain came up on deck, followed by Hands and

Dred. Dred spoke to the boatswain, who came forward directly and ordered the crews of the three boats to lower them and to bring them alongside. Then there followed a bustle of preparation. Presently, through the confusion, Jack saw that the men were arming themselves. They were going down below into the cabin and were coming up again, each with a pistol or a brace of pistols and a cutlass. Finally Morton, the gunner, came up on deck, and soon after the crews began scrambling over the rail and into the three boats with a good deal of noise and disorder. It was after dark when they finally pushed off from the sloop. The pirate captain sat in the stern of the yawl-boat, Hands took command of one of the others, and Dred and Morton went off in the third. Jack stood watching them pull away into the darkness, the regular chug-chug-chug of the oars in the rowlocks sounding fainter and fainter as the dim forms of the boats were lost in the obscurity of the distance.

Everything seemed strangely silent after the boats were gone. Only five men besides Jack remained aboard the sloop, and the solitude of the darkness that seemed to envelop them all around about was only emphasized by the tide that gurgled and lapped alongside. “Who is it they’re going to fetch from Marlborough?” Jack asked of one of the men who stood beside him leaning over the rail, smoking his pipe and looking after his companions.

“Who?” said he, without looking around. “Why, they’re going to fetch a young lady”; and that was all Jack knew until she was actually aboard the pirate sloop.

Colonel Parker was away from home. He had gone to Williamsburgh, but there was some company at Marlborough—Mr. Cartwright (a cousin of Madam Parker’s), his wife, and the Reverend Jonathan Jones, minister of Marlborough parish church—a rather sleek, round-faced man, dressed in sober clerical black, with a very white wig and a smooth, clean, starched band of fine, semi-transparent linen. Madam Parker and her guests sat at a game of ruff. Miss Eleanor Parker was trying a piece of music at the spinet, playing smoothly but with an effort at certain points, and then

stumbling at the more difficult passages, to which she sometimes returned, repeating them. The four played their game out without speaking, and then, as the last trick was taken, released the restraint of attentive silence to a sudden return of ease. "'Twas two by honors this time, I think," said Mr. Cartwright to Madam Parker, who was his partner.

"Yes," she said, "I held the queen and ace myself, and you the knave."

"Then that makes four points for us," said Mr. Cartwright, as he marked them.

"'Tis strange how ill the hands run with me to-night," said the reverend gentleman; "that makes the third hand running without a single court card." He opened his snuff-box and offered it to Madam Parker, and then to the others, taking finally a profound and vigorous pinch himself, and then shutting the lid of the box with a snap. Madam Parker and her partner smiled with the amused good-nature of winners at the game.

"Upon my word, Eleanor," said Madam Parker, "I wish you would not play so loud; my nerves are all of a jingle to-day; as 'tis, I can't fix my mind on the game." The young lady made no answer; she did not even turn round, but she continued her playing in a more subdued key.

"Was not that Lady Betty Arkwright in your pew last Sunday, Madam?" asked the rector of Madam Parker, as he shuffled the cards.

"Yes, 'twas," said the lady. "She came up from Williamsburgh last week, and Colonel Parker went back with her yesterday."

"I thought I could not be mistook," said the Reverend Jonathan, "and that 'twas indeed her. She hath a fine air of good breeding, hath she not, Madam?"

"Why, yes, she is good enough," said Madam Parker, "but has nothing like the fine breeding of her sister, Lady Mayhurst."

The reverend gentleman did not reply except by a deferential smile and half bow. He

had picked up his hand and had begun to run it over swiftly, and then another round of the game began in silence.

Presently the young lady ceased playing and began turning over the leaves of her music-book.

It was in this pause of silence that there came suddenly a loud and violent knock upon the outside hall door. Madam Parker started. “Why, who can that be?” she said, folding her hand of cards nervously and holding it face downward, and looking around the table at the others.

The players all sat listening, and Miss Eleanor partly turned around upon her music-stool. It was very late for visitors, and the negroes had closed the house some time since. “It sounded like some one who may have come in a haste,” said Mr. Cartwright. “Maybe Colonel Parker has sent a message.”

“I don’t know why he should send a message,” said Madam Parker. “I hope he has not been ailing again. But that may hardly be, for he has not had a single touch of the gout for over three months, and no sign of its coming back again.”

They listened as the negro crossed the hall to answer the knock. Then came the sound of the rattling of the chain and the turning of the key. Then the door was opened. As the card-players listened they heard the sound of a man’s voice and then the reply of the negro. Then once more the man’s voice and then the negro’s again—this time speaking, as it seemed, rather eagerly. Then there came a sharp exclamation and then a sound as of some one pushed violently against the door—then silence. There was something unusual, something very alarming in the noise. “What was that?” said Madam Parker, sharply, and there was a tone of keen anxiety in her voice.

As in answer, there was the shuffling sound of many feet crossing the hall. Mr. Cartwright rose from his seat, and the Reverend Jonathan Jones turned half-way round upon his chair. The next instant three or four men with blackened faces were

in the room. The foremost man wore the loose petticoat trousers of a sailor, a satin waistcoat, and a coat and hat trimmed with gold braid. His face was tied up in a handkerchief, but they could see that he had gold ear-rings in his ears. “Don’t you be frightened,” said he in a hoarse, husky voice, “there’ll no harm happen to you if you only be quiet and make no noise. But I won’t have any noise, d’ye hear?”

The three ladies sat staring with wide-eyed, breathless terror at the speaker. His companions stood silently at the doorway, each armed with a brace of pistols. There was something singularly dreadful in their silence, their black faces, their lips red by contrast with their sooty countenances, the whites of their eyes, which every now and then blinked into darkness and then were white again.

“What d’ye want?” said Mr. Cartwright. “Who are you? What do you want?” He had grown very pale, but his voice was strong and full, without a tremor in it.

The stranger, though he was armed, did not carry any weapon in his hand. He came out a little further into the room. “Ye see I have nothing to make you afraid of me!” he said, opening the palms of his hands. “So you may see I mean you no harm. But harkee! there’s to be no noise—no screaming, d’ye understand—no calling for help. So long as you keep still no harm shall be done to any of ye—man or woman.”

“You villain!” cried out Mr. Cartwright, with rising choler. “What do you mean by coming here this way, breaking into Coloner Parker’s house and blustering and threatening? Do you know where you are?” He pushed back the chair from which he had risen and looked around the room as though seeking for some weapon.

“Come, come, sir,” said the other sharply, and he clapped his hand to the butt of one of his pistols, “don’t you make any trouble for yourself, sir. I say there’ll be nobody harmed if you don’t make any trouble for yourself. But if you do, I tell you plain it’ll be the worse for you. I’ve got a score of men outside, and you can’t do anything at all, and if you make any trouble you’ll be shot, with no good to come of it. I’ll tell you what we came for—but first of all I want you to understand plainly that no harm

is intended to the young lady and that no harm shall happen to her. And now I'll tell you what we have come for. Young Mistress Parker yonder must go along with us."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when Madam Parker started up out of her chair with a loud and violent scream. Then she fell back again, catching at the table, overturning one of the candles, and scattering the cards on the floor in a litter. The other ladies screamed as in instant echo, and shriek upon shriek rang violently through the house. Miss Eleanor Parker had run to her mother, burying her face in Madam Parker's lap. "You villain!" roared Mr. Cartwright, and as he spoke he snatched up the heavy candlestick that had been overturned, and threw it with all his might at the head of the pirate. Blackbeard ducked, and the candlestick whirled past his head, striking with a crash against the wall beyond. "What d'ye mean?" roared he, as Mr. Cartwright grasped at the other candlestick; "don't you touch that candlestick! Ha! would you?" The next instant he had flung himself upon the gentleman, clutching him around the body. Mr. Cartwright struck at his assailant again and again, trying to free himself. For one moment he had almost wrenched himself loose. The men at the door ran around to their leader's aid. A chair was overturned with a crash, and the next moment the two had stumbled over it and fallen, and had rolled under the table.

Mr. Jones, with a face ghastly white and eyes straining with terror, thrust away his chair and rose, drawing back from the two as they struggled and kicked upon the floor beneath the table; and still the ladies screamed piercingly, shriek upon shriek. "Would you?" snarled the pirate captain, almost breathlessly, under the table—"Would you! Here—Morton—Dred—the devil's choking me! Ach! let go there!" The men who had run to his aid strove to drag the two apart, and a dozen or more, all with faces blackened, came running into the room just as they were separated. The pirate captain scrambled to his feet disheveled and furious. Before he raised himself he tied up his face in the handkerchief again. Then he stood up, feeling at his throat and glaring around him. Mr. Cartwright lay upon the ground,

held down by two or three men. His lip had been cut in the struggle, and was bleeding. His breath came thick and hoarse, and his face was strained and knotted with fury. Every now and then he made a futile effort to wrench his arm loose.

“I don’t know what you all mean, anyhow,” said the pirate captain, “squalling and fighting like that. By Zounds!”—to Mr. Cartwright, as he lay upon the floor—“I believe you’ve broke my Adam’s apple—I do. I tell you”—said he to Madam Parker, who, white and haggard, and shrunk together with terror, sat looking up at him—“I tell you, and I tell you again, that I don’t mean any harm to you or to the young lady. She’s got to go along with me, and that’s all. I tell you I’ll take good care of her, and she’ll be in the care of a woman who knows how to look after her; and just as soon as his honor the colonel chooses to pay for her coming back, then she’ll come. I’ve got a good safe boat down here at the shore, and no harm’ll come to her. She’ll only be gone for a month or so, and then she’ll be fetched back safe and sound. Now, if she wants to carry any change of her clothes along with her to wear, she’d better get ‘em together. D’ye understand me, Madam?”

Madam Parker, with her daughter’s face buried in her lap, still sat looking up at the pirate captain. Her lips moved once or twice, and then she whispered breathlessly, “Yes—I understand.”

“What d’ ye say, Madam? I don’t hear ye.”

“I understand,” she repeated a little louder, as he leaned forward across the table to hear her.

“Why, then, Madam,” said he, “I’m glad you do; for I want the young mistress to be as comfortable as she can, and if you don’t get something for her to wear and make her comfortable, I’ve got to take her off without. Now, Madam, will you get some clothes together? Maybe you’ll send one of your black women to get them.”

Madam Parker sat gazing at him without moving; the pirate captain stood looking at her. “What’s the matter with her, anyhow?” said he. One of the men stooped

forward and looked into her face. “Why, captain,” said he, “the lady’s dazed like; she don’t know what you’re saying. Don’t you see she don’t understand a word you say?”

The captain looked round and his eyes fell upon Mrs. Cartwright. “D’ ye think ye could get some change of clothes for the young lady, some clothes to take away with her, mistress?” said he. “She can’t go away from home for a month or so without a change of clothes to wear. You can see that for yourself.”

“Shall I go, Edward?” said Mrs. Cartwright.

Mr. Cartwright groaned. “You’ll have to go, Polly,” he said; “there ‘s nothing else to do. But, oh, you villains, mark my words! You’ll hang for this, every mother’s son of you!”

“Why, I like your spirit, Mr. Tobacco-Planter,” said the pirate captain; “and maybe you’ll hang us, and maybe you wouldn’t, but we’ll take our chances on that.” Then with a sudden truculence, “I’ve put up with all the talk from you I’m going to bear, and if you know what’s good for you you’ll stop your ‘villains’ and your ‘hangings’ and all that. We’ve got the upper hand here, and you’re the cock that’s down, so you won’t crow any more, if you please.”

Mr. Cartwright groaned again. “You’re breaking my arm,” he said to the men who were holding him down.

When Mrs. Cartwright came back into the room, carrying a large silk traveling-bag packed with clothes, she was crying, making no attempt to wipe away the tears that ran down her cheeks. The pirate captain came and stooped over Miss Eleanor as she knelt with her face in her mother’s lap. “Come, mistress,” he said, “you must go along with us now.” He waited for a moment, but she made no reply. “You must go along with us,” he repeated in a louder tone; and he took her by the arm as he spoke. Still she made no sound of having heard him. Then he stooped over and lifted her head. Mr. Cartwright caught sight of the face, and felt a keen thrill pierce through

him. “She is dead,” he thought. “Come here, Morton,” called out the pirate captain, “and lend a hand; the young lady’s swooned clean away.”

Madam Parker made some faint movement as her daughter was taken from her, but she could not have been conscious of what was passing. Mrs. Cartwright wept hysterically in her husband’s arms as they carried the young lady away, leaving behind them the room littered with the cards, the chair overturned, and the one candle burning dimly on the card-table. Outside of the house the negroes and the white servants stood looking on in helpless, interested terror from a distance, hidden by the darkness. Mr. Simms was sitting in his office, gagged and bound in his chair.

CHAPTER XXV

IN CAPTIVITY

IT seemed to Jack as he sat in the darkness with the watch upon the deck of the sloop, that the time passed away very, very slowly. The vessel lay pretty close to the shore, and myriad sounds from the dark, woody wilderness seemed to fill the air—the sharp quivering rasp of multitudinous insects, the strange noise of the night birds, and now and then the snapping and cracking of a branch, and always the lapping gurgle of water. He lounged on a coil of rope, watching the twinkling flicker of the fireflies, and listening to the men as they talked among themselves about people whom he did not know. There was a strong interest in hearing what they said, and so catching, as it were, a glimpse of a world so different from his own. A lantern swung in the shrouds, shedding a dim, yellow circle of light upon the deck, in which sat and squatted the five men left in charge of the sloop.

“She never got the better of me,” one of the men was saying. “I tell you what ’tis, I ain’t the man to put up with any women’s notions. Her and I was keeping company then, and I took her down to Derrick’s P’int—that time you was speaking of, Bob. Well, Ned Salter had just come back from South Caroliny with the captain, and had

a pocket full of money. I see her making eyes at him all the time, and by and by they stands up to dance together. Jem Smith, he says to me, 'Tommy, my boy, d' ye see what a figure Sally and Ned Salter be a-cutting together?' 'I do,' says I, and I just walks across the floor and up to her, and says: 'Sally, I fetched you here, and if you means to shake me loose you means it, and that's all.' She laughed, kind of like, and I saw her give Ned Salter a nudge with her elbow. She didn't think I see it, but I see it all the same. 'Very well,' says I, 'then I see how 'tis.' So without another word I goes away. I goes right down to the P'int, and I gets in my boat and I rows back to Ocracock, leaving her to get home as she chose. The next day I see her, and she says to me: 'Why, Tommy,' says she, 'where was you last night? I couldn't find you nowheres.' 'Why,' says I, 'I was where it suited me to be,' and I walks on and leaves her. I tell you, there be n't a woman around that can try her tricks with me."

They all sat in silence for a while, digesting what the speaker had said. "It must be pretty near midnight," said another of the men irrelevantly, looking up into the starry sky as he spoke.

"Harkee, I hear summat," said another, holding up his finger. "Like enough it be the boats a-coming back."

They all listened intently, but only the ceaseless murmurings of the night filled the air, and always the lapping gurgle of the water. "Then, there was Hetty Jackson," said the man who had just told of his adventure. "D' ye remember her, Bill? She'd just come down from Maryland way—"

Suddenly one of the men—he who had spoken before—scrambled up to his feet. "There they are," he said, cutting sharply into the narrative that the other was beginning. "I knowed I heard 'em."

A breath of air had sprung up from the river and had brought down with it the distant sound of measured chug-chug of the oars in rowlocks.

"Yes, that's them for certain," said another of the watch, and every one scrambled to

his feet. They all stood looking out toward the river. It was a great while before the distant boats gradually shaped themselves into forms out of the pale watery darkness beyond. “There they are; I see them,” said one of the men. And then, in a minute, Jack also saw the dim, formless dark blots upon the face of the water. As the boats drew slowly nearer and nearer to the sloop, Jack climbed up into the shrouds, whence he might obtain a better view of the men when they should come aboard. He did not know at all what the business was that had taken the pirates to Marlborough, nor did he suspect that it was anything startlingly unusual; he was merely curious to see the return of the boats. Presently they were alongside—the yawl-boat first of all—the men unshipping their oars with a noisy rattle and clatter. Some of them caught the chains just below Jack as the boat slid under the side of the sloop, and the other boats came alongside almost at the same time. Jack could see by the light of the lantern that those in the stern of the yawl were assisting a dark figure to arise, and that a sort of hushed attention was directed toward it. He wondered what was the matter, and his first thought was that some one had been hurt; then he saw that they were helping somebody up to the deck, and then, as the light fell upon the face, recognition came with a sudden keen shock,—it was Miss Eleanor Parker,—and even in the dim light he could see that her face was as white as death. Then he saw that the faces of all that had come in the boats were blackened as though with soot. The pirate captain had come aboard the sloop. “Easy, now,” he said, as they lifted the young lady up to the deck. Jack still clung to the ratlines, looking after them as they partly supported, partly carried the fainting figure across the deck. The next moment they had assisted her down into the cabin. Then Jack, who had been lost in wonder, returned sharply to the consciousness of other things. He became aware of the confusion of the boats’ crews coming aboard, the rattling and clatter and movement and bustle all around him on the deck. “Look alive, now, Gibbons!” he heard Hand’s voice say to the boatswain. “Get her under way as quick as you can,” and he knew that the sloop was about to quit its anchorage.

Dred, who had gone down into the cabin, had by and by returned upon deck, his face still sooty black. He stood by while the men hoisted the boats aboard. Jack came over to where he stood. “Why, Dred,” said he, “wasn’t that Mistress Eleanor Parker you brought aboard just now?” for even yet he thought he might possibly have been mistaken.

“You mind your own business, lad,” said Dred, turning upon him and speaking more sharply than he had ever spoken to Jack before. “You mind your own business and go for’ard where you belong.” Then he turned on his heel and walked away as though in a hurry, and the next moment Jack saw him go down into the cabin again.

The next morning Jack came on deck to find the sloop beating down the river in the face of a stiff breeze. They had been sailing all night and had made a long reach. He recognized where they were. The shore toward which they were now heading was the high, sandy bluff that overlooked the oyster banks, where he had once gone fishing with Dennis and the negro. He could see in the distance the shed standing upon the summit of the high, sandy bank. It looked very strange and new to him, and, at the same time, curiously familiar. It was as though a piece of his past life had been broken out and placed oddly into the setting that was so strangely new and different.

“Where’s Jack Ballister?” he heard Dred’s voice say, and then he turned around sharply.

“Here I am!” he said.

Dred came forward a little distance, then he beckoned and Jack went over to him. “The young lady down in the cabin seems very queer like,” said Dred. “She won’t say nothing and she won’t eat nothing. Didn’t you say as you knowed her at one time and that she knowed you, or summat of the sort?”

“Why, yes,” said Jack. “I know her very well, but I don’t know whether or no she remembers me now.”

“Well, lookee,” said Dred, “the captain thinks as how it might rouse her up a bit if somebody as knowed her was to come down and speak to her and take her down summat to eat. Can’t you get summat to eat, such as gentlefolk like her cares for? D’ ye see, we don’t know just what they kind likes and what they needs, and ’twould be a mightily serious thing for all on us if this here young lady was to take ill and die on our hands.”

“I don’t know,” said Jack, “whether I could do anything for her or not, but I’ll try.”

“Well, then, you go down into the galley and see if you can get summat for her to eat, and then fetch it aft to the cabin, and try to persuade her to eat a bite.”

When Jack came out of the galley a half hour later, carrying a plate of food, he heard the trum-trumming of the guitar sounding distantly from below, aft. It was the first time he had been down into the cabin. He found it fitted up with some considerable comfort, but now dirty and disorderly. The bedding in the berths was tumbled and dirty, as though it had not been made up for a long time, and the place was filled with a close, stuffy, sour smell, pervaded with the odor of stale tobacco smoke. Hands was lying, apparently asleep, upon the bench that ran around the cabin, and Captain Teach sat upon the other side of the table, with a glass of grog at his elbow. He held his guitar across his breast, and his brown fingers—one of them wearing a silver ring—picked at the strings. Behind the captain a dark figure lay in the berth, still and motionless. Jack could see one hand, as white as wax, resting upon the edge of the berth, and he noticed the shine of the rings upon the fingers.

Captain Teach looked at him as he entered. He stopped playing as Jack came to the place where the young lady lay and kneeled with one knee upon the cushions of the bench. The pirate looked at him with great curiosity, and Jack stood there for a while, not knowing what to say. “Won’t you eat something, mistress?” he said at last, awkwardly. No reply. “Won’t you eat something, mistress?” he said, again; “I brought you something here that I think you can eat—a bit of chicken and some rice.

Won’t you eat it?”

She shook her head, without turning around. He stood there for a while in silence, looking at her. “She won’t eat anything,” said he at last, turning toward Captain Teach.

The pirate captain stared at her for a while, in brooding thought. “Oh, very well, then,” he said; “let her alone. She’ll be sharp enough for something to eat, maybe, by afternoon. You can take the victuals back to the galley. Stop! let’s see what you’ve got.” He fingered the food over curiously, as Jack held the plate for him to see. “Chicken and rice, heh?” he said. “Where did you get the chicken?”

“The cook had two of them in a coop up in the bows,” said Jack.

That day it became known that the captain was going to stop over night at Norfolk, where he had friends; and about sundown they dropped anchor in the river, with the little town, the spire of its church showing above the trees, lying about a mile away. Presently the captain came up from below. He had combed out the plaits of his long black beard, and he was dressed rather quietly in a suit of brown clothes with brass buttons, white stockings, and shoes with plate buckles. The boat was ready and waiting for him alongside, and he stepped down into it. Jack watched it as it pulled away toward the shore, rising and falling and bobbing over the tumbling waves, the brown figure of the captain perched high in the stern, with his coat tails spread out upon either side. “He’s got a lot of friends in Norfolk,” said one of the men, who, smoking his pipe, lounged over the rail not very far from Jack, “but he’s got no call to stop there now. If he were in my place and I in hisn, I’d make out to sea without stopping to go ashore for a game of cards or a taste o’ grog at this time.” He took his pipe from between his teeth and puffed a broken cloud of smoke out into the swift windy air, looking gloomily after the boat. “’Tis as much as our necks are worth, as he well knows, for to lie in these here waters with this young lady aboard. Supposen some ‘un was to take a notion to come aboard on us and should find out who we had

here in the cabin, how long do you suppose ’twould be afore all on us would be a-lyin’ in the jug in Williamsburgh with a halter about our necks?”

Jack felt a sudden rush of apprehension seize upon him at the man’s words. He had not realized, until that moment, what it meant for him to be aboard the pirate’s sloop; that, having joined himself with outlaws, he himself was now an outlaw. He stood silently for a while, staring after the receding boat. “I do suppose,” he said at last, “that the captain won’t be long ashore.”

The man shrugged his shoulders. “If he once gets ashore with his friends and a bottle of grog, maybe ’twill be the best part of the night afore he gets away again.”

Jack drew a deep breath. “Well,” he said, “’twas a mightily foolhardy thing for him to do, to be sure.”

Just then some one laid a hand upon his shoulder, and he turned around with a start. It was Dred. “The young lady’s roused up a bit,” he said; “maybe, if you’d take summat down to her now, she’d eat it.”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PIRATE’S LAIR

IT took nearly a week to run from Norfolk to Bath Town. The sloop had run into Ocracock before the breaking of the fourth day; had discharged nearly all of its crew, with noisy hubbub, into the inscrutable gray of the dawning, and had then sailed away up the sound, with only the pirate captain, Dred, and Hands, and Jack, and two negroes left of the thirty or more who had comprised the vessel’s company. It was in the early daylight of the following day that the sloop came about and, with a short tack, sailed into the mouth of Bath Creek. On one side a swamp fringed with giant cypress-trees, their bright-green foliage standing out against the darker green of the trees behind, came close down to the point. Upon the other side were open clearings of plantations. About half a league up, at the head of the mouth of the

creek, the houses of the little town clustered among the trees upon a gentle rise of open ground. The sloop was sailing smoothly nearer and nearer to the bluff shore, upon which stood a square frame house with a tall, sloping roof and two lean chimneys. The house, which appeared to be of a somewhat better quality than the ordinary wooden house of the common settler, was almost hidden by the shade of two great cypress-trees that grew up from what seemed to be a little marshy hollow. Behind it, a glimpse of a clearing showed, stretching away to the edge of the woods beyond. A skiff and a dug-out lay drawn up on the beach close to a landing-place, and Jack could see two rough-looking white men standing on the little wharf, looking out toward the sloop. He was standing by with the two negroes who now composed the crew, ready to help let go the anchor at the word of command, when Dred came up out of the cabin and across the deck to where he stood. “You come with me,” he said; “the captain wants you down in the cabin.”

As Jack went below he heard the loud splash of the anchor, and then the sound of the running of the block as Hands let the sail go to the wind. The captain was combing out his shaggy hair, and the young lady sitting leaning with her arms upon the table as he came down the companion-way. She wore an air as of dumb expectation. “Here, young man,” said the captain, “you’re to go ashore with me and the young lady. I want you to carry that bag of clothes up to the house,” nodding his head toward the table where lay the bundle. There was a long pause as the pirate continued his toilet. “You’re to wait upon the young lady, and be handy to help whenever my wife wants you,” he continued, “d’ ye understand?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jack.

Then Hands came to the companion-way to say that the boat was ready; and Blackbeard turned to the young lady. “Come, mistress,” he said, “if you’re ready now we’ll go ashore.”

The young lady rose instantly from her place, and stood resting her hand upon the

table, looking about her. “D’ ye want any help?” said the pirate. She shook her head. “Well, come along, then.”

The captain led the way to the deck; Miss Eleanor Parker followed, and Jack came behind. The young lady looked around her as she came up into the open air. The faint wind stirred the hair at her temples as she gazed steadily at the little town lying seemingly so close. Jack had not noticed before how thin and pale she had grown. The bright glare of the sunlight made her look singularly wan. The boat was alongside, the negroes holding it close to the side of the sloop. They helped the young lady into it almost officiously, and then the captain took his place beside her. “You jump aboard up there in the bow,” he said to Jack; and, as Jack took his place, the negroes pushed off and began rowing away toward the shore. Jack watched the wharf as it came nearer and nearer. He could see that one of the white men who stood there looked haggard and pinched as though with illness. They did not look like sea-faring men, and he judged them to be neighboring planters from some of the places further inland. The next moment the negroes backed oars, the bow of the boat touched with a bump against the landing, and Jack jumped ashore. At the captain’s bidding he reached out his hand, and in instant response felt Miss Eleanor Parker’s grasp, soft and warm. She held tightly to him as he helped her up from the boat to the landing, and he was conscious that the two men on the wharf were staring intently at him and at her.

They still stood dumbly staring as Jack, carrying Miss Eleanor Parker’s bundle, followed the captain and the young lady up the crooked path to the house.

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“JACK FOLLOWED THE CAPTAIN AND THE YOUNG LADY UP THE CROOKED PATH TO THE HOUSE.”

From a distance the house had appeared picturesque—almost beautiful—hidden among the soft-green foliage of the cypress-trees; but it looked shabby and

weather-worn and even squalid upon a nearer approach. A young woman of sixteen or seventeen years old stood in the doorway, looking at them as they came up the path. Her face was not uncomely, but was heavy and dull. Her hair was light and colorless, and was tied up under a dirty cap. She was in her bare feet; she wore a jacket without sleeves, partly pinned, partly buttoned, and under it a flaming red petticoat. She stared at them with wide eyes, but the pirate said nothing at all to her, and she stood aside as he led the way directly into the house. The floor was bare and uncarpeted. There were a table and two chairs; some tin boxes and a couple of candlesticks, caked with grease, stood upon the mantel together with a loud-ticking clock. Altogether, the room, with its bare plastered walls, was very naked and cheerless, and was filled with a rank, smoky smell. “Sit down, mistress,” said Blackbeard; and then, as Miss Eleanor Parker obeyed him, “This is my wife,” he said, “and she’ll look after you for a while. D’ ye hear, Betty? You’re to look after the young lady. Go up-stairs now, and get the spare room ready, and be as lively about it as you can. You take the young lady’s bundle up-stairs, boys; he—” nodding toward his wife—“she’ll show you where.”

Jack followed the young woman up the rickety stairs to the sagging floor above. “Here, this is the place,” she said, opening the door upon a room directly under the roof. It looked out through two windows across the creek to the swamp on the other side, a half mile or so away. “Who is she?” said the woman to Jack, as he followed her into the room, and laid the traveling-bag upon the bed.

“The young lady down-stairs? She’s Miss Eleanor Parker,” Jack answered.

“A grand, fine lady, ben’t she?” and Jack nodded. “Well, you trig up the room a little now, won’t you? I’ll just go put on a better dress, for, d’ ye see, I didn’t look for Ned to bring such fine company. You’d better bring up a pail of water, too, for I reckon she’ll be wanting to wash herself.”

Blackbeard’s wife was gone for a long time. The pirate walked restlessly and

irritably up and down the room, stopping once at the mantel-shelf to fill a pipe of tobacco. The young lady sat impassively, with her hands lying in her lap, gazing absently upon the floor. Once or twice the pirate glared with angry impatience at the door. At last there was the sound of footsteps—this time not of bare feet—clattering down the stairs, and a second later the pirate's wife opened the door and entered the room. She had changed her slatternly dress for a medley of finery. She wore high-heeled shoes and silk stockings with red clocks. She courtesied to the young lady as Blackbeard glared at her. "If you come along with me now, madam," she said with an air, "I'll show you to your room."

CHAPTER XXVII

AT BATH TOWN

"YOU and Chris Dred will have to sleep together," the pirate's wife had said to Jack, the first evening of his arrival. "He's lived here ever since he came back. He sleeps in the corner room; there ain't no bed in t'other; so, now the young lady's come, you'll have to sleep together, or one of you'll have to sleep on the floor." And so Jack was settled at the pirate's house.

The next morning the pirate captain sent Jack in a boat up to the town with a letter to Mr. Knight, the colonial secretary.

The town appeared singularly interesting to Jack as, leaving the skiff at a little landing, under the care of the negro who had rowed him up to the place, he walked up a straggling lane between some fishing huts, and so to the main street, which, with its dirt sidewalk, was shaded with trees, through which filtered uncertain, wavering spots of sunlight. The day was hot, a dry wind rustled the leaves overhead, and a belated cicada trilled its shrill note that, rising for a while, pulsed whirring away into silence. The houses, mostly built of wood, were small and not very clean. They nearly all stood close to the street. A sort of indolent life stirred in the place,

and further down the street a lot of men were lounging in front of a building that looked as if it might be a store of some sort. They stared at Jack as he drew near, and when he asked where he should find Mr. Knight, they did not immediately reply.

“Mr. Knight?” said one of the group. “Why, I reckon Mr. Knight be n’t in town; he went off across the country the day afore yesterday, and I reckon he be n’t back yet.”

“Yes, he be back,” said another; “anyways, his horse be back again, for I saw Jem a-rubbing it down as I came by the stable a while ago.”

Then one of the men got slowly up from where he sat, and led Jack out into the middle of the street. “D’ ye see that open place yonder? Well, that’s where the church stands. Just beyond that—you can see it from here—is the house. ’Tis the very next house to the church. Well, that’s Mr. Knight’s house.”

Mr. Knight’s residence was built of brick and was very much better looking than the houses that surrounded it. Jack found that the secretary was at home, and was shown into his office. He was smoking a pipe of tobacco and looking over some papers which littered the writing-desk at which he sat. He was a rather thin, dark man, not ill-looking, but nervous and jerky in his movements. He wore a black cloth skull-cap upon his head, and Jack saw a fine wig of black hair hanging behind the door.

He turned his head and looked over his shoulder at Jack as he came into the room. “Well,” he said in a sharp, quick voice, “what d’ ye want?”

“Why, master,” said Jack, “Captain Teach hath sent me up with this note for you, sir.”

“O! he did, did he? Well, let me have it.” He leaned back in his chair and reached out for the note, which Jack handed to him and which he tore open quickly and sharply. Jack noticed how the letter trembled in his nervous hand as he held it. He watched his eyes as they traveled down the page until they reached the bottom, and then as he turned over the paper to make sure that there was nothing upon the other side. “Very well,” he said when he had ended; “tell the captain I’ll be there

to-morrow."

"Yes, sir," said Jack, lingering for a moment. "Is that all?"

"That's all. I'll be down to-morrow night."

"Yes, sir," said Jack again.

Mr. Knight came down to the pirate's house at the appointed time, and Captain Teach stood at the door watching him as he came up the crooked path. The pirate had been playing upon his guitar, and he now stood holding it under his arm as Mr. Knight approached, limping slightly and walking with a cane. The evening was warm, and he carried his hat under his arm. Jack stood around the end of the house, also looking at the colonial secretary as he approached. "How d' ye do, captain?" said Mr. Knight, as soon as he had come near enough.

"Why, I'm well enough," said Blackbeard, surlily, taking his pipe out of his mouth to reply. "Hands and Dred are both here, and we've been waiting for you for some time now. Come in."

He led the way into the room, where the two of whom he had spoken were sitting smoking and drinking rum and water in the dusk. Mr. Knight nodded to the others. "Well, captain," he said as he took his seat and laid his hat and cane upon the table, "what's this business you want to see me about? What's this I hear about a young lady you've brought down from Virginia?"

"Why," said Captain Teach, "I reckon 'tis just about as you've heard it." He had laid aside his guitar, and had gone to the mantel-shelf and was striking a flint and steel to light the candle. "I brought a young lady down with me from Virginia—she's staying here with my wife."

"Well, what's the business you have with me?"

"I'll tell you that in a minute as soon as I get this bloody candle lighted. I'll murder that woman some day. This is the third time she's left the punk out to get wet. There

it comes!" He blew the spark into blaze and lit the candle. "Now, Mr. Secretary Knight," he said, "I'll tell you just exactly what the business is we want of you and just what we've been doing. Do you know of Colonel Birchall Parker?"

"Why, to be sure I do," said Mr. Knight. "Why do you ask such a thing as that?"

"Well, I've carried his daughter off from Virginia; we've got her here in this house."

Mr. Knight sat quite still for a long time. "Then 'tis just as I heard this morning," he said at last, "but indeed I couldn't believe it, nor how you would dare do such a thing as to carry off Colonel Birchall Parker's daughter. 'Tis the maddest thing I ever heard tell of in all my life, and if I was you I'd send the young lady back just as soon as ever I could."

"Why, then, Mr. Secretary," said Captain Teach, "I'm much beholden to you for advice, but just you listen to me for a little, will you? and give me time to say my say before you advise me. I'm not going to send her back just now, in spite of your advice, nor until her father pays a good round sum to get her back." And then, after a little pause, during which he filled his pipe,—"I tell you what 'tis, Mr. Secretary Knight, there be a greater one than you or me mixed up in this here business—no less a one, if you will believe me, than Mr. Dick Parker."

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Knight, "Mr. Richard Parker? What d' ye mean by that?"

"Why, I just mean what I say," said Captain Teach. "Mr. Parker is the one man in this, and we manage it as his agents. So you may see for yourself we're not so likely to come to any harm as ye might think, for if we come to any harm it drags him along with us. 'Twas his plan and by his information that the young lady was taken—and, more than that, his plan is that you shall write to him as though to give him the first information of her being here in the keep of the Pamlico Pirates. Then he's to go to Colonel Parker and make the best bargain he can to have her redeemed."

"Stop a bit, captain!" interrupted Mr. Knight. "You're going all too fast in this

matter. You seem to be pleased to count on me in this business without asking me anything about it. I tell you plain that this is too serious a thing for me to tamper with. Why, d'ye think I'm such a villain as to trade in such business as this at the risk of my neck?"

"Well," said the pirate captain, "that is just as you choose, Mr. Secretary. But I don't see that you need bring yourself into any danger at all. You won't appear in it as a principal in any way. 'Tis I and those with me," sweeping his hands toward Hands and Dred, "who really take all the risk; and I take it even though I know that if anything should happen you'd throw us overboard without waiting a second moment to think about it."

Mr. Knight sat in thoughtful silence for a while. "What money is there in this for you?" said he, looking up sharply.

"That I don't know, neither," said the other. "Mr. Parker will manage that at t'other end, and methinks we can trust him to squeeze out all there is in it."

"What does he expect for his share in this precious conspiracy?" the secretary asked after a while of silent thought.

"Why," said the other, "there he drives a mightily hard bargain—he demands a half of all for his share, and he will not take a farthing less."

Mr. Knight whistled to himself. "Well," he said, "he does indeed drive hard at you, captain. But, after all, I do not know that I can be easier upon you; for if I go into this business it'll be upon the same stand that Mr. Parker takes: I will have the half that is left after he has taken his half."

Captain Teach burst out laughing. "Why, ye bloody leech!" he roared, "what d' ye mean by saying such a thing as that to me? 'Tis one thing for Mr. Parker to make his terms, and 'tis another thing for you to do it: ye pistareen. I tell you what shall be your share of it: I shall have my third first of all, and you shall stand in for your share with Hands and Morton and Dred."

Mr. Knight shook his head. “Very well, then,” said the pirate captain, harshly, pushing back his chair and rising as he spoke. “If you choose to throw away what may drop into your hands without any risk to yourself, you may do so and welcome. I’ll manage the business as best I can without you.”

“Stop a bit, captain,” said Mr. Knight. “You are too hasty by half. Tell me now, just what is it you want me to do in this affair?”

“Why,” said Captain Teach, “I have told you in part what I want you to do. ’Tis first of all to write a letter to Mr. Richard Parker, saying that you have certain information that the young lady, Colonel Parker’s daughter, is in the hands of certain pirates, and that they won’t give her up unless a ransom is paid for her. Ye may add also—as is the truth—that she appears to be in the way of falling sick if she isn’t taken away home pretty quick. Then, after you have writ your letter, you must hunt up a decent, respectable merchant-captain or master to take it up to Virginia and see that it is delivered into Mr. Richard Parker’s hands.”

Mr. Knight looked very serious. “But is the young lady really sick?” he asked.

“Well, I can’t truly say she is sick, but she’s not so well, neither.”

“And have you thought of what danger you’d be in if she was to die on your hands?”

“Yes, I have,” said the other, “and so you needn’t waste any more words about it. Tell me, will you take in with this business, or will you not?”

“Humph!” said Mr. Knight, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. He sat for a long time looking broodingly at the flickering candle-light. “There’s Nat Jackson hath gone up the river for a cargo of wood shingles. He’s looked for back here on Friday: ’tis like enough he would be your man to take the letter if I go into this business.”

“I dare say he’ll do well enough,” said Captain Teach, impatiently. “But tell me, what is your answer, Mr. Secretary? Will you go into the business or not?”

“I’ll tell you to-morrow,” said Mr. Knight. “If I go into it I’ll send you a draft of the

letter to Mr. Parker. Will that suit you?”

“Why,” said the other, sullenly, “’twill have to suit; but methinks you might give a plain yes or no without so much beating around the bush, or taking so much time to think it over.”

Jack and the pirate’s wife sat in the kitchen. They could hear the grumble of talk from the room beyond. “I tell you what ’tis,” said Jack, breaking the silence, “to my mind the young lady don’t look anything like so well as when I saw her in Virginia.”

“I don’t know why she’d be sick,” said the woman. “We give her good enough victuals to eat and she don’t lack for company. I’m sure I sat with her nigh all afternoon, and she answered me pretty enough when I talked to her.”

By and by they heard the party in the other room break up and Mr. Knight’s parting words as he left the house. Presently Dred came into the kitchen; he looked dull and heavy-eyed. “I reckon I must ‘a’ caught the fever,” he said; “my head beats fit to split, and I’m that hot I’m all afire. D’ye have any spirits of bark here, mistress?”

The pirate’s wife got up and went to the closet and brought out a bottle of decoction of bitter bark from which she poured a large dose into a teacup. Dred drank it off at a gulp, making a hideous, wry face. Then he spat and wiped his hand across his mouth.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN NORTH CAROLINA—IN VIRGINIA

THREE or four days after Mr. Knight’s interview with the pirates, Captain Jackson, of whom the colonial secretary had spoken as having gone up the river for a cargo of wood shingles, stopped at Bath Town on his way to Baltimore, and Mr. Knight sent a note to Blackbeard, telling him that he would bring the coasting captain down that same evening. Dred was just then sick in bed with the earlier stages of his fever, so

that only the pirate captain himself and Hands, the master, were left to meet the secretary and the Baltimore skipper.

It was after dusk when Mr. Knight and the Baltimore man came down from the town to the pirate's house. The boat in which they arrived was rowed by two white men of the crew of the "Eliza Boydell," the coasting schooner. "Where's your master, boy?" said Mr. Knight to Jack, who stood at the landing, watching their approach.

"He's over aboard the sloop," said Jack. "He went there an hour or more ago, and left word you were to go over there when you came."

Mr. Knight looked displeased. "I fear he'll be drinking," he said to Captain Jackson, "and as like as not be in one of his devil's humors. 'Tis so he ever appears to be when he hath some venture of especial risk in hand. I've a mind to go back to the town again, and come another day."

"I'm not afraid of him," Jack heard Captain Jackson say. "I've seen him often enough to know him well, and I've seen him in his liquor and I've seen him sober;" and then the boat rowed away from the landing toward the sloop.

No one met Mr. Knight and Captain Jackson as the two came aboard the pirate vessel. Even before they reached the cabin hatchway they could smell the fumes of liquor which filled the space below. It was as Mr. Knight had apprehended—the captain and his master had been drinking. The visitors found the cabin lit by the light of a single candle, and a squat bottle of rum stood on the table, from which both pirates were tippling freely. As the two visitors entered, Hands was in the act of filling his pipe with uncertain, tipsy fingers, and Captain Teach sat leaning upon the table, the lean, brown fingers of his hands locked around his glass. He glowered gloomingly at the two visitors, but he offered them no word of welcome. "Well, captain," said Mr. Knight, "d'ye see, I fetched our friend, Captain Jackson. And I've fetched the letter I've writ to our friend in Virginia for you to see." Captain Teach still looked gloomily from under his brows at his visitors, without vouchsafing any

answer.

“I’m glad to see you, captain,” said Captain Jackson. “’Tis a long while since we met, and you be looking hale and well.”

Captain Teach turned his dull, heavy eyes upon the speaker, but still he did not say anything.

“Oh, he’s well enough, he is,” said Hands, thickly. “He’s never sick—sick, he ain’t.” He tilted the bowl of his pipe uncertainly against the candle flame, at first not quite hitting the object at which he aimed. “Well, when he dies,” said Hands, with a wink toward Mr. Knight, “the devil dies, he does, and then honest—honest men all go to h—ic—heaven.”

Captain Teach did not look at his sailing-master. “You be still,” he growled. “You don’t know what you’re saying—you don’t. You’re in liquor, you are.”

Hands winked tipsily at the visitors, as though what the other said was a great joke. Mr. Knight stood looking uncertainly from one to the other. “Perhaps we’d better come some other time,” he said; “I don’t think you choose to talk about this business now, captain.”

“What d’ye mean?” growled the pirate. “D’ye mean to say I’m drunk, ye villain?” and he turned his heavy-eyed glare at the secretary.

“Why, no,” said Mr. Knight, soothingly, “I don’t mean to say you’re drunk, captain. Far be it from me to say that. I only mean to say that maybe ’twould suit you better to have us come another time, as I see you’re in the humor of having some sport to-night, and maybe don’t choose to talk business.”

“I know what you mean to say,” said the pirate captain, moodily. “You mean to say that I’m drunk. Maybe I’m drunk, but I’m sober enough to know what I’m at yet.” He was fumbling in his coat pocket as he spoke, and as he ended, he brought out a pistol of the sort called a dag or dragon—a short, stubby weapon with a brass barrel. “I’m just as steady as a rock,” said he, “and I could snuff that candle easy enough

without putting out the light." He aimed his pistol, as he spoke, toward the candle, shutting one eye. Captain Jackson was directly in range upon the other side of the table, and he ducked down like a flash, crouching beneath the edge of the board. "Hold hard, captain," he cried, in a muffled voice. "Take care what you're at! You'll do somebody a harm the next thing."

Captain Teach still aimed the weapon for a few seconds of breathless hush. Mr. Knight waited tensely for the report of the pistol, but it did not come, and presently the captain lowered the hammer and slipped it back again in his pocket. "Come, come, captain," said Captain Jackson, "don't try any more jokes of that kind." He smoothed down his hair with the palm of his hand, grinning uneasily as he did so.

"Come, captain," said Mr. Knight, "you mustn't act so, indeed you mustn't. If we're to talk business we must be serious about it and not go playing with pistols to shoot somebody dead, maybe, before we begin upon whatever we have to do. Our friend Captain Jackson here sails to-morrow morning, wind and weather permitting, and here's the letter he's to take up to Mr. Parker. He understands what we're about, and he undertakes to take the letter up for five pounds."

"Why, you black-hearted son of a sea-cook!" Captain Blackbeard roared at the other captain. "What d'ye mean by asking five pounds to take a bit of paper like that up to Virginia?" He glowered at his visitor for a moment or two, and the skipper laughed uneasily. "Ye call yourself an honest man, do ye? Ay, an honest man that'll rob a thief and say 'twas not him took it first. Let me see the letter," said he, reaching out his hand to Mr. Knight.

Mr. Knight handed him the letter, and the pirate captain drew the candle over toward him and read it slowly and deliberately. "Well," he said, as he folded it, "I dare say 'tis good enough."

"Trust the captain to tell what's what," said Hands, taking the pipe out of his mouth as he spoke. "He—he can read a let—ter as well as the betht o'—the best o' ye." He

held the pipe for a while, looking uncertainly into the bowl, and then thrust his finger into it.

“You hold your noise, Hands,” said Captain Teach; “you’re in your liquor, and not fit to talk.”

“Well, captain,” said Captain Jackson, “I’ll take the letter for five pounds; but I won’t take it for a farthing less. D’ye see, I run a risk in doing it, for I’m an honest man—I am, and nobody hath yet said that black is the white of my eye. And if I’m to run the risk of losing my honesty by dealing with pirates,—if I may be so bold as for to say so,—why, five pounds is little enough to ask for it.”

Captain Teach stared at him for awhile in silence without replying. “Here, captain,” he said, “fill a glass for yourself,” and he pushed the bottle and a glass across the table toward his visitor. “Fill your glass, Mr. Secretary. You villain!”—to Captain Jackson—“you’re worse than any of us to play you’re decent and honest, and to be a thief upon pirates.”

“Why, captain,” said Mr. Knight, “I believe I don’t choose to drink anything to-night.”

“By heaven! you shall drink,” said Captain Teach, scowling at him, and then Mr. Knight reluctantly filled his glass. But he kept a keen eye upon the pirate captain, and presently, as he more than expected, he saw him begin fumbling again in the pockets in which he carried his pistols. And then, as he still watched, he was certain he saw the glint of the light upon the barrel. Whether he was right or wrong, he did not care to risk the chance; neither did he choose to say anything of what he saw, fearing lest he might precipitate some desperate drunken act, and perhaps call the pirate’s anger down upon himself.

“Wait a bit,” he said, “I want to go up on deck a minute—I’ll be down again by and by,” and he edged his way out along the bench.

Captain Teach watched him gloomily as he left the cabin, and after his legs had

disappeared through the companion-way he still sat staring for a while out of the open scuttle. Then he turned and looked gloweringly at the other two. Hands was trying to explain to the skipper how he had once been an honest man himself. “Yes, sir,” he was saying, “I’d have no more to do with such bloody villains as these here be—than—than—but what was an honest man to do for hisself?”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Captain Jackson. “Where’s Mr. Knight gone?” he asked.

Hands looked about, as though observing for the first time that he was not there. “Why, I don’t know,” he said. “Mr. Knight—where be Mr. Knight?” As the sailing-master spoke, Blackbeard leaned a little forward, and suddenly blew out the light of the candle, leaving the cabin in utter darkness. The next moment there came a double dull, stunning report from beneath the table, and Hands yelled out in instant echo: “O Lord! I’m shot!”

Captain Jackson sat for a moment, dazed by the suddenness of that which had happened. Then he scrambled desperately out along the bench upon which he sat, and ran clattering up on the deck. “What’s the matter?” cried Mr. Knight, who had turned at the sound of the pistol-shots. “What’s happened?”

“Oh!” panted Captain Jackson, breathlessly, “I don’t believe that’s a man; I believe it’s a devil. He blew out the light and shot his pistols under the table. He’s shot Hands.”

The two stood listening for a moment—there was perfect silence below, only for the now regular groaning of the wounded man. “Here, fetch that lantern,” Mr. Knight called out. “There’s somebody shot down in the cabin.”

The men from the boat came scrambling over the edge of the sloop, one of them bringing the lantern with him.

Captain Jackson took the light from him and went to the open companion-way, where he held it for a while, looking down into the yawning darkness beneath. He hesitated for a long time before venturing down. “Go on,” said Mr. Knight. “Why

don’t you go on? He’s shot off both his pistols and he hath no more to shoot now.”

“Why, to be sure,” said Captain Jackson, “I don’t like to venture down into a pit with such a man as that. There’s no knowing what he’ll do.”

“He can’t do any more harm,” urged Mr. Knight. “He hath shot his pistols now, and that’s all there is of it.”

“Oh! oh!” groaned the wounded man from out of the darkness.

Finally, after a great deal of hesitation, Captain Jackson went slowly and reluctantly down below. Mr. Knight waited for a moment, and, as nothing happened, he followed after, and the two sailors who had come aboard followed after him. The close space was filled with the pungent mist of gunpowder smoke. By the light of the lantern they saw that Captain Teach was sitting just where he had sat all the evening, gloomy and moody. One of the empty pistols lay upon the table beside him, and the other he must have thrust back again into his pocket. Hands was leaning over with his face lying upon the table; it was ghastly white, and there were drops of sweat upon his forehead. “Oh!” he groaned, “O—h!” He was holding one of his legs with both his hands under the table.

“Where are you hurt?” said Mr. Knight.

“Oh!” groaned Hands, “I’m shot through the knee.”

“Lookee, captain,” said Mr. Knight, “you’ve done enough harm for to-night. D’ye mean any more mischief, or do you not?”

Captain Blackbeard looked heavily at him, swaying his head from side to side like an angry bull. “Why, how can I do any more mischief?” he said. “Don’t you see that both pistols are empty? If I had another I wouldn’t swear that I wouldn’t blow both your lives out.”

“Let’s see where you’re hurt,” said Captain Jackson to Hands. “Can you walk any?”

“No,” groaned Hands. “Ah—h!” he cried more shrilly and quaveringly as Captain

Jackson took him by the arm and tried to move him. “Let me alone—let me alone!”

“You’ve got to get out of here somehow,” said Captain Jackson. “Come here, Jake—Ned!” he called out to the two sailors who stood close to the foot of the companion-ladder. “Here, help me get this man out!”

With a great deal of groaning and dragging and shuffling of feet they finally dragged Hands out from behind the table. The blood was flowing down from his knee, and his stocking was soaked with it. Captain Teach sat gloomily looking on, without moving from his place or saying anything.

“What did ye shoot the man for, anyhow?” said Mr. Knight, as he stood over the wounded Hands, who now sat on the floor holding his shattered leg with both hands, swaying back and forth and groaning.

Captain Blackbeard looked at him for a moment or two without replying. “If I don’t shoot one of them now and then,” said he, thickly, “they’ll forget who I be.”

The letter reached Mr. Richard Parker some two weeks later at Marlborough, where he was then staying. The great house was full of that subdued bustle that speaks so plainly of illness. It was Colonel Parker. In the shock and despair that followed the abduction of his daughter, the gout had seized him again, and since then the doctor had been in the house all the time. “How is my brother this morning?” Mr. Richard Parker had asked of him.

“Why, sir, I see but very little change,” said the doctor.

“Yes, I know that; but can’t you tell me whether the little change is for the better or worse?”

“Why, Mr. Parker, sir, ’tis not for the worse.”

“Then it is for the better?”

“No, I do not say that, either, sir.”

“Well, what do you say, then?” said Mr. Parker, his handsome face frowning.

“Why, sir, I can only say that there is little change. His honor does not suffer so much, but the gout still clings to his stomach, and is not to be driven out.”

It was some little time after the doctor had so spoken that Mr. Knight’s letter was given to Mr. Parker. He had eaten his breakfast alone, and the plate and broken pieces of food still lay spread before him as he read and re-read the note. He sat perfectly still, without a shade of change passing over his handsome face. “’Tis indeed true,” said part of the letter, “that the young lady appears to be really ill, and if her father does not presently redeem her out of their hands she may, indeed, fall into a decline;” and then was added, in a postscript to the passage, “This is, I assure you, indeed the truth;” and the words were underscored.

There was no change upon his face when he read the passage, but he sat thinking, thinking, thinking, holding the open letter in his hand, his gaze turned, as it were, inward upon himself. Should she die, what then? There could be no doubt as to how it would affect him if father and daughter should both die. By his father’s will, the Parker estate that had been left to his brother would come to him in the event of the other’s dying without heirs. One of the servants came into the room with a dish of tea. Mr. Parker looked heavily and coldly at him, his handsome face still impassive and expressionless. “I can do nothing with my brother now,” he was saying to himself as he looked at the servant; “he is too ill to be troubled with such matters. Yes, Nelly will have to take her chances until Birchall is well enough for me to talk to him. I meant her no harm, and if she falls sick and dies, ’tis a chance that may happen to any of us.”

CHAPTER XXIX

AN EXPEDITION

BLACKBEARD had been away from home for some days in Bath Town—a longer stay than he commonly made. Meantime Jack was the only hale man left about the

place. He and Dred had been turned out of their beds to make way for Hands, who had been brought ashore to the house from the sloop when he was shot through the leg. That had been four or five weeks before, and since then Jack and Dred had slept in the kitchen. It was very hard upon Dred, who was weak and sick with the fever.

Then one morning the pirate captain suddenly returned from the town.

Jack and Betty Teach were at breakfast in the kitchen, and Dred lay upon a bench, his head upon a coat rolled into a pillow.

“You’d better come and try to eat something,” said Betty Teach. “I do believe if you try to eat a bit you could eat, and to my mind you’d be the better for it.” Dred shook his head weakly without opening his eyes. Jack helped himself to a piece of bacon and a large yellow yam. “Now, do come and eat a bit,” urged the woman.

“I don’t want anything to eat,” said Dred, irritably. “I wish you’d let me alone.” He opened his eyes for a brief moment and then closed them again.

“Well,” said Betty, “you needn’t snap a body’s head off. I only ask you to eat for your own good—if you don’t choose to eat, why, don’t eat. You’ll be as testy as Hands by and by—and to be sure, I never saw anybody like he is with his sore leg. You’d think he was the only man in the world who had ever been shot, the way he do go on.”

“‘Twas a pretty bad hurt,” said Jack, with his mouth full, “and that’s the truth. ’Tis a wonder to me how he did not lose his leg. ’Tis an awful-looking place.” Dred listened with his eyes closed.

Just then the door opened and the captain came in, and then they ceased speaking. He looked very glum and preoccupied. Dred opened his eyes where he lay and looked heavily at him. The captain did not notice any of the three, but went to the row of pegs against the wall and hung up his hat, and then picked up a chair and brought it over to the table. “Have you had your breakfast yet, Ned?” his wife asked.

“No,” he said, briefly. He sat quite impassively as she bustlingly fetched him a plate

and a knife and fork. “Where’s the case bottle?” he asked, without looking up.

“I’ll fetch it to you,” she said, and she hurried to the closet and brought out the squat bottle and set it beside him. He poured out a large dram for himself and then turned suddenly to Dred.

“Chris,” he said, “I got some news from Charleston last night. Jim Johnson’s come on, and he says that a packet to Boston in Massachusetts was about starting three or four days after he left. There’s a big prize in it, I do believe, and I’ve sent word down to the meet that we are to be off as soon as may be. I’m going to run down to-night.”

Jack sat listening intently. He did not quite understand what was meant, and he was very much interested to comprehend. He could gather that the pirate was going away, seemingly on an expedition of some sort, and he began wondering if he was to be taken along. Again Dred had opened his eyes and was lying looking at the pirate captain, who, upon his part, regarded the sick man for a steadfast moment or two without speaking. “D’ye think ye can go along?” said Blackbeard presently.

“Why, no,” said Dred weakly, “you may see for yourself that I can’t go along. How could I go along? Why, I be a bedrid man.”

The captain stared almost angrily at him. “I believe you could go along,” said he, “if you’d have the spirit to try. Ye lie here all day till you get that full of the vapors that I don’t believe you’ll ever be fit to get up at all. Don’t you think you could try?” Dred shook his head. “D’ye mean to say that you won’t even make a try to go along? D’ye mean that because you’re a little bit sick you choose to give up your share in the venture that’ll maybe make the fortune of us all?”

“I can’t help it,” said Dred, and then he groaned. “You may see for yourself that I’m not fit for anything. I wouldn’t do any good, and ’twould only cripple you to have a sick man aboard.”

“But how am I to get along without you?” said Blackbeard, savagely, “that’s what I

want to know. There's Hands in bed with his broken knee, and you down with the fever, and only Morton and me to run everything aboard the two sloops. For they do say that the packet's armed and we'll have to take both sloops."

Jack had listened with a keener and keener interest. He felt that he must know just what all the talk meant. "Where are you going, captain?" he said. "What are you going to do?"

The pirate turned a lowering look upon him. "You mind your own business and don't you concern youself with what don't concern you," he said. Then he added, "Wherever we're going, you're not going along, and you may rest certain of that. You've got to stay at home here with Betty, for she can't get along with the girl and two sick men to look after."

"He means he's going on a cruise, Jack," said Dred from the bench. "They're going to cruise outside to stop the Charleston packet."

"I don't see," said Jack to the pirate captain, "that I'm any better off here than I was up in Virginia. I had to serve Mr. Parker there and I have to slave for you here without getting anything for it."

Blackbeard glowered heavily at him for a few moments without speaking. "If ye like," he said, "I'll send ye back to Virginia to your master. I dare say he'd be glad enough to get you back again." And then Jack did not venture to say anything more. "Somebody'll have to stay to look after all these sick people," Blackbeard continued, "and why not you as well as another?"

The pirate's wife had left the table and was busy getting some food together on a pewter platter. "You take this up-stairs to the young lady, Jack," she said, "while I get something for Hands to eat. I never see such trouble in all my life as the three of 'em make together—the young lady, and Hands, and Chris Dred here."

"When d'ye sail!" Dred asked of the pirate captain, and Jack lingered, with the plate in his hand, to hear the answer.

“Why, just as soon as we can get the men together. The longer we leave it the less chance we’ll have of coming across the packet.” Jack waited a little while longer, but Blackbeard had fallen to at his breakfast, and he saw that no more was to be said just then, so he went up-stairs with the food, his feet clattering noisily as he ascended the dark, narrow stairway.

The young lady was sitting by the window, leaning her elbow upon the sill. Jack set the platter of food upon the table and laid the iron knife and two-pronged fork beside it. She had by this time become well acquainted with him and the other members of the pirate’s household. She would often come down-stairs when Blackbeard was away from home, and would sit in the kitchen talking with them, sometimes even laughing at what was said, and, for the time, appearing almost cheerful in spite of her captivity. Several times Jack and Betty Teach had taken her for a walk of an evening down the shore and even around the point in the direction of Trivett’s plantation house. She looked toward him now as he entered and then turned listlessly to the window again. She was very thin and white, and she wore an air of dejection that was now become habitual with her. “Do you know whether they have heard anything from Virginia to-day?” she asked.

“I don’t believe they have,” said Jack. “At least I didn’t hear Captain Teach say anything of the sort. Maybe by the time he comes back there’ll be a letter.”

“Comes back? Is he, then, going away?”

“Ay,” said Jack. “He’s going off on an expedition that’ll maybe take him two or three weeks.”

“An expedition?” she said. She looked at Jack as though wondering what he meant, but she did not inquire any further. “A matter of two or three weeks,” she repeated, almost despairingly. “I suppose, then, if a letter should come I would have to wait all that time until Captain Teach comes back again?”

“And cannot you, then, have patience to wait for a week or so, who have been here

now a month?" said Jack.

Just then came the sound of the pirate captain's heavy tread ascending the stairs.

"There he is, now," said Jack, "and I've got to go."

"Won't you ask him if he's heard anything from Virginia yet?"

"Why, mistress, it won't be of any use for me to ask him; he won't give me any satisfaction," said Jack; and then he added,—"but I will if you want me to."

Blackbeard went along the low, dark passageway and into the room where Hands lay, and Jack followed him. "Phew!" said the pirate captain, and he went across the room and opened the window. Hands, unconscious of the heavy, fetid smell of the sick-room, was sitting propped up in bed with a pillow, smoking a pipe of tobacco. He was very restless and uneasy, and had evidently heard some words of the pirate's talk with Dred down-stairs. "Well, what's ado now?" he asked.

"Why," said Blackbeard, "we're off on a cruise."

"Off on a cruise?" said Hands.

"Yes," said Blackbeard, as he sat himself down on the edge of the bed, "I was up in town last night when Jim Johnson came up. He'd just come back from Charleston and brought news of the Boston packet sailing. He says it was the talk there that there was a chist o' money aboard."

Hands laid aside his pipe of tobacco and began swearing with all his might. "What did ye mean, anyway," he said, "to shoot me wantonly through the knee?" He tried to move himself in the bed. "M-m-m!" he grunted, groaning. He clenched the fist upon which he rested, making a wry face as he shifted himself a little on the bed.

The pirate captain watched him curiously as he labored to move himself. "How do you feel to-day?" he asked.

"Oh! I feel pretty well," said Hands, groaning, "only when I try to move a bit. I reckon I'll never be able to use my leg agin to speak on."

Betty Teach came in with a platter of food. “What ha’ ye got there?” asked the sick man, craning his neck.

“A bit of pork and some potatoes,” she said.

“Potatoes and pork,” he growled. “’Tis always potatoes and pork, and nothing else.” She made no reply, but set the platter down upon the bed and stood watching him. “When do you sail?” asked Hands.

“As soon as we can,” said Blackbeard, briefly.

“The young lady wants to know if you’ve heard anything yet from Virginia,” said Jack.

The pirate looked scowlingly at him. “I’ll tell her when I hear anything,” he said shortly.

Blackbeard ate his dinner ashore, and it was some time afternoon before the sloop was ready to sail. Some half-dozen men had come up, during the morning, in a rowboat from somewhere down the sound. They had hoisted sail aboard the sloop, and now all was ready for departure. The clouds had blown away, and the autumn sun shone warm and strong. Dred had come down from the house to see the departure, and by and by Blackbeard appeared, carrying the guitar, which he handed very carefully into the boat before he himself stepped down into it. Dred and Jack stood on the edge of the landing, watching the rowboat as it pulled away from the wharf toward the sloop, the captain sitting in the stern. Two or three men were already hoisting the anchor, the click-clicking of the capstan sounding sharply across the water. The long gun in the bows pointed out ahead silently and grimly. Presently the small boat was alongside the sloop, and the captain scrambled over the rail, the others following. Still Jack and Dred stood on the end of the wharf, watching the sloop as the bow came slowly around. Then, the sail filling with the wind, it heeled heavily over, and with gathering speed swept sluggishly away from its moorings, leaving behind it a swelling wake, in which towed the yawl boat that had brought the

captain aboard. They watched it as it ran further and further out into the river, growing smaller and smaller in the distance, and then, when a great way off, coming about again. They watched it until, with the wind now astern, it slipped swiftly in behind the jutting point of swamp and was cut off by the intervening trees. The two stood inertly for a while in the strange silence that seemed to fall upon everything after all the bustle of the departure. The water lapped and splashed and gurgled against the wharf, and a flock of blue jays from the wet swamp on the other side of the creek begun suddenly screaming out their noisy, strident clamor. Presently Dred groaned. “I’m going back to the house,” he said. “I ain’t fit to be out, and that’s a fact. I never had a fever to lay me out like this. I’m going up to the house, and I ain’t going to come out ag’in till I’m fit to be out.”

CHAPTER XXX

THE ATTEMPT

IT was a chill and drizzly morning, five or six weeks after the pirates had gone off on their cruise; Jack had been out-of-doors to fetch in some firewood, and he now sat near the chimney-place, drying his coat before the crackling fire, holding out the shaggy garment, and watching it steam and smoke in the heat. Dred was lying stretched out on the bench with his eyes closed, though whether or not he was asleep Jack could not tell. His fever had left him, and he was now growing stronger every day. During his sickness he had grown into a habit of indolence, and he spent a great deal of his time lounging inertly thus upon the bench in the kitchen. The young lady had not been down that morning. Betty Teach was moving about up-stairs, and presently Jack, as he sat thus drying his coat, heard her tap on the door of Miss Eleanor Parker’s room; then, after an interval of waiting, tap again; then, after another interval, open the door and go into the room.

Suddenly there came the sound of her feet running—then of a window flung up.

Then she called out, “Dred! Dred!” Her voice was shrill with a sudden keen alarm, and Jack started up from where he sat, still holding his coat in his hand. His first thought was that something had happened to the young lady, and then, with a thrill, a second thought came to him, he knew not why, that maybe she was dead.

Dred raised himself upon his elbow as Betty Teach came running down-stairs. The next moment she burst into the kitchen. “O Dred!” she cried, her voice still high and keen with excitement, “she’s gone!”

“Gone!” said Dred, “who’s gone?” He asked the question, though he knew instantly whom she meant.

“The young lady!” cried Betty Teach, wringing her hands. “She’s run away. I went to her room just now, to see if she was up. I knocked, but she wouldn’t answer. Then I went in and I found she’d gone—there was her bed, as empty as could be.”

“Why,” said Jack, “I remember, now, I saw this morning that the door was unbolted, but I didn’t think anything of it then. She must just have opened it for herself and walked out.”

Neither Dred nor Betty Teach paid any attention to what he said. “O Dred!” cried Betty, “won’t you try to do something? Won’t you come up-stairs, and see for yourself?” She had begun to weep, now, and was wiping the tears from her face with her apron. “Oh,” she wept, “what will Ned say? He’ll kill me if he finds this out.”

“Well, well,” said Dred, “’tis no use making such a hubbub about it. That won’t do any good. Let’s go up and take a look at her room. She can’t be far away.” He arose heavily and laboriously from the bench as he spoke, and led the way up-stairs to the young lady’s room. He went to the bed and laid his hand upon it. “Ay,” he said, “she’s gone sure enough, and what’s more, she’s been gone some time, for the bed’s dead cold.” He looked about the room as he spoke. “Why, look yonder!” he cried out; “the pore young thing ain’t even took her shoes with her. I dare say she was afeard of making a noise, and so she’s gone off without ‘em—gone in her

stocking-feet, and on this cold, wet day, too. Have you told Hands yet?" he asked, turning to the pirate's wife.

"No, I haven't," she said.

"Then come along and let's tell him, and see what he has to say about it."

As they went along the passageway Betty Teach continued wringing her hands: "Oh, lacky, lacky me!" she wailed. "What'll Ned say when he finds this out? He's like enough to be back at any time, now, and he'll kill me, he will, if he finds out we've let her get away."

"Well, he don't know anything about it as yet," said Dred, roughly, "and till he does, 'tis no use crying for it."

Hands was still bedridden with his broken knee. As Dred, followed by Jack and Betty Teach, entered the room, they found him lying propped with his elbow on the pillow, and his head on his hand, smoking the pipe that now seemed never to leave his lips. He had heard the stir and the sound of voices below, and almost as soon as Dred opened the door he asked what was the ado. Dred told him, and he listened, sucking every now and then at his pipe, nodding his head at intervals, as though he had already surmised what had occurred. "In her stocking-feet!" he repeated, as Dred concluded. "Well, well! to be sure! In her stocking-feet! Why, then, she can't go far."

"In course not," said Dred.

"I don't know why she ran away," cried Betty Teach. "She didn't make no sign of running away last night. I took her supper up to her, and she talked for a long while with me. She asked me then if there'd been any news from Virginia, and then she wondered whether Ned couldn't take her back without waiting to hear news, but she didn't seem to think anything of running away."

They listened to her with a sort of helpless silence as she spoke.

“Well,” repeated Hands, after a while, “she can’t have gone far in her stocking-feet. I tell you what ’tis, Dred, I believe she be gone up toward the town. ’Tis most likely she’d think first of going there. If she didn’t go there she’d go down to Jack Trivett’s or Jim Dobbs’s, they being the nighest houses t’other way. And then, if she goes that way, why they knows all about her, and they’ll send her back or send word back. If she goes up toward the town she can’t go no furder than the little swamp. If I was you, I’d go up that there way on the chance of finding her.”

Dred sat for a while on the edge of the bed in thoughtful silence. “Well,” he said, “I reckon you be about right, and I’d better go and look for her.” Then he groaned. “This be ill weather for a fever-struck man to be out in,” he said, “but summat’s got to be done. If for no other reason, we can’t let the pore young lady stay out to be soaked in the rain. You’ll have to go with me, Jack.”

The misty drizzle had changed to a fine, thin rain when Jack and Dred started out upon their quest. They walked along together, side by side, Dred lagging somewhat with the dregs of his weakness. “We’ll strike along the shore,” he said, panting a little as he walked, “and then, from the mouth of the branch, we’ll beat up along the edge of the swamp. If we don’t find her ag’in’ we get up as far as the cross branch, we’ll skirt back into the country and see if she’s at Dobbs’s or Trivett’s plantation-houses. As for going to the town, why, what Hands says is true enough; she couldn’t cross the swamp with her shoes on, let alone in her stocking-feet.”

Jack’s every faculty was intent upon the search, but, by a sort of external consciousness, he sensed and perceived his surroundings with a singular clearness. The bank dipped down rather sharply toward a narrow strip of swamp, threaded midway by a little sluggish, lake-like stream of water. Oaks and cypress-trees grew up from the soft, spongy soil. The boles of the trees were green with moss, and here and there long streamers of gray moss hung from the branches. Fallen trees, partly covered with moss, partly buried in the swampy soil, stretched out gaunt,

lichen-covered branches like withered arms, also draped with gray hanging filaments. Here or there little pools of transparent, coffee-colored water caught in reflection a fragment of the gray sky through the leaves overhead, and gleamed each like a spot of silver in the setting of dusky browns of the surrounding swamp.

Dred walked upon the border of the drier land, Jack closer down, along the edge of the swamp. His feet sucked and sopped in the soft, wet earth, and now and then he leaped from a mossy root to a hummock of earth, from a hummock of earth to a mossy root. The wet wind rushed and soughed overhead through the leaves, and then a fine, showery spray would fall from above, powdering his rough coat with particles of moisture. The air was full of a rank, damp, earthy smell.

“D’ye keep a sharp lookout,” called Dred to him.

“Ay, ay,” answered Jack.

They again went on for a little distance without speaking. “I’m a-going to stop awhile, till I light my pipe,” Dred called out presently; “the damp seems to get into my nose; ’tis like a lump of ice.” He had filled his pipe with tobacco, and now he squatted down and began striking his flint and steel while Jack went on forward through the swamp.

He had gone, perhaps, thirty or forty paces when he suddenly caught sight of a little heap of wet and sodden clothes that lay upon the ground, partly hidden by the great ribbed roots of a cypress-tree. It looked like some cast-off clothing that had been thrown away in the swamp. He wondered dully for a moment how it came there, and then, with a sudden start—almost a shock—realized what it must be. He hurried forward, the branches and roots hidden by the mossy earth crackling beneath his feet. “Dred!” he called out, “Dred—come here, Dred!”

“Where away!” called Dred, his voice sounding resonantly through the hollow woods.

“Here!” answered Jack, “come along!”

The next moment he came around the foot of a cypress-tree, and found himself looking down at the fugitive—almost with a second shock at finding what he had expected.

She did not move. Her face was very white, and she looked up at him with her large, dark eyes as he stood looking down at her. A shudder passed over her, and then presently another. She said nothing, nor did he say anything to her. Her skirts were soaked and muddy with the swamp water through which she must have tried to drag herself. She sat with her feet doubled under her, crouched together. Her hair was disheveled, one dark, cloudy lock falling down across her forehead. Somehow Jack could not bear to look at her any longer; then he walked slowly away toward Dred, who now came hurrying up to where he was. “Where is she?” said Dred to Jack when the two met.

“Over yonder,” said Jack, pointing toward the tree. He was profoundly stirred by what he had seen. She had not looked like herself. She had looked like some forlorn, hunted animal. When Jack came back with Dred they found her still sitting in the same place, just as he had left her. Dred stood looking down at her for a moment or two. Perhaps he also felt something of that which had so moved Jack. Then he stooped and laid his hand upon her shoulder. “You must come back with us, mistress,” he said. “You shouldn’t ha’ tried to run away; indeed, you shouldn’t. How long have you been out here?”

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“THEY FOUND HER STILL SITTING IN THE SAME PLACE.”

Her lips moved, but she could not speak at first. “I don’t know,” said she presently, in a low, dull voice. “A long time, I think. I wanted to get away, but I couldn’t get through the swamp; then I was afraid to go back again.” She put her hand up to her eyes nervously, and pressed it there, and her lips began to quiver and writhe. And again she shuddered, as though with the cold.

“In course you couldn’t,” said Dred, soothingly, “and indeed you shouldn’t ha’ tried, mistress. ’Tis enough to kill the likes of you to be out in this sort of weather, and in your stocking-feet. There, don’t you take on so, mistress. Come, come, don’t cry no more. You come back to the house with us, and get some dry clothes on you, and you’ll feel all well again. Why, she’s cold to the marrow,” he said, as he helped her to rise. “Lend her your coat, Jack.”

Jack instantly began stripping off his coat, eager to do something to show his sympathy. She made no resistance, but stood with her hands pressed to her eyes as Jack put the coat over her shoulders and buttoned it under her chin.

Betty Teach opened the door and stood waiting as they came up the pathway to the house. “You’ve found her, have you?” she said, and she trembled visibly with joy. “Oh! what would Ned say if he was to find all this here out?”

“Why, he needn’t know anything about it,” said Dred, roughly, as he and Jack assisted the young lady into the house. “Just you say nothing about it to the captain, you too—d’ye hear, Jack? I’ll see Hands myself and ask him that he don’t say anything.”

Jack had walked all the way back from the swamp in his shirt-sleeves. He was damp and chilled with the fine rain, and he sat himself close to the fire, and began warming his hands, hardly knowing that he was doing so. He had been most profoundly moved by what he had seen, and his mind was full of thinking about it. He was glad that he was wet with the rain for her sake. Presently Betty Teach returned from taking the young lady to her room, and he roused himself from his thoughts to hear the pirate’s wife tell Dred that she had put her to bed. “You’d better take something warm up to her,” Dred said, and Betty Teach replied: “Yes, I will. D’ye think she’d drink a tumbler of grog if I mixed it?” “Ay, she’ll have to,” said Dred. “‘Twas enough to kill the likes of her to be setting out in the wet swamp like that.” Jack listened for the moment, and then his thoughts went back to her again. He

recalled how she had pressed her hands over her eyes, and how her lips had quivered and writhed as he buttoned the coat at her throat. His hand had touched her cold wet chin, and there was a strong pleasure in the recollection. Then he again aroused from his thoughts to hear Dred saying, “Take care what you’re about! You’re making it too strong,” and then he saw that Betty Teach was busy mixing a hot drink for the young lady, pouring rum from the pirate’s case-bottle into the hot water, and stirring it round and round.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE RETURN

IT was at the dead of the same night when Jack began to be disturbed in his sleep by iterated poundings upon the floor overhead. He heard the noise, and for some time it mingled in his dreams before he began recognizing it with his waking thoughts. He raised himself upon his elbow where he lay upon the floor. Dred, too, was sitting up, and there was the sound of stirring overhead. They could hear the patter of bare feet, and presently Betty Teach came running down-stairs. The next moment she burst into the room, clad in a blanket which she had wrapped around her. “The sloop’s come back!” she cried. “Hands heard ‘em, and he’s been pounding on the floor with his shoe for a deal of a while, but ye slept like ye were dead.”

Even before she had ended speaking, Jack was pulling on his shoes. He tied the thongs hurriedly and then slipped on his coat and hat. He looked up at the clock as he ran off out of the house, leaving Dred dressing more slowly and deliberately, and he saw that it was half-past twelve.

The rain was still driving in fine sheets, and there was the constant sound of running water, and every now and then the dropping and pattering of many drops from the trees as they bowed gustily before the wind. There were lights moving about down at the landing-place, and there were two other lights twinkling out over the harbor,

where the sloop evidently lay, the bright sparks reflected in long, restless trickles of light across the broken face of the water. Jack could see that there were figures moving about the landing wharf, and he started to go thither.

He was still dazed and bewildered with the sudden waking, and everything seemed to him to be singularly strange and unreal; what he saw took on the aspect of night-time, but things that had happened the day before mingling oddly with those of the present—the spitting of the fine, chill rain blending with a recollection of Miss Eleanor Parker as she crouched at the foot of the cypress-tree. A cock crew in the rainy night, and the sound was singularly pregnant of the wet darkness of the unborn day.

He had gone only a little distance when he suddenly met two dark figures walking up toward the house through the long, wet, rain-sodden grass. One was Captain Teach, the other was Morton, the gunner. They stopped abruptly as they met him, and the pirate captain asked him where he was going. Jack could tell by the sound of his voice that he was in one of his most savagely lowering humors. “I’m going down to the landing,” Jack answered.

“You’re going to do nothing of the sort,” said the pirate captain’s hoarse husky voice from out of the darkness. “You’re going straight back to the house again.” And then, as Jack hesitated a moment, “D’ye hear me?” he cried out, with a sudden savage truculence, “you go back to the house again,” and Jack did not dare to disobey.

Betty Teach met them at the door, and they all went directly into the kitchen, where a freshly-laid bunch of faggots crackled upon the fire, dispelling the chill dampness of the night. The pirate captain, without offering any word of greeting to Dred, turned to his wife and asked her if she had heard anything from Virginia concerning the young lady.

“No,” she said, “not a word.”

“What!” cried out the pirate, “are you sure? Nothing yet? Why, to be sure there must be something. It has been nigh six weeks since I left.”

“There’s nothing come yet,” said his wife.

Blackbeard’s face lowered at her as though he thought it was somehow her fault that no letter had come, but he said nothing. All this while Dred was standing before the fire as though waiting, and Jack knew it must be that he could hardly contain his desire to learn something about the fortune of the expedition. But however great was his desire to know, he asked no immediate question.

“How be you, Dred?” said Morton at last.

“I’m better now,” said Dred, “and able to be about a bit.” He opened his mouth as though to speak, when the pirate captain cut in:

“How’s Hands getting on?”

“He’s still abed,” said Dred, “but he’s a deal better than he was. He stood on his leg yesterday for nigh an hour.” Then at last he asked, “What luck did you have?” The question was directed at Blackbeard, and Jack and Betty Teach stood waiting breathlessly for the reply, but, in his sullen, evil humor, the pirate captain did not choose to answer. He turned away, flung his hat down upon the bench, and began slowly peeling off his rough coat, wet and heavy with the fine rain. Dred eyed him for a second or two, and then he turned to Morton. “What luck did ye have, Morton?” he asked.

Morton was a slow, heavy, taciturn man, very unready of speech. The reply came almost as though reluctantly from him, but he could not hide the triumphant exultation that swelled his heart. “‘Twere good enough luck, Chris Dred”—a pause—“ay, ‘twere good luck. You lost the chance of your life for a big prize this time, when you stayed ashore—that’s what you did, Chris Dred.”

“Did you, then, come across the packet?” asked Dred, impatiently; and again Jack and Betty waited breathlessly for the reply. Morton was filling his pipe. “‘Twere

better than that," he said, slowly. "'Twere better than any packet betwixt here and Halifax. 'Twere a French bark loaded full of sugar and rum from Martinique; that's what it were, Chris Dred."

Then, with many pauses in his slow narrative, and every now and then a few quick, strong puffs at his pipe, he told how the two pirate sloops—the sloop from Bath Town and the other from Ocracock—had captured the French bark with its—at that time—precious cargo of sugar and rum; that prize that afterward became so famous in the annals of the American pirates; that prize so valuable that it was impossible that Blackbeard should be allowed to keep it for his own without having to fight the law for it.

The pirate captain, in his sworn statement made before Governor Eden a few weeks later, said that the two sloops had found the bark adrift in the western ocean; and Governor Eden had then condemned it, as being without an owner and belonging to those who had brought it in.

It was a very different story that Jack listened to that night as Morton told it in his slow sentences, sitting in the red light of the crackling faggot fire. Morton said that the Frenchman had fought for over half an hour before he had surrendered. Two of the pirates had been killed and four wounded, and the Frenchman had lost thirteen in killed and wounded. He said that there were a number of Englishmen aboard—castaways, whom the Frenchmen had picked up off a water-logged bark that had been driven out of its course to the southward in a storm off the Bermudas. The Frenchmen, he said, would have surrendered a deal sooner than they did, only that the Englishmen had lent a hand in the fighting. He said that the English captain and a passenger from the English bark were the only men on deck when they came aboard, and it was the English captain who had informed them of the precious nature of the Frenchman's cargo. Dred asked incidentally what had been done with the prisoners, and Morton said that Blackbeard had, at first, been all for throwing the

Englishmen overboard, because they had fought against their own blood, but that he (Morton) and the boatswain of the other sloop had dissuaded him from his first intention, and that finally the crew and passengers of the prize had all been set adrift in three of the Frenchman's boats, though without compass and with only provisions and water for three days. This was the story that Morton told, and it was very different from Blackbeard's statement made before Governor Eden.

Jack listened most intently. It all sounded very strange and remote—that savage piracy upon a poor merchantman,—and yet it was all singularly real as Morton told it. He wished very strongly that he had been along. What a thing it would have been to remember in after years! What a thing to have talked about if he should ever get back again to Southampton!

Dred asked who of their own men had been hurt.

"Swigget was killed nigh the first fire the parleyvoos gave us," Morton answered, "and Robinson was shot a while later and died whiles they were carrying him below. T'others'll all get well like enough, unless it be black Tom, who was shot in the neck."

Jack did not know Robinson, but he recollected Swigget very distinctly as being one of the crew that had made the descent upon Marlborough. He had not seen him since those days, but it seemed very strange, almost shocking, to think that he who had been so strong and well at that time, who had snapped his finger in time to the captain's guitar music and who had been so exultant when he had won at cards, that he should now be suddenly dead!

"'Twere a hot fight while it lasted," Morton was saying. "But, oh, Chris, you should just ha' seen that there bark—full, chock up to the hatches, with sugar, and twenty hogsheads of rum in the forehold besides. 'Twas the chance of your life you missed, Chris Dred."

There was a long pause, and then Dred asked, "Where is she now?"

“She’s lying down below Stagg’s Island,” said Morton.

What, during that little pause, was the intangible cause that should have so suddenly have recalled to Jack’s memory the scene of yesterday—the swamp, and the poor fugitive girl crouching at the foot of the cypress-tree? Some expression of Dred’s face, perhaps; some indefinable motion of his hand. His mind rushed back to that other event, and a recollection of the young lady’s white, woeful face—a remembrance of the touch of her cold chin upon his hand, stood out very strongly upon his memory.

All the while Morton had been talking, Blackbeard had sat at the table in sullen silence, taking no part in, and not even seeming to hear, what was said. Morton still smoked his pipe, and now the kitchen was pungent with rank tobacco smoke. Meantime Betty Teach had been bustling about, and had brought out a bottle of rum and some glasses, half a ham, and a lot of corn bread. Then she set a couple of pewter plates with knives and forks upon the table. Blackbeard cut himself a slice of ham and helped himself to a piece of bread, and by and by Morton took his place at the table also, drawing up his chair with a noisy scrape upon the floor.

CHAPTER XXXII

A SCENE

THE news that the pirates had brought in a rich prize of rum and sugar flew very quickly up into the town, for the very next morning Mr. Knight came down to see the pirate captain, bringing with him a man who was a stranger to Jack. He afterward found that the stranger was a Captain Hotchkiss, master of a schooner bound for the port of Philadelphia. Captain Hotchkiss was an honest merchantman as the times went, but he was quite willing to undertake to dispose of the captured rum in the port for which he was bound.

The rain had cleared away, and soon after breakfast Jack had gone down to the

wharf. One of the pirates named Bolles—a young fellow not much older than himself—had come up from Ocracock aboard the sloop. He had been wounded in the fight, and he carried his arm in a sling. He had not come up from the landing for his breakfast, and Betty Teach had sent something down to him by Jack—a big, cold roast yam, some corn bread, and a thick slice of bacon. The young pirate had spread his meal out on top of one of the piles, and was making shift to eat it with his left hand. Jack stood leaning against the other side of the pile, watching his thick-featured, heavy face as he ate.

"Ye ought to ha' been along," said the young pirate, munching away with his mouth full.

"Why, so I should have liked to have been," said Jack.

"'Twere a mighty hot fight, though, while it lasted," said the young pirate with pride. "Like enough you mightn't ha' liked that so much if you'd been there. 'Twas a main villainous chance that I should ha' been hit the very first time I ever was really in a fight."

"Did it hurt you when you were shot?" Jack asked, curiously.

"Hurt!" said the pirate, "I don't know—no, not much at first. 'Twas as if somebody had struck me in the shoulder with a club. It just knocked me around as if I'd been hit with a club. I didn't know what 'twas at first, nor till I felt the blood a-running down my hand, all hot like. Arter that it hurt bad enough. 'Twere a grape-shot," he said, with some pride, "and it looked as though you'd 'a' scooped a bit of the meat out with a spoon, only deeper like. 'Twas a nigh chance, and if it had 'a' been a little higher, 'twould 'a' been all up with Ned Bolles."

"I'd have liked well to have been along," said Jack again.

"Well," said the young pirate, "'twas summat to stir the blood, I can tell ye. Then we lay for maybe twenty minutes or more afore t'other sloop could come up with us, and all the time that bloody French bark a-banging away at us, the bullets a-going

ping! ping! and chug! chug! and every now and then boom! goes a gun—boom! boom!—and maybe a bucketful of splinters goes flying. And then, by and by, I see ‘em carrying poor Tom Swiggett down below, and a nasty sight he were, with his eyes rolled up and his face like dough. And just then, bump! and around I goes, shot in the shoulder. ’Tweren’t no skylarking now, I tell ye.”

It was just then that Mr. Knight’s boat pulled up to the wharf beyond, and Jack went out to the end of the landing to meet it. The men who were rowing were strangers to Jack. They lay waiting on their oars, looking up at him. “Tell me, young man!” called Mr. Knight. “Is Captain Teach at home?”

“Yes, he is,” said Jack, “but he’s not about yet.”

Then Mr. Knight, followed by Captain Hotchkiss, came climbing up the ladder, slippery with green slime, to the wharf above. The colonial secretary led the way directly up to the house, and Jack followed the two visitors, leaving the young pirate munching away stolidly at his food.

They all went into the kitchen together. The pirate captain had gone to bed, but Dred and Morton still lingered in front of the fire, and Betty Teach was busy putting away the remains of the breakfast that had been standing on the table since midnight.

“If you’ll come in t’other room,” said Jack, “you’ll likely find it in better trim than this one, Mr. Knight.”

“Never mind,” said the secretary, “we’d just as lief stay here. What time did the sloop get in?” he asked of Morton.

“I don’t know exactly,” said Morton, without taking his pipe out of his mouth. “‘Twas some time arter midnight.”

“Is the captain asleep yet?”

“I reckon he be,” said Dred. “I hain’t seen him since he went to bed early this morning.”

“Well, he’ll have to be awakened then,” said Mr. Knight, “for I’ve just fetched Captain Hotchkiss, here, down from the town to see him, and he has to be going again as soon as may be.”

“You’d better go and wake him then, mistress,” said Dred; and Betty went, though with great reluctance, to arouse her husband. Presently they could hear her overhead talking to the pirate, who answered her evidently from his bed; then they could hear him telling her that he would be down in a little while, and presently she returned down-stairs again, leaving Blackbeard stamping his feet into his shoes and swearing to himself.

Then, after a while, they heard the door of the room open and the pirate captain go stumping along the passage. He did not come directly down-stairs, however, but went on into the room where Hands lay.

“Where’s he gone now?” said Mr. Knight. “Why don’t he come?”

“He’s stopped in to see Hands first,” said Betty Teach.

“Well, then, why should he do that?” said Mr. Knight, crossly. “Hands can wait and we can’t.”

Betty made no reply, but went on with her interrupted work. In the pause of silence that followed, those in the kitchen could hear the grumbling sound of the men’s voices talking up-stairs. Captain Hotchkiss fidgeted restlessly. “When did the fever take you?” he asked Dred.

“Why, I don’t know,” said Dred. “It appeared like I fetched it down from Virginny with me.”

Hands was talking now, and they could hear the growling of his voice—it continued for some time in a monotone, and then suddenly the captain’s voice burst out with a loud, angry excitement. There was instant silence in the kitchen: every one sat listening intently to hear what was said in the room above. “Run away!” they heard Blackbeard’s voice exclaim. “Run away!” and then came the noise of his chair

grating against the bare floor. Jack and Betty Teach and Dred exchanged looks. They knew that Hands had told of the young lady's attempted escape.

"He's gone and told, arter all," said Dred.

"Told what?" asked Mr. Knight, but the others were listening again, and did not reply. Again Hands was talking, but it was impossible to distinguish what he was saying. Suddenly the chair grated again, and the next moment came the sound of Blackbeard's feet striding across the room, and then along the passage. Then he came clattering down the stairs; then the kitchen door was flung open and he burst into the room. "What's this here Hands tells me about the young lady trying to run away yesterday?" he cried out, in a fierce, loud voice.

Captain Hotchkiss was listening with silent intentness. Mr. Knight instantly understood everything, and he shot a side look at Captain Hotchkiss's attentive face. "Take care, captain," he said to Blackbeard, "take care what you say. You forget there's a stranger here."

Blackbeard glared at him, but vouchsafed no reply. "Didn't I tell you," he said, turning upon his wife, "that you was to keep a sharp lookout upon the hussy while I was away? I was afeared of something of this sort, and I told you to keep a sharp lookout on her. Suppose she'd 'a' got up into the town! maybe she'd have had the whole province talking. 'Tis bad enough as 'tis with everybody hereabouts blabbing about her, but if she'd got up into the town maybe she'd found somebody to look after her and take up her case, and then we'd have never got her back again. There's Parson Odell, if she'd gone to him, he'd have had to take up her case, and then we'd 'a' had the whole Parker crew down upon us from Virginny, like enough."

"Well," said Betty Teach, "'twas nobody's fault she got away. To be sure, I did all I could to look after her, morning and night. I allus went to her door early, and I allus kept the doors of the house tight locked of a night. I don't know how she contrived to get out, but she did get out, and that's all there be about it. But now 'tis over and

done, and she's safe back home again and no harm done, so what's the use of blustering about it for everybody to hear?"

Mr. Knight came up to Blackbeard and plucked him by the sleeve. "You forget," he whispered, "that Hotchkiss is here. You don't want everybody to know about this business, do you?"

Blackbeard shook off his touch. He would listen to nothing. "And as for you, Chris Dred," he said, turning to the sick man, "what be ye fit for, anyhow?" Dred shrugged his shoulders without replying. "What! won't you answer me, then? By blood! you shall answer me!"

"'Tis no use to answer you," said Dred, "you've got in one of your humors, and there's naught that I can say that you'll listen to."

Blackbeard glared balefully at him for a while, perhaps not knowing just what to say. Then suddenly he turned on his heel and flung open the door, and went noisily up-stairs again.

"Where are you going, Ned?" his wife called after him, but he did not reply.

"I do believe he's going up to the young lady's room," said Dred, rising from his bench. "You'd better go up and stop him, mistress, or he'll frighten her to death."

They listened, and, sure enough, the pirate went straight to the girl's room and flung open the door violently. "You'd better go up arter him," said Dred; "he's in one of his fits, and there's no knowing what he'll say or do to her."

"Why," said Betty Teach, "to be sure I don't like to cross him now."

Dred shrugged his shoulders and sat down again. They could hear the loud, violent voice of the pirate storming from the room above. "Ye'd run away, would ye? Ye'd run away, would ye? By the eternal! I'll cure ye of that, my mistress! Ye don't know me, to try your tricks with me. What d' ye suppose I keep ye here for—because I love ye? Not I! 'Tis for what I can make out of ye!"—and so on, and so on. Betty

Teach stood listening at the half-open door. “Well,” she said at last, “I do suppose I’ll have to go up to him. ’Tis as you say; he’ll frighten her to death, the way he’s talking to her.” Then again she listened for a moment or two, and they could all hear the sound of some one crying. “Well, I’ll go,” she said; and she went, closing the door after her.

“Who is it he’s got up there, anyhow?” asked Captain Hotchkiss. He looked around at the others, but no one replied to him. He was devoured by curiosity.

“He shouldn’t have gone up-stairs in the humor he’s in,” said the secretary. “He wasn’t fit to talk with her now.”

“But who is it?” said Captain Hotchkiss, again.

“Never you mind that, captain,” said Mr. Knight, sharply. “’Tis a matter that don’t concern you at all, and you’d better mind your own affairs.”

Betty Teach was talking, and they could hear the sound of her voice, trying to quiet her husband—then the sound of Blackbeard’s, more violent than ever. The doors were closed, so that it was impossible to distinguish what was said. Suddenly there came a cry,—then a fall,—then silence. “By heavens!” said Mr. Knight, “he hasn’t done anything to her, has he?”

“No,” said Dred, “he wouldn’t do nothing to her o’ that kind. He wouldn’t touch hand to her, if you mean that.”

The silence continued for a while; then the door opened, and Betty Teach’s voice called down the stairs: “Jack! Jack! Come here a minute!”

Jack hurried out of the room, and up-stairs. The door of the young lady’s room was standing open, and before he entered he could see Miss Eleanor Parker lying upon the floor and the pirate’s wife bending over her, rubbing and slapping her hands. Blackbeard himself sat upon the edge of the table, swinging one leg, his arms folded, lowering down at the unconscious figure. “Here, Jack,” said the pirate’s wife, looking up, “help me lift her to the bed.”

Then Jack, who stood looking, aroused himself, and came into the room. He stooped, and slipped his hands and arms under the girl's shoulders. Her head fell back upon his arm as he raised her, and her hair flowed over it in a dark, glossy cloud. He looked down at the white face, the blue veins marking faint lines upon her forehead. Then he and the woman laid her upon the bed. "Go and fetch some water," said Betty Teach, "and be quick about it."

The pail was empty, and Jack ran down-stairs to fill it. "What's the matter?" asked Mr. Knight, as he hurried through the kitchen.

"Nothing," said Jack, "only she's fainted away."

When he returned to the room again he saw that the pirate's wife had loosened the young lady's stays, and that she had now returned, or was returning, to consciousness. "Well, then," Betty Teach was saying, "I do suppose you're satisfied, now that you've nigh frightened her to death. Are ye satisfied, now?"

As Jack set the pail of water upon the floor, he saw a shuddering tremor shake the half-conscious girl, and then, by and by, another. Blackbeard still sat upon the edge of the table, swinging one leg, his arms folded, and his face lowering. "Well, I'll frighten her worse than that," he said, at last. "I'll frighten her worse than she was ever frightened before in all of her life if she goes trying any of her tricks of running away again!" He stopped, and glared toward the two women. Then he ground his white teeth together in a sudden spasm of rage. "I'll frighten her so she'll wish she was dead!"

Whether the girl heard or not, she shuddered, as though at the words. "Well, you'd better go down-stairs now," said Betty Teach. "You've frightened her enough for once, and you've said things before Jack Hotchkiss that maybe you'll be sorry you said, by and by."

"I'll go down-stairs," growled the pirate, "when it suits me to, and not before." He sat for a little while longer, as though to assert himself, and then presently got up

and slouched out of the room, without closing the door behind him.

Jack lingered for a while, and at first the captain's wife, busied about her patient, did not see him. Presently the young lady began to cry weakly, and then Betty Teach looked up. "You go down-stairs, too," she said.

"Can't I do something to help you?" said Jack, gulping at the sympathetic lump that rose in his throat.

"No, you can't," she said, sharply, "except to do as I bid you." And then Jack followed the captain down into the kitchen.

"They do say," Mr. Knight was saying, "that there was twenty casks of rum aboard. Well, if that be true, methinks I can help you to rid yourself of some of them at a fair price. Hotchkiss, here, is on his way to Philadelphia, and will take six of them to Mr. West, who'll handle them as my agent, if you choose to have it so. I dare say he'll get the best there is out of them for you."

"The purchase isn't condemned yet," said Blackbeard, sullenly.

"Oh, well, 'twill make no difference just to take a little rum," said Mr. Knight. "I'll make that all right with his Excellency."

Blackbeard sat gloomily without speaking. "Where is the rum?" said Captain Hotchkiss.

"It's aboard the bark," said Blackbeard, shortly. "I've got a keg of it aboard the sloop, if you choose to come and sample it." His lowering mood still brooded heavily upon him, but he arose, took down his hat gloomily, and without saying anything further, stalked out of the house, leaving his two visitors to follow him as they chose.

"I've a great mind," said Jack to himself, "to ask Captain Hotchkiss if he won't take me away to Philadelphia with him." But he did not do so.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HOW JACK RESOLVED

JACK, missing a full night of young, wholesome sleep, dozed a great deal of the afternoon, lying stretched out uncomfortably upon a bench in the kitchen. Dred and Morton talked intermittently, and the occasional growling tenor of their voices mingled ever with his half dreams; an occasional expression striking out now and then from the monotone of words, and rousing him to a fleeting consciousness. Then there would be long pauses of silent tobacco-smoking, in which he would fall to dreaming again.

Ever since the day before, his bosom had been growing more and more full of the thought of the young lady. Now his thoughts recurred to her again and again in his half-waking dozings, remembering always how he had found her in the swamp and how he had covered her cold shoulders with his own coat, how he had lifted her soft swooning body from the floor, how her black hair fell in a cloud over his arm. He seemed to sense again the singular fragrance of her presence, and at times of his half sleeping he would almost feel the touch of her damp chin upon his hand as he buttoned the coat at her throat. There was a strange, keen pleasure in thus dreaming about her, and he yielded himself entirely to it.

Equally present in this half-waking sleep was the fact of the return of the pirates. Once he fancied very vividly that he was on board of the French bark, and that he was trying to escape in her with Miss Eleanor Parker, and that the forecastle was smeared all over with blood. He saw the scene very vividly—almost as though it stood actually before his eyes. Two voices were speaking somewhere, and then he awoke to hear Dred and Morton talking together again.

That evening after supper he rowed Morton up to the town. He himself had made many acquaintances at Bath Town during the two months or more of his life at the pirate’s house. Everybody grew to know him very well—his history, of his family,

of his prospects. They used to call him “Gentleman Jack,” and showed him a sort of consideration they would not have done had he not had such advantages of birth and breeding. He used often to go up in the skiff of an evening, to sit and talk at some gathering-place of the planters and the town’s people, returning perhaps late at night through the hollow solitude of the watery silence.

This evening he went with Morton from place to place, watching him as he drank rum, listening to his talk, and sometimes joining in what was said. The town, as has been said, was full of the news of the pirates’ return and of the rich prize they had made, and Morton was welcomed everywhere. He was drinking very freely, and, as he went from house to house, he talked ever more and more openly about the circumstances of the capture of the prize. It almost seemed to Jack as though he himself had part and parcel in it all by virtue of being a member of the pirate’s household. Ordinarily he would have taken great delight in listening to what was said and in saying his say concerning it, but now a strong desire for her presence hung continually over him, urging him almost uncomfortably to get back home again.

So it was that he did not stay very long up in the town, but returned before the night had altogether fallen, and while a pallid light still lingered in the western sky, making it faintly luminous. As he rowed slowly down the smooth stretch of water, solitary and alone, the joy of that strong yearning to be near her again seemed to fill everything, and, as he listened absently to the rhythmic chugging jerk of the oars in the rowlocks, and as he looked out astern at the long, trailing, oily wake that the boat left behind it along the glassy smoothness of the water, he thought of her, bearing strongly upon the thought, and holding it close to him.

He built up incoherent plans for comforting her, for helping her. He had thought a score of times that day about the possibility of helping her to escape, and now in the dusk and the solitude the disjointed thoughts began to assume almost the vividness

of reality, and once or twice he thrilled with a quick, keen, nervous pang as though he were upon the eve of actually fulfilling some such determination. These vague plans did not take any definite shape excepting that he said to himself that he might carry her back home as she had been brought thither, and maybe that he might take the big yawl-boat that the pirates had brought back with them in the tow of the sloop, and which now again lay drawn up on the beach near to the landing wharf. Beyond this he had not thought of any plan for taking her away, but only dwelt upon the delight of being with her for such a long time and of taking care of her.

His mind was full of such thoughts as he ran the skiff upon the half sandy, half muddy strip of beach beside the landing wharf, driving the bow of the boat far up on the shore with two or three quick pulls of the oar, and the desire for her presence was so strong upon him that when he reached the house he leaned the oars against the side of the wooden wall, and went around to the further end of the building, where the window of her room opened out to the westward.

Excepting for this window, that side of the house was not inhabited, the lower windows of the bleak and naked parlor being nearly always closed. He had been there before, and as he went thither now, he remembered, with a kind of sudden joy, how he had brought to her one evening two or three peaches that he had gathered at Trivett's plantation, and how he had thrown them up to her as she leaned out of the window to catch them, and of how he had lingered a little while to talk with her.

The window of her room was open, but there was no light within, and all was very silent. After a moment's hesitation he called softly, in a tone that was rather a loud whisper than a voice, "Young lady! Mistress! Miss Eleanor!" and then presently again, "Young lady, are you there? 'Tis I, Jack—Jack Ballister." He waited, looking up, but still there was no reply. By and by he was about to go away, but at the moment he thought he saw a movement at the window. Then her face appeared, shadow-like, above the ledge. "Who is it?" she whispered. "Is that Jack Ballister?"

“Yes,” said Jack, “’tis I. Tell me, mistress, how do you do by now? Do you feel better?”

“Ay,” she answered. “I’m better now than I was. I’ve been ill all afternoon, but I’m feeling better now. But why did you call me?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Jack. “I’ve been up to the town, and I was thinking about you. I’ve been thinking about you all day. I felt mightily sorry for you, and I was wondering how you did. I’m glad you’re better now than you were.”

She did not speak immediately; then she said: “Yes, I’m better now than I was.”

There was something in the undertone of her voice that seemed to him to bespeak that she had been crying, and was near crying again. The thought that she had been crying struck him very sharply. He stood silent for a moment or two, and then, as though for confirmation, he asked: “What is it, mistress? Has anything—have they been troubling you again? Tell me, have you been crying?” She did not reply. “I know something hath happened,” he whispered. “Tell me what it is,” and then he knew that she was crying now.

“’Tis not much,” she said after a while, during which he stood there not knowing just what to say or do. “’Tis only a little thing. They have taken my clothes away from me, and locked the door so that I sha’n’t run away again. That is all,” and as she spoke he could see, but darkly, the flicker of her handkerchief as she wiped her eyes.

“Taken your clothes!” cried Jack. “Who has taken your clothes?”

“Mistress Teach has just been in and taken them away. Captain Teach went to bed a long while ago, and he sent her to take them away. There, go away, please; you make me cry again, and I am a fool to cry so and for such a little thing.” And then, breaking down, she burst out, almost passionately, “I don’t know why they treat me so!”

Jack stood silent in the presence of her sudden emotion, but still he did not know

how to go away and leave her. “There, there, mistress!” he said, awkwardly, “don’t you take it so bitterly; it will all come right in the end, I know that, so don’t cry any more.” Then, feeling the barren inconsequence of his words, he continued, “Do you know what I was thinking as I rowed down from the town just now? I was thinking that I would try to help you to get away from here and back home again, so don’t cry any more.” Then he added, “If you’ll bid me, I’d take you away to-night—I would, and carry you back to Virginia again.”

“No,” she said, in a voice stifled with the restraint she was putting upon herself. “’Tis no use to try to escape. I tried, and I couldn’t get away. I know I’ll never be able to get away from here. I feel that I never shall.” Then she suddenly gave way, and her crying became so vehement that Jack began to be afraid that some one would hear it. “Hush!” he whispered sibilantly, “they’ll hear you.”

“I can’t help it,” she gasped. “Go away, please.”

At that moment some one opened the door at the further end of the house, and a light shone out from the kitchen. Jack instantly slipped away into the darkness around the corner of the building. He waited for a time, but no one came. After a while he peeped around the further corner, but whoever it was that had opened the door had gone back into the house. Then he went around and into the kitchen without trying again to speak to the young lady; but his heart was full of and heavy with pity for her.

Betty Teach and Dred were both in the kitchen when Jack came in—Dred smoking his pipe, the pirate’s wife busied about her work. There was a bundle of clothes lying upon the table, and Jack, as he stood with his back to the fireplace, knew that it belonged to the young lady.

“Did Morton come back with you?” asked Dred.

“No,” said Jack, shortly; and then he added, “He said he’d stay up there all night to-night and be back to-morrow.”

Betty Teach picked up the bundle of clothes and, lifting the lid of the hutch, flung it in, banged down the lid and turned the key, all in the same moment. “I’m going to bed,” she said. “I’ve been up and on my feet ever since midnight, and I’m tired to the marrow.”

A sudden anger flamed up within Jack. “’Tis a bleeding shame,” he cried out, “for you to treat the young lady so and take her clothes from her that way, and to lock her in her room besides.”

Betty Teach turned quickly on him. “Who told you I’d took her clothes away from her and locked her in her room?” she asked, sharply.

Jack hesitated for a moment. “Can’t I see for myself?” he said. “Ain’t those her clothes you’ve locked up in the chest?”

“But who told you I’d locked her in her room?” Betty Teach insisted. “Come, tell me, who told you?”

Then Jack answered, almost sullenly, “Well, if you must know, I stopped on my way up from the boat to ask the young lady how she did, and she told me you’d locked her up and taken her clothes away from her.”

“And so you’ve been around back of the house speaking to her, have you? I thought I heard some one talking outside. And so ’twas you, was it?”

“Well,” said Jack, “and what if it was? What harm was there in my talking to her?”

“Harm!” said Betty Teach. “You’ll see what harm there’s in it if Ned catches you at it, after what happened yesterday. He’ll harm you, I promise you that. ’Tis good for you he’s so dead asleep as not to hear you. He’d harm you with a bullet in your head if he caught you or anybody else hanging around her window out there at night after her trying to run away.”

“No he wouldn’t, neither,” said Jack, stoutly.

“Wouldn’t he?” said Betty. “Well, you just try it again some fine day when he’s

about, and you'll see quicker than you like," and then she went out of the room and up-stairs to bed.

Jack still stood, and Dred still smoked his pipe in silence for a long while after the pirate's wife had gone. At last Dred spoke. "It be true enough what she said, lad," he said. "If you go meddling in this matter you'll be getting yourself into sore trouble, as sure as you're born. 'Tis none of your business to be meddling in it."

"Who said I was meddling?" said Jack. "What have I been doing to meddle?"

Dred shrugged his shoulders and then smoked on for a long time in silence, during which Jack still stood sullenly in front of the fireplace. "Not that I blame you," Dred suddenly said, as though following out some train of his own thoughts. "If I was a young lad like you be, I wouldn't sit still to see a pretty young creature like this here young lady put upon as she's put upon, neither. It ben't my business no more than it's yours—except I went up to Marlborough to help fetch her away. But sometimes I can't abide it to see her sit there moping for day after day, getting sicker and sicker all the while, until some fine day she'll just fall away and die under our very noses."

"Die!" cried out Jack with a start, and then, after a moment's pause, "What do you mean by that, Dred?"

"You'd better not talk so loud," said Dred, "unless you want 'em to hear you up-stairs."

"But what did you mean by saying she was going to die?" said Jack, in a lowered voice.

"I didn't say she was going to die," said Dred. "I said she was getting sicker all the time, and anybody as is that way stands a chance to die unless they gets better. And how's she to get any better if she's kept penned up here, moping for her own home? That's what I meant when I said I didn't blame you for making it your business." Then, after a long while of silence, in which he puffed at his pipe, he continued, abruptly, "Ay, she's growin' more and more peaked all the time. She lies abed half

the day, nowadays, and afore long, ’tis my belief, she’ll lie in bed all the time and never get up out of it again.”

Jack stood perfectly still, his hands thrust deep into his breeches pockets. He could not trust himself to speak. He did not know how long he stood there, but it must have been for a great while. Then Dred began again: “To my mind, ’twas an ill day when the captain undertook this business of kidnapping. Here he is now, with this young gell on his hands. He’s afraid to let her go, and if he keeps her cooped up she’s as like as not to die on his hands. He don’t know how to treat her, and he can’t contain hisself when she crosses him. Look at the way he talked to her to-day. A few more talks o’ that kind, and, he’ll kill her for sartin’. By blood! I wish I was well out of it all—I do. If she dies on our hands down here ’twill be the worst day’s happening that ever fell on Bath Town. I’ve been thinking a deal about it lately, and sometimes ’twouldn’t take much to make me cut it all and get away from here.” And then presently he added, “I don’t see as there’s over much profit in staying, as ’tis.” Again he smoked away at his pipe, puffing quickly to get it alight once more. Then by and by he began once more: “’Tis my belief the captain feels he’s being tricked by Mr. Parker, and that for some reason or other our gentleman hath no notion of ever having her fetched back again. Well, if he thinks that, ’tis my belief, too. Hotchkiss was saying this morning that there be news about that Colonel Parker’s fallen sick and’ll maybe die. And if he dies, and this young lady dies, your Mr. Parker’ll be a mightily rich man. Now you put two and two together, and how many does it make? If she dies, and her father dies, Mr. Parker’ll deny all blame in this matter, and more’n likely’ll come down and roast out the whole lot on us, just to show that he had naught to do in the business. Well, well, ’tis none of my business, but I only hope and pray that we sha’n’t all hang for doing what’ll profit him everything and won’t profit us anything. The captain might ha’ knowed he’d get naught out o’ this business to play ag’in such a sharp blade as Mr. Parker.”

All this time Jack had been standing dumbly, with his hands thrust deep into his

pockets. Every word that Dred said impelled him more and more strongly to say what was in his mind, and every moment he was resolving more and more nearly to a culmination to say his say and to take Dred into his confidence. At last he did speak—it seemed to him almost before he had finally decided to do so. “Dred,” he said, and then, beginning again, “Dred, you told me a while ago that you didn’t blame me for making this my business. Well, I’m going to tell you something, Dred. I’ve been thinking that maybe I’d undertake to help the young lady to get away home again to Virginia.” He waited an instant, and then added, “When I spoke with her just now, outside yonder, I told her that if she called on me to do it, I’d help her to go away, even if it was this very night.”

Dred sat for a while in perfectly dead silence, looking at Jack through his half-shut eyes, and Jack, his heart beating quickly at having spoken, wondered what he would say. “Well,” he said, at last, “you be a mighty bold fool, to be sure, to talk that way to me. You’ve got a great heart in you, for sartin. But now you tell me; how would you set about to do such a thing as that? You don’t know what you talk about doing. How d’ye suppose a boy like you could get her away from such a man as the captain, and safe up to Virginny? A man like me might maybe do such a thing as that, but how would you set about it?”

“I hadn’t any real plan,” Jack acknowledged, “but I thought I might maybe get her away in the yawl—some time, perhaps, when the captain was away from home. Why not?”

Dred shook his head. “No, no, my hearty,” he said, “you’d never be able to do it. You’d be overhauled afore you got half way to Ocracock—and what d’ye suppose would happen then?”

“I suppose I’d be fetched back again,” said Jack.

“Do you?” said Dred, grimly. “Well, then, I don’t suppose you’d be fetched back again, unless you was fetched back feet foremost.”

“Do you mean they’d harm me?” said Jack.

“That’s just what I do mean,” said Dred. “If the captain caught you trying to get this young lady away, he’d put a bullet into your head as quick as wink, and as sure as you’re a born Christian. You don’t know the captain like I do.”

Jack stood thinking, and Dred sat still, watching him keenly. Presently he heaved a profound breath that was almost more than a sigh. “Well, Dred,” he said, “if she wanted me to do it, I believe I would do it.”

Dred continued to regard him for a while, then his thin lips widened into a grin. “You’ve got a big heart in you, Jack Ballister,” he said, “and there’s no doubt about that.” Then suddenly he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and arose from where he sat. He came up to Jack and thrust his face close into Jack’s face. “Well, my lad,” he said, “you’ve said your say to me, and now I’m a-going to say my say to you.” Jack drew back involuntarily, wondering with some apprehension what was coming next. “Well, then, this is my say: How’d you like me to go along with you?”

For the moment Jack did not understand. “What did you say?” he said.

“I said, how would you like me to go along with you, that’s what I said—to go along and help take the young lady back to Virginny again?” Then Dred reached out suddenly and caught Jack by the collar, giving him a shake. “Why, ye young fool,” he said, “d’ye think I’d let ye go on such a venture as that all alone, and have the head blowed off of ye for your pains? Not I! I knowed what ye was at, the very first word ye said, and if I’d chose to do so I’d ‘a’ stopped your talk quick enough.”

Even yet Jack did not know whether he really understood aright. “Dred,” he said, whispering intensely, “what do you mean? Do you mean that you’re willing to help the young lady to get away?” Then, as it came upon him to know that that was what Dred did mean and that he was earnest in meaning it, he reached out, hardly knowing what he did, and caught at the other as though to hug him. “O Dred!” he cried.

“Get away!” whispered Dred, pushing him off with his elbow. “What d’ ye mean, ye young fool—hugging at me that way?” Then he began laughing. “D’ye think I’m your sweetheart to try to hug me like that? ’Tis my belief the young lady up-stairs is your sweetheart, else you wouldn’t be so anxious to have your head blowed off for her sake.”

Jack knew that he was blushing fiery red. He struck at Dred, and burst out laughing. “You’re a fool, Chris Dred, to talk that way. Why, I hav’n’t spoken fifty words to her this week.”

Dred struck back at Jack and laughed. “All the same, ’tis my belief she’s your sweetheart,” he said. “Well, let’s go and have a look at the yawl, and then we’ll ax her if she’s willing to trust us to help her away from here?”

“What!” cried Jack, “you don’t mean to go to-night, do you?”

“Why not?” said Dred. “If we makes up our mind to go at all, ’tis no use to put it off. To-night’s as good a night as we’re like to have, and the longer we leave it to think about, the harder ’twill be to do.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE ESCAPE

JACK did not—he could not—immediately realize that he was now actually, so suddenly, and so unexpectedly, to undertake that which he had dreamed of and vaguely planned that day. It was not until he saw Dred in the act of lacing his shoes, not until he saw him in the act of putting on his coat and taking his hat down from the peg behind the door, that it really came upon him to thrill with that keen pang that sometimes heralds the immediate performance of some pregnant act of life. Then he did thrill, stretching himself with that sudden nervous tension that perhaps all of us have sometimes felt. There was something about the fact of Dred lacing his shoes, and putting on his coat and hat, that made the certainty of what he was

embarked upon very present and very real. In one little hour, now, he might be upon his way back to Virginia again, and once more he thrilled keenly and poignantly at the thought.

Dred opened the stair door and stood listening for a while, but all was perfectly still and hushed above. The pirate's wife had evidently gone to sleep with the instant sleep of a tired woman. Then Dred closed the door again, and, nodding to Jack, led the way out into the darkness of the night. Here again they stood for a while, the night air breathing chilly about them, while Dred listened. But there was not a breath of sound, not a glimmer of light. Then together they walked around to the end of the house where Jack had before stopped to speak to the young lady that evening. Jack went over beneath the open window, and called to her in the same whispering voice he had used before, Dred waiting the while at the corner of the house, keeping a sharp lookout. Jack had to call again and again; for, whether she failed to hear him, or whether she did not choose to immediately reply, it was some time before the young lady showed her face. When she did appear at the window, she stood for a while as though dazed, and listened to what he had to tell her as though not understanding what he said. He had to repeat to her that he and Dred had come to do what he had promised to do that evening—to take her away back home again to Virginia if she were willing to go with them. "To take me away?" she said, vaguely; and then, as the meaning of it all broke upon her, she cried out, "Oh, do! Oh, do take me away! For heaven's sake, take me away from here!"

"We will, we will! That is what we have come for," said Jack. But she did not seem to hear him, but cried out again and vehemently, "If you only will take me away, I'll do anything in the world for you; and my father will do anything for you. Oh, please, kind, good men, do take me away!"

She was perhaps hysterical from the dreadful fright she must have suffered in the morning, and, as the understanding of a possible escape came upon her, she

appeared to forget all caution. Jack was so struck by her sudden passion that he did not know what to say to check her; but Dred came hurrying up, and warned her in a whisper to be still: “We mean to help you to get away, mistress,” he said, in a breathing whisper; “but if ye takes on so as to disturb everybody in the house and wake ‘em up, why, we can’t do anything to help you.”

They could see that she put a great restraint upon herself, trying to stifle her crying, clinging to the frame of the lifted window-sash. Then she seemed to suddenly remember that her clothes had been taken away, and that the pirate’s wife had locked the door upon her. “But my clothes!” she cried. “I had forgot them, and then the door is locked, too. I can’t get away, after all. Oh, I know I never shall get away from here!”

“Yes, you will, mistress,” said Dred; “don’t you fret about that, now. Jack, here, shall fetch you your clothes, for they’re only just inside, and I’ll go bring the ladder from the shed over yonder, and so you can get down as quick as a wink. Don’t you fret and cry any more; you get yourself dressed as quick as you can after Jack fetches your clothes, and we two’ll go down and get the boat ready. Then we’ll come back for you. Just you get ready, and we’ll be ready for you.”

Jack hurried off, glad to do something for her that might soothe her. He entered the house very quietly, and had no difficulty in finding the clothes that Betty had thrown into the hutch. When he returned with them he found that Dred had already brought the ladder, and set it up against the side of the house. He climbed part way up the ladder, and reached the bundle silently up to her as she reached down for it.

His heart was very full of her as he and Dred walked down to the boat together. “Pore young thing!” said Dred. “‘Twas as if the thought of going had nigh broke her heart,” and Jack nodded his head without speaking.

As they approached the waterside the broad mouth of the creek stretched out dim and misty before them into the night. The trees of the further shore stood out

obscurely in the darkness, and the pallid, rippling surface of the water seemed to stretch away to dim, infinite distance. The little waves beat with a recurrent and pulsing plash and slide upon the beach, and the chill air was full of the smell of brackish water and of marshy ooze.

The yawl, a big, clumsy, broad-beamed, open boat, lay drawn up on the beach near to the landing. The mast, with the sails furled close and snug, the gaff, and the long oars lay along the thwarts. Jack helped Dred step the mast, and together they partly loosened the reef-points so that the sail hung limp and ready to be spread at a moment's notice. There was a small barraca nearly half-full of water in the bow of the boat. Dred lifted it out, drew the plug, smelled briefly at the water, and then turned it out upon the sand. Then he sat down upon the rail for a talk, while the water glugged and gurgled out of the keg upon the beach. "D'ye see," he began, "I look at this here affair this way. 'Tis not as though I was playing the captain false, d'ye see? for I was dead set against this here venture from the very first, and he went into it in spite of me. I didn't want the girl fetched here, and I told him he would be getting hisself into bitter trouble if he did fetch her. Well, he would do it, and now 'tis just as I said. Now, d'ye see, 'tis either to take this young lady away, or else to sit by and see her die, as she's bound to do if she lives here much longer; and 'tis as bad for the captain one way as 'tis another. If she dies on his hands he'll be hung for sure, and if she gets away, the whole province of Virginny'll be down here to roast him out; and either way 'tis as bad as can be, and nothing gained if she dies. Well, then, I don't choose to sit by, and let her die, and no good come of it. My neck's mightily precious to me, for 'tis all I've got; and if I can save it from being stretched by taking her back home again, why not do it—can ye tell me that?"

"What you say's true enough, Dred," said Jack.

But Dred appeared to be speaking more for himself than for Jack, and he sat for a while in silence. The water had all run out from the keg, but still he did not move.

Then he suddenly began speaking again. “There’s summat as I don’t know as I ever told ye about, lad. D’ye remember my telling you once how I shot a young gentleman aboard an English bark the captain took some two years or more ago?”

“Yes, I do,” said Jack. And then an instant light flashed upon him. Dennis had several times told how young Mr. Edward Parker had been killed by the pirates, but the coincidence had never before struck him. It had never before occurred to him to parallel the tragedy of young Mr. Parker with the story Dred had told him about shooting a young gentleman aboard the Duchess Mary; nor is it likely that he would have thought of it now, only for the very meaning tone in which Dred spoke. “Why, then, was it you shot Mr. Edward Parker?” he cried out, and he could see in the gloom that Dred nodded his head. It was only after quite a while that Dred said, “Ay, ‘twas I shot him, and now you knows it.” Jack sat looking intently at him through the glimmering darkness. “Now, what I mean to say is this,” he continued; “when we gets back to Virginny, don’t you go telling to anybody that I was ever mixed up in that there business, for ‘twould mean hanging for me if you did. What’s done can’t be cured, and ‘twould only get me into a peck of trouble if you was to talk about it. D’ye see, if I’m going to take the trouble and risk of carrying this young lady back to her father, why, I ought to get paid for it, and not get hung at the end of all my trouble.”

“I’ll not say anything about it,” said Jack. “I never thought of it being you who shot the young gentleman. So far as I’m concerned, I sha’n’t say a word about it; but how about the captain? Won’t he be likely to tell about it for the sake of getting even with you?”

“That for the captain!” said Dred, with a gesture. “Who’ll mind what he says? If Colonel Parker’s going to give me anything for bringing his gell back he’ll give it, and then away I goes out of harm’s way. By the time the captain’s had time to talk, why, I may be as far away as Indjy or Cochin Chiny.”

Then he arose and picked up the empty barraca and led the way up to the house.

It was maybe half an hour before everything was ready for the departure. Beside a barraca of fresh water, they brought down and stowed away in the boat a ham, a flitch of bacon, a bag and a half of biscuit, and a lemon net full of yams. Everything was done so silently that the pirate captain and his wife and the wounded Hands slept on undisturbed by their preparations. Then, all being ready, they shoved the yawl off from the shore, and drew it around to the end of the wharf, where they lashed it with stern-lines and bow-lines to the piles. “Now, lad,” said Dred, “we’re ready to start; and if you’ll go up and fetch the young lady, I’ll go up to the house and bring down the two storm-coats. Like enough we’ll need ‘em afore we gets to the end of our cruise.”

Jack found Miss Eleanor Parker ready, and waiting for him. He climbed the ladder to the window, and she handed him out her traveling-bag. Then he noiselessly assisted her to the ladder, and thence to the ground. He did not say anything to her nor she to him, as they walked rapidly away together in the silence down toward the boat. Before they had gone very far they caught up with Dred, carrying the two storm-coats. He opened one of the pockets, and showed Jack that he had brought Captain Teach’s case-bottle, which had been newly filled with rum, and he burst out into a soundless laugh as he dropped the bottle back into the pocket again. “A cruise with a girl and a boy,” he said, “and a yawl-boat for to cruise in! What d’ye think of that for a bloody salt like I be?” and he fetched Jack a slap on the back. Jack could smell the fumes of rum upon his breath, and he knew that Dred must have been taking a drink before he left the house. He did not reply, and after that they walked on in silence down to the little wharf and out to where the yawl lay at the end of the landing.

“I tell ye what ’tis, mistress,” said Dred; “if your father don’t stand to me for this here, there’s no such thing as thankfulness in the world. I tell you, he ought to pay

me well for doing this, and trying to get you back home again."

"Indeed—indeed, my father'll never forget what you're doing for me!" she cried. "Nor shall I ever forget it either, but will be grateful to you both for as long as ever I live." Then Jack and Dred helped her down into the boat. As Dred stepped forward to spread the sail, Jack pushed the yawl off with one of the oars, and it drifted slowly away from the end of the little wharf into the broad, dim, night-lit waters of the creek. Then he turned to help Dred loose the sail, the boat drifting slowly further and further away into the pallid night, and the young lady sitting silent and motionless in the stern thwarts.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE BEGINNING OF THE VOYAGE

AT FIRST the three fugitives—the young lady and Jack and Dred—sailed away in silence. The wind blew swiftly, and the dark, silent shores seemed to slide away strangely and mysteriously behind them. As they ran out into the broad, misty waters of the greater river, the distorted half-moon was just rising from a bank of clouds in the east, and a sort of obscure light lit up everything indistinctly. The wind was blowing fresh and cool, and as the boat came further and further out into the wider waters it began to pitch and dance. "About!" called Dred, and, as he put down the tiller and drew in the sheet, hand over hand, the sail flapping and fluttering, Jack and the young lady crouched, and the boom came swinging over. The boat heeled over upon the other course, and then drove forward swiftly with a white splash of loud water at the bow, and a long misty wake trailing behind, flashing every now and then with a sudden dull sparkle of pallid phosphorescence.

Neither Jack nor Dred had spoken anything to the young lady since they had left the wharf behind, and she sat silent and motionless in the stern where they had placed her. Jack had gone forward to raise the peak a little higher. As he came back,

stepping over the thwarts, he looked at her; her face shone faint and pallid in the moonlight, and he saw her shudder. “Why, mistress,” he said, “you are shivering—are you cold?”

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JACK AND DRED RESCUE ELEANOR—THE START.

“No, I’m not cold,” said she, in a hoarse, dry voice. And then, for the first time, Jack noticed the sparkle of tears upon her cheeks. Dred was looking at her, and perhaps saw the tears at the same time.

“Here,” said he, suddenly, “put on this overcoat; ‘twill make you more comfortable.” She protested feebly, but Dred and Jack persisted, and Jack held the coat for her as she slipped her arms into it.

“There’s a scarf in the traveling-bag yonder,” she said. “If you’ll let me have it I’ll put it on.”

Jack reached the bag to her, and she placed it upon the seat beside her and opened it, turning over the clothes until she found what she wanted. Then she wrapped the scarf around her head, tying it in beneath her chin. She felt in her pocket for her handkerchief and wiped her eyes. “How long will it take us to get back to Virginia?” she asked.

Jack looked at Dred. “Why, I don’t know,” said Dred. “Maybe not more’n a week.”

“A week!” she repeated.

“Why, yes. Perhaps not that long, though,” he added, “if the weather holds good, and we’re not stopped any place.” No one said anything for a while, and the boat plunged swiftly on, the waves, every now and then clapping against the bow, sending a dash of spray astern, and the water gurgling away noisily behind. Suddenly Dred turned toward the young lady again. “You must be tired,” he said. “I know very well you must be tired.”

“No, I’m not very tired,” said she, faintly.

“Why, mistress, I know you must be tired from the sound of your voice. Here, lad”—to Jack—“you take the tiller while I see if I can make her comfortable. Now, then,” he said, as he turned to her, “you lie down there with your head on this here bundle, and I’ll cover you over.”

She obeyed him silently, and he covered her over with the second overcoat, tucking it in under her feet. “I’ll never forget what you are doing for me, as long as I live,” she said. “I—” her lips moved, but she could not say anything more.

“That’s all very well, mistress,” said Dred, gruffly. “Never you mind that, just now.”

Jack looked long and fixedly at the young lady’s face, pallid in the growing moonlight which sparkled in her dark eyes; she looked singularly beautiful in the white light. “Where be ye going?” called out Dred, suddenly. “Keep to your course!” And then he came back to himself and the things about him with a start, to find the yawl falling off to the wind. Then once more Dred settled himself in his place, relieving Jack of the tiller. Presently he took out his tobacco-pipe and filled it. He struck the fire with the flint and steel, holding the tiller under his arm as he did so. Then he lit his pipe, puffing hard at it for a while. The wind blew the young lady’s hair across her face and she raised her hand to put it back. Jack half lay upon the bench opposite, resting upon his elbow, his cheek upon his hand.

“D’ye see,” said Dred, beginning abruptly with the thoughts in his mind, and without any preface, “according to what I calculate they won’t be able to folly us afore late to-morrow morning. ‘Twill take ‘em some time to get a crew together to man the sloop, and it may be ten o’clock afore they gets away. In course, arter they do have her manned they’ll overhaul us fast enough; but if we have so much start as we’re like to have, why, ’tis like we’ll keep our lead till we get up into the Sound.” Jack listened, saying nothing. In spite of himself he was dozing off every now and then, and awakening with a start. As Dred talked to him, the words came distantly to

his ears. “D’ye see,” said Dred, after puffing away at his pipe for a while in silence—and once more Jack aroused from the doze with a start at the sound of his voice—“D’ye see, what we’ll have to do’ll be to sail up into Albemarle Sound, past Roanoke Island and so into Currituck Sound. The waters there be shoal, and even if the sloop should folly us we can keep out of her way, maybe, over the shallows. Old Currituck Inlet—if’t is anything like I used to know it three year ago—is so as we can get over it at high tide in the north channel; that is, we may if the bar ain’t closed it yet. The sloop can’t folly through the inlet; she draws too much water for that, and if we once get there, d’ye see, we’re safe enough from all chase. Contrarywise, if they run down to Ocracock, thinking we took that way—what with running so far down into the Sound and we having the gain on ‘em of so much start, they’d have as poor chance as ever you saw in your life to overhaul us afore we gets inside of Cape Henry. D’ye understand?”

Again Jack had dropped off into a dim sleep; at the last question he awoke with a start. “What did you say, Dred?” he asked; “I didn’t hear the last part.”

Dred looked keenly at him for a moment or two; then he took the pipe out of his mouth and puffed out a cloud of smoke. “Well,” he said, “it don’t matter no way. You lay down and go to sleep.”

“No, I won’t,” said Jack. “I’ll just rest this way.” He was lying upon the thwart, his head propped upon his arm. He tried to stay awake, but presently he began again dozing off, waking every now and then to find Dred steadily at the helm, and the young lady lying motionlessly opposite to him. At last he fell fairly asleep and began dreaming.

When he awoke again he found the day had broken, although the sun had not yet risen. They were running down about a quarter of a mile from the shore. A dark, dense fringe of pine forest grew close to the water’s edge. The breeze was falling away with the coming of the day, and the boat was sailing slowly, hardly careening

at all to the wind.

Jack sat up, looking about him, and then at the young lady, and there his gaze rested. She looked very white and wan, but she was sleeping deeply and peacefully, her eyelids closed, and the long, dark lashes resting softly on her cheek. Dred followed Jack's look, and there his eyes rested also. As Jack moved, stretching his stiffened arms, Dred put his finger to his lips and Jack nodded.

About a half a league over the bow of the boat Jack could see the wide mouth of a tributary inlet to the Sound. He slid along the seat toward Dred. "What water is that over there?" he whispered.

"That's the mouth of the Pungo," said Dred. "I'm a-going to run ashore at the p'int, and I hope the wind'll hold to reach it. There's a lookout tree there, and I want to take a sight to see if there's any sign of a chase. I don't know as we'll get there without oars, though," he said, "for the wind's dying down. I tell you what 'tis, lad, you'd better whistle your best for a breeze; for just now 'tis worth gold and silver to us, for the furder we reaches now, the safer we'll be. By and by, about this time, they'll be stirring at home to find we've gone. If we'd have to lay at the p'int yonder all day, 'twill give 'em a chance to man the sloop and be down on us. As like as not they'll be getting a slant o' wind afore we do, if it comes out from the west, as 'tis like to do."

Jack looked over the edge of the boat and down into the brackish water, clear but brown with juniper stain. It seemed to him that the yawl barely crept along. "At this rate," said Dred, "we're not making two knot an hour."

The sun rose round and red over the tops of the trees of the distant further shore, and the breeze grew lighter and lighter. Every now and then the sail, which lay almost flat, began to flutter. Presently the boom swayed inward a little, and as it did so a level shaft of light fell across the young lady's face. She moved her hand feebly over her face; then she opened her eyes. Jack and Dred were gazing at her as she did so.

First there was a blank look of newly awakened life in her face, then bewilderment, then a light of dawning consciousness. Then she sat up suddenly. “Where am I?” she said, looking about her, dazed and bewildered.

“You’re safe enough so far, Mistress,” said Dred; “and I’m glad you’re awake, for’t is high time we was taking to the oars. An ash breeze is all we’ll be like to have for a while now.” He gave the tiller a quick jerk or two. “Come, Jack,” said he; “I’ll make out well enough to do the sailing, but’t is you’ll have to take to the oars.”

“Very well,” said Jack; “that suits me well enough.”

He drew out the oars, clattering, and dropped them into the rowlocks. Then he shot a quick glance over the bow, spat on his hands, and gripped the oars. As he began rowing, the sail swung in over the boat, and Dred steadied it with one hand, holding the tiller with the other. He laid the bow of the boat for a little cypress-tree that stood out beyond the tip of the point in the water. Jack rowed and rowed, and the shore drew foot by foot nearer and nearer; and presently they went slowly around the point into a little inlet or bay sheltered by the woods that stretched out like arms on either side. Then the bow of the boat grated upon the sand, and Dred arose from where he sat. “Here we be,” he said, stretching himself.

Fronting upon the beach was a little sandy bluff three or four feet high, and beyond that stretched away the pine forest, the trees—their giant trunks silver-gray with resin—opening long, level vistas into the woods carpeted with a soft mat of brown needles. “We’ll go ashore here a bit,” said Dred; “you come along o’ me, Jack, and we’ll go down to the p’int to the lookout tree. Don’t you be afraid if we leave you a little while, mistress; we’ll be back afore long.”

“I would like to get out of the boat for a little while too,” she said, “for I’m mightily tired.”

“To be sure you be,” said Dred. “Come, Jack, lend a hand to help her young ladyship ashore.”

They spread out one of the overcoats upon the sand, and made her as comfortable as they could. The sun, which had now risen above the tops of the trees, shone warm and strong across the broad, level stretch of smooth water. The young lady sat gazing away into the distance. “We’ll be back again soon,” said Dred. “Come along, Jack.” She looked toward them and smiled, but made no other reply.

“Methinks she appears better already,” said Jack, as he and Dred walked away together.

“Ay,” said Dred, briefly.

They walked down along the sandy shore for some little distance, and then cut across a little narrow neck of land to the river shore upon the other side. A great, single pine-tree stood towering above the lower growth, and there were cleats nailed to the trunk, leading from the earth to the high branches above. “Here we be,” said Dred; “and now for a sight astern.” He laid aside his coat, and then began ascending the tree by means of the cleats. Jack watched him as he climbed higher and higher until he reached the roof-like spread of branches far overhead. There he flung one leg over the topmost cleat, and, holding fast to the limb, sat looking steadily out toward the westward, his shirt gleaming white among the branches against the sky of the zenith. He remained there for a long time, and then Jack saw him climbing down again. He brushed his hands smartly together as he leaped to the ground, and then put on his coat.

“Well,” said Jack, “did you see anything?”

“No,” said Dred, “I didn’t. ’Tis a trifle thick and hazy-like—d’ye see? But so far as I could make out, there ain’t no chase in sight yet awhile.”

The young girl, when they returned, was walking up and down the beach. She hesitated when she saw them, then came a lingering step or two to meet them, and then stood waiting.

“I see naught so far, mistress,” said Dred, when they had come up to her; “so far as I

see we're safe from chase."

"You are very good to me," she said. "I was just thinking how kind you are to me." She looked from one to the other as she spoke, and her eyes filled with tears. Jack looked sheepish at the sight of her emotion, and Dred touched his forehead with his thumb, with rather an abashed salute. They stood for a moment as though not knowing what to say.

"Well, lad," said Dred, in a loud, almost boisterous voice, making a pretended feint as though to strike at Jack as he spoke, "'tis time to be off again with an ash breeze, seeing as no other don't come up for to help us. Every mile we make now, d'ye see, is worth ten furder on. As for a bite to eat, why, we'll just have to take that as we goes along. Come, mistress, get aboard, and we'll push off." He helped the young lady into the boat, and then he and Jack pushed it off, Jack running through the water and jumping aboard with a soaking splash of his wet feet.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A STOP OVER NIGHT

AS THE DAY had settled toward sundown the breeze had sprung up again. There was a growing bank of haze in the west through which the sun shone fainter and fainter as it approached the horizon and then was swallowed up and lost. The wind, blowing strong and full, drove the water into ridges that caught up to the yawl as it sailed free before the breeze, ran past it swiftly, and left it behind. Dred seemed almost elated. "This be the wind for luck," he said. "Why, I do suppose that, gin the captain the best he could have, we've got a fifteen-league start on him, and he'll never overhaul that. 'T will blow up stiff from the east'rd to-morrow, like enough, and 'twill be a cross sea ag'in' us beating up into the head of the Sound, but fifteen leagues of start means a deal, I can tell ye. And, besides that, the captain'll most likely sail straight for Ocracock. It be n't likely, d'ye see, that he'd think of running

up into the sounds. He'd think that we'd trust to our lead of any chase and strike right for the open water through Ocracock, and he'll not think we'd try to make through the shoals out Currituck way."

Jack had no notion at all of the geography of the sounds, but he did understand that while they were going one way, Blackbeard would probably be going another.

Meantime the gray light of the failing day had softened the harsh outlines of the pine and cypress woods into a mysterious gloom of shadows. They were sailing now not over two or three furlongs from the shore as they ran yawing along before the wind. Upon one side of them were thick swamp forests, upon the other the seemingly limitless water of the sound, reaching away its restless gray without any sign of a further shore.

So they sailed for a while in silence, the gray light growing duller and still more dull. "Do you know," said Dred, suddenly speaking, "there's a settlement up beyond that island yonder—or leastwise there was some houses there three or four year ago. I knowed the man what lived there then, and I'm going to put in, d'ye see, and find out whether he lives there yet awhile. If he do, I'll get him to let us stay over night. D'ye see, I can't stand sailing forever, and the young lady can't stand it, neither. So we'll make a stop here, if we're able. Like enough we'll make another in Shallowbag Bay in Roanoke Island. Arter that we'll make a straight stretch for Currituck."

Jack was looking out ahead at the island of which Dred had spoken. It was separated by a little inlet from the wooded shores. Dred laid his course toward a point of land that jutted out into the water, and the shore slid swiftly away behind them as they rushed onward before the wind. "How far is it to the settlement?" asked Jack.

"Just beyond the p'int yonder," said Dred, briefly. He was looking steadily out ahead.

As they came nearer to the point, the waters of a little bay began to open out before

them. It spread wider and wider, and at last they were clear of the jutting point. Then Jack saw the settlement of which Dred had spoken.

There was a slight rise of cleared land, at the summit of which perched a group of four or five huts or cabins. They were built of logs and unpainted boards beaten gray with the weather. Two of the houses showed some signs of being inhabited; the others were plainly empty and deserted, and falling to ruin. Near the houses was a field of Indian corn dried brown with the autumn season, and there were two or three scrubby patches of sweet potatoes, but there was no other sign of cultivation.

Dred put down the tiller and drew in the sheet, and the boat, heeling over to the wind that now caught her abeam, met the waves splashing and dashing as it drove forward upon its other course. Gradually the trees shut off the rougher sea, and then the yawl sailed more smoothly and easily. Presently a dog began barking up at one of the houses, and then two or three joined in, and Jack could see the distant hounds dim in the twilight gray of the falling evening, running down from the houses toward the landing. At the continued noise of their barking several figures appeared at the door of the two cabins—first a man, then two or three half-naked children, then a woman. Then a young woman came to the door of the other cabin with a baby in her arms, and a young man. “Ay,” said Dred, “that be Bill Gosse, for certain.” Then finally the boat grated upon the shore, the sail falling off flapping and clattering in the wind, and the voyage of the day was ended.

The man who had first appeared went into the house, the next moment coming out with a tattered hat upon his head. He came down toward the landing, the children following him scatteringly, and the woman standing in the doorway, looking down toward them. The young man was also coming slouching behind. Dred and Jack had lowered the peak and had begun to take in the boom when the man reached the shore. Jack looked at him with a good deal of curiosity, and the young lady sat in the stern thwarts also gazing at him. He was tall and lean and sallow. A straggling beard

covered his thin cheeks and chin, and a mat of hair plaited behind hung down in a queue. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and he wore a pair of baggy breeches tied at the knees. “Hullo, Bill!” said Dred. “How be ye?”

“Be that you, Chris Dred?” said the man in a slow, dull voice. “Who’ve ye got there with ye?”

“This? This here is a young Virginny lady of quality,” said Dred. “She’s been took sick, and we—this lad and me—is carrying her back home again. I’ll tell ye all about that by and by. What I want to know now is, will you take us in for the night? The holy truth is, I’m just getting over the fever, and this here young lady, as I said, be sick too. We’ve been sailing all day, and so I thought maybe you’d let us make port here for the night.”

The man stood stolidly watching Dred and Jack furl and tie up the sail. He did not offer to help them. “Where did ye come from?” he asked, at last, in the same slow, heavy voice.

“Down from the Pungo,” said Dred.

“Well, you’d better come up to the house and talk to my woman,” said the man, answering Dred’s initial question. “I be willing enough for you to stay, so far as I’m concerned.”

“Very well,” said Dred, “so I will. You wait here, Jack, till I come back again.”

He stepped stiffly out of the boat, and then the two went away together. The young man who had also come down to the shore remained behind, squatted upon the ground, staring fixedly at Jack and the young lady, who looked back at him with a good deal of interest.

“I do hope the good woman’ll let us stay all night,” said the young lady, suddenly breaking the long silence. “Indeed I feel mightily tired, and if I could only rest for that long I know it would do me a vast deal of good.”

“She’ll let you stay,” said the young man. “That’ll be all right, mistress.”

Just then Dred reappeared, coming back alone from the house down through the twilight, and confirmed what the young man had said. “’Tis all right,” he said, “and they’ll give us a berth for the night. Come along, mistress, I’ll help you.”

Miss Eleanor Parker rose, stiffened with the long sitting in the boat, supporting herself with her hand upon the rail. Dred reached out a hand and helped her out over the thwarts and to the beach. Then he climbed into the boat, and taking the case-bottle of rum out of the locker, slipped it into his pocket.

The woman and the three children stood in the doorway watching the three as they approached. As Jack entered he looked back and saw that the young man was bending over the yawl, examining it curiously.

The house consisted of one large room. There was a fireplace at one end of it; two benches, and two or three rickety chairs, a table, and two beds comprised the furniture. The man was standing by the fireplace with an empty pipe between his lips. “This here is the young lady,” said Dred to the woman. “I dare say she’d like to lie down now a bit while you’re getting supper ready,” and Miss Eleanor Parker acknowledged that she was very tired.

“Wasn’t that there Captain Teach’s yawl-boat?” the man asked of Dred.

“Ay,” said Dred.

“I thought I knowed her,” the man said.

Almost as soon as she had eaten her supper, the young lady went again and lay down upon the bed. Then Dred brought out the case-bottle of rum, and he and the two men began drinking. Jack watched them with growing apprehension, for they were helping themselves very freely. He thought every moment Dred would cork the bottle again, but he did not do so, and gradually the effect of the drink began to show itself. Jack could see that Dred was taking more of it than he should. He began to talk more volubly, and the stolid silence of the men began to melt also. The older

man became at times almost quarrelsome. He repeated the same thing over and over again, and the young man would laugh foolishly at everything that was said. Jack looked toward the young lady, wondering whether she was conscious of what was going on. But she lay perfectly quiet and motionless, and he thought that maybe she did not perceive it. “Won’t you come over and join us?” said Dred, waving the bottle toward Jack, and then taking a drink himself.

“No,” said Jack, “I won’t.”

“Why not?” said the man. “You be n’t too proud to drink with us, be you?”

“No, I’m not,” said Jack, shortly, “but I don’t choose to. I’m tired, and I wish you’d stop drinking yourselves.”

“You be too proud by half,” the man said, thickly; “that be the trouble with you. You be too proud.”

The young man laughed and wiped his mouth with his fingers. “Why, no, Jack hain’t proud,” said Dred; “Jack and I’ve been messmates for many a day, hain’t we, Jack? D’ye know, he was kidnapped from England. His uncle over there is a rich lord or summat of the sort. Anyways, he’s got a stack of money. Hain’t that so, Jack?”

“I don’t care,” said the man, “who he be. The trouble with him is he be too proud—that’s what’s the trouble with him. When a man axes me to come and drink with him, I don’t care who he be, I goes. I wouldn’t be too proud to drink—no, not if I was a lord instead of a beggarly runaway.”

“He be n’t no runaway,” said Dred. “He and me was two of Blackbeard’s men. Now we be our own men. We be taking that there young lady back to Virginny.” Then he leaned across the table and whispered hoarsely, “She’s a beauty—she is.”

His hoarse whisper sounded very loud through the cabin. Jack shot a look at the young lady, but she did not move or seem to notice what was said. “I wish you’d be still, Dred,” he said; “you’re drinking more than you ought, and you don’t know

what you're saying."

Dred looked gloomily at him for a while. "You mind your business, lad," he said, "and I'll mind mine. I know what I'm doing and what I'm saying well enough."

Jack made no reply. He curled himself up on the bench and shut his eyes. Dred sat still, looking moodily at him for a little while. "You think I be drinking more than I ought, do you?" But still Jack did not reply nor open his eyes. "I'll drink as much as I choose, and no man shall stop me."

"You'll make yourself sick again, that's what you'll do," Jack said, shortly.

He lay there with his eyes closed, and presently, in spite of himself, the events of the day before and the sleepless nights he had passed began to press upon him, and he drifted off into broken fragments of sleep, through which he heard the men still talking and laughing. At last, after a while, he opened his eyes to silence. The fire had burned low, and the men lay sleeping on the floor with their feet turned toward the blaze. Jack arose, took up the bottle upon the table, and shook it beside his ear. There was still a little liquor in it, and he corked it and laid it behind him on the bench so as to make sure it should not be touched again.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE SECOND DAY

THE woman was stirring early in the morning, and Jack awoke with a start. Dred was moving uneasily in his sleep, with signs of near waking as Jack went to the door and looked out. It was still hardly more than the dawn of day. It had clouded over during the night, and had been raining, as Dred had predicted. The wind was now blowing swiftly from the east, sending low, drifting clouds hurrying across the sky. From where he stood he could see, through the twilight gray, the white caps, churning every now and then to a sudden flash of foam out across the dim stretch of the sound, and he thought to himself that their voyage was likely to prove very

rough. Presently Dred stood beside him. He stood for a while gazing out into the gray daylight, as Jack had done, looking across the sound; then he went out into the open air. He stared up into the wet sky above, and then all around him. "'Tis likely we'll have a stiffish day of it," he said, "but we'll have to make the most of it, let us get ever so wet. 'Tis lucky I thought of fetching the overcoats." He said nothing about the night before, and did not seem to remember that he had been drinking more than he should have done. The woman of the house emerged from the outshed, carrying an armful of sticks. "Hullo, mistress!" Dred called to her, "I wish you'd wake the young lady and tell her we've got to be starting again. Why, it must be well on toward six o'clock by now, allowing for this here thick day."

The woman was smoking a short, black pipe. She took it out of her mouth with one hand. "Won't you stay and take a bite to eat first?" said she.

"Why, no, we won't," said Dred. "We'll eat what we want aboard the boat. We've got a good rest, and we're beholden to ye for it." He opened his hand, and then Jack saw he had a sixpenny-piece in it. "I want you to take this here," he said, "for to pay you for your trouble."

The woman stretched out her lean, bony hand, took the coin eagerly enough, and slipped it in her pocket. "I'll tell her young ladyship that you be waiting," said she with a sudden access of deference, and then went back into the house.

"Did you see anything of that there bottle o' rum?" said Dred.

"Yes, I did," said Jack. "I put it away in the overcoat pocket."

"That's all well, then. I thought maybe Bill or Ned Gosse had stole it. Was there anything left in it?"

"A little," answered Jack.

Beside this Dred made no present reference to the drinking bout of the night before.

When they went back into the house again the young lady was sitting on the edge of

the bed, smoothing her hair. "'Tis time we was starting now, mistress," said Dred, "and the sooner the better."

They all went down to the boat together, the two Gosse men accompanying them. This time they helped Jack and Dred unfurl the sail, and set the boom and the gaff, and they pushed the boat off into the water when all were aboard. "You'll have a windy day outside, like enough," Bill Gosse said, in his slow, dull voice.

"I reckon we will," Dred replied briefly.

There was a fine spit of rain-like mist drifting before the wind, and the water lapped and splashed chilly, beating in little breakers upon the beach. "You'd better put on this overcoat, mistress," said Dred, and he held it for the young lady as he spoke.

She looked steadily at him for a moment, and it seemed to Jack, with some intuitive knowledge, that she was thinking of the way Dred had been drinking with the two men the night before. Jack himself took the coat from Dred and held it for her while she slipped her arms into the sleeves. Then he helped her settle herself in the stern. "You'd better put on the other overcoat, Dred," he said. "I can do very well without it."

The boat was already dancing and bobbing with the short, lumpy swell that came in from the sound around the point, and gave promise of rough weather outside. The sail flapped and beat noisily in the wind; Jack hoisted the peak, and Dred, drawing the sheet with one hand and holding the tiller with the other, brought her around to the wind. The people on the shore stood watching them as the boat heeled over and then, with gathering headway, swept swiftly away. There were no farewells spoken. Jack, looking behind, saw the people still standing upon the shore as it rapidly fell away astern, dimming in the gray of the misty rain.

"About!" called Dred, sharply, and then the boat, sweeping a curve, came around upon the other tack. Once more they came about, and then presently they were out in the open sound. There was a heavy, lumpy sea running, and the boat began to lift

and plunge to the greater swell with every now and then a loud, thunderous splash of water at the bow, and a cloud of spray dashed up into the air. A wave sent a sheet of water into the boat. “I reckon we’ll have to drop the peak a bit, Jack,” Dred said; “she drives too hard.”

The young lady, in the first roughness of the rolling sea, was holding tight to the rail. Jack stumbled forward across the thwarts and lowered the peak. The water was rushing noisily past the boat. “’Tis a head wind we’ve got for to-day,” said Dred, when he had come back into the stern again. “I’m glad we’ve had a bit of rest afore we started, for we’ll hardly make Roanoke afore nine or ten o’clock to-night if the wind holds as ’tis.”

And it was after nightfall when they ran in back of Roanoke Island. The wind had ceased blowing from the east, and was rapidly falling away. Just at sundown, the sun had shot a level glory of light under the gray clouds, bathing all the world with a crimson glow, and then had set, the clouds overhead shutting in an early night. The water still heaved, troubled with the memory of the wind that had been churning it all day. The young lady had been feeling ill, and she now lay motionless upon the bench, where Jack had covered her with everything obtainable, and where she lay with her head upon her bundle of clothes, her face, resting upon the palm of her hand, just showing beneath the wraps that covered her. In the afternoon Dred had handed the tiller over to Jack, who still held it. Now, wrapped in one of the overcoats, he lay upon the other bench, perhaps sleeping. The night had fallen more and more, and soon it was really dark. Jack held steadily to the course that Dred had directed, and by and by he was more and more certain that he was near the land. At last, he really did see the dim outline of the shore, and in the lulls of the breeze he could presently hear the loud splashing of the water upon the beach.

“Dred,” he called, “you’d better come and take the helm.” Dred roused himself instantly, shuddering with the chill of the night air as he did so. He looked about

him, peering into the darkness.

“Ay,” he said, after a while. “’Tis Roanoke, and that must be Duck Island over yonder, t’other way. That’s Broad Creek, yonder,” pointing off through the night. “We might run into it, and maybe find some shelter; but what I wants to do, is to make Shallowbag Bay. There’s a lookout tree on the sand-hills there, and I wants to take a sight behind us, to-morrow. D’ye see, ’tis Roanoke Sound we’re running into. If the sloop follys us at all, ‘twill run up the ship-channel Croatan way.”

Jack did not at all understand what Dred meant, but he gave up the tiller to him very readily. He went across to where the young lady lay. “How d’ye feel now, mistress?” he said.

“I feel better than I did,” she said, faintly, opening her eyes as she spoke.

“Would you like to have a bite to eat now?” She shook her head, and once more Jack took his place in the stern.

“There’s another reason why I wants to make Shallowbag Bay,” said Dred. “D’ye see, there’s a house there,—or, leastwise, there used to be,—and I thought if we could get there it might make a shelter for the young lady, for she’s had a rough day of it to-day, for sartin.”

“How far is it?” Jack asked.

“Why,” said Dred, “no more’n a matter of eight mile, I reckon. Here; you hold the tiller, lad, while I light my pipe.”

Maybe an hour or more passed, and then Dred began, every now and then, to take a lookout ahead, standing up and peering away into the darkness. The clouds had now entirely blown away, and the great vault of sky sparkled all over with stars. All around them the water spread out, dim and restless. They were running free close to the shore. A point of sand jutted out pallidly into the water, and through the darkness Jack could dimly see the recurrent gleam of breaking waves upon it. Again Dred was standing up in the boat, looking out ahead. “We’re all right, now,” he said, after

a long time of observation, finally taking his seat. “I’ve got my bearings now, and know where I be. The only thing now is, that we sha’n’t run aground, for here and there there’s not enough water to float a chip.” As he ended speaking he put down the tiller, and the yawl ran in close around the edge of the point. He sailed for some little distance before he spoke again. “We’ll have to take to the oars for the rest of the way,” he said, at last; and as he spoke he brought the bow of the boat up to the wind. “We’re done our sailing for to-night. The shanty’s not more’n a mile furder on from here across the bay. We’d better put up the sail here, I reckon. ‘Twill be swinging all around in your way when ye row.”

He arose and went forward, Jack following him, and together they loosened the boom and began reefing the sail still wet with the rain and spray of the day’s storm. The young lady did not move; perhaps she was asleep. Then Dred returned to the tiller, and Jack took to the oars.

In somewhat less than half an hour Jack had rowed the heavy boat across the open water. As he looked over his shoulder, he could see a strip of beach just ahead, drawing nearer and nearer to them through the night. A minute more, and the bow of the boat ran grating upon a sandy shoal and there stuck fast. Dred arose, and he and Jack stepped into the shallow water. The young lady stirred and roused herself as they did so. “Sit still, mistress,” said Dred, “and we’ll drag the boat up to the beach. It seems like there’s a bank made out here since I was here afore.” They drew the boat across the shoal and up the little strip of beach. Beyond, a level, sedgy stretch reached away into the night. “You wait here,” said Dred, “and I’ll go up and see if the shanty be there yet. I know ‘twas there three year ago.”

He went away, leaving Jack and the young lady sitting in the boat.

“Do you think he’ll take us to such a place as he did last night?” she presently asked of Jack.

“No, I know he won’t,” Jack said. “’Tis an empty hut he’s going to take us to this

time."

"I'd rather sleep out in the boat," she said, "than go to such a house again. 'Twas dreadful last night when those three men sat drinking as they did."

"Well," said Jack, "this is no such a place as that. 'Tis an empty hut; and he only comes here to find shelter for you for the night, and to take an observation to-morrow."

She had not said anything before as to what she had felt during the previous night, and Jack had thought until now that perhaps it had made little or no impression upon her. "You needn't be afraid of Dred, mistress," he said, presently. "He's rough, but he's not a bad man, and you needn't be afraid of him."

She did not reply; and Jack could read in her silence how entirely she had lost confidence in Dred. Presently he appeared, coming through the darkness. "'Tis all right," he said; "I have found the cabin. We'll just pull the yawl a trifle furder up on the beach, and then I'll take ye up to it. Now, mistress, if you'll step ashore."

Jack and Dred helped the young lady out of the boat. She stood upon the damp beach wrapped in the overcoat she had worn all day as Jack drove the anchor down into the sandy soil and made fast the bow-line. Dred opened the locker and brought out the biscuit and the ham.

He led the way for some distance through the darkness, his feet rustling harshly through the wiry, sedgy grass, and by and by Jack made out the dim outline of the wooden hut looming blackly against the starry sky. It was quite deserted, and the doorway gaped darkly. It stood as though toppling to fall; but the roof was sound, and the floor within was tolerably dry. At any rate, it was a protection from the night. As Dred struck the flint and steel, Jack stripped some planks from the wall, breaking them into shorter pieces with his heel, and presently a fire blazed and crackled upon the ground before the open doorway of the hut, lighting up the sedgy, sandy space of the night for some distance around.

After they had eaten their rude meal, they made the young lady as comfortable as possible; then they sat down side by side to dry their damp clothes by the fire. It burned down to a heap of hot, glowing coals, and Jack threw on another armful of sticks; they blazed up with renewed brightness, lighting up the interior of the hut with a red glow.

“Like enough this is the last stop we can make,” said Dred, “betwixt here and the inlet.”

“How far is the inlet from here, d’ye suppose?” Jack asked.

“Perhaps a matter of twenty league or so,” said Dred. “We can’t expect the wind to favor us as it has done. We’ve got along mightily well so far, I can tell ye. We’ve got a lead far away ahead of any chase the captain can make arter us. I do believe we be safe enough now; all the same I’m going over to the sand-hills to-morrow to take a look astern. Over in that direction—” and he pointed with his pipe—“there’s a lookout tree we used to use three or four year ago when we was cruising around here in the sounds.”

“Do you know, Dred,” said Jack, “I believe you’re vastly the better in health for coming off with us? You don’t seem near as sick as you did before we left Bath Town.”

“Ay,” said Dred; “that’s allus the way with a sick body. I hain’t time now to think how sick I be.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE THIRD DAY

JACK was awakened the next morning by Dred stirring about. The sun had not yet arisen, but the sky, mottled over with drifting clouds, was blue and mild. “Well,” said Dred, “I’m going over to the sand-hills now. You and the young lady can get

some breakfast ready ag'in' I get back."

"Don't you mean to take me along with you, then?" Jack asked.

"No," said Dred, "'twould be no use. You can do more by staying here and getting ready a bite to eat, for I want to make as early a start as may be."

Jack watched him as he walked across the little sandy hummocks covered with the wiry sedge grass that bent and quivered in the gentle wind. "How long will you be gone, Dred?" he called after the departing figure.

The other stopped and turned around. "About a half hour," he called back, and then he turned and went on again.

Jack got together some wood for the fire, and presently had a good blaze crackling and snapping. The young lady was stirring, and in a little while she came to the door of the hut and stood looking at him. "Where's Mr. Dred?" she asked.

"He's gone across to an observation tree over yonder," Jack said, pointing in the direction with a bit of wood. "He says he'll be back within half an hour, and he wants that we should get breakfast ready against that time."

The young lady stood looking about her. "'Twill not storm again to-day, will it?" said she.

"No," said Jack, "the weather's broken now for good." He felt a curiously breathless constraint in being thus alone with her with no one else near them, but she was clearly altogether unconscious of any such feeling, and her unconsciousness abashed him all the more. He busied himself studiously about his work without speaking, the young lady standing watching him, and the breakfast was cooked and spread out upon a board some time before Dred returned. His impassive face looked more than usually expressionless. "Did you see anything?" Jack asked.

He did not reply to the question. "We'll not eat here," he said; "we'll just take it aboard the boat and eat it there as we sails along." And then it flashed upon Jack that

he must have seen something. “Ye might ha’ roasted two or three o’ them taties we fetched with us,” Dred continued. “We hain’t touched them yet, and this is like enough to be the last chance we’ll get to do so now, for we ben’t like to go ashore—leastwise this side of the inlet—and arter that we’ve got to make straight to Virginny.” Then he caught Jack’s eye with a meaning glance, and presently led the way around to the other side of the hut. There he leaned with his back against the side of the house, his hands thrust deeply into his breeches pockets. “Well,” he said, in a low voice, “I been and took a lookout astern.”

“Well,” Jack said breathlessly, “what of it?”

“Why,” said Dred, “I see a sail off to the south’rd a-making up Croatan way.”

Jack felt a sudden, quick, shrinking pang about his heart. “Well,” he said, “what of it? Was it the sloop?”

Dred shook his head. “I don’t know that,” he said, “and I can’t just say as ‘twas the sloop—but I can’t say as ‘tweren’t the sloop, neither. It may have been a coaster or summat of the sort; there’s no saying, for ‘twas too far away for me to tell just what it was. But I’ll tell you what ’tis, lad, we’ve just got to get away as fast as may be, for the craft I see ben’t more than fourteen or fifteen knot astarn of us, and, give her a stiff breeze, she may overhaul that betwixt here and the inlet if we tarries too long.”

Jack was looking very fixedly at Dred. “Well, Dred,” he said, “suppose ’tis the sloop, and it does overhaul us, what then?”

Dred shrugged his shoulders, and there was something in the shrug that spoke more voluminously than words could have done. “’Tis no use axing me what then,” he said, presently. “We just sha’n’t let her overhaul us, and that’s all. We’ll not think on anything else.”

The sense of overshadowing danger in the possibility of the boat that Dred had seen being the sloop, and the further possibility of its overhauling them, loomed larger

and larger in Jack's mind the more his thoughts dwelt upon it, swelling up almost like a bubble in his bosom. For a time it seemed as though he could not bear the bigness of the apprehension growing so within him. He wondered that Dred could appear so indifferent to it. "Why, Dred," he cried, "how can a body help thinking about such a thing?"

Dred looked at him out of his narrow, black, bead-like eyes, and then shrugged his shoulders again. His face was as impassive as that of a sphinx.

Jack stood thinking and thinking. The growing apprehension brought to him for a moment a feeling almost of physical nausea. He believed that Dred believed that the sloop was really Blackbeard's, and that it was overhauling them. He heaved an oppressed and labored sigh. "I wish," he said, "we'd only sailed straight ahead instead of stopping over night—first, down yonder at Gosse's in the swamp, and now here."

Again Dred shrugged his shoulders. "Well," he said, "you be hale and strong enough to stand sailing four or six days on end in an open boat. But you don't seem to think as how the young lady can't stand it—saying naught of myself. If I hadn't took care of myself, and had 'a' been took sick on your hands, you'd be a deal worse off than you are now. And, arter all," he added, "'tis a blind chance of that there craft being the sloop. She may be a coaster. Well, 'tis no use stopping here to talk about that there now. The best thing for us to do is to make sail as quick as may be. I don't see how they got track on us anyhow," he said, almost to himself, "unless they chanced to get some news on us at Gosse's, or unless they ran across Gosse hisself." He slapped his thigh suddenly. "'Tis like enough, now I come to think on it, Gosse went off som'ers to buy rum with the sixpence I gave his mistress, and so ran across the captain in the sloop, som'ers, maybe down toward Ocracock way."

To all this Jack listened with the heavy oppression of apprehension lying like a leaden weight upon his soul. "Then you do think the sail you saw was the sloop?"

said he with anxious insistence, and once more and for the third time Dred shrugged his shoulders, vouchsafing no other reply.

Never for any moment through all that long day did Jack's spirit escape from that ever-present, dreadful anxiety. Always it was with him in everything that he saw or did or said, sometimes lying dull and inert behind the vivid things of life, sometimes starting out with a sudden vitality that brought again that sickening nausea, as a sort of outer physical effect of the inner distress of spirit.

The breeze had grown lighter and lighter as the day advanced, but by noon they had run in back of a small island, and by three or four o'clock were well up into the shoal water of Currituck Sound. During the time they were crossing the lower part of Albemarle Sound Dred would every now and then stand up to look back; then again he would take his place, gazing out ahead. Each time he had thus stood up, Jack had looked at him, but could learn nothing of his thoughts from his expressionless face.

Suddenly Dred glanced up overhead, the bright sunlight glinting in his narrow black eyes. "The wind be falling mightily light," he said, and then again he stood up and looked out astern, stretching himself as he did so. This time when he sat down he exchanged one swift glance with Jack, and Jack knew that he had seen something. After that he did not rise again, but he held the tiller motionlessly, looking steadily out across the water that grew ever smoother and smoother as the breeze fell more and more away. By and by he said suddenly: "Ye might as well get out the oars and row a bit, lad; 'twill help us along a trifle."

The cloud of anxiety was hanging very darkly over him as Jack went forward and shipped the oars into the rowlocks. The sun had been warm and strong all day, and, without speaking, he laid aside his coat before he began rowing. They were skirting along now well toward the eastern shore of Currituck Sound. There was a narrow strip of beach, a strip of flat, green marsh, and then beyond that a white ridge of

sand. Flocks of gulls sat out along the shoals, which, in places, were just covered with a thin sheet of water. Every now and then they would rise as the boat crept nearer and nearer to them, and would circle and hover in clamorous flight. Presently, as Jack sat rowing and looking out astern, he himself saw the sail. The first sight of it struck him as with a sudden shock, and he ceased rowing and resting on his oars looking steadily at it. He felt certain that Dred believed it to be the pirate sloop; he himself felt sure that it must be, for why else would it be following them up into the shoals of Currituck Sound? Then he began rowing again. Suddenly, in the bright, wide silence, the young lady spoke. “Why, that is another boat I see yonder, is it not?”

“Yes, mistress,” said Dred, briefly. He had not turned his head or looked at her as he spoke, and Jack bowed over the oars as he pulled away at them.

After that there was nothing more said for a long time. The young lady sat with her elbow resting upon the rail, now looking out at the boat astern, and now down into the water. She was perfectly unconscious of any danger. A long flock of black ducks threaded its flight across the sunny level of the distant marsh, and there was no cessation to the iterated and ceaseless clamor of the gulls. Now and then a quavering whistle from some unseen flock of marsh-birds sounded out from the measureless blue above. Jack never ceased in his rowing; he saw and heard all these things as with the outer part of his consciousness; with the inner part he was thinking, brooding ceaselessly upon the possibility of capture. He looked at Dred’s impassive face, and now and then their eyes met. Jack wondered what he was thinking of; whether he thought they would get away, or whether he thought they would not, for the other gave no sign either of anxiety or of hope.

The sail was hanging almost flat now. Only every now and then it swelled out sluggishly, and the boat drew forward a little with a noisier ripple of water under the bows. Jack pulled steadily away at the oars without ceasing. It seemed to him that

the sail of the boat in the distance stood higher from the water than it had. At last he could not forbear to speak. “She’s coming nigher, ain’t she, Dred?” he asked.

“I reckon not,” said Dred, without turning his head. “I reckon ’tis just looming to the south’rd, and that makes her appear to stand higher. Maybe she may have a trifle more wind than we, but not much.”

The young lady roused herself, turned, and looked out astern. “What boat is that?” she said. “It has been following us all afternoon.”

Dred leaned over and spat into the water; then he turned toward her with a swift look. “Why, mistress,” he said, “I don’t see no use in keeping it from ye; ’tis like that be Blackbeard’s boat—the sloop.”

The young lady looked steadily at him and then at Jack. “Are they going to catch us,” she asked, “and take us back to Bath Town again?”

“Why, no,” said Dred, “I reckon not; we’ve got too much of a start on ‘em. It be n’t more than thirty knot to the inlet, and they’ve got maybe six knot to overhaul us yet.” He turned his head and looked out astern. “D’ye see,” said he, “ye can’t tell as to how far they be away. It be looming up yonder to the south’rd. ’Tis like they be as much as seven knot away rather than six knot.” Again he stood up and looked out astern. “They’ve got a puff of air down there yet,” he said, “and they have got out the sweeps.”

Jack wondered how he could see so far to know what they were doing.

The breeze had died away now to cat’s-paws that just ruffled the smooth, bright surface of the water. Dred, as he stood up, stretched first one arm and then the other. He stood for a while, resting his hand upon the boom, looking out at the other vessel. Then he began to whistle shrilly a monotonous tune through his teeth. Jack knew he was whistling for a wind. Presently he took out his clasp-knife and opened it as he stepped across the thwarts. Jack moved aside to make way for him. He stuck the knife into the mast and then went aft again. The young lady watched him

curiously. “What did you do that for?” she asked.

“To fetch up a breeze, mistress,” said Dred, shortly.

All this time Jack was pulling steadily at the oars without ceasing. The sun sloped lower and lower toward the west. “They ain’t gaining on us now,” said Dred; but Jack could see that the sail had grown larger and higher over the edge of the horizon.

The yellow light of the afternoon changed to orange and then to red as the sun set in a perfectly cloudless sky. Suddenly, Jack felt his strength crumbling away from him like slacked lime. “I can’t row any more, Dred,” he said. “I’m dead tired, and my hands are all flayed with rowing.” He had not noticed his weariness before; it seemed as though it came suddenly upon him, its leaden weight seeming to crush out that dreadful anxiety to a mere dull discomfort of spirit.

The palms of his hands were burning like fire. He looked at the red, blistered surface; they had not hurt him so much until he stretched them, trying to open them. His hands and arms were trembling with weariness.

“You’d better take a drink of rum,” said Dred; “‘twill freshen you up a bit. You’d better take a bite, too.”

“I don’t feel hungry,” he said hoarsely.

“Like enough not,” said Dred. “But ‘twill do you good to eat a bite, all the same. The biscuits are aft here. By blood! we didn’t leave much in the bottle down at Gosse’s, did we?” and he shook the bottle at his ear. “Here, mistress, eat that,” and he handed a biscuit to the young lady.

The sail in the distance burned like fire in the setting sun. The three looked at it. “D’ye say your prayers, mistress?” said Dred.

She looked at him as though startled at the question. “Why, yes, I do,” she said. “What do you mean?”

“Why, if you do say your prayers,” said Dred, “when you say ‘em to-night just ax

for a wind, won't ye? We wants to make the inlet to-night, as much as we wants salwation."

The sun set; the gray of twilight melted into night; the ceaseless clamor of the gulls had long since subsided, and the cool, starry sky looked down silently and breathlessly upon them as they lay drifting upon the surface of the water. "I'll take a try at the oars myself," said Dred, "but I can't do much. You go to sleep, lad, I'll wake you arter a while."

Jack lay down upon the bench opposite the young lady. He shut his eyes, and almost instantly he seemed to see the bright level of the water and the green level of the marsh, as he had seen them all that afternoon; he seemed to hear the clamor of the gulls ringing in his ears, and his tired and tingling body felt almost actually the motion of rowing. At last his thoughts became tangled; they blurred and ran together, and before he knew it he was fast asleep—the dead sleep of weariness—and all care and fear of danger were forgotten.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE FOURTH DAY

JACK felt some one shaking him. He tried not to awaken; he tried to hold fast to his sleep, but he felt that he was growing wider and wider awake. Dred was shaking him. Then he sat up, at first dull and stupefied with sleep. He did not, in the moment of new awakening, know where he was—his mind did not fit immediately into the circumstances around him—the narrow, hard space of the boat, the starry vault of sky, and the dark water—then instantly and suddenly he remembered everything with vivid distinctness. He looked around in the blank darkness almost as though he expected to see the pursuing boat.

"Come," said Dred. "I've let you have a good long sleep, but I can't let you have no more. We've got to take to the oars again, and that's all there is about it. I tried to

row, but I couldn't do it. And so ever since you've been sleeping the boat's been drifting. I'll lend a hand with one of the oars for a while. 'Twill not be so hard on you as if you had to pull both. But I couldn't row by myself, and that's all there is of it."

"How long have I been asleep?" asked Jack.

"A matter of four or five hours," said Dred.

"Four or five hours!" exclaimed Jack. It seemed to him that he had not been asleep an hour. He stood up, and stretched his cramped limbs. There was not a breath of air stirring. The young lady lay dark and silent in the stern, covered over with the overcoats and wraps, and evidently asleep. She stirred just a little at the sound of their talking, but did not arouse herself.

"Have you seen or heard aught of the sloop?" said Jack.

"No," said Dred. "Go and take your place, and we'll pull a bit. I'll take this seat here; you take the one amidships."

Jack climbed over the thwarts to his place. He was still drunk and half inert with the fumes of sleep. He took up his oar, and settled it quietly into the rowlock so as not to disturb the young lady. "Do you know what time 'tis, Dred?" he asked.

"I make it about two o'clock," said Dred, "judging by the looks of the stars." He was leaning over his oar, opening the bag of biscuit. He handed one back to Jack. "We'll take a bite to eat and a drop to drink afore we begin rowing," said he. "Where's the bottle? Oh, yes; here 'tis," and again the young lady stirred at the sound of his voice near her.

Jack's hands were still sore and blistered from the rowing of the day before. At first the oar hurt him cruelly, but his hands presently got used to the dragging jerk, and he dipped and pulled in time with the moving of Dred's body, which he could dimly see in the darkness. They rowed on in perfect silence. Now and then Jack's consciousness blurred, and he felt himself falling asleep, but he never ceased his

rowing. Then again he would awaken, looking out, as he dipped his oar, at the whirling eddy it made in the water. Every stroke of the oar drew the heavy boat perhaps a yard and a half onward. “A thousand strokes,” said Jack to himself, “will make a mile.” And then he began counting each stroke as he rowed. Again his mind blurred, and he forgot what he was counting. “‘Twas three hundred and twenty I left off with,” he thought, as he wakened again. “Maybe there’s been twenty since then. That would make three hundred and forty. Three hundred and forty-one—three hundred and forty-two—three hundred and forty-three—there was a splash—that was a fish jumped then—three hundred and forty-four—three hundred and forty-five.”

Dred stopped rowing. “I’ve got to rest a bit,” he said, almost with a groan. “Drat that there fever! I don’t know what a body’s got to have fever for, anyway.”

Jack rested upon his oar. It seemed to him that almost immediately he began drifting off into unconsciousness, to awaken again with a start. Dred was still resting upon his oar, and the boat was drifting. They were enveloped and wrapped around by a perfect silence, through which there seemed to breathe a liquid murmur.

Still there was no breeze, but there began to be an indescribable air of freshness breathed out upon the night. The distant quavering whistle of a flock of marsh-birds sounded suddenly out of the hollow darkness above. It was the first spark of the newly awakened life. Again the tremulous whistle sounded as if passing directly above their heads. The young lady still lay darkly motionless in the stern. All the earth seemed sleeping excepting themselves and that immaterial whistle sounding out from that abysmal vault—the womb of day. Jack fancied that there was a slight shot of gray in the east. Again the whistle sounded, now faint in the distance. Then there was another answering whistle; then another—then another. Presently it seemed as though the air were alive with the sound. Suddenly, far away, sounded the sharp clamor of a sea-gull; a pause; then instantly a confused clamor of many gulls.

There slowly grew to be a faint, pallid light along the east as broad as a man's hand, but still all around them the water stretched dark and mysterious.

Dred was again resting upon his oar, breathing heavily. "'Twill be broad daylight within an hour," he said, "and then we can see where we be."

His sudden speech struck with a startling jar upon the solitude of the waking day, and Jack was instantly wide awake. "How far are we from the inlet now, do you suppose, Dred?"

A pause. "I don't just know. 'Tis maybe not more than fifteen mile."

"Fifteen miles!" repeated Jack. "Have we got to row fifteen miles yet?"

"We'll have to if we don't get a breeze," said Dred, still panting; "and as we didn't get a breeze to reach us to the inlet last night, we don't want it now. 'Twill only serve to fetch them down upon us now if a breeze do spring up."

Again, for the third time, the sleeping figure in the stern stirred a little at the sound of voices. The growing light in the east waxed broader and broader. In that direction the distance separated itself from the sky. Jack could see that they were maybe a mile from the marshy shore, over which had now awakened the ceaseless clamor of the gulls and the teeming life of the sedgy solitude. To the west it was still dark and indistinct, but they could see a further and further stretch of water. "I see her," said Dred. "Well, she don't appear to have overhauled us much during the night, anyways."

Jack could see nothing for a while, but presently he did distinguish the pallid flicker of a spot of sail in the far-away distance. Had it gained upon them? It seemed to Jack that, in spite of what Dred had said, it was nearer to them.

The day grew wider and wider. The sun had not yet risen, but everything stood out now in the broad, clear, universal flood of light that lit up the heavens and the earth. The east grew rosy, and the distance to the west came out sharply against the dull, gray sky, in which shone steadily a single brilliant star. The boat was wet with the

dew that had gathered upon it.

The young lady roused herself, and sat up, shuddering, in the chill of the new awakening. She looked about her. Then Dred stood up, and looked long and steadily at the strip of beach to the east. “I don’t know much about the lay of the coast up this way,” he said; “there ought to be a signal-mast over toward the ocean side som’ers about here. But, so far as I can make out, we be ten mile from the inlet. I thought we’d been nigher to it than we are.”

The water was as smooth as glass.

Suddenly the sun rose, big, flattened, distorted, from over the sand-hills, shooting its broad, level light across the water, and presently the sail in the distance started out like a red flame in the bright, steady, benignant glow. Again Jack and Dred were rowing, and the boat was creeping, yard by yard, through the water, and leaving behind them a restless, broken, dark line upon the smooth and otherwise unbroken surface.

The sun rose higher and higher, and the day grew warmer and warmer, and still not a breath of air broke the level surface of the water. It was, maybe, ten o’clock, and the point of land they had been abreast of an hour before, lay well behind. “That’s the inlet, where you see them sand-hills ahead yonder,” said Dred.

“How far are they away?” said Jack.

“Not more’n three mile, I reckon.”

The pirates in the sloop were rowing steadily with the sweeps. Jack could see, every now and then, the glint of the long oars as they were dipped into the water and came out, wet and flashing, in the sunlight. “They’re gaining some on us, Dred,” said he, after a while.

“That comes from a sick man’s rowing,” said Dred, grimly. “Well, they won’t catch us now, if the wind’ll only hold off a little longer. But I’m nigh done up, lad, and that’s the truth.”

“So am I,” said Jack. Again, as during the night before, the keen sense of danger that had thrilled him seemed to be sunk into his utter weariness—dulled and blunted.

They rowed for a while in silence. The sand-hills crept nearer. Suddenly Dred stood up in the boat, holding his oar with one hand. He did not speak for a moment. “There’s a breeze coming up down yonder,” he said. “They’re cracking on all sail. They’ll get it, like enough, afore we do. ’Tis lucky we be so nigh the inlet.” He took his place again. “Pull away, lad,” said he; “I reckon we’re pretty safe, but we’ll make it sure. As soon as we get to the inlet we can take all day to rest.”

Jack could see that they were raising every stitch of sail aboard the sloop. Then, presently, as he looked, he could see the sails fill out, smooth and round. “They’ve got it now,” said Dred, “and they’ll be coming down on us, hand over hand.”

The young lady was looking out astern. Jack managed to catch Dred’s eye as he turned for a moment and looked out forward. He could not trust himself to speak. Again that heavy weight of fear and anxiety was growing bigger and sharper. Suddenly it swelled almost to despair. He did not say anything, but his eyes asked, “What are our chances?”

Dred must have read the question, for he said: “Well, it hain’t likely they’ll overhaul us now. If we’d only had wind enough to carry us to the inlet last night we’d been safe; but the next best thing is no wind at all, and that we’ve had. I reckon we’ll make it if we keep close to the shore where ’tis too shoal for them to folly. Yonder comes the breeze. By blood! we’ll get it afore I thought we would.” He drew in his oar, and handed it to Jack. “You take this,” said he, “and keep on rowing, and I’ll trim sail.” He went forward, and raised the gaff a little higher. “Pull away, lad—pull away! and don’t sit staring.”

In spite of what Dred had said, Jack could see that the sloop was rapidly overhauling them. It was now coming rushing down upon them, looming every moment bigger and higher. In the distance Jack could see a black strip lining the smooth surface of

the water. It was the breeze rushing toward them ahead of the oncoming sail. Suddenly, all around them, the water was dusked with cat's-paws. Then came a sudden cool puff of air—a faint breath promising the breeze to come. The sails swelled sluggishly, and then fell limp again. The line of oncoming breeze that had been sharp now looked broken and ragged upon the nearer approach of the wind. "Now she's coming," said Dred.

He was looking steadily over the stern. The sloop, every stitch of sail spread, was making toward them. There was a white snarl of waters under her bows. It seemed to Jack that in five minutes she must be upon them. Suddenly there was another cool breath, then a rush of air. The boom swung out, the sail filled, and the boat gave a swift lurch forward with the ripple and the gurgle of water about them. Then the swift wind was all around them, and the boat heeled over to it, and rushed rapidly away.

Jack was still rowing. The motion had grown habitual with him, and now he hardly noticed it. The sloop seemed to be almost upon them; he could even see the men upon the decks. Dred sat grimly at the tiller, looking steadily out ahead, never moving a hair. Jack thrilled as with a sudden spasm, and everything about him seemed to melt into the fear rushing down upon them—the despair of certain capture. It seemed to him that he felt his face twitching. He looked at Dred. There were haggard lines of weakness upon his steadfast face, but no signs of anxiety. Again Dred must have read his look. "They can't reach in here," said he; "the water is too shoal." Suddenly, even as he spoke, Jack saw the sloop coming about. He could hear the creak of the block and tackle as they hauled in the great mainsail, and presently it was flapping limp and empty of wind. Dred turned swiftly and looked over his shoulder. "D'ye see that?" he said. "They've run up to the shoal now. They've got to keep out into the channel, and that's about as nigh as they can come to us. They'll run out into the channel again now. What they'll try to do'll be to head us off at the inlet, but they've got to make a long leg and a short leg to do that. Ay!"

he cried, exultantly, “you’re too late, my hearty!” And he shook his fist at the sloop.

The sloop had now fallen off broadside to them. Its limp sails began to fill again, and it looked ten times as big as it had done running bow on. Suddenly there was a round puff of smoke in the sunlight, instantly breaking and dissolving in the sweeping wind. There was a splash of water; then another splash, and another, and at the same moment a report of a gun. Boom! a dull, heavy, thudding sound, upon the beat of which a hundred little fish skipped out of the water all about the boat.

At the heavy beat of the report, the young lady uttered an exclamation like a smothered scream. The cannon-ball went skipping and ricochetting across their bows and away. “Don’t you be afraid, mistress,” said Dred; “there ben’t one chance in a thousand of their hitting us at this distance; and, d’ye see, they’re running away from us now. Each minute there’s less chance of them harming us. Just you bear up a little, and they’ll be out of distance.”

She brushed her hand for a moment across her eyes, and then seemed to have gained some command over herself. “Are they going to leave us?” she asked.

“Why, no,” said Dred, “not exactly. They know now that we’re making for the inlet. What they’ll do’ll be to run out furder into the channel, and then come back on another tack, and along close in to the inlet so as to head us off. But, d’ye see, the water be too shoal for them, and they’re likely to run aground any moment now. As for us, why, we’ve got a straight course, d’ye see, and our chance is ten to one of making through the inlet afore they can stop us.”

Again there was a puff of smoke that swept away, dissolving down the wind. Again came the skipping shot, and again there was the dull, heavy boom of the cannon. It seemed to Jack that the shot was coming straight into the boat. The young lady gripped the rail with her hand. The cannon-ball went hissing and screeching past them. “By blood!” said Dred, “that was a nigh one, for sartin. ‘Twas Morton hisself lay that gun, I’ll be bound.” Another cloud of smoke, and another dull report, and

another ball came skipping across the water, this time wide of the mark. The sloop was now running swiftly away from them, growing smaller and smaller in the distance, her sails again smooth and round, tilting to the wind. They did not fire any more. Jack bent to the rowing, plunging and splashing the water in the tenseness of his apprehension and fear. He no longer felt the smart of his hands or the weariness of his muscles; it seemed to him that he had never felt so strong.

It was not until the guns had been fired that the young lady appreciated the full danger they were in. Jack's own feelings for the immediate time had been too tense to notice her. Now he saw that she was wringing her hands and tearlessly sobbing, her face as white as ashes. "Come, come, mistress!" said Dred, roughly. "'Twon't do no good for you to take on so. Be still, will you?"

The brusqueness of his speech silenced her somewhat. Jack saw her bite at her hand in the tense suppression she set upon herself.

"How far is it to the inlet?" said Jack, hoarsely.

"Half a mile," said Dred.

Jack turned his head to look. "Mind your oars," said Dred, sharply; "'tis no time to look now. I'll mind the inlet. 'Twon't get us there any quicker for you to look. By blood!" he added, "she's coming about again."

The sloop was maybe a mile away; again it was coming about. "Now for it!" said Dred. "'Tis they or us this time." Jack swung desperately to the oars. "That's right—pull away! Every inch gained is that much longer life for all on us."

The water was now dappled with white caps, and the swift wind drove the yawl plunging forward. The sloop was now set upon the same course that they were, only bearing toward them to head them off. As for them, their leeway was bringing them nearer and nearer the shore. Dred put down the helm a little further so as to keep the boat off the shoals. This lost them a little headway. Jack's every faculty was bent upon rowing. The sea-gulls rose before them in dissolving flight—the cannon-shots

had aroused them all along the shore, and Jack heard their clamor dimly and distantly through the turmoil of his own excited fears. His throat was dry and hot, and his mouth parched. He could hear the blood surging and thumping in his ears. He looked at the young lady as though in a dream, and saw dully that her face was very white and that she gripped the rail of the boat. Her knuckles were white with the strain, and he saw the shine of the rings upon her fingers. The sloop, as he looked at it, seemed to grow almost visibly larger to his eyes; it seemed to tower as it approached. He could see the figures of the men swarming upon the decks. He looked over his shoulder—the inlet was there. "Unship them oars," said Dred sharply; "'tis sail or naught now." Then as Jack, unshipping the oars, tipped the boat a little, Dred burst out hoarsely, "Steady, there, you bloody fool! what d'ye heave about so for?" Jack drew in the oars and laid them down across the thwarts, and again Dred burst out roughly: "Look out what ye're doing! You're scattering the water all over me."

"I didn't mean it," said Jack; "I couldn't help it."

Dred glared at him, but did not reply. Jack looked over his shoulder; the broad mouth of the inlet was opening swiftly before them—the inlet and safety. Suddenly the bottom of the boat grated and hung upon the sand; and Jack, with a dreadful thrill, realized that they were aground. The young lady clutched the rail with both hands with a shriek as the boat careened on the bar, almost capsizing. Dred burst out with a terrible oath as he sprang up and drew in the sheets hand over hand. "Push her off!" he roared. Jack seized one of the oars; but before he could use it the yawl was free again and afloat, and once more Dred sat down, quickly running out the sheets.

Jack's heart was beating and fluttering in his throat so that he almost choked with it. Dred did not look at the sloop at all. Some one was calling to them through a speaking-trumpet, but Jack could not distinguish the words, and Dred paid no attention to them. There was another puff of smoke, and this time a loud, booming

report, and the almost instant splash and dash of the shot across their stern. Jack saw it all, dully and remotely. Why was Dred sailing across the mouth of the inlet instead of running into it? “Why don’t you run into the inlet, Dred?” he cried, shrilly. “Why don’t you run into the inlet? You’re losing time! They’ll be down upon us in a minute if you don’t run in!”

“You mind your own business,” shouted Dred, “and I’ll mind mine!” Then he added, “I’ve got to run up past the bar, ha’n’t I? I can’t run across the sand, can I?”

The sea-gulls were whirling and circling all about them, and the air was full of their screaming clamor.

“About!” called Dred, sharply; and he put down the helm.

Jack could see straight out of the inlet to the wide ocean beyond. It was a quarter of a mile away, and there was a white line of breakers. There was a loud, heavy report—startlingly loud to Jack’s ears—and a cannon-ball rushed, screeching, past them. He ducked his head, crouching down, and the young lady screamed out shrilly. Dred sat at the helm, as grim and as silent as fate. Again the bottom of the boat grated upon the sand. “My God!” burst out Jack, “we’re aground again!” Dred never stirred. The yawl grated and ground upon the sandy bar and then, once more, it was free.

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THE PIRATES FIRE UPON THE FUGITIVES.

Then Dred looked over his shoulder. He looked back. Then he looked over his shoulder again. “Get down, mistress!” he called out, sharply. “Get down in the bottom of the boat! They’re going to give us a volley.” Jack saw the glint of the sunlight upon the musket-barrels. The young lady looked at Dred with wide eyes. She seemed bewildered. “Get down!” cried out Dred, harshly. “Are you a fool? Get down, I say!” Jack reached out and caught her violently by the arm and dragged her down into the bottom of the boat. Even as he did so he saw a broken, irregular cloud

of smoke shoot out from the side of the sloop. He shut his eyes spasmodically. There was a loud, rattling report. He heard the shrill piping and whistling of the bullets rushing toward them. There was a splashing and clipping. Would he be hurt? There was the jar of thudding bullets. There was a shock that seemed to numb his arm to the shoulder. He was hit. No; the bullet had struck the rail just beside his hand. He was unhurt. He opened his eyes. A vast rush of relief seemed to fill his soul. No one was hurt. The danger was past and gone. No! some of the pirates were about to fire again. There was a puff of smoke; then a broken cloud of smoke, a sharp report, another, and another; then three or four almost together. The bullets were humming and singing, clipping along the top of the water. One—two, struck with a thud against the side of the boat. Jack saw, in a blinded sort of way, that the sloop had come up into the wind; she could follow them no further. There were half a dozen puffs of smoke altogether. O God! would the dreadful danger never be past? Was there no way of escape?

“Ach!” cried out Dred, sharply.

Jack looked up with an agonizing, blinding terror. Was Dred hurt? No; he could not be. There was no sign of hurt. Was that a little tear in his shirt! O God! Was it real? Suddenly there was blood. O, it could not be. Yes; there was a great, wide stain of blood shooting out and spreading over his shirt! “O, Dred!” screamed Jack, shrilly.

“Sit down!” roared Dred. He put his hand to his stomach, at the side, and then there was blood in his hand. Suddenly there was a broken swirl and toss all around them. It was the broken ground-swell coming in past the shoals. The boat pitched and tossed. There was a thundering splash of breakers. Jack sprang up. “Steady!” cried out Dred. Jack’s blinded eyes saw that the pirate sloop was far away in the distance. Were they still shooting? He did not know. He saw everything with dizzy vision. O God! Dred’s shirt was all soaked with blood. What was it now? There was something. They were out in the ocean; that was it—the inlet was passed. “Oh—h!”

groaned Dred, “I’m hurt—I’m hurt!”

CHAPTER XL

FIAT JUSTITIA

AS THE BOAT swept into the great lift and fall of the ocean swell, Dred had leaned forward and rested his forehead upon the tiller, which he still held. His body shook and heaved, and Jack sat like one turned to stone. The thought went through his mind, “He is dying—will he die as he sits there? Can it really be that he is dying?” Then Dred looked up, and his face was as white as ashes. Great beads of sweat stood on his forehead. “Some water,” he said, hoarsely; “give me some water, lad.”

Miss Eleanor Parker still lay in the bottom of the boat, whither Jack had dragged her. Jack went forward blindly across the thwarts and brought out a cup of water. His hand shook and trembled; his eyes saw, but did not see, what he was doing; his throat was constricted as though it would choke him. Then he came back with the cup of water. It slopped and spilled over his hand. Suddenly, Miss Eleanor Parker shrieked. She had aroused, and in her first glance had seen the blood. “Oh, what is it?” she cried. Dred had raised himself again from the tiller upon which he had been leaning, and he groaned. Jack pushed past the young lady without speaking to her or noticing her, and Dred reached out his hand for the cup of water. It shook, and part of the water spilled, as he put it to his lips and, throwing back his haggard face, drank it off. The young lady was sitting staring at him, white even to the very lips. “Oh! oh!” she moaned, wringing her hands, “oh! oh!” Jack panted, his breath coming hot in his dry mouth. He tried to moisten his lips again and again, but they remained dry.

The yawl, its course unheeded, had come up into the wind, rising and falling with the slow heaving of the ground-swell, the sail fluttering and flapping. Dred leaned with one elbow upon the seat beside him. “Ye’ll have to go up for’rd, mistress,” he

said presently, in a hoarse voice, “I’ve got to do summat—I’ve got to do summat to stop this here place somehow. O Lord!” he groaned. She got up and went forward to the bow, where she crouched down, hiding her face in her hands. “Reach me that there shawl,” said Dred. “We’ve got to tear it up.”

Jack wrenched open the bundle, and with hands and teeth tore the shawl into strips. Dred had stripped off his shirt. Jack looked at him. He saw it, and he thrilled dreadfully and turned his eyes away. “Come, come, lad,” said Dred, “this be no time for any such-like foolishness. Well, give me that strip, I’ll do it for myself.”

The young lady still sat crouched down in the bow. It was all perfectly silent as Jack busied himself about Dred. “Are you more comfortable?” he said, at last.

“Yes,” said Dred. “M-m-m-m,” he groaned. “Let me lie down.” Jack had helped him on with his coat again, and had buttoned it under his chin. He had rolled up the shirt and thrown it overboard. “’Tis all right now, mistress,” he said; “you can come back here again now.”

He supported Dred as the wounded man lay down upon the stern thwart, then he covered him over with the overcoats. He did not leave him to help the young lady as she came aft to sit down upon the bench opposite to where Dred lay. Suddenly she burst out crying.

Dred lay with his eyes closed. His face was white and his forehead covered with a dew of sweat. He opened his eyes for a moment and looked at her, but said nothing, and closed them again. Jack, his breast heaving and panting, sat at the tiller. As he did so he saw that there were stains of blood upon it and upon the seat. Then he drew in the sheets, and the yawl once more came up to its course.

The pirates must have landed from the sloop, for they had come out across the land and down to the beach. They fired a few muskets-shots after the boat, but the bullets fell short, and Jack held the yawl steadily to her course, and soon they were dropping the hills of the inlet far and farther away behind.

After a while Dred began every now and then to sigh recurrently, and it was very dreadful to listen to him. All about them was the bright sunlight and the swift salt wind driving the boat onward with its tragic freight under the warm, mellow sky, so serenely calm and so remotely peaceful. Jack, sitting there, heard, as from a distance, the young lady's convulsive sobbing. Suddenly Dred spoke hoarsely. "I want another drink of water," he said.

"Will you get the water for him, mistress?" said Jack. Then he knew that he too was crying, and he wiped his eyes with the skirt of his jacket.

She instantly arose and went forward to the barraca in the bows, presently coming back with a brimming cup of water. Dred raised himself upon his elbow and drank it off, and again they sailed onward for a long time of silence.

Suddenly Dred spoke in a low, uncertain voice. "You've got to run ashore, lad," he said. "I can't stand this any more; I've got to get ashore."

"Do you think I can get the boat through the breakers?" Jack said, chokingly.

"Ye'll have to," said Dred, groaning as he spoke, "for I can't bear it here." Then Jack drew in the sheets and brought the boat up with its bow diagonally toward the distant beach. The sand-hills of the inlet were lost in the distance, and all danger of pursuit was over. As the yawl drew nearer to the beach, Jack could see that very little surf was running. "You'll have to bring her around with her bows to the sea," whispered Dred, opening his eyes; "and then take to the oars—and let the surf drive her in to the beach. Try to keep her off—lad—keep her bows steady." He panted as he spoke.

Jack left the tiller and shipped the oars. They were now close to the beach, and the ground-swell was sharpening to the breakers that burst into foam a little further in. He brought the bows of the boat around to the sea, and then backed water toward the shore. "Keep her off," panted Dred, "she'll go in fast—fast enough of herself."

Presently they were among the breakers; they were not very heavy, but enough to

make it needful to be careful. Suddenly, a coming breaker shot the yawl toward the beach. As the water ebbed, the boat tilted upon the sand. Jack dropped his oars and leaped out. The sweep of the next wave struck against the yawl and tilted it violently the other way. The barraca and the oars slid rattling. Dred groaned, and the young lady grasped convulsively at the rail. “Pull her up!” exclaimed Dred.

“I will,” said Jack, “but I can hardly manage her.” He held to the bows, and when the next wave came he pulled the boat around up upon the beach. The wash of the breaker ebbed, the sand sliding from under his heels. Then came another wave, and with its wash he dragged the yawl still further up the beach. Then he ran up with the bow-line and drove the anchor into the sand. He came back, his shoes and stockings and loose breeches soaked with the salt water. “You get out, mistress,” he said, “then I’ll help Dred.” She obeyed him silently, going a little distance up from the edge of the shore and there sitting crouched down upon the sand. “Now, Dred,” said Jack. Dred groaned as he arose slowly and laboriously. “Easy, easy, lad,” he whispered, as Jack slipped his arm around him. Then he laid his arm over Jack’s shoulder and heavily and painfully clambered out of the boat. He sat for a while upon the rail, the wash of a breaker sweeping up around his feet and ankles. “What a lucky thing ‘twas,” he said, looking down at the thin slide of water, “that we had high tide to carry us through the inlet, else we’d ‘a’ been lost.” Then Jack burst out crying. There seemed something very pitiful in Dred’s thinking about that now. After a while Dred steadied himself and then arose slowly, leaning heavily upon Jack, who supported him as he walked up to the little bank of sand that fronted upon the beach. Here the wounded man made an effort as though to sit down.

“Can’t you go a little further?” said Jack.

“Not much,” he whispered.

“O Dred!” said Jack, “I’m afraid you’re worse, I’m afraid you’re worse—” Dred did not reply. His hand touched Jack’s cheek, and it felt cold and limp.

“What can I do?” said the young lady, rousing herself.

“You may fetch up the two overcoats from the boat,” Jack said, “and be quick about it.”

He had seated Dred upon the sand, where he instantly sank down and lay at length. Jack supported his head until the young lady came with the two rough overcoats. He rolled one of them up into a pillow which he slid beneath Dred’s head, and then he went down to the boat and brought up the oars, and with them and the other overcoat, he and the young lady arranged a shelter over the wounded man’s face.

“Bring me a drink of rum, lad; I feel sort of faint-like,” Dred whispered, and Jack again ran off down to the boat, presently returning with the bottle. He poured out some of the liquor into the cup, and Dred drank it off. It seemed to revive him. “Come here, lad, there’s summat—summat I want to say to ye.” Jack came close to him, and the young lady also approached. “I want to speak to—Jack hisself, mistress,—if you’ll leave us alone a bit,” said Dred; and then she turned and walked away.

Jack watched her as she sat down upon the sand some distance away, wiping her eyes with her handkerchief. The sun stood midway in the heavens and it was very warm, and he stripped off his coat as he sat down alongside of Dred. Dred reached out his hand. Jack hesitated for a moment, then, seeing what he wanted, took it. Dred pressed Jack’s hand strongly. “I believe I’ve got my—dose, this time—lad,” he whispered.

“Don’t say that, Dred,” said Jack; “I—” and then he broke down, his body shaking convulsively.

“I don’t know,” said Dred, “but I kind o’ think I—won’t get over this. But if I should die, I want to ax you, lad—don’t you never tell the young mistress ‘twas I—shot her brother.”

“No, I won’t,” gasped Jack. “I won’t tell her, Dred,” and again Dred pressed the

hand he held.

He waited for a long, long while,—his breath every now and then catching convulsively,—thinking Dred might have something more to say; but the wounded man did not speak again, but lay there holding his hand. “Is that all, Dred?” he said at last. “Have you nothing more on your mind to say?”

Dred did not answer for a while. Then, as though collecting himself, “No—that’s all,” he said; and then again, presently, “I’ve been a bad man, I have. Well, I—can’t help that now—now—now,” and then he lapsed away into silence. He loosened his hold upon Jack’s hand and let his own fall limp.

Then Jack realized with a shock, how very much worse Dred was than he had been. He had been growing ever weaker and weaker, but Jack only fully realized it now. He sat watching; Dred seemed to be drowsing. “I want another drink of rum,” he whispered presently. “Another drink o’ rum—another drink o’ rum—drink o’ rum—drink o’ rum,” and he fell to repeating the words with lips that whispered more and more.

Jack arose instantly. The bottle and cup were at a little distance. The cup had sand in it, and he wiped it out. The young lady, who was sitting a little piece away, arose as she saw him coming. “Is he any better now?” she asked.

Jack could not answer; he shook his head. He knew that Dred was going to die. He was so blinded that he could hardly see to pour out the liquor. But he did so and then brought it to Dred. “Here ’tis, Dred,” he said, but there was no reply. “Here ’tis, Dred,” he said again, but still there was no answer.

Jack thrilled dreadfully. He bent down and set the cup to the wounded man’s lips, but Dred was unconscious of everything. Then he stood up and tossed out the liquor upon the sand. “Mistress!” he called out in a keen, startled voice—“mistress, come here quick! I do believe he’s passing.”

She came over and stood looking down at Dred. She was crying violently. Jack sat

squatting beside him. He reached out and felt Dred's hand, but it was very cold and inert. The young lady crouched down upon the other side, and so they sat for a long, long time. But there did not seem to be any change. The afternoon slowly waned toward sundown, and still they sat there. "You'd better go and rest a bit," said Jack, at last, to the young lady. "You're worn out with it all. I'll call you if there's any change."

She shook her head; she would not go.

The sun sank lower and lower and at last set, but still there was no change. The young lady moved restlessly now and then. "You'd better get up and walk a bit," said Jack, as the gray of twilight began to settle upon them. "You're cramped, sitting there so long." Then she got up and walked up and down at a little distance. Jack sat still. By and by he leaned over Dred. Dred had ceased breathing. A sharp pang shot through him. Was it over? Then suddenly Dred began again his convulsive breathing, and Jack drew back once more. The young lady still walked up and down, and the twilight settled more and more dim and obscure. There was a slight movement, and again Jack leaned over and touched Dred. He began breathing again, and again Jack sat down. Then there came a longer pause than usual in the breathing. It is over, thought Jack. But no; he breathed again, now fainter and shorter. He ceased. He breathed. He ceased. There was a long, long pause, then there was a rustling movement, and then silence. Was it over? Jack sat waiting, tremblingly and breathlessly, but there was no further sound. Then he reached over in the darkness and touched Dred's face. He drew back his hand quickly and sat for a moment stunned and inert. He knew in an instant what it was. He arose.

The stars had begun to twinkle in the dim sky, but sky and sea and earth were blurred and lost to his flooded eyes. He walked over toward the young lady. She stopped as he approached. "How is he?" she said.

"He—he's dead," said Jack; and then he put up his arm across his face and began

crying.

CHAPTER XLI

THE BOAT ADRIFT

NEARLY two months had passed in Virginia since Eleanor Parker had been abducted, and nothing yet had been definitely heard concerning her. There were many vague rumors from Ocracock, and it was known that Blackbeard the pirate had been for some time past up into Virginia waters. He had been seen at Norfolk two or three times, and it was known that he had been up into the James River. It was almost more than suspected that he had been concerned in the outrage, but there was as yet nothing definite to confirm such a suspicion.

Colonel Parker was still too ill to quit his room, though he had so far improved that he had begun to think of taking some steps for the recovery of his daughter.

One day Governor Spottiswood went up to Marlborough to see him. He was almost shocked to find the great man so weak and broken. “The villains!” said the sick man, in a weak and querulous voice, so different from his usual stately tones, “‘twas those men murdered my Ned, and now they have taken all that was left me.”

There was something very pathetic in the helplessness of the proud, great man, and in that weakened, tremulous voice. The governor did not reply, but he pressed the hand he held.

Mr. Richard Parker stood by his brother’s chair during his Excellency’s visit. The governor looked at him and wondered how he could be so calm and unmoved. He had never liked Mr. Richard Parker.

“My brother Richard,” said the invalid, putting his weak hand to his forehead, “my brother Richard seems to think it would be better to wait until we have some word from the villains who kidnapped Nelly.” He turned his eyes towards his brother as

he spoke. “But I can’t wait; I must do something to find her, and I can’t wait. Just as soon as I am well enough I am going to take steps to find her. They say that villain Teach hath been seen up in the James River. Maybe ‘twas he took her away, and I am going to fit out a boat,—or two boats, if need be,—and go down to North Carolina and try to find her.”

Colonel Parker’s plan appeared singularly weak and inconsequential to the Governor, but he chose to comfort his friend by encouraging any plan that might bring hope to him.

“The Pearl and the Lyme are lying at Jamestown now,” he said. “I was talking t’other day about your dreadful misfortune to some of the officers who had come over to the palace. Lieutenant Maynard was there, and I am sure, from what he said, if you will fit out two such boats and will raise volunteers for such an expedition, he will take command of it. He is a brave and experienced officer, and hath had to do with the pirates before at Madagascar. He would make the best commander you could have, especially if it came to fighting with the villains.”

“To my mind,” said Mr. Richard Parker, cutting into the talk, “‘twould be a mistake to push against the villains. To my mind, ‘twould be better to rest for a while until we hear from them. I sha’n’t need to tell you that they can have no reason for kidnapping Nelly except for the ransom they can get for her. If that is so—and I’m sure it is so—’twill be to their interest to treat her well, and to look after her with all tenderness, and to let us know about her as soon as possible; but if we should use violence toward them there is no telling what they might do out of revenge. Maybe, if we press them too closely, they may carry her elsewhither from place to place, or, if they find themselves driven into a corner, they may even make away with her for their own safety or out of revenge.” Colonel Parker shuddered at the words, but Mr. Richard Parker continued calmly, as before, “I should advise to wait a little while longer. We have waited so long as this, and it can do no harm to wait a while longer

with patience."

At this Colonel Parker cried out in his sick, tremulous voice, "Patience! patience! 'Tis easy enough for you to talk of patience, brother Richard, but how can I be patient who have all I hold most precious in the world taken away from me? O Nelly, Nelly!" he cried, covering his eyes with his trembling hands, "I would give all I have in the world to have thee safe back again! I would! I would!"

The Governor could not bear to look at the sick man in his grief. He turned away his face and gazed out of the window. Mr. Richard Parker said nothing, but shrugged his shoulders.

Before the Governor went, he took Mr. Richard Parker aside and said to him, "Sir, there may be truth in what you said just now about the inadvisability of driving too hard against the villains, but surely you must see that 'twill be infinitely better for your poor brother to have something to think of—to arouse himself. He sitteth here eating his heart out, and any plan of action is better for him than none. Were I in your place, I would encourage him in thinking of such things rather than discourage him from such hopes." But Mr. Richard Parker only shrugged his shoulders as before, without vouchsafing any reply.

Governor Spottiswood had not thought that Colonel Parker's rambling plans would result in anything, but within two weeks two boats were really fitted out—the schooner that belonged to Marlborough, and a larger sloop that was purchased for the purpose. It took a week or more to victual the boats and arm and man them, and by that time Colonel Parker was able to be up and about. He would listen to no advice, but insisted that he himself should have chief command of the expedition. Mr. Richard Parker advised him vehemently not to go, and Madam Parker besought him with tears to remain at home, while the doctor assured him that it was at the danger of his life that he went. "Sir," said the great man to the doctor, "I have been a soldier; shall I, then, stay at home when my own daughter is in danger, and let others

do the fighting for me? You shall go along, if you please, to look after my poor body, but go I shall, if God gives me life to go," and so he did, in spite of all that his family could say against it.

At Norfolk he had another though slight attack of his malady, and by order of the doctor, who had sailed with the expedition, he rested for over a week at the home of a friend at that place.

It was while he was lying at Mr. Chorley's house that he received the first fragment of news concerning the young lady that was at all definite.

A coasting vessel from South Carolina ran into Norfolk on Saturday night, coming direct from Ocracock, where she had put in during a storm a few days before. The captain of the coaster said that while they were lying at the inlet he had heard a good deal of talk about a strange lady whom it was said Blackbeard had brought down from Virginia to North Carolina a month or so before, and whom he had taken somewhere up into the sounds. It was a general report that she was extremely beautiful, and a lady of quality, and that she had been brought to North Carolina against her will.

It was on Sunday morning that somebody told Lieutenant Maynard about the coasting captain and his news, and he lost no time in coming to speech with the man. He took him directly to Mr. Chorley's house, where Colonel Parker was still staying. Mr. Chorley and Mr. Chancellor Page and Dr. Young were all present when Captain Niles told his story to Colonel Parker. "It must be Nelly!" cried out the poor bereaved father. "It can be no one else than she!"

"I would not build too much upon such a rumor," said Mr. Chorley. "Nevertheless, it does seem as though, at last, you have really news of her. And now the question is, how do you propose to act? 'Twill never do to be too hasty in such a delicate matter."

But Colonel Parker was so eager to set sail at once in quest of his daughter that he

would listen to nothing that his friends advised to the contrary. Mr. Chorley urged again and again that the utmost caution should be used lest the pirates should carry the young lady still further away from rescue, or maybe take some violent action to protect themselves. He suggested that Governor Eden be written to and requested to take the matter in hand. “Write to Governor Eden!” Colonel Parker cried out; “why should I write to Eden? Why suffer so much delay? Have I not boats fitted out and sufficiently armed and manned with brave fellows to face all the pirates of North Carolina if need be? Nay; I will go down thither and inquire into this report myself without losing time, and without asking Governor Eden to do it for me.”

This, as was said, was on Sunday morning, and Colonel Parker determined that the expedition should set sail for North Carolina early upon the morning of the following day.

It was on this same day that the news was first brought to Virginia of the loss of the French bark. One of Colonel Parker’s two boats—the sloop, which was at that time under command of an ex-man-of-war boatswain, known at Norfolk as “Captain” Blume—one of Colonel Parker’s two boats had been beating up and down the mouth of the bay for several days past, hailing incoming or outgoing vessels in the hope of obtaining some news concerning the young lady. It was about ten o’clock that Sunday morning, when the lookout in the foretop of the schooner sighted an open boat under a scrap of sail, beating up into the bay against the wind. By and by they could make out with the glass that there were men in the boat waving their hats and something white, apparently a shirt or a shift, at the end of an oar. When the sloop ran down to the boat they found it loaded with twenty men and two women; one of the women very weak and exhausted from exposure, all of them haggard and famished.

The boat was one of those belonging to the French bark that the pirates had taken, and it had been adrift, now, for eleven days, having been parted from the others at

sea during a time of heavy and foggy weather.

One of the women and three of the men were French; all the others were English—the remnant of the crew of the English bark that the Frenchman had rescued from the water-logged and nearly sinking vessel.

The man in command of the boat had been the mate of the English bark, and the story he told when he came aboard the sloop was one of continued mishaps and misfortunes that had followed them ever since they had quitted Plymouth in England for Charleston in South Carolina. Two days out from England, he said, the smallpox had broken out aboard, and the captain had died of a confluent case. Then, while the crew was still short-handed with the sickness, a storm had struck them and driven them far out of their course to the southward. Then the vessel had sprung a leak and was actually sinking under them when the French bark had picked them up. Then the Frenchman had been attacked and captured by the pirates, and all hands had been set adrift in the open boats with only three days' provisions. That, as was said, had been eleven days before, and since that they had been trying in vain to make the Chesapeake capes, having been again and again driven out of their course by the heavy weather.

It is strange how much misfortune will sometimes follow an ill-fated vessel, one mishap succeeding another without any apparent cause or sequence. The mate said with a sort of rueful humor that he would not trust even yet that his troubles were over, nor until he felt his feet on dry land at Norfolk. He said that the Englishwomen and six of the Englishmen were redemption servants who had been shipped from Plymouth for Charleston.

After having heard the castaways' story, Captain Blume thought it best to put back to Norfolk with the rescued crew. He reached that town late at night and reported immediately to Lieutenant Maynard, who was aboard of the schooner at the time, making ready for the departure on the morrow. The lieutenant, together with Captain

Blume and the shipwrecked mate, went ashore and to Mr. Chorley's house, where Colonel Parker still lay.

It was then nearly midnight, and as it was too late to find the magistrate, Colonel Parker gave orders that the rescued boat's crew should be transferred to the schooner—it being the larger vessel of the two—and so held until the morning. They could then be turned over to the proper authorities for an examination under oath, and the bond-servants deposited in some place of safekeeping until they could be duly redeemed.

Lieutenant Maynard himself went aboard the sloop with Captain Blume to see that the transfer of the shipwrecked crew was properly made. As he stood by the rail while the men were being mustered a man came across the deck and directly up to him. He was one of the castaways, and when he came near enough for the light of the lantern to fall upon him, the lieutenant could see that he was a little man with a lean, dark face, and that he had a stringy, black beard covering his cheeks. His face was peppered over with the still purple pits of recent smallpox, and he was clad in a nondescript costume made up of a medley of borrowed raiment. Mr. Maynard looked the little man over as he approached. "Well, my man," he said, "and what can I do for you?"

"Sir," said the little man, "I ask for nothing but justice."

"You go forward again, Burton," said the mate of the rescued boat; "you'll have plenty of chance to talk to the magistrate to-morrow."

"Not till the gentleman hears me!" cried the little man.

"What do you want?" said the lieutenant. "What is the trouble?"

"Sir, I have been foully dealt with," said the little man. "I am a lawyer; my name is Roger Burton. I am a man of repute and was held in respect by all who knew me in Southampton, whence I came. Sir, I was struck upon the head at night and nearly killed, and while I lay unconscious I was kidnapped, and came to myself only to find

myself aboard of a vessel bound for the Americas."

"He was one of a lot of redemption servants brought aboard at Plymouth," said the mate. "He appeared to have been hurt in a drunken brawl."

"Sir," the little man protested, vehemently, "I was never so drunk as that in all my life."

"Well, I am sorry for you, my man, if what you say is true," the lieutenant said, "but 'tis none of my business. Many men are brought hither to America as you say you have been, and your case is not any worse than theirs. I am sorry for you, but the affair is not mine to deal with."

"What, sir!" cried the little man, "and is that all the satisfaction I am to have? Is that all you, one of his Majesty's officers, have to say to me who hold the position of a gentleman? Sir, in the eyes of the law, I have a right to sign myself esquire, as you have the right to sign yourself lieutenant, and to go under a gentleman's title. Am I, then, to be put off so when I do but ask for justice?"

"You may sign yourself what you choose," said the lieutenant; "and as for justice, I tell you 'tis none of my affairs. I am not a magistrate, I am an officer of the navy. You are a lawyer, you say—well, then, you can plead your own case when you get ashore, and if you have justice on your side, why, I have no doubt but that you will obtain it."

"Come, now, Burton, you go forward where you belong," said the mate.

The little man gave one last earnest look at the lieutenant. He must have seen that it was of no use to plead his case further, for he turned and walked away with his head hanging down.

"How many of those poor people had you aboard?" the lieutenant asked.

"We had fifteen in all. I had seven with me in the boat; six men and one woman. All the others but two died of smallpox."

CHAPTER XLII

THE NEXT DAY

JACK was awakened at the first dawn of day by the sea-gulls clamoring above him. Their outcries mingled for a little while with his dreams before he fairly awoke. He found himself standing up. The sun was shining. There was the beach and the sandy distance. Dred came walking toward him up from the boat, and a great and sudden rush of joy filled his heart. “Why, Dred,” he cried out, “I thought you were dead!” Dred burst out laughing. “I was only fooling you, lad,” he said; “I weren’t hurt much after all.” Then that terrible tragedy had not really happened. He must have dreamed it. Dred had not been shot, and he had not died. The sea-gulls flew above their heads screaming, and his soul was full of the joy of relief.

Then he opened his eyes. The sun had not yet arisen, but he was still full of the echo of joy, believing that Dred was alive, after all. He arose and stood up. The motionless figure was lying in the distance just as he had left it the night before.

But, after all, Dred might not be dead, and there might be some truth in his dream. He might have been mistaken last night. Perhaps Dred was alive, after all, and maybe better this morning.

He went over to where the silent figure lay, and looked down into the strange, still face—upon the stiff, motionless hands. Yes; Dred was dead. As Jack stood looking he choked and choked, and one hot tear and then another trickled down either cheek. They tasted very salt.

Then he began to think. What was he to do now? Something must be done, and he must do it himself, for he must not ask the young lady to help him. He went down to the boat. There was nothing there that he could use, and so he walked off some distance along the beach. At last he found a barrel, that had perhaps been cast up by a storm, and which now lay high and dry upon the warm, powdered sand which had

drifted around it, nearly covering it. He kicked the barrel to pieces with his heel, and pulled up two of the staves from the deeper layer of damp sand beneath. He had walked some distance away, and now he turned and went back to where the still figure lay motionless in the distance. The young lady had not yet awakened, and he was glad of it.

He was trembling when he had ended his task. Suddenly, while he was still kneeling, the sun arose, throwing its level beams of light across the stretch of sand, now broken and trampled, where he had been at work. He smoothed over the work he had made. The damper particles stuck to his hands and clothes, and he brushed them off. Then he took down the shelter that he and the young lady had built up over Dred's head the day before, carrying the oars and the young lady's clothes down to the boat. Then he came back and carried down the overcoats. By that time she had arisen. Jack went straight up to her where she stood looking around her. "Where is he?" she said.

Jack did not reply, but he turned his face in the direction. She saw where the smooth surface of the sand had been broken and disturbed, and she understood. She hid her face in her hands and stood for a moment, and Jack stood silently beside her. "Oh," she said, "I was dreaming it was not so."

"So was I," said Jack, brokenly, and again he felt a tear start down his cheek.

"It did not seem to me as if it could be so," she said. "It don't even seem now as though it were so. It was all so dreadful. It doesn't seem as though it could have happened."

"Well," said Jack, heaving a convulsive sigh, "we'll have to have something to eat, and then we'll start on again." The thought of eating in the very shadow of the tragedy that had happened seemed very grotesque, and he felt somehow ashamed to speak of it.

"Eat!" she said. "I do not want to eat anything."

“We’ll have to eat something,” said Jack; “we can’t do without that.”

The task of pushing the yawl off into the water was almost more than Jack could accomplish. For a while he thought they would have to wait there till high tide in the afternoon. But at last, by digging out the sand from under the boat, he managed to get it off into the water. “I’ll have to carry you aboard, mistress,” he said.

He stooped and picked her up, and walked with her, splashing through the shallow sheet of water that ran up with each spent breaker upon the shining sand. He placed her in the boat and then pushed it off. The breakers were not high, but they gave the boat a splash as Jack pulled it through them.

He rowed out some distance from the shore, and she sat silently watching him. Then he unshipped the oars and went forward and raised the sail. By this time the morning was well advanced. The breeze had not yet arisen, but cat’s-paws began to ruffle the smooth surface of the water. Then by and by came a gentle puff of breeze that filled out the sail, and swung the boom out over the water. Jack drew in the sheet, and the boat slid forward with a gurgle of water under the bows. Then the breeze began blowing very lightly and gently.

This was Sunday morning.

They sailed on for a long, long distance without speaking. Both sat in silence, he sunk in his thoughts, and she in hers. He was trying to realize all that had happened the day before, but he could hardly do so. It did not seem possible that such things could have actually happened to him. He wondered what she was thinking about—Virginia, perhaps. Yes; that must be it. And he was going back to Virginia, too. How strange that he should be really going back there—the very place from which he had escaped two months before! Was there ever anybody who had had so many adventures happen to him in six months as he? Then something caused him suddenly to remember how he had reached out the evening before, and had touched Dred’s senseless hand. There seemed to him something singularly pathetic in the

stillness and inertness of that unfeeling hand. Then came the memory of the silent face, of those cold lips that one day before had been full of life, and it was profoundly dreadful. He shuddered darkly. Was this always the end of everything?—of the rushing breeze, the dazzling sunlight, the beautiful world in which men lived? Death is terrible, terrible to the eyes of youth.

“Do you know,” said the young lady, suddenly, breaking upon the silence, “it does not seem possible that I am really to see my father again, and maybe so soon. I’m trying to feel that it is so, but I can’t. I wonder what they will all say and do! Oh, it seems as though I couldn’t wait! I wonder how much further ’tis to Virginia?”

“I don’t know,” said Jack; “but it can’t be much further. I’ve been thinking that those sand-hills on ahead must be at Cape Henry. I only saw it in the evening when I was on Blackbeard’s sloop, the time we were bringing you down to Bath Town; but the hills look to me like Cape Henry. And, do you see, the coast runs inward there. I can’t tell, though, whether ’tis only a bend in the shore, or whether ’tis the bay.”

“My father will never forget what you’ve done,” she said, looking straight at him.

“Will he not?” said Jack.

“He will never forget it.”

Her words brought a quick spasm of pleasure to Jack. He had not thought before of the reward he should receive. Of course there would be some reward—some great reward. It was perhaps then that he first realized what a thing it was he had done—that he had brought Colonel Parker’s daughter safe away from the pirates, through the very jaws of death! Yes; it was a great thing to have done; and again there came that spasm of delight. The future had suddenly become very bright. It seemed now to throw back a different light upon all those dreadful things that had passed, and they became transformed into something else. They were no longer gloomy terrors—they were great events leading to a great success.

It was late afternoon when they slid before the wind around the high sand-hills of

the cape. As the bay slowly opened before them they saw that there were three sails in sight. One of them, far away, apparently a schooner, was coming down the bay as though to run out around the cape to the southward.

“See that boat!” cried out the young lady. “’Tis coming this way. Don’t you believe we could stop it, and get the captain to take us back to Virginia?”

“I don’t know,” said Jack; “’tis like she won’t stop for me, but I’ll try it if you’d like me to.”

He put down the helm of the yawl so as to run up across the course upon which the distant vessel seemed to be sailing. They watched her in silence as slowly, little by little, she came nearer and nearer. “I ought to have something to wave,” said Jack, “to make her see us. I don’t believe she’ll stop for us unless we signal her in some such way.”

“Why not my red scarf!” said the young lady. “Stop, I’ll get it for you.”

She handed the bright red scarf to Jack, who tied it to the end of an oar. The schooner was now some three quarters of a mile away. Jack stood up in the boat, and began waving the scarf at the end of the blade, hallooing as he did so. As the course of the schooner was laid, she would run past them about half a mile distant. “I don’t believe she’s going to stop for us, after all,” said Jack. “Bear the tiller a little to the left. That’s as it should be. Now hold it steady, and I’ll wave again.” Then, even as he spoke, he saw that those aboard the schooner were hauling in the foresail and mainsail, and that she was coming about. “She is going to stop for us!” he cried.

The schooner had gone a little past them before her sails swung over; then, sweeping around in a great semi-circle, she bore down upon them, bow on. Jack laid down the oar, and, taking the tiller again, brought the yawl up into the wind, and so lay waiting for the schooner to reach them. She ran to within maybe thirty or forty yards of them, and then, coming up into the wind, lay rising and falling, swinging slowly back and forth with the regular heave of the ground-swell. She looked very near.

There was a group of faces clustered forward, looking out at them across the restless water, and another little group of three men and a woman stood at the open gangway. A large, rough man, with a red face prickled over with a stubby beard, hailed them. He wore baggy breeches tied at the knees, and a greasy red waistcoat. “Boat ahoy!” he called out. “What boat is that?”

Jack was standing up in the yawl. “We’ve come up from North Carolina!” he called back in answer. “We’ve just escaped from the pirates.”

“Is that Miss Eleanor Parker?” the other called out instantly.

“Ay!” said Jack.

There was an instant commotion aboard the schooner, and the captain called out: “Bring your boat over here!”

Jack seated himself and set the oars into the rowlocks. He pulled the bow of the boat around with a few quick strokes, and then rowed toward the schooner. In a minute or so he was close alongside. The men and the woman were standing on the deck just above, looking down at him. The six or eight men of the crew were also standing at the rail, gazing at them. Jack could see that the schooner carried as a cargo three or four hogsheads of tobacco and a great load of lumber.

“Was it you brought the young lady away?” said the captain to Jack. “You’re a mightily young fellow to do that, if you did do it.”

“I didn’t bring her off my own self,” said Jack. “One of the pirates helped us get away. But Blackbeard came up with us at Currituck Inlet, and before we could get away the man who helped us was shot. He died last night.”

“So, then!” said the captain. “Then it was Blackbeard, arter all, who carried off the young lady, was it?” Then he added, “Colonel Parker’s at Norfolk now. I’ll run back with you, and tow the yawl into the bargain, if the young lady’ll guarantee me that her father’ll pay me five pounds for doing it.”

“Five pounds!” cried Jack. “Why, that is a deal of money, master, for such a little thing.”

“Well, ’tis the best I’ll do. It may lose me three days or more, and I won’t do it for less.”

“Oh, it does not matter,” said the young lady to Jack, in a low voice. “I’ll promise him that papa will pay him five pounds.”

Jack felt that the captain was taking advantage of her probable eagerness to return, but he also saw that she would not allow him to bargain at such a time. “She says her father will pay it, master,” he said; “but ’tis a great deal of money to make her promise.”

The captain of the schooner did not reply to this latter part of Jack’s speech. “Here, Kitchen,” he said to the mate, “help her ladyship aboard. Look alive, now!”

The mate jumped down into the boat (he was in his bare feet), and he and Jack helped the young lady to the deck above. Jack followed immediately after her, and the mate remained, busying himself in making the yawl-boat fast.

“Here, Molly,” said the captain to the woman, who was his wife, “take her young ladyship into my cabin and make her comfortable.”

Jack was standing, looking around him like one in a dream. The crew and the man whom the captain afterward called Mr. Jackson (whom Jack took to be a passenger) stood staring at him. The schooner was a common coaster. The decks were littered and dirty; the captain and the crew rough and ordinary.

“This way, master,” said the captain; and then he, too, went down into the cabin. It was close and hot, and smelled musty and stuffy. The young lady was sitting at the table, while the woman, the captain’s wife, was busy in the inner cabin beyond. She had left the door open, and Jack, from where he sat, could see her making up a tumbled bed in the berth. He could also see a sea-chest, some hanging clothes, a map, and a clock through the open door. The schooner was getting under way again,

and he could hear the pat of bare footsteps passing across the deck overhead, the creaking of the yards, and then the ripple and gurgle of the water alongside.

“When did you leave Bath Town?” said the captain.

“On Wednesday morning early,” said Jack. Now that all was over, he was feeling very dull and heavily oppressed in the reaction from the excitement that had kept him keyed up to endure. His hands, from which the skin had been rubbed by rowing, had begun again to throb and burn painfully; he had not noticed before how great was the smart. He looked at them, picking at the loose skin. Nobody cared how much his hands hurt him, now that Dred was gone, and his throat began choking at the foolish thought.

“Wednesday! Why, ’tis only Sunday now. D’ ye mean to say that ye’ve sailed all the way from Bath Town in five days in that there yawl-boat?”

“Is this Sunday?” said Jack. “Why, so ’tis.”

“How long will it take to get to Norfolk?” asked the young lady.

“Well, we ought to get there by midnight if this wind holds,” said the captain.

“The berth’s made up now if your ladyship’d like to lie down,” said the captain’s wife, appearing at the door of the inner cabin.

After the young lady had gone, the captain and the man named Jackson plied Jack with questions as to all that had happened. He answered dully and inertly; he wished they would let him alone and not tease him with questions. “I’m tired,” he said, at last; “I’d like to lie down for a while.”

“I suppose you be feeling kind of used up, ben’t you?” asked the man Jackson.

Jack nodded his head.

“Won’t you have a bite to eat first?” asked the captain.

“I’m not hungry,” said Jack; “I want to rest—that’s all.”

“I’m going to let you have the mate’s cabin,” said the captain. “You said I made the

young lady promise too much for carrying ye back to Norfolk. Well, I'm doing all I can to make you comfortable. I give my cabin to her, and I give the mate's cabin to you; and if you'll only wait I'll have a good hot supper cooked."

"Just where did the bullet hit him?" asked Jackson.

"I don't know just where," said Jack. "Somewhere about here (indicating the spot with his finger). Can I go to the mate's cabin now?"

"Well, I think 'twas mortal strange," said Jackson, "that he didn't fall down straight away, or at least drop the tiller, or something of the sort. He just sat there, did he?"

The mate came in, still in his bare feet. He sat down without saying anything, and stared at Jack.

"I'm going to let him have your berth for to-night, Kitchen," said the captain.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE RETURN

THE breeze had fallen during the night so that it was nearly daylight when the schooner came to anchor off Norfolk. The captain sent the mate directly to carry the news of the young lady's return to Colonel Parker's schooner. Colonel Parker himself was not on board, but the lieutenant came at once out of his cabin, half dressed as he was, and the mate told him the news. Mr. Maynard at once sent word ashore to Colonel Parker, and then had himself rowed aboard the schooner on which the young lady was.

Within an hour Colonel Parker came off from the town. The first man he met when he stepped aboard the coaster was Lieutenant Maynard. "Why, Maynard, is that you?" he said, and Mr. Maynard had never seen him so overcome. He grasped the lieutenant's hand and wrung it and wrung it again. His fine, broad face twitched with the effort he made to suppress his emotions. "Where is she?" he said, turning around

almost blindly to Captain Dolls, who, with his mate, had been standing at a little distance looking on. “This way, your honor,” said the captain with alacrity.

He led the way across the deck to the great cabin; Lieutenant Maynard did not accompany them. “She’s in my cabin here, your honor,” said the captain. “I let her have it, for ‘twas the best aboard. Her ladyship’s asleep yet, I do suppose. If your honor’ll sit down here I’ll send my wife into the cabin to wake her and to help her dress.”

“Never mind,” said the colonel, “where is she—in here?” He opened the door and went into the cabin. She was lying upon the berth sleeping. She had only loosened her clothes when she lay down the night before, and she was lying fully dressed. “Nelly!” said Colonel Parker, leaning over her, “Nelly!” She did not stir. He had not entirely closed the door, and it stood a little ajar. Captain Dolls, in the great cabin beyond, stood looking in, and for the moment Colonel Parker did not notice him. “Nelly!” he said again. “Nelly!” and he laid his hand upon her shoulder.

She stirred; she raised her arm; she drew the back of her hand across her eyes; she opened her eyes and they looked directly into his face as he leaned over her. “What is it?” she said, vacantly.

Colonel Parker was crying. “’Tis I—’tis thy poor father, Nelly.” The tears were trickling down his cheeks, but he did not notice them. Suddenly her vacancy melted and dissolved, and she was wide awake. “Papa! O papa!” she cried, and instantly her arms were about his neck and she was in his arms.

She cried and cried. Colonel Parker, still holding her with one arm, reached in his pocket and drew out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes and his cheeks. As he did so he caught sight of Captain Dolls standing without in the great cabin looking in at them. The captain moved instantly away, but Colonel Parker reached out and closed the door.

Presently she looked up into his face, her own face wet with tears. “Mamma,” she

said,—“how is poor mamma?”

“She is well—she is very well,” he said. “My dear! my dear!”

Once more she flung her arms about his neck. She pressed her lips to his again and again, weeping tumultuously as she did so. “O papa, if you only knew what I’ve been through!”

“I know—I know,” he said.

“Oh, but you can’t know all that I’ve been through—all the dreadful, terrible things. They shot poor Mr. Dred, and he died. I saw them shoot him,—I was in the boat,—I saw him die. Oh, papa! I can’t tell you all. Oh, it was so terrible. He lay on the sand and died. There was sand on the side of his face, and the young man, Jack, did not see it to brush it off, and I could not do it, and there it was.”

“There! there!” said Colonel Parker, soothingly. “Don’t talk about it, my dear. Tell me about other things. The sailor who came to bring me off told me there was a young man—a lad—with you when they picked you up down at the capes.”

“Yes,” she said, “that was late yesterday afternoon.”

“But the young man; is he the young man you call Jack?”

“Yes, that is he.”

“He is aboard here now, is he not? Who is he?”

So they talked together for a long time. She had lain down again, and she held his hand in hers as he sat upon the edge of the berth beside her. As they talked she stroked the back of his hand, and once she raised it to her lips and kissed it.

A while later Jack was awakened from a sound sleep by some one shaking him. He opened his eyes and saw that a rough, red face was bending over just above him. In the first instant of waking he could not remember where he was, or what face it was looking down at him. Then he recognized Captain Dolls. He was, first of all, conscious of a throbbing, beating pain in the palms of his hands. It seemed to him

that he had been feeling it all night.

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“COLONEL PARKER REACHED AND LAID HIS HAND UPON JACK’S SHOULDER. ‘AY,’ SAID HE, ‘TIS A GOOD HONEST FACE.’”

“What is it?” he said. “What do you want?”

“Well,” said Captain Dolls, “we’re at Norfolk, and have been here for three hours and more.”

“Norfolk!” said Jack, vaguely. “Are we, then, at Norfolk? How came we there?” His mind was still clouded with the fumes of sleep.

Captain Dolls burst out laughing. “We got there by sailing,” he said. “How else? But come! get up! Colonel Parker’s aboard, and he wants to see you. He’s out in the great cabin now.”

Then Jack was instantly wide awake. “Very well,” he said, “then I’ll go to him directly. Have you a bucket of water here that I may wash myself? I’m not fit to go as I am.”

He stood lingering for a moment before he entered the cabin. He could hear Colonel Parker’s voice within, and he shrank from entering, with a sudden trepidation.

“Go on,” said Captain Dolls, who had followed him. “What d’ ye stop for?” Then Jack opened the door and went in.

Some one rose as he entered; it was Colonel Parker. In a swift look Jack saw that the young lady had been sitting beside her father. She had been holding her father’s hand, and she released it as he arose. Captain Doll’s wife was also in the cabin busily packing the young lady’s clothes ready for her departure. Jack knew that Eleanor Parker was looking at him, and he also saw in the glance that she had been crying. Colonel Parker was gazing at him also. “Was it, then, one so young as you,” he said, “who would dare to bring my Nelly away from the villains? Come hither,”

and as Jack came lingeringly forward Colonel Parker reached out and laid a hand upon his shoulder, holding it firmly. He looked long and steadily at Jack's face. "Ay," said he, "'tis a good, honest face." Jack was very conscious of the presence of the captain's wife, and it made him feel more embarrassed than he would otherwise perhaps have been. He could not look up. "Ay," said Colonel Parker again, "'tis a good, honest face, and the face of an honest young man. I am glad 'twas such a good, honest soul that brought our Nelly back to us. We shall never, never forget what you have done—never forget it."

His mood was still very warm with the emotions that had melted him. "And that other preserver," he said, "that other noble preserver who gave his life that he might save my girl; never can I forget him. But he is beyond anything that I can do to reward him and to bless him now. I would that he were here, that I might show him, as I shall show you, that we shall never forget what you have done for us—never forget it." In his softened mood, still holding Jack by the shoulder, he drew out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes and his face. Jack, knowing that there were tears running down from the great man's eyes, had not dared to look up into his face, but it suddenly came into his mind to remember how it was Dred who had shot and killed this man's only son.

"Well," said Colonel Parker, "we are just making ready to leave this and to go aboard of my own vessel, and so back to Marlborough. If you have anything to get ready you had better do so, for of course you go along with us."

"I have nothing to get ready," said Jack. "There were two overcoats we brought with us,—they belong to Captain Teach,—but I left them in the yawl last night."

"What does your ladyship intend doing with this petticoat?" said the captain's wife, holding up a mud-stained skirt. "Shall I bundle this up with the others?"

"No," said the young lady, "you need not do so, for I sha'n't need that any longer. Do you know, papa," she said, "that was a part of the clothes I wore when I tried to

run away by myself down in North Carolina, and ran into the swamp. 'Tis the mud from the swamp that stains it so."

Jack had sat down on the bench opposite to Colonel Parker and the young lady. Every moment he was growing happier and happier. He had an indefinable feeling that some great good was coming to him. His hands hurt him very much. He awoke from his golden thoughts to hear Colonel Parker saying to his daughter, "And now, my dear, if you are quite ready, we will go."

Lieutenant Maynard stood waiting at the open gangway as the three came up out of the cabin. He took off his hat as the young lady approached.

"This is my daughter, Lieutenant Maynard," said Colonel Parker. And the lieutenant bowed low to her with a fine air, to which she replied with as fine a courtesy. "And this," said Colonel Parker, "is the young man who brought her back—a fine, noble fellow, and a good, honest, comely lad, too."

"Why, then," said the lieutenant, "I shall ask you to let me take your hand. Give me your hand." Jack reached out his throbbing palm to the lieutenant, who took the hand and shook it firmly. "By zounds! you are a hero," he said. "See, sir,"—to Colonel Parker—"that is the boat they escaped in—such a little open boat as that to come all the way from Bath Town and through a storm, they tell me, in the lower sound. We are going to tow it over to the schooner."

He pointed down at the yawl as it lay alongside, fastened to the other boat by the bow-line. Colonel Parker looked down into the empty boat. There was the stain of blood still upon the seat where Dred had sat when he was shot. The very emptiness of the boat as it lay there seemed to speak all the more vividly of the tragedy that had been enacted in it.

As they left the coaster, Jack sat in the stern of the boat not far from Colonel Parker and the young lady. As he looked back he could see the figures of Captain Dolls and his wife, of the barefoot mate with his knit cap, and of Mr. Jackson standing at the

gangway. The yawl was towing behind them. His smarting palms throbbed and burned in pulsations of pain, and he looked furtively down into one of his hands.

“Why, what is the matter with your hand, my lad?” Colonel Parker asked, suddenly.

Jack blushed red and shut his fist tight. “I flayed them rowing, your honor,” he said.

“While you were helping Nelly away?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“Let me see your hand.”

Jack held it out reluctantly, conscious of the rough knuckles and nails, and Colonel Parker took it into his soft, white grasp. “Why,” he exclaimed, “what a dreadful, terrible sore hand is this! Let me see t’other. And did you suffer this in helping Nelly get away? Look, lieutenant, at the poor boy’s hands. They must be salved and dressed as soon as we get him aboard the schooner.”

“Let me see, my lad,” said the lieutenant.

CHAPTER XLIV

RISING FORTUNES

PERHAPS there was no period of the attorney Burton’s misfortunes more bitter to him than when he stood that morning upon the deck of Colonel Parker’s schooner, and saw the town almost within hand’s reach, and yet felt himself so helpless, so utterly powerless to escape.

All hands were talking about Colonel Parker’s daughter, and how she had been brought back from the pirates, and by and by an interest in what he heard began to work its way into his consciousness in spite of the misfortunes that overhung him. So it was that, when he saw the boat coming toward the schooner, he went over to the rail and stood with the others gathered there looking out as it approached. He saw that there were several people sitting in the stern-sheets,—one of them the

young lady,—and that they were towing an empty boat behind them. All hands aboard the schooner were standing at the rail or clinging to the shrouds watching their approach, and from where the little attorney stood he could see that the surgeon and the sailing-master and the shipwrecked mate were at the gangway waiting for them.

He at once singled out the pirate who had rescued the young lady—the young man with the long, shaggy hair and rough, half-sailor clothes. He seemed to the attorney Burton to be singularly young for a pirate, with a round, smooth, boyish face. Presently the boat was close under the side of the schooner, and the next moment the crew had unshipped their oars with a loud and noisy clatter. The lieutenant leaned out astern and stopped the yawl as it slid past with the impetus of its motion, and then it also fell around broadside to the schooner.

Then they began to come aboard, first the lieutenant, then Colonel Parker, then the young lady. At that instant the young pirate looked up, and the attorney looked full into his face. If a thunderbolt had fallen and burst at the little lawyer’s feet, he could not have been more amazed than he was to see the face of Jack Ballister looking toward him.

It is such wonderful chance meetings as this, and as that other time when Jack met Dred at Bullock’s Landing, that teach us how little is this little world of ours, and how great is the fatality that drifts men apart and then drifts them together again.

The next moment Jack also had climbed aboard, and had gone into the cabin with the others. “You must look at the poor lad’s hands before you do anything else, doctor,” Colonel Parker was saying to the physician who accompanied them.

Jack was still filled full of warm happiness as he sat there in the fine cabin, watching Dr. Poor as the surgeon dressed his hands, winding the clean white linen bandage around one of them. The dressing felt very soothing and cool. Colonel Parker and the young lady and Lieutenant Maynard sat opposite to him across the table, Colonel

Parker asking him many things about the circumstances of their escape. Jack had been telling what he knew concerning the young lady's abduction. "And were you with the pirates, then, when they took Nelly away?" said Colonel Parker.

The surgeon was trimming away the rough edges of skin from the palm of Jack's other hand, and Jack looked down at the skilful touches upon the sore and tender place. "I didn't go with them over to the house, if you mean that, your honor. I stayed aboard of the boat while they went. There was a watch of half a dozen left aboard, and I was with them. The others went off in three boats; the yawl was one of them. It was the biggest of the three, and Blackbeard went in it. I had only just come aboard, and I don't think they would have chosen me to go with them upon such an expedition. I had just run away from Mr. Parker's then, and that was my first day with them."

"Why, then, I am glad of that," said Colonel Parker. "I am glad you were not with them in such an unlovely business as attacking a defenseless houseful of women. But I don't see how they could dare to do such a thing. There must have been some one set the villains on to do it. Did you hear whether there was any one else concerned in it—instigating them to the outrage?"

Jack had heard enough talk in Blackbeard's house to feel sure that Mr. Richard Parker had been the prime mover in the outrage, but he did not dare to tell Colonel Parker about it. "I don't know," said he; "but they're very desperate villains, your honor, and that's the truth. You don't think what desperate villains they are when you are with them, for they talk and act just like other men. But I do believe that there's nothing they would stop at. They are very desperate villains."

Colonel Parker was looking intently at him as he spoke. "You speak mightily good language," he said; "are you educated?"

Jack blushed red. "Yes, your honor," he said; "my father taught me. He was a clergyman, and a great scholar, I've heard say."

Colonel Parker appeared very much interested. “Indeed!” he said, “is that the case? Why, then, I am very glad to hear it. Your being a gentleman’s son makes it easier for me to do all that I want to do for you. But you were kidnapped, you say?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jack.

Suddenly the surgeon clipped the thread of the second bandage. “There, you are as well as I can make you now,” he said.

“And indeed they feel mightily comfortable,” said Jack, opening and shutting his hand; “and I thank you kindly for the ease you have given me.”

“Now go and dress yourself, ready for breakfast,” said Colonel Parker. “My man Robin hath set out some clothes for you in the lieutenant’s cabin.”

Colonel Parker’s body-servant Robin was just coming out of the lieutenant’s cabin when Jack entered. “You’ll find everything you want in there, I do suppose,” he said. “If you don’t you may call me. I’ll be just outside here.”

He had laid the clothes upon the lieutenant’s berth. He closed the door as he went away, and Jack stood looking about him. It was all very clean and neat. It was the cabin that Miss Eleanor Parker generally used when she was aboard the schooner. A cool, fresh smell pervaded it. He laid his clothes aside, and sat down upon the edge of the berth, and then, presently, lay down at length upon its clean surface. As he lay there resting he was very, very happy. He went over in his mind all that had passed that morning. How beautiful it all was! How kind was Colonel Parker! Yes; he was reaping his reward. He lay there for a long time, yielding himself to his pleasant thoughts. Everything seemed very bright and hopeful. His hands felt so comfortable. He lifted them and looked at the bandages: how white and clean they were, how neatly they were stitched! He could smell the salve, and it seemed to have a very pleasant savor in the odor. He was glad now that Colonel Parker had seen his hands, and that they had looked so terribly sore. At last he roused himself, and looked at the clothes that had been laid out for him, turning them over and feeling them. They

were of fine brown cloth, and there was a pair of white stockings. “I wish I had something to rub up my shoes a trifle,” he thought; “they look mightily rusty and ugly.”

Then he got up and began dressing, only to stop in the midst of it and to lie down once more to build those bright castles in the air. How fine it would be to live at Marlborough, not as a servant, but as one of the household! And now such good fortune was really his own. He lay there for a long, long time until, suddenly, the door was opened, and Colonel Parker’s servant looked in. Jack sprang up from where he lay. “Not dressed yet?” said the man. “Well, then, hurry as quick as you can. His honor wants you out in his own cabin. There’s somebody aboard here knows you, and he’s been in his honor’s cabin now for ten minutes or more.”

“Somebody who knows me?” said Jack. “Why, who can that be, pray?”

“’Tis a lawyer,” said the man—“a man named Burton. He says he knew you in Southampton.”

“Master Roger Burton!” cried Jack. “Why, to be sure I know him. Are you sure that is who ’tis? Why, how does he come aboard here? When did he come to America?”

He was getting dressed rapidly as he talked, and the servant came into the cabin and closed the door after him. “As to coming to America,” he said, “he came here naturally enough. He was kidnapped just as you and me were. I heard him tell his honor the lieutenant he had been knocked on the head and kidnapped.”

“Knocked on the head and kidnapped!” Jack cried; “why, that was just what happened to me.”

“Here, let me hold your coat for you,” said Robin. He held it up as Jack slipped his arms into the sleeves. “There, now then, you come straight along,” he said, and he led the way across the great cabin to Colonel Parker’s own private cabin beyond. He tapped on the door and then opened it.

“Come in,” called out Colonel Parker, and Jack entered.

He saw the attorney Burton immediately. He would not have recognized him if he had not known whom he was to see. The marks of the smallpox, the rough clothes he wore, and the thin, stringy beard that covered his cheeks and chin made him look like altogether a different man. Only his little stature and his long nose fitted with the memory of him in Jack's mind. He stood for a while gazing at the little man. "Why, how now, Master Jack," said the attorney, "don't you know me?"

"Yes, I do, now that you speak," said Jack, "but to be sure I wouldn't have known you if I hadn't been told you were here."

Colonel Parker was lying in his berth, a blanket spread over his knees and feet. Miss Eleanor Parker sat on the edge of the berth, holding his hand, and the lieutenant sat opposite, crowded into the narrow space. "Come hither," said Colonel Parker, reaching out his hand, and as Jack came toward him he took the lad's bandaged hand into his own and held it firmly. "Why did you not tell me who you were?" said he.

"I don't know what you mean, your honor," said Jack.

"Don't call me 'your honor,'" said Colonel Parker. "Call me 'sir,' or else 'Colonel Parker.'"

"Yes, sir," said Jack, blushing.

"What I mean," said Colonel Parker, "is that you did not tell me that you were Sir Henry Ballister's nephew and a young gentleman of such high quality, nor that you were the heir of any such fortune as I am told hath been left to you. You should have told me all this at once. I might have gone on for a long while without knowing, had this good man not told me what was your family and condition."

"I don't know, sir," said Jack, awkwardly, "why I didn't tell you, but I didn't think to do it."

Lieutenant Maynard burst out laughing, and even Colonel Parker smiled. "Well, well," he said, "family and fortune are something worth while to talk about, as the world goes. But I am glad that I shall know what to do for you now."

Jack looked up at Miss Eleanor Parker, and saw that she was gazing straight at him. She smiled brightly as their eyes met.

The schooner left Norfolk that morning, but the breeze was very light, and it was not until the following day that they reached Marlborough.

The great house was in clear sight when Jack came up on deck at sunrise. Colonel Parker and Miss Eleanor were standing at the rail gazing out toward the house, which had been already aroused by the approach of the schooner. People were hurrying hither and thither, and then a number came running down to the landing from the house and the offices and the cabins, until a crowd had gathered at the end of the wharf.

“Yonder is thy mother, Nelly,” said Colonel Parker—“yonder is thy mother, my dear.” He spoke with trembling lips. The tears were running down the young lady’s cheeks, but she seemed hardly to notice them, and she was not crying. She wiped her eyes and her cheeks with her handkerchief, and then waved it; then wiped her eyes again, then waved it again. “Yonder is your Uncle Richard with her,” said Colonel Parker, and he also wiped his eyes as he spoke.

Jack could see his former master standing close to the edge of the wharf. He himself stood a little to one side with the Attorney Burton, who had also come up on deck. He had an uncomfortable feeling of not being exactly one in all the joy of this home-bringing.

A boat was pulling rapidly off from the shore, and in a moment the anchor fell with a splash. They were close to the wharf, and almost immediately the boat from the shore was alongside. Everybody was cheering, and Jack and the Attorney Burton stood silently in the midst of it all. Suddenly Colonel Parker turned to Jack, wiping the tears from his eyes. “Come,” he said, “you must go along with us. The others may follow later.”

The young lady did not see him or seem to think of him. She was weeping and

weeping, clinging to the stays, and now and then wiping her eyes. The crew helped her down into the boat, where Colonel Parker was already seated. Jack followed after her, and then the men pulled away toward the shore; in a moment they were at the wharf. The people, black and white, were crowded above them, and Madam Parker had struggled so close to the edge that her brother-in-law and Mr. Jones were holding her back. She was crying convulsively and hysterically, and reaching out her hands and arms, clutching toward her daughter. Jack sat, looking up at all the faces staring down at them. The only unmoved one among them all upon the wharf was Mr. Richard Parker. He stood, calm and unruffled, with hardly a change of expression upon his handsome face. The next moment the mother and daughter were in one another's arms, weeping and crying; and then, a moment more, and Colonel Parker was with them, his arms around them both.

Still Mr. Richard Parker stood calmly by; only now, when Jack looked, he saw that his eyes were fastened steadily upon him—but there was neither surprise nor interest in his face. Then Jack, too, went ashore. Colonel Parker saw him. "My dear," he said to his wife in a shaking voice, "this is our dear Nelly's preserver—the young hero who brought her back to us. Have you not a welcome for him?"

Madam Parker looked up, her eyes streaming with tears. She could not have seen Jack through them, and Jack stood, overcome and abashed. Through it all he was conscious that Mr. Parker was still looking steadily at him.

"Ay, brother Richard," said Colonel Parker, wiping his eyes, "you know him, do you not? Well, 'tis to him we owe it that our Nelly hath been brought back to us again, for 'twas he who brought her."

Then Jack looked at his former master and wondered what he was thinking; he said nothing.

CHAPTER XLV

PREPARATION

WE, OF THESE times, protected as we are by the laws and by the number of people about us, can hardly comprehend such a life as that of the American colonies in the early part of the last century, when it was possible for a pirate like Blackbeard to exist, and for the governor and the secretary of the province in which he lived perhaps to share his plunder, and to shelter and to protect him against the law.

At that time the American colonists were in general a rough, rugged people, knowing nothing of the finer things of life. They lived mostly in little settlements, separated by long distances from one another, so that they could neither make nor enforce laws to protect themselves. Each man or little group of men had to depend upon his or their own strength to keep what belonged to them, and to prevent fierce men or groups of men from seizing what did not belong to them.

It is the natural disposition of every one to get all that he can. Little children, for instance, always try to take away from others that which they want, and to keep it for their own. It is only by constant teaching that they learn that they must not do so; that they must not take by force what does not belong to them. So it is only by teaching and training that people learn to be honest and not to take what is not theirs. When this teaching is not sufficient to make a man learn to be honest, or when there is something in the man’s nature that makes him not able to learn, then he only lacks the opportunity to seize upon the things he wants, just as he would do if he were a little child.

In the colonies at that time, as was just said, men were too few and scattered to protect themselves against those who had made up their minds to take by force that which they wanted, and so it was that men lived an unrestrained and lawless life, such as we of these times of better government can hardly comprehend.

The usual means of commerce between province and province was by water in coasting vessels. These coasting vessels were so defenseless, and the different

colonial government were so ill able to protect them, that those who chose to rob them could do it almost without danger to themselves.

So it was that all the western world was, in those days, infested with armed bands of cruising freebooters or pirates, who used to stop merchant vessels and take from them what they chose.

Each province in those days was ruled over by a royal governor appointed by the king. Each governor, at one time, was free to do almost as he pleased in his own province. He was accountable only to the king and his government, and England was so distant that he was really responsible almost to nobody but himself.

The governors were naturally just as desirous to get rich quickly, just as desirous of getting all that they could for themselves, as was anybody else—only they had been taught and had been able to learn that it was not right to be an actual pirate or robber. They wanted to be rich easily and quickly, but the desire was not strong enough to lead them to dishonor themselves in their own opinion and in the opinion of others by gratifying their selfishness. They would even have stopped the pirates from doing what they did if they could, but their provincial governments were too weak to prevent the freebooters from robbing merchant vessels, or to punish them when they came ashore. The provinces had no navies, and they really had no armies; neither were there enough people living within the community to enforce the laws against those stronger and fiercer men who were not honest.

After the things the pirates seized from merchant vessels were once stolen they were altogether lost. Almost never did any owner apply for them, for it would be useless to do so. The stolen goods and merchandise lay in the storehouses of the pirates, seemingly without any owner excepting the pirates themselves.

The governors and the secretaries of the colonies would not dishonor themselves by pirating upon merchant vessels, but it did not seem so wicked after the goods were stolen—and so altogether lost—to take a part of that which seemed to have no

owner.

A child is taught that it is a very wicked thing to take, for instance, by force, a lump of sugar from another child; but when a wicked child has seized the sugar from another and taken it around the corner, and that other child from whom he has seized it has gone home crying, it does not seem so wicked for the third child to take a bite of the sugar when it is offered to him, even if he thinks it has been taken from some one else.

It was just so, no doubt, that it did not seem so wicked to Governor Eden and Secretary Knight of North Carolina, or to Governor Fletcher of New York, or to other colonial governors, to take a part of the booty that the pirates, such as Blackbeard, had stolen. It did not even seem very wicked to compel such pirates to give up a part of what was not theirs, and which seemed to have no owner.

In Governor Eden’s time, however, the colonies had begun to be more thickly peopled, and the laws had gradually become stronger and stronger to protect men in the possession of what was theirs. Governor Eden was the last of the colonial governors who had dealings with the pirates, and Blackbeard was almost the last of the pirates who, with his banded men, was savage and powerful enough to come and go as he chose among the people whom he plundered.

Virginia, at that time, was the greatest and the richest of all the American colonies, and upon the further side of North Carolina was the province of South Carolina, also strong and rich. It was these two colonies that suffered the most from Blackbeard, and it began to be that the honest men that lived in them could endure no longer to be plundered.

The merchants and traders and others who suffered cried out loudly for protection; so loudly that the governors of these provinces could not help hearing them.

Governor Eden was petitioned to act against the pirates; but he would do nothing, for he felt very friendly toward Blackbeard—just as a child who has had a taste of

the stolen sugar feels friendly toward the child who gives it to him.

At last, when Blackbeard sailed up into the very heart of Virginia, and seized upon and carried away the daughter of that colony's foremost people, the Governor of Virginia, finding that the Governor of North Carolina would do nothing to punish the outrage, took the matter into his own hands and issued a proclamation offering a reward of one hundred pounds for Blackbeard, alive or dead, and different sums for the other pirates who were his followers.

Governor Spottiswood had the right to issue the proclamation, but he had no right to commission Lieutenant Maynard, as he did, to take down an armed force into the neighboring province and to attack the pirates in the waters of the North Carolina sounds. It was all a part of the rude and lawless condition of the colonies at the time that such a thing could have been done.

The governor's proclamation against the pirates was issued upon the eleventh day of November. It was read in the churches the Sunday following and was posted upon the doors of all the government custom offices in lower Virginia. Lieutenant Maynard, in the boats that Colonel Parker had already fitted out to go against the pirates, set sail upon the seventeenth of the month for Ocracock. Five days later the battle was fought.

Blackbeard's sloop was lying inside of Ocracock Inlet among the shoals and sand-bars, when he first heard of Governor Spottiswood's proclamation.

There had been a storm, and a good many vessels had run into the inlet for shelter. Blackbeard knew nearly all of the captains of these vessels, and it was from them that he first heard of the proclamation.

He had gone aboard one of the vessels—a coaster from Boston. The wind was still blowing pretty hard from the southeast. There were maybe a dozen vessels lying within the inlet at that time, and the captain of one of them was paying the Boston skipper a visit when Blackbeard came aboard. The two captains had been talking

together. They instantly ceased when the pirate came down into the cabin, but he had heard enough of their conversation to catch its drift. “Why d’ye stop?” he said. “I heard what you said. Well, what then? D’ ye think I mind it at all? Spottiswood is going to send his bullies down here after me. That’s what you were saying. Well, what then? You don’t think I’m afraid of his bullies, do you?”

“Why, no, captain, I didn’t say you was afraid,” said the visiting captain.

“And what right has he got to send down here against me in North Carolina, I should like to ask you?”

“He’s got none at all,” said the Boston captain, soothingly. “Won’t you take a taste of Hollands, Captain?”

“He’s no more right to come blustering down here into Governor Eden’s province than I have to come aboard of your schooner here, Tom Burley, and to carry off two or three kegs of this prime Hollands for my own drinking.”

Captain Burley—the Boston man—laughed a loud, forced laugh. “Why, captain,” he said, “as for two or three kegs of Hollands, you won’t find that aboard. But if you’d like to have a keg of it for your own drinking, I’ll send it to you and be glad enough to do so for old acquaintance’ sake.”

“But I tell you what ’tis, captain,” said the visiting skipper to Blackbeard, “they’re determined and set against you this time. I tell you, captain, Governor Spottiswood hath issued a hot proclamation against you, and ‘t hath been read out in all the churches. I myself saw it posted in Yorktown upon the Custom-House door and read it there myself. The governor offers one hundred pounds for you, and fifty pounds for your officers, and twenty pounds each for your men.”

“Well, then,” said Blackbeard, holding up his glass, “here, I wish ‘em good luck, and when they get their hundred pounds for me they’ll be in a poor way to spend it. As for the Hollands,” said he, turning to Captain Burley, “I know what you’ve got aboard here and what you haven’t. D’ ye suppose ye can blind me? Very well, you

send over two kegs, and I'll let you go without search." The two captains were very silent. "As for that Lieutenant Maynard you're all talking about," said Blackbeard, "why, I know him very well. He was the one who was so busy with the pirates down Madagascar way. I believe you'd all like to see him blow me out of the water, but he can't do it. There's nobody in his Majesty's service I'd rather meet than Lieutenant Maynard. I'd teach him pretty briskly that North Carolina isn't Madagascar."

On the evening of the twenty-second the two vessels under command of Lieutenant Maynard came into the mouth of Ocracock Inlet and there dropped anchor. Meantime the weather had cleared, and all the vessels but one had gone from the inlet. The one vessel that remained was a New Yorker. It had been there over a night and a day, and the captain and Blackbeard had become very good friends.

The same night that Maynard came into the inlet, a wedding was held on the shore. A number of men and women came up the beach in ox-carts and sledges; others had come in boats from more distant points and across the water.

The captain of the New Yorker and Blackbeard went ashore together a little after dark. The New Yorker had been aboard of the pirate's sloop for all the latter part of the afternoon, and he and Blackbeard had been drinking together in the cabin. The New York man was now a little tipsy, and he laughed and talked foolishly as he and Blackbeard were rowed ashore. The pirate sat grim and silent.

It was nearly dark when they stepped ashore on the beach. The New York captain stumbled and fell headlong, rolling over and over, and the crew of the boat burst out laughing.

The people had already begun to dance in an open shed fronting upon the shore. There were fires of pine-knots in front of the building, lighting up the interior with a red glare. A negro was playing a fiddle somewhere inside, and it was filled with a crowd of grotesque dancing figures—men and women. Now and then they called with loud voices as they danced, and the squeaking of the fiddle sounded incessantly

through the noise of outcries and the stamp and shuffling of feet.

Captain Teach and the New York captain stood looking on. The New York man had tilted himself against a post and stood there holding one arm around it, supporting himself. He waved the other hand foolishly in time to the music, now and then snapping his thumb and finger.

The young woman who had just been married approached the two. She had been dancing, and she was warm and red, her hair blowsed about her head. “Hi, captain, won’t you dance with me?” she said to Blackbeard.

Blackbeard stared at her. “Who be you?” he said.

She burst out laughing. “You look as if you’d eat a body,” she cried.

Blackbeard’s face gradually relaxed. “Why, to be sure, you’re a brazen one, for all the world,” he said. “Well, I’ll dance with you, that I will. I’ll dance the heart out of you.”

He pushed forward, thrusting aside with his elbow the newly-made husband. The man, who saw that Blackbeard had been drinking, burst out laughing, and the other men and women who had been standing around drew away, so that in a little while the floor was pretty well cleared. One could see the negro now; he sat on a barrel at the end of the room. He grinned with his white teeth and, without stopping in his fiddling, scraped his bow harshly across the strings, and then instantly changed the tune to a lively jig. Blackbeard jumped up into the air and clapped his heels together, giving, as he did so, a sharp, short yell. Then he began instantly dancing grotesquely and violently. The woman danced opposite to him, this way and that, with her knuckles on her hips. Everybody burst out laughing at Blackbeard’s grotesque antics. They laughed again and again, clapping their hands, and the negro scraped away on his fiddle like fury. The woman’s hair came tumbling down her back. She tucked it back, laughing and panting, and the sweat ran down her face. She danced and danced. At last she burst out laughing and stopped, panting. Blackbeard again

jumped up in the air and clapped his heels. Again he yelled, and as he did so, he struck his heels upon the floor and spun around. Once more everybody burst out laughing, clapping their hands, and the negro stopped fiddling.

Near by was a shanty or cabin where they were selling spirits, and by and by Blackbeard went there with the New York captain, and presently they began drinking again. “Hi, captain!” called one of the men, “Maynard’s out yonder in the inlet. Jack Bishop’s just come across from t’other side. He says Mr. Maynard hailed him and asked for a pilot to fetch him in.”

“Well, here’s luck to him, and he can’t come in quick enough for me!” cried out Blackbeard in his hoarse, husky voice.

“Well, captain,” called a voice, “will ye fight him to-morrow?”

“Ay,” shouted the pirate, “if he can get in to me, I’ll try to give ‘em what they seek, and all they want of it into the bargain. As for a pilot, I tell ye what ’tis. If any man hereabouts goes out there to pilot that villain in, ‘twill be the worst day’s work he ever did in all of his life. ‘Twon’t be fit for him to live in these parts of America if I am living here at the same time.” There was a burst of laughter.

“Give us a toast, captain! Give us something to drink to! Ay, captain, a toast! A toast!” a half dozen voices were calling out at the same time.

“Well,” cried out the pirate captain, “here’s to a good, hot fight to-morrow, and the best dog on top! ‘Twill be, Bang! bang!—this way!”

He began pulling a pistol out of his pocket, but it stuck in the lining, and he struggled and tugged at it. The men ducked and scrambled away from before him, and then the next moment he had the pistol out of his pocket. He swung it around and around. There was perfect silence. Suddenly there was a flash and a stunning report, and instantly a crash and tinkle of broken glass. One of the men cried out, and began picking and jerking at the back of his neck. “He’s broken that bottle all down my neck,” he called out.

“That’s the way ‘twill be,” said Blackbeard.

“Lookee,” said the owner of the place, “I won’t serve out another drop if ’tis going to be like that. If there’s any more trouble I’ll blow out the lantern.”

The sound of the squeaking and scraping of the fiddle and the shouts and the scuffling feet still came from the shed where the dancing was going on.

“Suppose you get your dose to-morrow, captain,” some one called out, “what then?”

“Why, if I do,” said Blackbeard, “I get it, and that’s all there is of it.”

“Your wife’ll be a rich widdy then, won’t she?” cried one of the men; and there was a burst of laughter.

“Why,” said the New York captain,—“why, has a—a bloody p—pirate like you a wife then—a—like any honest man?”

“She’ll be no richer than she is now,” said Blackbeard.

“She knows where you’ve hid your money, anyways; don’t she, captain?” called out a voice.

“The divil knows where I’ve hid my money,” said Blackbeard, “and I know where I’ve hid it; and the longest liver of the twain will get it all. And that’s all there is of it.”

The gray of early day was beginning to show in the east when Blackbeard and the New York captain came down to the landing together. The New York captain swayed and toppled this way and that as he walked, now falling against Blackbeard, and now staggering away from him.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE FIGHT

EARLY in the morning—perhaps eight o’clock—Lieutenant Maynard sent a boat from the schooner over to the settlement, which lay some four or five miles distant.

A number of men stood lounging on the landing, watching the approach of the boat. The men rowed close up to the wharf, and there lay upon their oars, while the boatswain of the schooner, who was in command of the boat, stood up and asked if there was any man there who could pilot them over the shoals.

Nobody answered, but all stared stupidly at him. After a while, one of the men at last took his pipe out of his mouth. “There ben’t any pilot here, master,” said he; “we ben’t pilots.”

“Why, what a story you do tell!” roared the boatswain. “D’ye suppose I’ve never been down here before, not to know that every man about here knows the passes of the shoals?”

The fellow still held his pipe in his hand. He looked at another one of the men. “Do you know the passes in over the shoals, Jem?” said he.

The man to whom he spoke was a young fellow with long, shaggy, sunburnt hair hanging over his eyes in an unkempt mass. He shook his head, grunting. “Na—I don’t know naught about t’ shoals.”

“’Tis Lieutenant Maynard of his Majesty’s navy in command of them vessels out there,” said the boatswain. “He’ll give any man five pound to pilot him in.” The men on the wharf looked at one another, but still no one spoke, and the boatswain stood looking at them. He saw that they did not choose to answer him. “Why,” he said, “I believe you’ve not got right wits—that’s what I believe is the matter with you. Pull me up to the landing, men, and I’ll go ashore and see if I can find anybody that’s willing to make five pound for such a little bit of piloting as that.”

After the boatswain had gone ashore, the loungers still stood on the wharf, looking down into the boat, and began talking to one another for the men below to hear them. “They’re coming in,” said one, “to blow poor Blackbeard out of the water.” “Ay,” said another man, “he’s so peaceable too, he is; he’ll just lay still and let’em blow and blow, he will.” “There’s a young fellow there,” said another of the men;

“he don’t look fit to die yet, he don’t. Why, I wouldn’t be in his place for a thousand pound.” “I do suppose Blackbeard’s so afraid he don’t know how to see,” said the first speaker.

At last one of the men in the boat spoke up. “Maybe he don’t know how to see,” said he, “but maybe we’ll blow some daylight into him afore we get through with him.”

Some more of the settlers had come out from the shore to the end of the wharf, and there was now quite a crowd gathering there, all looking at the men in the boat. “What do them Virginny ‘baccy-eaters do down here in Caroliny, anyway?” said one of the new-comers. “They’ve got no call to be down here in North Carolina waters.”

“Maybe you can keep us away from coming, and maybe you can’t,” said a voice from the boat.

“Why,” answered the man on the wharf, “we could keep you away easy enough, but you ben’t worth the trouble, and that’s the truth.”

There was a heavy iron bolt lying near the edge of the landing. One of the men upon the wharf slyly thrust it out with the end of his foot. It hung for a moment and then fell into the boat below with a crash. “What d’ye mean by that?” roared the man in charge of the boat. “What d’ye mean, ye villains? D’ye mean to stave a hole in us?”

“Why,” said the man who had pushed it, “you saw ‘twasn’t done a purpose, didn’t you?”

“Well, you try it again, and somebody’ll get hurt,” said the man in the boat, showing the butt-end of his pistol.

The men on the wharf began laughing. Just then the boatswain came down from the settlement again, and out along the landing. The threatened turbulence quieted as he approached, and the crowd moved sullenly aside to let him pass. He did not bring any pilot with him, and he jumped down into the stern of the boat, saying briefly, “Push off.” The crowd of loungers stood looking after them as they rowed away, and

when the boat was some distance from the landing they burst out into a volley of derisive yells. “The villains!” said the boatswain, “they are all in league together. They wouldn’t even let me go up into the settlement to look for a pilot.”

The lieutenant and his sailing-master stood watching the boat as it approached. “Couldn’t you, then, get a pilot, Baldwin!” said Mr. Maynard, as the boatswain scrambled aboard.

“No, I couldn’t, sir,” said the man. “Either they’re all banded together, or else they’re all afraid of the villains. They wouldn’t even let me go up into the settlement to find one.”

“Well, then,” said Mr. Maynard, “we’ll make shift to work in as best we may by ourselves. ‘T will be high tide against one o’clock. We’ll run in then with sail as far as we can, and then we’ll send you ahead with the boat to sound for a pass, and we’ll follow with the sweeps. You know the waters pretty well, you say.”

“They were saying ashore that the villain hath forty men aboard,” said the boatswain.[1]

Lieutenant Maynard’s force consisted of thirty-five men in the schooner and twenty-five men in the sloop. He carried neither cannons nor carronades, and neither of his vessels was very well fitted for the purpose for which they were designed. The schooner, which he himself commanded, offered almost no protection to the crew. The rail was not more than a foot high in the waist, and the men on the deck were almost entirely exposed. The rail of the sloop was perhaps a little higher, but it, too, was hardly better adapted for fighting. Indeed, the lieutenant depended more upon the moral force of official authority to overawe the pirates than upon any real force of arms or men. He never believed, until the very last moment, that the pirates would show any real fight. It is very possible that they might not have done so had they not thought that the lieutenant had actually no legal right supporting him in his attack upon them in North Carolina waters.

It was about noon when anchor was hoisted, and, with the schooner leading, both vessels ran slowly in before a light wind that had begun to blow toward midday. In each vessel a man stood in the bows, sounding continually with lead and line. As they slowly opened up the harbor within the inlet, they could see the pirate sloop lying about three miles away. There was a boat just putting off from it to the shore.

The lieutenant and his sailing-master stood together on the roof of the cabin deck-house. The sailing-master held a glass to his eye. “She carries a long gun, sir,” he said, “and four carronades. She’ll be hard to beat, sir, I do suppose, armed as we are with only light arms for close fighting.”

The lieutenant laughed. “Why, Brookes,” he said, “you seem to think forever of these men showing fight. You don’t know them as I know them. They have a deal of bluster and make a deal of noise, but when you seize them and hold them with a strong hand, there’s naught of fight left in them. ’Tis like enough there’ll not be so much as a musket fired to-day. I’ve had to do with ‘em often enough before to know my gentlemen well by this time.” Nor, as was said, was it until the very last that the lieutenant could be brought to believe that the pirates had any stomach for a fight.

The two vessels had reached perhaps within a mile of the pirate sloop before they found the water too shoal to venture any further with sail. It was then that the boat was lowered as the lieutenant had planned, and the boatswain went ahead to sound, the two vessels, with their sails still hoisted but empty of wind, pulling in after with sweeps.

The pirate had also hoisted sail, but lay as though waiting for the approach of the schooner and the sloop.

The boat in which the boatswain was sounding had run in a considerable distance ahead of the two vessels, which were gradually creeping up with the sweeps until they had reached to within less than half a mile of the pirates—the boat with the boatswain maybe a quarter of a mile closer. Suddenly there was a puff of smoke

from the pirate sloop, and then another and another, and the next moment there came the three reports of muskets up the wind.

“By zounds!” said the lieutenant. “I do believe they’re firing on the boat!” And then he saw the boat turn and begin pulling toward them.

The boat with the boatswain aboard came rowing rapidly. Again there were three or four puffs of smoke and three or four subsequent reports from the distant vessel. Then, in a little while, the boat was alongside, and the boatswain came scrambling aboard. “Never mind hoisting the boat,” said the lieutenant; “we’ll just take her in tow. Come aboard as quick as you can.” Then, turning to the sailing-master, “Well, Brookes, you’ll have to do the best you can to get in over the shoals under half sail.”

“But, sir,” said the master, “we’ll be sure to run aground.”

“Very well, sir,” said the lieutenant, “you heard my orders. If we run aground we run aground, and that’s all there is of it.”

“I sounded as far as maybe a little over a fathom,” said the mate, “but the villains would let me go no nearer. I think I was in the channel, though. ’Tis more open inside, as I mind me of it. There’s a kind of a hole there, and if we get in over the shoals just beyond where I was we’ll be all right.”

“Very well, then, you take the wheel, Baldwin,” said the lieutenant, “and do the best you can for us.” Lieutenant Maynard stood looking out forward at the pirate vessel, which they were now steadily nearing under half-sail. He could see that there were signs of bustle aboard and of men running around upon the deck. Then he walked aft and around the cabin. The sloop was some distance astern. It appeared to have run aground, and they were trying to push it off with the sweeps. The lieutenant looked down into the water over the stern, and saw that the schooner was already raising the mud in her wake. Then he went forward along the deck. His men were crouching down along by the low rail, and there was a tense quietness of expectation about them. The lieutenant looked them over as he passed them. “Johnson,” he said, “do

you take the lead and line and go forward and sound a bit." Then to the others—"Now, my men, the moment we run her aboard, you get aboard of her as quick as you can, do you understand? Don't wait for the sloop or think about her, but just see that the grappling-irons are fast, and then get aboard. If any man offers to resist you, shoot him down. Are you ready, Mr. Cringle?"

"Ay, ay, sir," said the gunner.

"Very well, then, be ready, men; we'll be aboard 'em in a minute or two."

"There's less than a fathom of water here, sir," sang out Johnson from the bows. As he spoke there was a sudden soft jar and jerk, then the schooner was still. They were aground. "Push her off to the lee there! Let go your sheets!" roared the boatswain from the wheel. "Push her off to the lee." He spun the wheel around as he spoke. A half a dozen men sprang up, seized the sweeps, and plunged them into the water. Others ran to help them, but the sweeps only sunk into the mud without moving the schooner. The sails had fallen off and they were flapping and thumping and clapping in the wind. Others of the crew had scrambled to their feet and ran to help those at the sweeps. The lieutenant had walked quickly aft again. They were very close now to the pirate sloop, and suddenly some one hailed him from aboard of her. When he turned he saw that there was a man standing up on the rail of the pirate sloop, holding by the back-stays. "Who are you?" he called, from the distance, "and whence come you? What do you seek here? What d'ye mean, coming down on us this way?"

The lieutenant heard somebody say: "That's Blackbeard hisself." And he looked with great interest at the distant figure.

The pirate stood out boldly against the cloudy sky. Somebody seemed to speak to him from behind. He turned his head and then he turned round again. "We're only peaceful merchantmen!" he called out. "What authority have you got to come down upon us this way? If you'll come aboard I'll show you my papers and that we're

only peaceful merchantmen."

"The villains!" said the lieutenant to the master, who stood beside him. "They're peaceful merchantmen, are they! They look like peaceful merchantmen, with three carronades and a long gun aboard!" Then he called out across the water, "I'll come aboard with my schooner as soon as I can push her off here."

"If you undertake to come aboard of me," called the pirate, "I'll shoot into you. You've got no authority to board me, and I won't have you do it. If you undertake it 'twill be at your own risk, for I'll neither ask quarter of you nor give none."

"Very well," said the lieutenant, "if you choose to try that, you may do as you please; for I'm coming aboard of you as sure as heaven."

"Push off the bow there!" called the boatswain at the wheel. "Look alive! Why don't you push off the bow!"

"She's hard aground!" answered the gunner. "We can't budge her an inch."

"If they was to fire into us now," said the sailing-master, "they'd smash us to pieces."

"They won't fire into us," said the lieutenant. "They won't dare to." He jumped down from the cabin deck-house as he spoke, and went forward to urge the men in pushing off the boat. It was already beginning to move.

At that moment the sailing-master suddenly called out, "Mr. Maynard! Mr. Maynard! they're going to give us a broadside!"

Almost before the words were out of his mouth, before Lieutenant Maynard could turn, there came a loud and deafening crash, and then instantly another, and a third, and almost as instantly a crackling and rending of broken wood. There were clean yellow splinters flying everywhere. A man fell violently against the lieutenant, nearly overturning him, but he caught at the stays and so saved himself. For one tense moment he stood holding his breath. Then all about him arose a sudden outcry

of groans and shouts and oaths. The man who had fallen against him was lying face down upon the deck. His thighs were quivering, and a pool of blood was spreading and running out from under him. There were other men down, all about the deck. Some were rising; some were trying to rise; some only moved.

There was a distant sound of yelling and cheering and shouting. It was from the pirate sloop. The pirates were rushing about upon her decks. They had pulled the cannon back, and, through the grunting sound of the groans about him, the lieutenant could distinctly hear the thud and punch of the rammers, and he knew they were going to shoot again.

The low rail afforded almost no shelter against such a broadside, and there was nothing for it but to order all hands below for the time being.

“Get below!” roared out the lieutenant. “All hands get below and lie snug for further orders!” In obedience the men ran scrambling below into the hold, and in a little while the decks were nearly clear except for the three dead men and some three or four wounded. The boatswain crouching down close to the wheel, and the lieutenant himself, were the only others upon deck. Everywhere there were smears and sprinkles of blood. “Where’s Brookes?” the lieutenant called out.

“He’s hurt in the arm, sir, and he’s gone below,” said the boatswain.

Thereupon the lieutenant himself walked over to the forecastle hatch, and, hailing the gunner, ordered him to get up another ladder, so that the men could be run up on deck if the pirates should undertake to come aboard. At that moment the boatswain at the wheel called out that the villains were going to shoot again, and the lieutenant, turning, saw the gunner aboard of the pirate sloop in the act of touching the iron to the touch-hole. He stooped down. There was another loud and deafening crash of cannon, one, two, three—four,—the last two almost together,—and almost instantly the boatswain called out: “’Tis the sloop, sir! look at the sloop!”

The sloop had got afloat again, and had been coming up to the aid of the schooner,

when the pirates fired their second broadside, now at her. When the lieutenant looked at her she was still quivering with the impact of the shot, and the next moment she began falling off to the wind, and he could see the wounded men rising and falling and struggling upon her decks.

At the same moment the boatswain called out that the enemy was coming aboard, and even as he spoke the pirate sloop came drifting out from the cloud of smoke that enveloped her, looming up larger and larger as she came down upon them. The lieutenant still crouched down under the rail, looking out at them. Suddenly, a little distance away, she came about, broadside on, and then drifted. She was close aboard now. Something came flying through the air—another and another. They were bottles. One of them broke with a crash upon the deck. The others rolled over to the further rail. In each of them a quick-match was smoking. Almost instantly, there was a flash and a terrific report, and the air was full of the whizz and singing of broken particles of glass and iron. There was another report, and then the whole air seemed full of gunpowder smoke. “They’re aboard of us!” shouted the boatswain, and even as he spoke, the lieutenant roared out: “All hands to repel boarders!” A second later there came the heavy, thumping bump of the vessels coming together.

Lieutenant Maynard, as he called out the order, ran forward through the smoke, snatching one of his pistols out of his pocket and the cutlass out of its sheath as he did so. Behind him, the men were coming, swarming up from below. There was a sudden stunning report of a pistol, and then another and another, almost together. There was a groan and the fall of a heavy body, and then a figure came jumping over the rail, with two or three more directly following. The lieutenant was in the midst of the gunpowder smoke, when suddenly Blackbeard was before him. The pirate captain had stripped himself naked to the waist. His shaggy black hair was falling over his eyes, and he looked like a demon fresh from the pit, with his frantic face. Almost with the blindness of instinct, the lieutenant thrust out his pistol, firing it as he did so. The pirate staggered back: He was down—no; he was up again. He had a

pistol in each hand; but there was a stream of blood running down his naked ribs. Suddenly, the mouth of a pistol was pointing straight at the lieutenant's head. He ducked instinctively, striking upward with his cutlass as he did so. There was a stunning, deafening report almost in his ear. He struck again blindly with his cutlass. He saw the flash of a sword and flung up his guard almost instinctively, meeting the crash of the descending blade. Somebody shot from behind him, and at the same moment he saw someone else strike the pirate. Blackbeard staggered again, and this time there was a great gash upon his neck. Then one of Maynard's own men tumbled headlong upon him. He fell with the man, but almost instantly he had scrambled to his feet again, and as he did so he saw that the pirate sloop had drifted a little away from them, and that their grappling-iron had evidently parted. His hand was smarting as though struck with the lash of a whip. He looked around him; the pirate captain was nowhere to be seen—yes, there he was, lying by the rail. He raised himself upon his elbow, and the lieutenant saw that he was trying to point a pistol at him, with an arm that wavered and swayed blindly, the pistol nearly falling from his fingers. Suddenly, his other elbow gave way, and he fell down upon his face. He tried to raise himself—he fell down again. There was a report and a cloud of smoke, and when it cleared away Blackbeard had staggered up again. He was a terrible figure—his head nodding down upon his breast. Somebody shot again, and then the swaying figure toppled and fell. It lay still for a moment—then rolled over—then lay still again.

There was a loud splash of men jumping overboard, and then, almost instantly, the cry of "Quarter! quarter!" The lieutenant ran to the edge of the vessel. It was as he had thought: the grappling-irons of the pirate sloop had parted, and it had drifted away. The few pirates who had been left aboard of the schooner had jumped overboard and were now holding up their hands. "Quarter!" they cried. "Don't shoot!—quarter!" And the fight was over.

The lieutenant looked down at his hand, and then he saw, for the first time, that there

was a great cutlass gash across the back of it, and that his arm and shirt-sleeve were wet with blood. He went aft, holding the wrist of his wounded hand. The boatswain was still at the wheel. “By zounds!” said the lieutenant, with a nervous, quavering laugh, “I didn’t know there was such fight in the villains.”

His wounded and shattered sloop was again coming up toward him under sail, but the pirates had surrendered, and the fight was over.

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“THE COMBATANTS CUT AND SLASHED WITH SAVAGE FURY.”

CHAPTER XLVII

IN THE NEW LIFE

IT is wonderful how adolescent youth accepts the changes of its life, and with what fluency it adapts itself to them.

During the month that the Attorney Burton lingered at Marlborough before his return to England, it came to be more like home to Jack than any place in which he had ever lived. In a wonderfully little while there grew to be a singularly ripe feeling of familiarity about the roomy halls and passageways, the books, the pictures, the fine, stiff, solid furniture, the atmosphere of wide and affluent ease; a like familiarity in all the outside surroundings of unkempt grassy lawn, of garden and of stable. No doubt the steady, uniform kindness of those dear people tended more than anything else to endear everything to him, with that peculiar home-feeling that always afterward embalmed the memories of Marlborough in his mind. No one, not even his uncle, Sir Henry, in the few years that followed, seemed to fill the singular place in his heart occupied by Colonel Parker with his somewhat grandiose benignity; no one the place of Madam Parker with her fussy, sometimes tiresome, attentions.

It was a long time before Nelly Parker recovered her perfect strength. Some days she

would appear almost perfectly herself; then would ensue times of petulant lassitude that were sometimes very hard to bear. The little doctor came every day to see her, sometimes staying to supper, and riding home alone through the starlit night. He and Jack struck up a great friendship, and there were many little meaningless fragments of that pleasant time remaining in Jack's memory, in which the little pot-bellied man was the dominant figure.

One such recollection was of finding him waiting for Miss Nelly Parker when she and Jack returned from a ride to Bolingwood—Mr. Bamfield Oliver's place. She had gone to call on the young ladies, and Jack, at her bidding, had reluctantly accompanied her. He always felt his awkwardness and young clumsiness at such times—the constraint of talking about himself and of answering those reiterated questions about his adventures. At the sound of their horses' hoofs the doctor and Madam Parker had appeared at the door, and as Jack dismounted and helped Nelly Parker down from her horse at the horse-block, the doctor had called out, "Well, my young pirate, and so you are back again, then? Zooks! We were just debating whether you hadn't run away with our young lady again, and for good and all this time."

Another such recollection of his presence was of his coming unexpectedly one time while there was company out on the lawn, and of feeling her pulse as she sat in the midst of them all.

Such foolish little memory fragments are very apt to have some indefinable filaments of association that cause them to cling with peculiar tenacity to the memory.

For some such subtle reason all the little circumstances of a certain uneventful Sunday morning became very intimately a part of Jack's life. That day he rode to the parish church with the family, in the great coach. It had been raining the day before, but then the air was full of warm, mellow autumn sunlight, that fell widely in

through the coach windows and across Colonel Parker's knees and his own lap, feeling warm and pleasant to his legs. The road was heavy with sticky mud, and the four horses strained and labored as they pulled the huge, yawing coach through the deeper ruts. Nelly Parker and her mother sat opposite, the young girl, all unconscious of his steady look, playing with and smoothing out the ribbons that hung from her prayer-book—trivial little things, but for some reason knit so closely into his consciousness, that his memory always recurred to them with a singular precision of detail. The church was paved with brick, and he even remembered how very chill and damp it was that morning, and how, by and by, when he moved his toes in his shoes, he found them grown numb and as cold as ice.

When the sermon was over the ladies and gentlemen gathered for a while, standing in groups here and there in the churchyard, flooded with the yellow sunlight that felt very bland and warm after the chill, damp interior of the building. The greater part of the ladies were gathered in a single group, chatting together about this or that of gossip. Three or four gentlemen stood with them, now and then putting in a word, now and then laughing. Colonel Parker and Mr. Bamfield Oliver and Mr. Cartwright were standing together, discussing tobacco; and from where he stood he could hear Mr. Oliver's monologue running somewhat thus:—"I cannot understand it,"—here he offered the other gentlemen snuff from a fine silver-gilt snuff-box,—"I cannot understand it; 'twas as good tobacco as any I ever shipped, and if there was anything the matter with it, as Sweet complains, why, the hogsheads must have been broached in the carrying. I'm sure it could not have been Jarkins's fault; for he is the best packer I have." And so on and so on.

All this while Jack was lingering near Nelly Parker, holding her prayer-book in his hand. He saw that Harry Oliver and two of his sisters were talking to Mrs. Cartwright a little distance away. He knew one of the young ladies; the other, who had been away from home for some time, was, as yet, a stranger to him. He felt that she was looking intently at him, and presently saw her whispering to her brother. He

tried to appear unconscious, but with certain prescience he knew very well she was speaking to her brother about him and his adventures. Suddenly Harry Oliver burst out laughing. “Why, Master Jack,” he called, “here’s another young lady hath lost her heart to you, and thinks you’re a hero. The fame of your pirate adventures has reached all the way to the Bermuda Hundreds, ‘twould seem.”

The young lady’s velvety cheek, dark like her brother’s, colored to a soft crimson, and she turned sharply away. Jack felt himself blushing in sympathy, and Nelly Parker, looking at him, burst out with a peal of laughing.

The afternoon of another Sunday, when the news of the fight at Ocracock and the death of Blackbeard was first received at Marlborough, had perhaps more reason for its insistence upon the plane of his consciousness than this meaningless fragment.

Nelly Parker had gone to her room after dinner, and the house seemed singularly empty without her presence in it. Jack was sitting in the library, reading. Now and then the words formed themselves into ideas, but for long lapses he would read without knowing what he was reading, his mind full of and brimming over with the thought of her. The sunlight came in through the wide, open windows, and lay in great squares across the floor, and the brass of the nails in the chair and sofa and of the andirons, catching the light, gleamed like stars, and the room was full of the clear brightness. The blazing fire snapped and crackled in the great fireplace, and there was a dish of apples on the table.

While he so sat there he heard the door suddenly opened, and the rustle of a dress. He knew instantly and vividly who it was had come in—he felt it in every fiber, but he would not look up. Then he heard her moving about the room.

“What are you reading?” she said, at last.

Jack looked at the top of the page. “’Tis The Masque of Comus,” he said.

“The Masque of Comus!” she repeated. “I was reading that to papa yesterday.”

She came over and stood behind his chair as she spoke, leaning over him and

looking down at the book in his hand, reading it as he read it. He felt her nearness, and every filament of nerve tingled at it. Her breath fanned his cheek, and a part of her dress touched his shoulder. His heart thrilled poignantly, and his breath came thickly and suffocatingly, but still he did not look up. She stood there close behind him for a long while. He could almost hear the beat of her young heart, and it seemed to him that she must be feeling some soft echo of his own passion. Suddenly she gave his elbow a push that knocked the book out of his hand, and then she burst out laughing. As Jack stooped to pick up the book there was the voice of some one in the hall without. It was Harry Oliver, and she sprang away from where she stood, and flew like a flash to a chair at some distance, where she seated herself, instantly demure.

Then Harry Oliver came into the room; and presently he and she were talking and laughing together, and all that agonizing delight of the little while before melted out of Jack’s heart and dissolved away and was gone.

That passionate, innocent joy of early love! How does it fill all these little nameless, foolish things full to overflowing with its tremulous golden happiness—its ardent pangs of deep delight!

It was a little while after this that Colonel Parker called Jack into his own cabinet and put a packet of papers in his hand, saying that they had just been sent up from Jamestown, and that they were from Lieutenant Maynard; that there had been a fight with the pirates at Ocracock, and that Blackbeard was killed.

“What!” exclaimed Jack. “Blackbeard dead?” And then again, after a moment—“Blackbeard dead!” It seemed incredible to him that such a thing could be; he could not realize it.

There was a list of killed and wounded accompanying the letter, and Jack read it over, name by name—he knew nearly all. “Why,” he cried, “Morton’s dead, too—and Miller, the quartermaster—and Roberts, and Gibbons. Why, that is all of

Blackbeard’s officers, except Hands, who is lame at Bath Town.”

“Maynard says there was a lame man they arrested down at Bath Town and brought up with them.”

“That, then, must be Hands,” said Jack. “He was the fellow whom Blackbeard shot in sport while I was down there.” And then, suddenly thinking of Nelly Parker, his heart thrilled agonizingly again.

CHAPTER XLVIII

JACK MEETS SOME OLD FRIENDS

IT was late in November when Mr. Burton returned to England. Jack accompanied him as far as Jamestown; and Mr. Simms, who had business at the factory at Yorktown, also went down in the schooner as far as that place.

The day was keen and clear, with a soft, cool wind blowing, before which the schooner sloped swiftly away, dropping the great brick front of Marlborough rapidly behind. The wide rush of air and water seemed very full of life and vigor, and Jack lay up under the weather-rail in the warm sunlight, wrapped in his overcoat and given up utterly to the building of day-dreams.

He had just parted from Nelly Parker, and his mind was very full of thoughts of her. She had been more than usually teasing that morning. “I believe you wouldn’t mind if I were going away from you forever,” Jack had burst out as they stood lingering in the wide sunlight in front of the great house. “I sometimes think that you have no heart in you at all.”

Then she looked at him with sudden seriousness. “Do you, then, really think that of me?” she said. “Well, then, I may tell you that I have a heart, and that it would, indeed, grieve me to the heart if you were going away forever.”

“Would it?” Jack had said.

“Yes. And see—if I have teased you too much, here is my hand.”

Jack took her soft, white hand in his; it was very warm. Then with a sudden impulse he lifted it to his lips and pressed a long, long kiss upon it. She did not withdraw it, and when he looked up he saw that she was still gazing very steadily at him. His heart was beating with exceeding quickness, but he looked as steadily back at her, though with swimming sight. Then she had burst out into a peal of laughter, had snatched her hand away, and had run away back into the house, leaving him standing where he was. Then he had hurried down toward the wharf, hardly sensing whither he was walking, and not answering Mr. Simms when the factor asked him what had kept him so long.

Long after they had dropped Marlborough away behind, he still lay in the sunlight under the rail, wrapped closely in his overcoat, his heart full of the thought of her. He was giving himself over luxuriously to that foolish day-dreaming to which adolescent youth loves to yield itself, and upon the funny inconsequence of which the matured man looks back and laughs from the firmer stand of later years. For one often remembers such dear, foolish day-dreams in after times.

He imagined to himself how he would have to go away to live in England. He would not come back again, he thought, until he had made himself famous; then he would return to her once more. Yes; while he was away from her he would become very famous. Maybe he would enter the navy. There would be a great war, and his ship would be in battle. He pictured to himself a terrible battle in which the senior officers would all be killed, so that it would depend upon him, the youngest of all, to save the ship. He would call upon the men to follow him, and then, in a last desperate, almost hopeless attack, he would rush aboard the enemy’s ship, his men close behind him. They would conquer, but he would have been shot through the arm, and his arm would have to be cut off, and he would go with an empty sleeve—it seemed very pathetic as he thought of it. All the world would talk of the

young hero who had saved the ship, and Nelly Parker would hear of it and would think, “He will now never come back to Virginia again. He is too great and too famous to remember me now.” Then one day he would suddenly appear before her. She would say: “What! have you, then, come back to us? Have you, then, not forgotten us?” He would smile and would say: “No, I can never forget you.” He would stand before her with one empty sleeve pinned to his breast. There would be an order upon his breast, and he would say: “I love you and have always loved you, and none but you.”

“If we make it in time,” said Mr. Simms, suddenly, speaking to the Attorney Burton where they stood together looking out toward the shore, “we’ll stop at the Roost this afternoon. There was a letter for Mr. Parker sent up to Marlborough by mistake yesterday, and I may as well leave it on the way down.”

His words broke sharply upon Jack’s thoughts and shattered the dream to fragments. He lay silent for a moment or two. “Do you think,” he said, suddenly, “that Mr. Parker is there now?”

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Simms, turning toward him, “but I hope he is, so that I can leave this letter for him. Why do you ask?”

“I’d like to go ashore,” said Jack, “but I don’t care to meet him.”

“Why not?” said Mr. Simms. “He can’t do you any harm.”

“I know that very well,” said Jack, “but, all the same, I don’t want to see him, if I can help it.”

It wanted still an hour of sunset when they reached the Roost. Mr. Parker was not at home, and Jack accompanied Mr. Simms up to the house. How familiar and yet how strange everything appeared! How full of countless associations! There was a bed-coverlet hanging from a window, and he seemed to recognize its garish colors. A face passed by the open window—it was Peggy Pitcher. Two or three negroes came out from behind the end of the house and stood looking toward him; among

them was Little Coffee. The negro boy stood staring; then, when Mr. Simms had gone into the house, he came forward, and Jack burst out laughing at his staring face. He asked the negro boy where Dennis was; Little Coffee said that the overseer was at the stable, and Jack went directly over to the outbuildings, Little Coffee following him. That feeling of renewed familiarity still surrounded everything. Everywhere the negroes grinned recognition at him, and he spoke to them all, laughing and nodding his head.

He found Dennis sitting in the shed by the stables mending an old saddle. He looked up when Jack came in, as though for a moment puzzled. Then instantly his face cleared. “Why, lad,” he said, “is that you?” He slipped the wax-end betwixt his lips and held out his hand. Then he looked Jack over. “And how you have climbed up in the world, to be sure!” he said.

“Have I?” said Jack, laughing.

They talked together for a little while about indifferent things, and it did not seem to Jack that Dennis was as keenly alert as he should have been to the fact of his visit. There was something very disappointing in it. As they talked, Little Coffee stood by, looking him all over. “How’s Mrs. Pitcher, Dennis?” Jack asked, presently.

“Oh, she’s very well,” said Dennis. “She was talking about you only this morning. I tell you what ’tis, lad, she and his honor had it like shovel and tongs after you ran away.”

“Did they?” said Jack. “Well, I think I’ll go over to the house to see her. I’ve only got a little while to stay. We’re going on down the river to Jamestown. Good-by.”

Dennis took the hand that Jack gave him and shook it warmly.

“I can’t get up,” he said, “for this teasing saddle.”

Jack went away over to the house, still accompanied by Little Coffee. Some one had told Peggy Pitcher that he was about the place, and she was expecting him. Whatever lack of warmth Jack had felt in Dennis’s greeting was fully made up by

Mrs. Pitcher. “Why, Jack,” she said, looking all over him, “what a fine, grand gentleman you’ve grown all of a sudden! Well, to be sure! To think that I should have seen you that last time sitting down yonder in the cellar so down in the spirits that ‘twas enough to break a body’s heart to see you, and now you to be grown so fine a young lord of a man, to be sure. I did hear say that you joined the pirates after you got away.”

“No, I didn’t join the pirates,” said Jack. “I went down to North Carolina with them, but I didn’t have any business with them. But never mind that, Mrs. Pitcher. What I wanted to say is that I’ll never forget what you’ve done for me as long as ever I live.”

“Won’t you, Master Jack?” she said, evidently gratified. “Why, now, that’s very kind and noble-spoken of you.”

“I don’t see that ’tis,” said Jack. “Where would I have been now, do you think, if it hadn’t been for you?”

Peggy Pitcher burst out laughing. She sat down on a chair just behind her. “Why, I don’t know,” she said, “and that’s the truth. ’Tis like you’d been in a pretty bad way. His honor was hot ag’in’ you, just then, I can tell you.” She became suddenly serious. “I tell you what ’tis, Master Jack,” she said, “things are not going well with him just now, and he’s a good, kind man, too, when he chooses to be so. Do you remember Master Binderly, who used to come here, blustering about his money?”

“Yes,” said Jack, “I do. And how you said you’d pour hot water upon him if he didn’t go away.”

Again Peggy burst out laughing, and slapped her palm upon her knee. “Ay,” she said, “so I did, to be sure. Well, he’s been pestering about here a deal, of late, and I do suppose that’s why his honor’s away so much. He’s been away now for two weeks.”

Just then he heard Mr. Simms calling him outside. “Master Jack! Master Jack!”

“There,” said Jack, “I must go now. I’ll try to see you some time again, Mrs. Pitcher,” and he gave her his hand.

“Well,” said Peggy Pitcher, as she rose, and took Jack’s hand, “I didn’t think I was helping you into such good luck when I helped you to get away that night.”

“Nor I didn’t, either,” said Jack.

Something, he couldn’t tell what, brought the thought of Nelly Parker into his mind, and he felt a quick fullness of happiness that seemed suddenly to brim his heart more than full.

“Good-by, Mrs. Pitcher,” he said, and again he pressed Peggy’s hand.

“I’ve been hunting all over the place for you,” said Mr. Simms, testily, when Jack came out of the house.

Jack almost never enjoyed himself so much as he did those three or four days while he was at Jamestown. Lieutenant Maynard appeared to be very glad to see him, and welcomed him with great heartiness. Almost from the beginning of their acquaintance he had dubbed Jack “My hero,” and he began calling him so now when they met again. “Well, my hero,” he cried out, as he came aboard the schooner from the man-of-war’s boat, carrying his arm in a sling, “and how do you do by now! Well, your old friend, Blackbeard, has got his quietus. Look ye here, d’ ye see, he left me a remembrance before he went,” and he held out his bandaged hand so that Jack might see it. “A great big cutlass slash across the knuckles,” he said.

“I hear the pirates are all in jail over at Williamsburgh,” said Jack.

“Ay,” said the lieutenant, “and it was lucky for you that you ran away in time, or else you might be there, too.” And then Jack burst out laughing.

The lieutenant introduced Jack to his brother officers of the “Lyme,” and Jack often went aboard of the man-of-war, sometimes to take breakfast, and nearly always to dinner. The officers all seemed to like him, and once Captain St. Clare entertained

him over a bottle of Madeira for nearly an hour in the cabin. The life aboard the man-of-war was very new to Jack, and he never lost the vividness of his interest in the charm of the wide, long decks, so immaculately clean; in the towering masts, the maze of rigging, the long, double row of cannon, in the life that swarmed above and below—the sailors, the marines, the sentinels pacing up and down, with every now and then a sparkling glint of the sun on musket-barrel or brass trimmings of accoutrements.

It was a great pleasure and gratification to him to be made so much of aboard the great man-of-war, and he was with his new friends nearly all the time. There were wild, rollicking blades among them—men seasoned to the wickedness of the world, who would sometimes sing songs and tell stories after dinner that were not always fitted for a young boy's ears. One handsome rattle-brained young fellow in particular, who seemed to take a peculiar liking to Jack, was full of jests and quips, that, though they made Jack laugh, were hardly suitable for him to listen to. But Jack's nature was of too honest and too robust a sort to offer ground for any pruriency of thought to cling very closely to.

On the second or third day of his stay at Jamestown, he and Lieutenant Maynard went over to Williamsburgh together, to visit the pirate prisoners in the jail at that place. As soon as they had obtained the permit they went straight to the prison, and were admitted by the turnkey to the round-house in which the pirates were confined.

They were all crowded into the one room—the wounded and the unwounded together. At first, Jack could hardly bear the heavy, fetid smell of the place, but the prisoners themselves appeared altogether unconscious of it. There was quite a number of them who had been hurt and who now lay there uncared for in their sufferings; one man, with a cloth tied around his head, looked very pale and ill, and another lay with his face to the wall, perfectly silent all the time that Jack was there.

"Why, 'tis Jack Ballister!" cried one of the men as soon as he had come in at the

door. It was Ned Bolles who spoke—the young fellow of about Jack's age who had been shot in the shoulder when the pirates took the French barque. Then: "Why, Jack," he said, "what a fine, grand gentleman you are, to be sure!"

Jack laughed. They all crowded around him except Hands and the man with the wounded head, and the other who lay motionless with his face turned toward the wall. Hands sat in a corner upon the floor smoking his pipe, his lame leg stretched out perfectly straight before him. He spoke no word of especial greeting to the visitor. All of the prisoners were handcuffed and wore leg-irons. Some had wrapped rags around the shackles to protect their ankles and wrists from being rubbed by the rough iron. They all seemed very glad to see Jack; apparently glad of any change in the monotony of their imprisonment.

"Well, Jack," said one of the men, named Dick Stiles, "I tell 'ee what 'tis, 'ee be lucky to be here now alive and well. 'Twas a nigh miss for 'ee when 'ee got int' t' inlet ahead of us. If 'ee'd been a minute later 'ee never 'a' got oot t' be here now."

"So poor Chris Dred is dead, is he?" another called out.

"Ay," said Jack, "you did the business for him."

"Well, Jack," said one of the men, "you fell into your fortune when you got away. I suppose you'll be marrying her young ladyship next, won't you?"

They all burst out laughing. Jack laughed too; but he knew that he was blushing, and was conscious that Lieutenant Maynard was standing at the door, listening to what was said.

"I tell you what 'tis, Jack," said one of the men; "you be such a grand, great gentleman now, you ought to speak a good word for your old friends. They says our trial is to come off next week, and you ought to ax for our pardon of your new friend the governor, for old times' sake," and then they all began laughing.

"Hands says he knows summat'll save his own neck," said a voice.

“Ay,” said Hands, from where he sat on the floor, “they daren’t hang me. I know what I know, and they won’t harm me. I’m not afraid of that.”

It seemed very strange to Jack that they should appear to think so little of their approaching trial and the inevitable result that must follow. They must all know that there could be but one end to it, for the governor was determined to make an example of them for the benefit of all other would-be pirates; they seemed to think more of the dullness of their present imprisonment than anything else.

“Lookee, Jack,” one of them said, “do you have any money about ye? Just tuppence or so to buy a twist of ‘baccy; I ha’n’t had a smoke for two days now.” It was the young fellow Bolles who spoke.

“I’ve got sixpence here,” said Jack, “and that’s all. But you’re welcome to it.”

“You wouldn’t give it all to Bolles, would you?” said Salter. “He’s no worse off than the rest on us be.”

As they walked away up the street together, Lieutenant Maynard asked him what it was Hands meant when he spoke to him.

“What do you mean?” said Jack; “I don’t remember what he said.”

“Well,” said the lieutenant, “the talk is that he hath been proclaiming to every one that the governor shall never hang him, and that he knows something concerning Colonel Parker that will save his neck, and that they will never dare to hang him.”

“Does he say that?” said Jack. “Ay, I do remember now what he said to me, though I didn’t think of it at the time. But he knows naught about Colonel Parker—’tis about Mr. Richard Parker.”

“About Mr. Richard Parker?” said the lieutenant. “Do you know what it is, then? What is it, Jack?”

Jack hesitated for a second or two. “I don’t believe I ought to tell you anything about it,” he said. “I don’t believe Colonel Parker would choose to have me say anything

about it to you."

"Nonsense!" said Lieutenant Maynard. "Why should you not tell me? I'll not speak about it to a living soul. What hath Mr. Richard Parker been about?"

Then Jack told him.

The lieutenant was listening very silently and intently as he walked along. "Why, what a thing do you tell me?" he cried out. "Of course, if that villain Hands knew aught like this conspiracy of Mr. Richard Parker's he has reason enough to believe that Colonel Parker won't choose to have it known. I always misliked Dick Parker; but what a prodigious rascal he must be! 'Tis incredible that one born a gentleman could be such a villain as that. But I tell you what it is, Master Jack, this is a mightily serious secret that you have. You'd best keep it tight locked in your own bosom and say naught of it to any living soul."

As the lieutenant spoke, a heavy feeling fell suddenly upon Jack that he had been very foolish to speak to such a comparative stranger as the lieutenant about such a thing. He walked on in silence, suffering that singularly bitter feeling that we have maybe all of us sometimes smarted under—a feeling that we have betrayed a friend's secret to a stranger.

He was destined to feel still more uncomfortable about it in time. For almost immediately upon his return to Marlborough he was called into Colonel Parker's private cabinet. Colonel Parker had just received a packet from Williamsburgh the day before—a long letter from Governor Spottiswood, inclosing a statement from Hands, and he began at once, almost as soon as Jack had come into the room, to speak about what he had in his mind. "Tell me," he said, "do you know aught of how Nelly came to be taken away from Marlborough?"

"What do you mean, sir?" said Jack, and then his heart began beating. He knew very well what Colonel Parker referred to.

"I mean," said Colonel Parker, "do you know aught of who 'twas put this pirate

Blackbeard up to carrying poor Nelly away? Did he do it of his own free will, or did you hear that any one set him to do it?"

Jack hesitated, then he said, "Yes, sir; I did hear there was somebody put him up to doing it."

"What did you hear?" said Colonel Parker. "Come, speak out plain, and tell me just what you know."

"Well," said Jack, "'twas said down there at Bath Town,—that is, by those who came to see the pirate at his house,—'twas said that—that Mr. Richard Parker knew about Miss Nelly's having been taken away. I don't know anything about it myself, but that was what they all said. I know that Blackbeard writ three or four letters to Mr. Parker while the young lady was there, and I heard them say again and again that Mr. Parker knew that she had been taken away from home and whither she had been taken, and that he was concerned in it."

Colonel Parker was leaning with his elbow upon the table, and his fingers against his forehead. He was looking very steadily and silently at Jack. He did not speak for a long time after Jack had ended. "Well," he said, at last, "what then? What else do you know?" And Jack resumed:

"I heard Blackbeard say over and over again that it was Mr. Parker had planned how she should be taken, and that he was to get you to pay for bringing her back again. Mr. Knight the secretary writ three or four letters, too, and sent 'em to Mr. Parker, and 'twas said that Mr. Parker was to show the letters to you. But no answer could be got to any of them. Then, by and by, they all began to think that maybe he—Mr. Parker, that is—intended that she shouldn't come back again at all."

"Are you sure of all this you're telling me?" said Colonel Parker.

"I am sure that was what I heard," Jack said. "'Twas talked about there in the house betwixt Blackbeard and the others just as things are talked about in a house. They didn't try to hide the matter or keep it a secret from me, but talked about it always as

if ‘twere so.”

Again Colonel Parker sat in silence, and Jack, as he stood there, wished and wished—oh, with what pangs of bitter self-reproach!—that he had not said anything to Lieutenant Maynard about it. He wondered with heavy apprehension what Colonel Parker would say if he knew that he had told such a secret to such a stranger as the lieutenant. Then suddenly Colonel Parker spoke. “Well,” he said, “you can see for yourself without my telling you that naught must be said of all this—no, not to a living soul. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” said Jack, weakly.

“Very well,” said Colonel Parker. “Remember, my boy, that you have in your bosom a very dreadful secret that involves the credit of the whole of our family, and that you must not speak of it to a living soul.”

It may be said here that the lieutenant did not betray Jack’s secret—or, at least, it never came to Jack’s ears that he had done so. It may also be briefly said that Hands was pardoned by Governor Spottiswood, and that in a little less than a month later Mr. Richard Parker ran away from Virginia—it was said from his debts—to Jamaica.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE DEPARTURE

THE Attorney Burton wrote to Colonel Parker almost immediately upon his return to England. He said that he had been to see Master Hezekiah Tipton, “and if I had dropped from the stars instead of walking into his office,” he wrote, “he could not have been more amazed to see me.”

After that he wrote frequently, keeping Colonel Parker apprised of all his movements. By January, he had Jack’s affairs so far settled that there was talk of his

returning to England. It was finally arranged with Hezekiah Tipton that Jack should go to live at Grampton with Sir Henry Ballister, and a sufficient sum for his maintenance was extorted from the old man. It was also arranged that he should be given such an education as befitted his rank in the world.

Finally, March was settled upon as the date of Jack's departure. During that month the "Richmond Castle," a fine, large ship, was to sail for England. Captain Northam was one in whom Colonel Parker felt every confidence, and so it was decided that Jack should take passage in that vessel from Yorktown.

As the time for departure drew nearer and nearer, there was that ever increasing bustle and confusion of preparation that always culminates with such a leave-taking. Even on the very last day the two sea-chests did not seem nearly filled, and there was a mountainous heap of clothes and personal belongings yet waiting to be packed away in them. The negro women-servants were hurrying continually up and down stairs upon this errand and upon that, and there was a ceaseless calling and countermanding of orders. Madam Parker, leaning over the banister, and calling:—"Jack! Jack! Where is Jack? Did you see Master Jack, Chloe?"—"Iss, missy. Him in de office with hes honor."—"Well, run and ask him where he put those two lace cravats and the lawn sleeves, for we can't find them anywhere." "Mamma, mamma!" this from Nelly Parker from the room within, "if that is what you 're looking for, I know where they are; they were put into the little chest. I saw Dinah pack them there this morning."

A dozen times Madam Parker would sink down, suddenly relaxed, into a chair, to say that she was that tired with all this hurry that her feet ached to the bone, and each time Nelly Parker would say, "Why do you vex yourself so much, then, mamma? Surely Dinah and Rose and Chloe are enough to do the packing without your wearing yourself out at it."

"But, my dear," Madam Parker would say, with her nervous fussiness, "if I don't see

to it myself, they will never get it done."

Then Chloe, Madam Parker's own maid, came to say that Robin and the negro man, Cæsar, were waiting to cord the boxes.

"Well, they'll have to wait," said Madam Parker, crossly, "for they're not ready yet."

"They might cord the small box, mamma," said Nelly Parker; "we can pack everything else in the other."

Meantime, Jack was sitting with Colonel Parker, who was giving him his last instructions. "I have them marked down here," he said, "on this paper. Keep it carefully by you. Nay; don't trust it in your pocket that way. Where's the pocket-book I gave you yesterday to keep such things in?"

"I left it up-stairs on the table, sir," said Jack.

"You should always carry it with you," said Colonel Parker, "and not leave it about in that way. Well, put the memoranda into your pocket, now, but be sure you put it in your pocket-book when you get up-stairs."

"Yes, sir," said Jack.

"Here's a letter to Captain Northam," said Colonel Parker. "Give it to him as soon as you go aboard the "Richmond Castle," and he will extend very particular care to you. It gives him full instruction as to all he is to do for you. When you get to Gravesend he will send you up as far as Broadstairs in a wherry, and there you shall get a hackney coach to take you to my agent at Snow Hill. Here is a letter to him and a packet—Ebenezer Bilton, Esquire. This packet of letters you shall use while you are in London as you need them. You will see by the addresses who they are for. Here is this large packet to give to your uncle. You had better put these larger packets into your chests, but carry the captain's letter in your pocket-book, so you may give it to him as soon as you get aboard."

“Yes, sir,” said Jack.

How singularly dull and blank is the interval of waiting that follows all rude bustle of preparation—when the boxes have been corded and carried away down to the landing, and the house has again relapsed into its former quietude, and yet the time has not quite come to say farewell. There is something singularly trying in that period of passive waiting.

It was late that last afternoon at Marlborough, and Jack and Nelly Parker stood at the window, in the slant of the winter’s day, looking out down toward the landing. The day before the treacherous March weather had turned suddenly back to winter again, and it had snowed nearly all day; now the slush was melting rapidly in the sun. Everywhere the water was running, trickling, the drops sparkling in the bright slanting light of the sinking sun. The snow still lingered in wide white patches here and there in sheltered places of the grass; but on the pathway and on the steps of the house it had dissolved into a wet, thin sheet of half-frozen slush. She was very silent as she stood there looking out toward the river beyond the screen of winter trees.

“I wonder how much you will miss me?” Jack said.

She turned and looked directly at him, but she did not reply in words.

“I shall miss you,” he said. “I can’t tell how much I shall miss you. I shall be thinking about you all the time.”

“Will you, Jack!”

“Yes, I shall. Will you often think about me?”

“Indeed I shall.” Then she suddenly reached out her hand toward him, and he took it and held it in his, and she let it remain there. It seemed to him that he could hardly breathe, and as she stood there, perfectly still, with her hand in his, he could see her innocent bosom rising and falling with her own labored heavy breathing.

“Will you miss me?” he said, at last, almost whispering. “Will you, then, miss me?

I'll miss you—oh, how I shall miss you!"

"Yes, I'll miss you," she whispered.

She stood close to him. Her dress and her arm touched him, and he thrilled and thrilled again and again. It was upon him to say somewhat of that which so swelled his bosom, but the words hung like lead on his lips, and his heart beat so strenuously that he could hardly breathe. She did not withdraw her hand from his as she stood there.

Then suddenly there was the sound of some one coming, and she snatched her hand away from him. It was Madam Parker. "Why, Jack," she said, "I've been looking for you everywhere. What are you doing here?" and she looked from one to the other.

"Doing?" said Jack, stupidly. "I'm not doing anything." And Nelly Parker moved away from the window.

"Colonel Parker wants to see you in his room for a minute," said Madam Parker. "You'd better go right away." And if she thought of anything that had passed, she said nothing concerning it.

Jack did not find a chance to speak to Nelly Parker again that night until the very last minute before she went away to bed. She seemed to him to avoid even looking at him. She sat very silently beside her father, listening to what he said, but saying nothing herself. She went to bed before the others, the negro waiting-woman standing at the door holding the candle. Then she gave Jack her hand. Her father and mother were looking on. "Good-night," she said; "and 'twill be good-by." And then she raised her eyes, and looked slowly and steadily at him.

Jack held her hand, remembering strongly what had passed that afternoon.

"And will you not wake to see me off in the morning?" he said. He was still holding her hand.

"Maybe I will."

“You will—I know you will.”

“Why, Jack, you’ll be off before we’re awake,” said Colonel Parker. “You’ll have started before seven o’clock.” And then she went away.

Jack was awakened by the rattle of the latch and the echoing footsteps of some one coming into his room, and the sliding light of a candle shining across the walls and then down into his face. It was Colonel Parker’s serving-man, Robin, who had come, bringing a lighted candle and a jug of hot water. “You must get up, Master Jack,” he said, “’tis six o’clock.”

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“‘THEN I WILL COME,’ SAID HE.”

Even in the moment of first awakening from sleep into which he had brokenly drifted the night before, he was conscious of something portentous looming in the background of the coming day; but he could not in the first instant seize upon the coming events of his life. Then it came to him with a flash, and he sprang out of bed upon the cold floor and into the chill of the dark and wintry room. The time had come for him to depart.

Robin helped him as he dressed with chattering teeth and numb, cold fingers. “The boat’s all ready and waiting, Master Jack,” the man said, “and they’ll start as soon as you’ve eaten your breakfast and go aboard.”

“’Tis mightily cold this morning, Robin,” Jack said.

“Ay; ’tis a freezing morning, sir,” said the man.

Presently Jack asked, “Is Miss Nelly up yet?”

“Miss Nelly!” said Robin, in very evident surprise. “Why, Master Jack, she won’t be up for three hours yet.”

“I thought maybe she’d be up to see me off,” Jack said, in a sort of foolish explanation.

He found a solitary breakfast spread out for him down-stairs by the light of a cluster of candles, and he sat down and began immediately to eat, waited on by Robin and a negro man. All the great spaces were chill and raw with frost of the winter morning. Jack's fingers were still stiff with cold, and his breath blew out like a cloud in the light of the candles. He ate his meal with an ever heavier and heavier certainty that Nelly Parker would not be awake to see him off. As the certainty grew upon him there seemed to be something singularly heartless in such neglect. He would never have so treated her, and at the thought a sudden anger arose within him against her. Then it occurred to him with a fading hope that maybe she might be in the library or drawing-room waiting for him. He finished his scant breakfast and went thither, out across the hall; but there was no one there but the negro man making a fire of logs, the smoke rising in great volumes from the kindled lightwood, part of it coming out into the room, and filling it with a pungent cloud. The wide, cold spaces seemed singularly empty and deserted of their accustomed life. As he stood, lingering, some one came across the hall; it was Robin, and he was carrying the overcoats. "They're waiting for you at the landing, Master Jack," he said.

Then Jack, with a crumbling away of the heart, knew for a certainty that he was not to see her again.

Robin held the overcoat for him, and he slipped his arms into it, and then he went out of the house and down toward the landing. The sun had not yet risen, and the air of the morning was keen with the cold and frozen newness of the day. Here and there, where the sodden snow of yesterday had not all melted away, it had frozen again into slippery sheets that crunched beneath his tread. He turned and looked back toward the house. He could see her room; it was closed and dark. Then he turned again and walked on once more toward the landing, his breath coming thick and hot in his throat. To think that she would not come to bid him good-by before he went away!

The boat was waiting for him, and the sailing-master stood upon the wharf, swinging and slapping his arms. Jack climbed down into it, and the other followed him. The men shoved it off with a push of their oars, and then began rowing away toward the schooner, where a light still hung in the stays, burning pallidly in the increasing daylight. Then they were aboard.

Jack went down into the cabin, still gray with the early light. Both his chests were there and his two bundles, and he sat down among them, overwhelmed. By and by he came up on deck again. They were out and away in the river now. The sun had just risen, and the red light lit up the front of the great house, now standing out clear through the leafless trees. Jack stood holding to the stays, looking out at it, and his eyes blurred, and for a moment everything was lost to his sight. She had not come to bid him good-by; that was the bitterest pang of all.

CHAPTER L

THE RETURN

JACK wrote back to Marlborough from Jamestown, and again from Yorktown just before he sailed—letters full of homesickness and of longing. Perhaps the most unhappy hours of his life were those one or two when, from the poop-deck of the great ship, he saw the bluffs of Yorktown fall further and further astern while, one after another, the great square sails high overhead burst out to the swift cold wind that hummed away to the eastward, driving the water in white-capped ridges before it. He sensed nothing of the windy glory of that morning; he was so full of the heavy weight of his melancholy that he could not stand still for a minute, but walked up and down, up and down the deck continually, his soul full to overflowing with that deep, yearning passion of homesickness. A number of passengers—two ladies—one young and one old—and half a dozen gentlemen also stood gazing out at the shore as it fell away behind; yet it seemed to Jack that, in spite of such companionship, he

was more alone than ever he had been in all of his life before.

How different were those other feelings when, six weeks later, he stood with his fellow passengers (now grown into so many intimate friends) and watched the distant cliff-walls of England rising up, ever higher and higher, out of the ocean! Even six weeks of time may cure those pangs of homesickness and of love-longings in a young and wholesome heart.

The week that followed was one of such continued bustle and change that no part of it had time to really come close enough to him to be firmly united to his life. The Thames; the journey from Gravesend; London, its different people and different scenes; the long northward journey in the coach—all these were mere broken fragments of events without any coherency of ordinary sequence. Then at last he was at Grampton.

It was a fine and stately old place, with an air of quality such as he had never known before—a great brick house, of old King James's day, with long wings and ivy-covered gables; with halls and passageways, with wide terraced lawn, with gardens and deeply-wooded park.

That first moment of his arrival, he felt singularly lonely as he stood in the great wainscoted hall, looking about him at the pictures on the walls, the bits of armor, the stag's antlers, the tall, stiff, carved furniture. It was all ever so much greater and grander than he had anticipated, and he felt himself altogether out of place and a stranger in it. Then his uncle came hurrying to meet him and gave him a very kind and hearty welcome to Grampton.

He had been settled in England for over a month before he heard from Virginia. Then there came a great packet of letters all together; a fat, bulky letter from Colonel Parker, one from Madam Parker, one from Lieutenant Maynard, and a very long letter from Nelly Parker.

He held this last for a long time in his hands before he opened it, recognizing, as he

sat there, how greatly the keenness of that old sweet passion had become dulled and blunted even in this short time. He felt a sort of shame that it should be so, not knowing that it always is thus.

It is a long time before one can get used to that strange time-wearing that so rubs the keen, sharp outline of passion into the dim and indistinct formlessness of mere memories; sometimes we grow gray before we recognize that it must be so, and even then we wonder why it should be.

Then he opened her letter and read it.

“We have had a great deal of company for the last two weeks,” said a fragment of the letter. “There was an aunt Polly from the eastern shore of the bay who brought my three cosins with her. And then my uncle James came afterward with my other cosin, a boy of thirteen and mightily spoiled, who will talk at table and give his opinion to my father, who, as you know, can bare no man’s opinion but his own, much less a boy’s of thirteen. But my cosins are dear, sweet girls whom I have not seen for nigh four years,” and so on and so on. “The ‘Lyme,’ hath come back from Jamaca, too, and so Mr. Maynard was here and brought two young gentlemen who are cadits along with him. You know them very well, for they are Master Delliplace and Master Monk. And so everything very gay. Well, I am gay, too, and do enjoy myself, but indeed think oftener than I choose to tell you of some one a great ways off in England.” And here Jack felt a strong yearning toward the writer of the innocent, inconsequent words. There seemed to be a tender pathos even in the misspelling here and there. Continuing, the letter said: “Indeed and indeed I was truly sorry that I did not wake to see you go away, for so I did entend to do, and so I ment to tell you I would do. And indeed I could have boxed Cloe’s ears that she did not wake me, for so she promised to do. But she did not wake herself, so how could she wake me? I did not wake for a good long time after the boat had gone, and when I waked the boat was way down the river at the bend. Alack! I could have cried my

eyes out. Do you beleve that? Well, I did cry, and that not a little, for I was so sorry to have you gone that I could have cried my eyes out for a week." Toward the end of the letter she said: "I had nigh forgot to tell you that my poor uncle Richard is reported dead. He was in Jamaca, and Mr. Maynard says he was shott, but how, he could not tell. So now the Roost is to be sold, and 'tis likely that papa will buy it. Yesterday he said to mama, 'What a fine thing it would be if Jack could buy the Roost and come back to us again,' for indeed it is a fine plantation. And oh, I wish you could buy the Roost."

After Jack had finished reading the letter he sat thinking a long time. Would he ever go back to Virginia again? As he sat there, he felt a sudden longing for it—its warm wildness, its pine woods, its wide stretches of inland waters—and while the feeling was strong within him, he sat down and wrote to her. "It is all very fine here"—he said, "a great, grand house, with a wide park of trees, and a lawn with terraces and stone steps, and a great garden all laid out in patterns and scrolls, with box bushes and hedges trimmed into shapes of peacocks and round balls and what not." And so on in a page or so of description. "My uncle is as kind as ever he can be, only—I will tell you this in secret—he will drink too much wine at dinner, and then sometimes is cross. Well, he is a dear, good, kind man, and almost like a father to me. My Aunt Diana is kind to me, too, and my cousins—dear, good, sweet girls—do all they can to make me happy. Yet I always think of Virginia, and more than all else, when I am thinking of it, do I think of one who stood with me at the window the last day I was there, and wish I were there to see her again. Ay, sometimes I would give all I have in the world if I could only be back again." It was a great pleasure for him to write this, and as he wrote it his heart warmed and thrilled again. "Indeed, I did look for you that morning I went away," he wrote, "for I hoped to say good-by to you again when there was no one by to hear me say it. But you did not come, and I went away so sad and broken-hearted that I could almost have cried. I was so sad that I would have given all the world to be back again.

“My uncle,” he wrote, “intends that I shall go to Cambridge College, and so I study all day long with a tutor. But methinks I am slow and dull at learning, excepting Latin and Greek, which my poor father taught me when I was a boy, and which I know nigh as well as my tutor himself. That I know perhaps in some places better than he. But yet, if I could help it, I would not go to Cambridge College, but would go back to Virginia again. Yet what can I do? It is four years, now, till I come of age and enter into mine own, and then I can come and go as I please. Do you not believe that it will please me to go straight back to Virginia?”

He sat for a little while thinking, and then he wrote, “Whom, think you, I saw a short while ago?—whom but Israel Hands, who hath come back to England again. He found me out where I was living, and came here begging. I did not know him at first, for he hath grown a great, long beard. He limps with the knee, which he says is all stiff like solid bone, and that he can only bend it—as indeed he showed me—a tiny bit. He hath grown mightily poor and is in want. My uncle was prodigiously interested in him, and would have him up in his cabinet to talk with him, after he had something to eat and some beer in the buttery. I gave him some money, and he went away happy. My uncle’s man said that he was drinking down in the village that night, and so, I suppose, spent all the money I gave him,—poor wretch.”

Then, thinking of another matter, he wrote: “I do not think I told you aught of my cousin Edward. He is my uncle’s son, and is in the Guards—a great, tall, handsome gentleman, who was here a while since and was very kind to me; only he would forever tease me by calling me his cousin the pirate, and would ask me to show him my pardon before he would own me. But of course you must understand all this in jest.”

Jack was twenty years of age when his uncle Hezekiah died. The old man left a great fortune of over thirty thousand pounds, a part of which was invested in a large tract of land in Virginia. The next year Jack left college, and the year after, in the

following summer, took passage to America to look after his property and to have it properly surveyed. Colonel Parker, who had been the active agent in the purchase of the land, invited him to come directly to Marlborough, and Jack gladly accepted the invitation.

It seemed very wonderful to behold with the living eyes those old familiar places once more. It was almost like stepping back from the living present into a dim and far-away fragment of the beautiful past. The very schooner that met him at Jamestown—how familiar it was! It seemed to him that he remembered every turn of the scrollwork in the little cabin.

They passed by the old Roost early in the morning. It stood out clear and clean in the bright light, and Jack stood upon deck gazing, gazing at it.

How full of associations it all was! and yet the place was very much changed. The roof had been newly repaired, the house painted, and the old stables were replaced with new outbuildings. The sharp outlines of the old house and the two tall chimneys were, however, exactly as he remembered them.

Turning, he could just see the houses at Bullock’s Landing on the other side of the river; and, looking at the far-distant cluster of wooden hovels, he almost lived over again the circumstances of that night of his escape from his master.

It was after midday when the brick chimneys of Marlborough showed in the distance across the wide, bright river above the trees, and it was maybe two or three o’clock when he stepped ashore at the well-known landing-wharf.

He saw that there was quite a company gathered on the lawn in front of the house as he walked up from the landing along the familiar path. And how familiar it all was—just exactly as he remembered it, only now, to his riper knowledge, the great house appeared to have shrunk in size, and to have become more bare and angular than he remembered it to have been. The company upon the lawn had turned their faces toward him as he came. They evidently had not seen the approach of the

schooner. He saw Colonel Parker at once and Madam Parker, but he did not see Nelly Parker until she arose from among the others as he drew near. She had changed very little, except that her slender, girlish figure had rounded out into the greater fullness of womanhood. Jack was looking straight at her, but he had seen that Harry Oliver was there also.

“Papa!—mamma!” she cried out, “t’is Jack!” And then she ran to meet him, reaching out her hands and grasping both of his. Then, in an instant, all was a general disturbance of voices and of coming forward. Colonel Parker wrung Jack’s hand again and again, and Madam Parker almost cried, giving him, not her hand, but her cheek to kiss.

“I hope Mr. Ballister will remember me,” said Harry Oliver.

“Indeed, yes,” said Jack, “I’m not likely to forget you,” and he took the hand that was offered.

He saw in the brief moment of hand-shaking that Oliver had not improved in his appearance. His face had begun to show a white, puffy look, as though of dissipation, and there was a certain looseness about his dress that Jack had not remembered. In his memory he had an image of Harry Oliver as of a perfectly fine gentleman, and he wondered passively whether the change that he now beheld was in the other or in himself.

That night was full of a singular redundancy of happiness—one of those periods of pellucid contentment which lies in after times so sweet a center in the memory of other things. The room he occupied was the very one that had been his before he went away to England; and as he lay there in the warm, mellow darkness, wide awake, listening to the myriad sounds of night that came in through the open window, and as he thought of Eleanor Parker, and that he was now again with her, to see her and to be near her for a month, he seemed to be wrapped all about with a balm of the perfect joy of peacefulness.

That month was the happiest of all his life, for in it Nelly Parker promised to be his wife. It had merged into lovely early autumn weather, and the katydids were in full song, and in the happy after-memories of those four blissful weeks, the note of the little green singing things was always present in recollections of mellow evenings when he and she would sit out in front of the house, listening to the rasping notes answering one another from the black clumps of foliage; of other times when he would lie awake in his room, not sleeping for thinking of her, his heart full to overflowing with happiness, and that same rasping iteration sounding ceaselessly here—there—louder—more distant, in through the open window. Never afterward did he hear the katydids singing at night without a recurrent echoing vibration of happiness flowing into his heart. For so, year by year, as the seasons come, do such little things of the heavenly Father’s beautiful world of nature bring back to the soul an echo of some part of that divine hymn that has been sung,—of joy, of tender sorrow, of bliss fulfilled, of grief that is past,—a sound, a touch from out the past, setting the finely-drawn heart-cords to quivering and ringing with an answering pang of passion that age does not always dull—that time does not always cause to become stilled.

FOOTNOTE:

[1] The pirate captain had really only twenty-five men aboard of his sloop at the time of the battle.

TRANSCRIBER’S NOTE:

—Obvious errors were corrected.

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