

**ARTHUR
FREDERICK
WALLIS**

IDONIA: A ROMANCE OF
OLD LONDON

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The irregular pile of buildings known as Petty Wales, of which considerable mention is made in this book, formerly stood at the northeast corner of Thames Street. The chronicler, Stow, writes of "some large buildings of stone, the ruins whereof do yet remain, but the first builders and owners of them are worn out of memory. Some are of opinion ... that this great stone building was sometime the lodging appointed for the princes of Wales when they repaired to this city, and that therefore the street, in that part, is called Petty Wales;" and he further adds: "The merchants of Burdeaux were licensed to build at the Vintry, strongly with stone, as may yet be seen, and seemeth old though oft repaired; much more cause have these buildings in Petty Wales ... to seem old, which, for many years, to wit, since the galleys left their course of landing there, hath fallen to ruin." It appears to have been let out for many uses, some disreputable; and a certain Mother Mampudding (of whom one would like to know more) kept a part of the house for victualling.

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH I LEARN FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAVE AN UNCLE

The first remembrance I hold of my father is of a dark-suited tall man of an unchanging gravity on all occasions. He had, moreover, a manner of saying "Ay, ay," which I early came to regard as the prologue to some definite prohibition; as when I asked him (I being then but a scrubbed boy) for his great sword, to give it to a crippled soldier at our gate, who had lost his proper weapon in the foreign wars—

"Ay, ay," said my father, nodding his grey head, "so he lost his good sword, and you would make good the loss with mine. Ay, 'twas a generous thought of yours, Denis, surely."

I was for reaching it down forthwith, where it hung by the wall in its red velvet scabbard, delighted at the pleasure I was to do my bedesman.

"Go to your chamber, boy," said my father in a voice smaller than ordinary.

"But, sir, the sword!" I cried.

"Ay, the sword," he replied, nodding as before. "But, go warn Simon Powell that he look to his poultry-lofts. And learn

wisdom, Denis, for you have some need of it, in my judgment."

The same temperate behaviour he ever showed; granting little, and that never to prayers, but sometimes upon good reasoning. He seemed to have put by anger as having no occasion for the use of it, anger being neither buckler nor broadsword, he would say, but Tom Fool's motley. This calmness of his, I say, it was I first remember, and it was this too that put a distance between us; so that I grew from boyhood to nigh manhood, that is until my eighteenth year, without any clear understanding of what lay concealed behind his mask of quiet. That he had a passion for books I soon discovered, and the discovery confirmed me in the foolish timidity with which I regarded him. For hours together would he sit in the little high room beyond the hall, his beard buried in his ruff, while the men awaited his orders to go about the harvesting, and would read continuously in his great folios: the Lives of Plutarch, or Plato, or the Stoick Emperor, or other such works, until the day was gone and all labour lost. I have known our overseer to swear horrid great oaths when he learned that Master Cleeve had received a new parcel of books by the carrier, crying out that no estate would sustain the burden of so much learning so ill applied.

Our house stood within a steep combe close under the Brendon hills, and not far from the Channel, by which ships pass to Bristol, and outward-bound to the open sea. Many a time have I stood on a rise of ground between the Abbey, whence it is said we take our name of Cleeve, and the hamlet on the cliff above

the seashore, gazing out upon the brave show of ships with all sails set, the mariners hauling at the ropes or leaning over the sides of their vessels; and wondered what rich cargo it was they carried from outlandish ports, until a kind of pity grew in me for my father in his little room with his rumbled ruff and his Logick and Physick and Ethick, and his carrier's cart at the door with Ethick and Physick and Logick over again.

At such times Simon Powell was often my companion, a lad of a strange wild spirit, lately come out of Wales across the Channel, and one I loved for the tales he had to tell of the admirable things that happened long since in his country, and indeed, he said, lately too. I cannot call to mind the names of the host of princes that filled his histories, save Arthur's only; but of their doings, and how they talked familiarly with beasts and birds, and how they exchanged their proper shapes at will, and how one of them bade his companions cut off his head and bear it with them to the White Mount in London; which journey of theirs continued during fourscore years; of all these marvels I have still the memory, and of Simon Powell's manner of telling them, which was very earnest, making one earnest who listened to him.

For ordinary teaching, that is, in Latin and divinity and arithmetick, I was sent to one Mr. Jordan, who lived across the combe, in a sort of hollow half way up the moor beyond, in a little house of but four rooms, of which two were filled with books, and his bed stood in one of them. The other two rooms I believe he never entered, which were the kitchen and the bedchamber.

For having dragged his bed, many years before, into the room where he kept the most of his books, he found it convenient, as he said, to observe this order ever afterwards; and being an incredibly idle man, though a great and learned scholar, he would lie in bed the best part of a summer's day and pluck out book after book from their shelves, reading them half aloud, and only interrupting his lecture for extraordinary purposes. My father paid him handsomely for my tuition, though I learned less from him than I might have done from a far less learned man. He was very old, and the common talk was that he had been a clerk in the old Abbey before the King's Commission closed it. It was therefore strange that he taught me so little divinity as he did, unless it were that the reading of many pagan books had somewhat clouded his mind in this particular. For I am persuaded that for once he spoke of the Christian faith he spoke a hundred times of Minerva and Apollo, and the whole rout of Atheistical Deities which we rightly hold in abhorrence.

My chief occupation, when I was not at school with Mr. Jordan nor on the hills with Simon, was to go about our estates, which, although they were not very large, were fair, and on the whole well ordered. Our steward, for all his distaste of my father's sedentary habit, had a reverence for him, and said he was a good master, though he would never be a wealthy one.

"His worship's brother now," he once said, "who is, I think, one of the great merchants of London, would make this valley as rich and prosperous as any the Devon shipmasters have met with

beyond the Western Sea."

I asked him who was my uncle of whom he spoke, and of whom I heard for the first time.

"'Tis Master Botolph Cleeve," he said. "But his worship does not see him this many a year, nor offer him entertainment since they drew upon each other in the great hall."

"Here, in this house!" I cried, for this was all news to me, and unsuspected.

"In this house it was, indeed, Master Denis," replied the steward, "while you were a poor babe not yet two year old. But there be some things best forgotten," he added quickly, and began to walk towards where the men were felling an alder tree by the combe-brook.

"Nay, Peter Sprot," I cried out, detaining him, "tell me all now, for things cannot be forgotten, save they have first been spoken of."

He laughed a little at this boyish argument, but would not consent at that time. Indeed, it was near a year afterwards, and when I had gained some authority about the estate, that he at length did as I demanded.

It was a sweet spring morning (I remember) with a heaven full of big white clouds come up from the westward over Dunkery on a high wind that bent the saplings and set the branches in the great woods stirring. We had gone up the moor, behind Mr. Jordan's house, with the shepherd, to recover a strayed sheep, which, about an hour before noon, the shepherd chanced to espy a

long way off, dead, and a mob of ravens over her, buffeted about by the gale. The shepherd immediately ran to the place, where he beat off the ravens and afterwards took up the carcass on his shoulders and went down the combe, leaving us twain together.

"It is not often that he loses any beast," said the steward. "'Tis a careful man among the flocks, though among the wenchies, not so."

I know not why, but this character of the shepherd put me again in mind of my uncle Botolph, upon whom I had not thought for a great while.

"Tell me, Peter Sprot," I said, "how it was my father and my uncle came to fighting."

"Nay, they came not so far as to fight," cried the steward, with a start.

"But they drew upon each other," said I.

He sat silent for a little, tugging at his rough hair, as was his wont when he meditated deeply.

After awhile, "You never knew your lady mother," he said, in a deep voice, "so that my tale must lack for that which should be chief of it. For to all who knew her, the things which befell seemed a part of her beauty, or rather to issue from it naturally, though, indeed, they were very terrible. Mr. Denis, it is the stream which runs by the old course bursts the bridges in time of winter, and down the common ways that trouble ever comes."

"But what trouble was in this," I asked, in the pause he made, "that it were necessary I should have known my mother

to comprehend it?"

"Nay, not the trouble, master," he answered, "for that was manifest to all. But 'twas her grace and beauty, and her pretty behaviour, that none who knew not Madam Rachel your mother, may conjure e'en the shadow of.

"You were a toward lad at all times," he went on, "and when your brother was born, though you were scarce turned two, you would be singing and talking from dawn to dark. Ah! sir, your father did not keep his book-room then, but would be in the great chamber aloft, with you and your lady mother and the nurse, laughing at your new-found words and ditties, and riding you and fondling you—God save us!—as a man who had never lived till then.

"'Twas when little Master Hugh came that all changed. For what must 'a do, but have down Mr. Botolph from London to stand sponsor to him, at the christening. He came, a fine man, larger than his worship, and with a manner of bending his brow, which methought betokened a swiftness of comprehension and an impatience of all he found displeasing. Indeed, there was little he did not observe, noting it for correction or betterment. Though a city man and a merchant, Mr. Botolph had but to cast an eye over this place, and 'Brother,' said he, 'there be some things here ill done or but indifferent well'; and showed him that the ricks were all drenched and moulded where they stood, and bade him build them higher up the slope. Master Cleeve took his advice in good part, for they were friends yet.

"But within a little while, I know not how, a shadow fell athwart all. In the farm, matters went amiss, and the weather which had formerly been fine became foul, with snow falling, though it was come Eastertide, and all the lambs sickened. The maids whispered of Mr. Botolph, who had never so much as set eyes on my lady till that time (she having kept her bed to within a week of the christening), that he had spoken no word since the hour he saw her in, nor scarce once stirred from his chamber. His worship, they said, took no heed of this melancholy in his brother, or rather seemed not to do so, though he played no longer with you, and had small joy of the infant. But with Madam Rachel he sat long in chat, cheering her, and talking of what should be done in due season, and of how he would remove the state rooms to the upper floor (as was then generally being done elsewhere), and would build a noble staircase from the old hall; and of many other such matters as he had in mind.

"So for a week, and until the eve of the christening, nought could be called strange, save that Mr. Botolph kept himself apart, and that the shadow on all men's minds lay cold. I doubt if any slept that night, for without the wind was high as now it is, and charged with snow. We could hear the beasts snorting in their stalls and the horses whinnying. Little do I fear, Master Denis," said the old man, suddenly breaking off, "but I tell you there was something abroad that night was not in nature.

"'Twas about midnight that we heard laughter; your lady mother laughing in her silver voice, which yet had a sort of

mockery in it, and his worship answering her now and then. After awhile comes he to my room, where I yet sleep, beyond the armoury.

"Peter,' he says, 'hast seen my brother Botolph?'

"I told him no, but that I supposed he was in the guest-room down the long corridor.

"Madam Cleeve cannot sleep,' says he again, 'thinking that he is out in the storm, and would have us seek him.'

"I lit a candle at this, for we had spoken in the dark hitherto, and when it had burned up, I saw his worship dressed and with his boots on. His sword he held naked in his hand, and with his other hand he would press upon his brow as one whose mind is dull. The gale nearly blew out the candle the while I dressed myself, and again we listened to the noises without.

"I took a staff from behind the door.

"Whither shall we go?' he asked me.

"Surely to his room, first of all,' said I, 'for it is likely that my lady is deceived.'

"I think so,' he said gravely, and we went upstairs.

"Without summoning him, Mr. Cleeve opened the doors of his brother's chamber, and at once started back.

"He is not within,' he said, in a low voice, and neither of us spoke nor even moved forward to search the room thoroughly. It was very manifest to us that the shadow under which we had been moving for many days was now to lift; and the certainty that it would lift upon black terror held us in a sort of trance.

"I am not of a ready wit at most times, Mr. Denis, but somehow without the use of wit, and almost upon instinct I said: 'Go you again to your own chamber, master, and if all be well there, be pleased to meet me below in the great hall,' and with that, hastening away, I left him.

"I ran at once to the stair, which has a window overlooking the base court; and as I ran methought the sound I had heard before of horses whinnying, was strangely clear and loud, they being safe in stable long since and the door shut. The candle which I still bore just then a gust of wind extinguished, so that I could scarce find my way to the window, so black was all, and I so distraught. But once there, I needed not to look a second time, for down below in the snow of the yard stood a great coach with four sturdy hackneys that kicked and whinny'd to be gone. 'Twas so dark I could distinguish nought else, yet I continued to stand and stare like a fool until on a sudden I heard another sound of steel clashing, which sent my blood to my heart, and a prayer for God's pity to my lips.

"It was in the hall I found them, my master and Mr. Botolph; he cloaked as for a journey; and beyond, swooning by the fire which had not yet burned out, but threw a dull light along the floor, Madam Rachel, your mother.

"Not many passes had they made, as I think, when I came between them. And indeed they did not resist me, for your father turned away at once, striding across the red floor to my lady, while Mr. Botolph, with just a sob of breath between his teeth,

stole off, and as I suppose by the coach, which we heard wheel about and clatter up the yard. I got me to my cold bed then, Mr. Denis, leaving my master and mistress together. It was the chill she took that cruel night which became a fever suddenly, and of that she died, poor lady, and at the same time the infant died too."

He twitched his rough sheepskin coat about him as he concluded his tale, for the sky was gathering to a head of tempest, and after a little while we went down the moor towards the combe where the great house lay in which I had been born, and where, as I knew, my father at this moment was sitting solitary over some ancient folio, in the endless endeavour after that should stead him in his battle with the past.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH PTOLEMY PHILPOT COMMENCES HIS STUDY OF THE LATIN TONGUE

It is, I conceive, natural in a young man to use more time than wisdom in the building of hopes which be little else than dreams, though they appear then more solid than gross reality. Thus I, in laying out my future, saw all as clear as our own park-lands, and where I misliked anything there I altered, working with a free hand, until the aspect of my condition was at all points to my taste, and I itched to enter forthwith into the manhood I had so diligently imagined.

Unwittingly, perhaps, I had allowed Simon Powell's tales of fantasy to get the mastery of my mind, and in such sort that no prince of all his mountains ever marched so lightly from adventure to adventure, nor came off with so much grace and so acclaimed as I. My life (I told myself) was to borrow no whit of my father's aversion from the world, which disposition of his, for all my pity of the cause of it, I could not find it in my heart to praise. Alas! I was but nineteen years of my age, and pride was strong within me, and the lust of combat.

With Simon himself I consorted less frequently than of old,

for I stood already in the estate of a master; being acknowledged as such by all, from Peter Sprot himself to the maids who came into the fields for the gleaning, and courtsey'd to me as I rode between the stooks on my white mare. But although I had necessarily become parted from my wild preceptor, I had, as I say, my mind tutored to dreaming, which but for Simon might have been dull and content with petty things, whereas it was with a gay arrogance that I now regarded the ordering of the world, and held myself ordained a champion to make all well. For this I hereby thank Simon Powell with all my heart; and indeed it is a benefit well-nigh inestimable. To such a height then had this humour of errantry gone, that I would snatch at every occasion to gratify it; and so would ride forth through the gate before the grey Combe Court, and setting my mare at a gallop, would traverse the lanes athwart which the level morning sun cast bars of pale gold and the trees their shadows, and be up on the wide rolling moors or ever the mists were stirring in the valley or the labourers risen to their tasks. Many a fancy held my busy brain at such times, and as I looked backward upon our great irregular house, which was built, a part of it, in the year of Agincourt, so quiet it lay amidst its woods and pasture lands that it seemed a place enchanted, upon which some magician had stolen with a spell of sleep. 'Twas no home for active men, I said, and laughed as I turned away and urged my poor jade again onward. Contempt is very close to joy in a lad's heart, and his valour rouses (like old Rome) to the summons of the goose-voice within him.

Some six months had passed since the steward first acquainted me with the calamity which had made shipwreck of my father's life, when, upon a memorable, clear, October morning, I rode forth as my custom was, intending to shape my course towards the little hamlet of Roodwater, and so by the flats to Dunster. The orchard-trees about the old Abbey were rimed with frost, and a keenness in the air lifted me so that I could have wept or sung indifferently. The dawn had scarce broke when I set out, and 'twas not till I had ridden three or four miles that the smoky redness of the sun showed between the pine stems on a spur of hill behind me. My thoughts were all of victory, and in this temper the events of the time, albeit I am no politician, confirmed me. For news had reached us a little since of the disclosure of that horrid plot of Throgmorton and the two Earls against Her Grace and our most dear Sovereign, and of how sundry suspected persons of high estate were arrested and confined. The Papists everywhere were said to be in great confusion, for though many, and some said the most part, were loyal subjects enough, yet the defection and proved villainy of the rest shook all faith in those that professed still the old religion and allegiance to the Pope. The Queen's ships were straitly ordered to watch the ports, and even as I descended the hill beyond Roodwater to the seashore, I saw, a little off Watchet Quay, a ship of war riding at anchor, and a cock-boat pulling away from her side.

Moreover, it was no great while since, by order of Her

Majesty's Council, that notable Bond of Association had been signed for the better defence of the Queen, my father signing with the rest, as a chief person of these parts and a magistrate.

I am no politician, as I say, but there is small need of knowledge in State affairs to make a man love his home; and when a plot of the magnitude which this of Fr. Throgmorton's had, is brought to light, why, every man is a politician perforce and a soldier too.

For Queen Mary Stuart, who was now more closely guarded, as indeed was meet, and who later was to be led to her death, I say nought of her, for tales be many, and men's minds confused, when it comes to question of a woman sinning, and that the fairest of them all. That she was guilty I suppose no one reasonably doubteth, and obnoxious to peace and good government, but, when all is said, there is the pity of slaying a delicate lady in order to the securing ourselves; and such a deed makes quiet a cowardly thing, and puts a colour of shame on justice herself.

But that business was not come yet by two years and more, and for the present all our thoughts were of gratitude for our deliverance from the subtlety of forsworn plotters, and of courage and loyalty and the will to be feared.

I spurred my mare down the rough lane, and was soon out upon the level shore of the bay, beyond which lies Dunster in a fold of steep moor, and the wooded promontory of Minehead further to the west. The tide was out as I rode at full gallop along the bow of thin turf which bounds the coast; while across the

reach of sand the little waves lapped and fretted with a sweet, low sound.

The sun was now risen pretty high, and the fisher-folk were busied here and there with their nets and tackle as I passed them by. It was nigh eight o'clock when I drew rein in Dunster market, before the chief inn there—a clean place, and of good entertainment. My purpose was immediately to break my fast, for I had a fierceness of hunger upon me by reason of the sharp air and the early hour, and afterwards to visit a certain sea captain whom I knew to be lodged there, Mr. Jonas Cutts, of the *Three Lanterns*, one of Her Majesty's ships, though but a small one; he being a gentleman I had met with upon the occasion of my father's signing the Bond of Defence. What my further purpose was, if indeed 'twere aught but to hear wonders and talk big about the Spaniards, I cannot now charge my remembrance, but to him I was determined to go after breakfast and waste an hour before returning home.

I inquired his lodging out, therefore, over my dish of eggs, but learned to my disappointment that he had left it suddenly, before daybreak, to join his ship at Minehead, where it lay. This intelligence, little though it affected me, save as it robbed my idleness of some plea of purpose, I took ill enough, rating my host like the angry boy I was, and dispraising the closeness of the ward upon our coasts, though I had formerly praised the same, and indeed had meant to enlarge with the captain upon this very theme.

In a very sour humour then I departed from the inn, and while my mare was baiting took a turn about the town.

And so fair did I find all, the high street wide and sweet and the houses thereon neat and well ordered, the great castle, moreover, on a mount at the nether end, very fencible and stately builded, that it was not long ere my spirits rose again, and I thought no more upon Captain Cutts and his departing. Methought the countryside had never seemed so pleasant as now under its web of frost, and the trees a kind of blue of the colour of silver-work tarnished by age, the sky red behind them reaching up from grey. I left the middle part of the town soon and got into the lanes, where at length I came by chance upon an ancient mill, which was once, I learned, a monkish mill whither every man had perforce to bring his grain to be ground. Now as I stood idly by the gate of the mill-house I heard voices of men in talk, and, without further intention, could not but catch some words of their discourse. It was evident that a bargain was going forward, and that one sold grudgingly.

"Nay," said the one voice, "for this standard of red buckram, sevenpence and no less, Master Ptolemy."

"Thou puttest me to uncommon great charges, Master Skegs," replied the other invisible; "what with thy gilding and thy scarlet hoods, and now this standard of the devil! Ay, and besides there is that crazy mitre of Cayphas, which, o' my conscience, is not worth the half a groat."

"A cost me two shillings not twelvemonth since," cried the

first invisible in a manifest rage, "yet am I willing to sell it thee for one shilling and ninepence as I have set it down in the bill, where is also to be found a coat of skins; item, a tabard; item, Herod's crest of iron; all which I have grossly undervalued. Ah! there be some," he interjected, in a whining voice, "there be some that would buy up all Jewry for a parcel of bawdy, torn ballads. Art not ashamed, Ptolemy Philpot, thou a Christian man, to purchase so divine a tragedy for so mean a sum?" But the invisible Ptolemy not replying, the invisible Skegs proceeded:

"Well, thou hast heard my price, master, which is three pounds sixteen shillings in all, and look you! to avoid all bitterness and to make an end, I will throw in the parchment beasts of the Deluge for the same."

What manner of cheapening was here I could not conceive, and so (still chiding my lack of manners) crept through the gate and to a coign of the mill-house, where I might observe these strange traders in parchment beasts and red buckram. And observe them I did, indeed, and they me at the same instant; which discovery so confused me that I stood before them first on one foot and then on the other, with no sense to go or stay, nor to cover my discourtesy with any plausible excuse. Howbeit, one, whom I took (and rightly) to be Ptolemy, burst into laughter at this my detected intrusion, and bade me step forward and judge betwixt them. He was a big man, with a child's face for all that he wore a great beard, and a terrible nose of the colour of the stone they call agate, it being veined too and marvellous shining.

Yet his voice was small like a child's, and I saw at once that in any bargain he was like to get the worse of it. The other man, whose name was Skegs, had a woeful pallor, but an undaunted behaviour and a very fierce eye. Between them stood the cause of their difference, which was a sort of wheeled pageant or cart of two stages; the upper being open and about five feet in breadth, with a painted cloth behind; the lower room enclosed, and was, I learned, for the convenience and disposal of the puppet master (this being a puppet-show and the puppets appearing, as players do, on the stage above).

Coming forward, then, as I was bidden, I very modestly awaited the argument between Mr. Skegs and Ptolemy, being pleased to be trusted in so notable a cause. But it fell out otherwise, for Skegs swore by the body of St. Rumbold he would have no arbitrament, and that his price was three pound and sixteen shillings, as he had already said.

"It is a great sum," said Ptolemy, in his piping reed voice.

"How, great?" retorted Skegs, "seeing I sell thee the pageant-car itself, together with Nicodemus, Pilate, and four stout Torturers, besides the holy folk, and all their appurtenance. And were I not at the gate of the grave myself, I would not part with so much as Joseph's beard for twice this reckoning."

"He gives you also certain parchment beasts, Mr. Ptolemy," said I, very judicially.

"I retract the beasts," cried the pageant master, whose red eyes blazed terribly, and he danced with vexation of my ruling.

"Look you, now," grumbled Ptolemy, running his great hand through his beard, "was ever such a fellow!"

"'Tis a part of the Deluge," said Mr. Skegs, "and to bring in beasts before the judgment-seat of Pilate were against all Scripture. But contrariwise, as it toucheth the Interlude of the Deluge, mass! without those beasts of mine, the cats and dogs too (as the verse goes)—"

"'Otter, fox, fulmart also;
Hares hopping gaily'

withouten these wherefore was Noah's ark builded, and so great a stir made?"

"But if you be about to die, Master Skegs," I put in, "as you say you are, of what advantage is this same Deluge to you?"

"Ay, truly," cried Ptolemy, "for thou hast no wife, man, nor any dependent on thee. So thou be decently buried, 'tis all one whether I have the parchment beasts or thou."

"Would you spoil me of my heritage?" cried the pallid man in an extremity of rage, "and strip me naked before I be come to the grave? I say thou shalt not have the beasts."

"Wilt thou sell me the Deluge outright?" asked Ptolemy after a silence, "for I am no hand at this chaffering."

"Ay, for a further fourteen shillings, I will," said Skegs promptly, "which maketh in all four pounds and ten shillings; and for that, I give thee Noah, a new figure of wood, and Noah's wife,

who truly is somewhat worsened by usage, but not past mending; Shem also, Ham and Japhet, stalwart lads all, and their wives corresponding. An ark there is, moreover, which was builded in Rye by a shipwright out of battens and good gummed canvas. The beasts be all whole, save the weasel, but that signifieth not. I have a schedule of them, and the parts of the players in good scrivener's hand. All these shalt thou have for a matter of four pounds thirteen shillings and fourpence."

"Four pounds and ten shillings, Master Skegs," said Ptolemy, dismayed at this unconscionable addition.

"Said I aught of the ark when I named that price?" asked Skegs scornfully. "Wouldst thou haggle with a dying man, Ptolemy Philpot?"

"I will furnish the remainder shillings," I whispered to Ptolemy, who stood in a maze to answer such imposture as Skegs sought to lay upon him. "Strike the bargain, Mr. Ptolemy, and pay when thou hast checked over the tale of beasts."

He thanked me like a pleased stripling, and, to be short, purchased all for the sum named, which, there being seven or eight pieces not found, and Japhet's leg burst from the pin, methought sufficient, albeit Mr. Skegs at every turn sought to increase it, or else detract some piece of note, as Mount Ararat in pasteboard and the dove with a sprig of olive.

"I have forgot the raven," he screamed after us, as at length we went away with our cartful of miracles. "'Twas new varnished at Michaelmas, and there is the cost of the varnish you must

repay me, which is three-pence halfpenny," at which, when we replied not, he ran into the mill-house in a sort of fury, and as I understood, died there a week later, muttering upon his "cocks and kites and crows," his

"Rooks and ravens, many rows;
Cuckoos, curlews, whoso knows,
Each one in his kind;"

and putting a price upon each particular fowl, like any poulter in Cheape. I never met a man so engrossed in business to so little purpose, nor one (to do him justice) so little put out of his humour of acquisition by the near approach of death. He had bought the mill, so Ptolemy told me, out of his former profits, knowing nothing of the miller's trade, but because it was to be got at an advantage.

When we were out of the yard Mr. Philpot again thanked me immoderately for my aid, which he said he would never forget (and as the event proved, he did not); and told me moreover that he was bred to the wax-chandlery, but had left it, having a taste for letters.

"How will this pageant help you any whit the more to study?" I asked him.

"I shall go about the country," he replied, "and so I doubt not shall fall in with very famous scholars, who are often to be found where they be least expected. Have you ever read Horace now?" he asked me quickly.

I told him, a little.

"When I shall have learned Latin," he said, in his childlike manner, "I shall do so also, and, indeed, I have bought his Satires already, but can make little of them. The Romans must have been a marvellous learned people," he observed with a sigh, "and 'tis small wonder they conquered the world."

"Is there any attendance upon these old interludes?" I demanded, as we passed upward through the town towards my inn, where I was to take out my mare.

"Why, as to that," he replied something moodily, "I know not certainly as yet, although I hope so, seeing that my proficiency in the Latin tongue dependeth upon the popular favour towards them; and, indeed, I may have been over eager at the bidding, since there doubtless hath been some decline from the love of such plays that the vulgar was used to show upon all occasions of their being enacted. Notwithstanding, I have a design, as yet unperfected, by which, if I get no hearing for my mysteries and moralities, I may yet prosper; and that is (to let you into the secret), to turn this musty Deluge into a modern battle upon the high seas, with Mr. John Hawkins for Noah—good seamen both; the figure of Japhet, too, that hath by good fortune lost a leg, might serve, with but slight alteration, for a veteran tall boatswain, and Ham with the red beard, would as readily become a master-gunner. Ay, a little skill would do all, Mr. Cleeve; and for the Spaniards, why, such as were necessary to my purpose might be fashioned out of the greater beasts, without any very

notable difference from the original."

I would have questioned him further upon this venture of his, which was surely as bold as any that Mr. Hawkins had made to the coast of Guinea or the Indies, had not I at that moment espied our overseer, Peter Sprot, by the door of the inn, his horse blown and sweating, and himself sitting stiff with hard riding. I ran to him at once, demanding if he sought me, which I knew already was so, and felt a fear at my heart lest my father was suddenly fallen ill.

"His worship is not ill," replied Peter, "but sore troubled, and sends for you home without delay." He cast a hard eye upon Ptolemy Philpot as he spoke, for he had observed us in company, and being something strait in matters of religion, held shows and dancing and such-like to be idolatry and lewd sport. I have known him break a babe's rattle that shook it on a Sunday, and quote the Pentateuch in defence of his action.

"What hath troubled him, Peter?" I asked eagerly, while the ostler brought out my mare.

"'Tis a letter," he said, and with that shut his mouth, so that I knew it was vain to inquire further.

Now, as I was managing my beast, that was restive with the cold air, comes Mr. Ptolemy to my side, and ere I understood his purpose had thrust up a little parchment-bound book for me to read the title of it, whispering that he would have read it long since himself, but that 'twas in Latin.

I told him briefly I could not read it then, being in an itch to

be gone; but he still detained me.

"There is one particular word there set down," said he, "that I have often lighted upon in other books also, which if you would translate 'twould ease me mightily."

"What word is that?" cried I, impatiently.

"It is *Quemadmodum*," said he.

But before I could interpret to him, my mare had scoured away after Peter Sprot's hackney, and we were a bowshot distant ere I had recovered my seat.

CHAPTER III

HOW A BROTHER, HAVING OFFENDED, WAS FORGIVEN

I found my father sitting as his wont was in the high wainscoted book-room beyond the hall. When I entered he looked up from a pile of papers he had been diligently perusing, and smiled upon me pleasantly. I was surprised to note the serenity of his brow, having indeed prepared myself for a worse condition of health in him than Peter Sprot had allowed. But whatever trouble he had he laid it by to bid me good-morrow, and to excuse himself for so hastily summoning me.

"Upon so fine a morning, Denis," he said, "I would not willingly have cut short your pleasure, and do not so for my own business, which is simple enough at most times, as a man's should be who hath ever studied to be quiet." He paused a small while and cast his eye over an open book that lay beside him on the table, and I knew it to be the "Discourses of Epictetus." A wonder crept into my mind at this, that while the words of Scripture would oftentimes be in his mouth, his reading was generally in the heathens, and his way of life more according to the ancient Stoicks (of whom Mr. Jordan had often discoursed),

than to the precepts of the Church of England of which he nevertheless professed himself a member. Such fancies however being foreign to the matter, I put them from me, expecting the sequel anxiously, and in the meantime assuring my father that I would never have gone thus upon my twilight journey had I known he required me; which was indeed true, and he acknowledged it handsomely.

"I know where to trust and where to doubt, Denis," he said, in his quiet voice, "and I know likewise that where trust is broken there stands occasion for lenity, though the using of it is hard at all times; severity being more aptly come by, and by the vulgar commended."

I knew by this that his thoughts had slid from the present into that sad channel of the past, and marvelled that he could speak so of forgiveness where his honour had been engaged, and, in the event, my mother's life forfeit.

"'Twas well that Peter had some inkling of your road," my father went on and in a livelier manner, "else we might still be seeking you o'er half Exmoor. But tell me what it was led you to Dunster, lad?" And he looked at me methought somewhat keenly as he spoke.

"I had hoped to meet with Captain Cutts," I returned boldly, though I was conscious of the emptiness of the reason, "and to hear of the chance of war."

To my surprise my father appeared relieved by my answer, but presently explained himself.

"It had lain upon me that you were perhaps courting some lass there, Denis; not that I should censure you therefor, but having need of you myself awhile, I would not suddenly interfere with that is proper enough for you to consider of at your age. Well, so much for prologue," he broke off swiftly, and betook himself again to scanning the papers on his desk.

"So Mr. Cutts having avoided the town before you arrived," he said presently, glancing up, "the direct purpose of your errand failed."

I was about to reply when he added: "You have little cause to grieve in that, Denis, seeing his commission is cancelled and he to be apprehended for malpractices of which I have here the note before me."

"I would all such villains were hanged as soon as apprehended," cried I, in a sudden rage at this disclosed infamy; but my father put up his hand peremptorily to stop me.

"Hast ever heard of thine uncle Botolph?" he asked me presently, and with the same piercing glance as before.

I told him yes, and that Peter Sprot had related some part of his story to me.

"That was not altogether well," replied my father with a little movement of his brows, "and not what I looked for from his discretion." He set his ruff even and took up his pen as if to write, but sat so awhile without either writing or speaking.

"I forced him to tell me," I said, for I thought he blamed Peter for what was truly my own curiosity.

"Tut," said my father, "'tis a small matter, and being known saves many words to no purpose. I have received a letter from him," he said.

This amazed me, for I had thought him (I know not wherefore) to be dead.

"Why, where is he?" I asked.

"He is in the Tower," said my father.

At these words my blood leapt to my heart in a tumult, for I knew well enough what this meant, and that in such a time of danger as now we lived in, when all was suspicion and betrayal, few men that had once come into that foul dungeon ever left it living. Until now I had found frequent matter for rejoicing in this very process and summary action of the Council, being confident that 'twas for the better security of the realm, and deriding them that would have accorded an open trial to all, and the means of a man's clearing himself at the law. But now that our own family stood thus impeached, I had nothing to say, nor aught to think, but upon the terror of it and the disgrace to our house and ancient name.

"What is the cause?" I inquired, when I had something recovered myself; but my lips were dry and my face (I am assured) as white as paper.

"He has had licence granted to write," returned my father; "which is a mark of favour not oftentimes bestowed. He saith he is well treated, though for the rest his chamber is but a mean cold one and evil smelling, and the ward upon him strict, especially

when he is had in to the Constable for examination, which hath been several times renewed. As for the cause, there would appear by his letter to be little enough, save such as gathers from a host of fears, and from his known devotion to my Lord of Arundel; which indeed was the direct occasion of his apprehension. Of a former intimacy with that witless Somerville moreover, he is accused, and the mere supposition of it goes hard against him; but upon this head he hath strong hope of his exculpation, having only, as he writes, once met with the man, and then in a public place without any the least concealment."

He rose from his seat as he ended speaking, and took a turn or two about the room, his hands clasped behind his back and his head bent in thought. I suppose that never before had I observed my father with so close attention, having ever held him (as I have said) in a kind of negligent contempt for his mild and bookish ways. But now I perceived a nobility of bearing in him which took me strangely, and withal, a secret strength. His scholar's indifference he had quite cast aside, and appeared full of purpose, shrewdly weighing each circumstance of his brother's case, and examining the good and bad in it, in order to the more directly assist him. This unused activity of his so engaged me that for awhile I could do nought but follow him with my eyes, until the vision of my father always thus (as thus he might have been, save for that great weight of sorrow warping him from his natural aptness), this vision, I say, so moved me in his favour and against my uncle Botolph, who was surely now receiving chastisement

for his former sin, that I could not contain myself.

"But, sir," I cried, "why should you concern yourself for a man that hath wronged you so basely as my uncle did? And besides that," I bethought myself to add in order to strengthen our excuse for leaving him alone, "besides that, there is the unseemliness of your aiding a man that the Queen's Majesty is offended withal. It is very probable he is implicated in these treasons, who hath brought such treason into household affairs, and the likelier still for his denying it."

Something in my father's countenance stayed me there, else would I have spoken more; for there is nought so easy as to persuade ourselves 'tis right to do nothing in a dangerous pass.

"Ay, ay," said my father slowly, "then your advice is to leave my brother to perish."

"You are a magistrate, sir," I stammered, "and it surely behoves you to assist in the arrest of traitors."

"Ay, and so it doth, Denis," said he, nodding, "but then, this gentleman being already arrested, it seems that my poor assistance therein is rendered in advance superfluous."

"But you are minded to help him, sir," said I, "so far as you be able."

"Leaving that aside," he said, "let us return to your former argument, which was, as I remember, that because he had once badly wronged me so I should not now concern myself on his behalf. Why then do you afterwards bring me in as a magistrate, when you have so potently addressed my prejudice as a man?"

Nay, Denis," he said, smiling at my discomfiture, "you speak for my ease, I know well, and I thank you; but this may not be. Nor, indeed, does your uncle desire it to be as you understand the case. He prays me here," he struck the open letter lightly, "to gain him fair trial, if such a thing may be come by, and by it he is content to be judged. Were it I, who stood in this jeopardy, Denis, and not he, would you deny me your offices?"

His grave manner and contempt of the revenge I had held out to him, wrought upon me so that I could not answer him, but going forward I knelt and kissed his hand. I think now he was the best man I ever knew, and one that, without hesitancy, ever chose the untainted course.

We fell to business after that with a will; my father opening with me upon many matters of procedure at the law, in which I was surprised to find him perfect, and giving me his reasons for supposing that my uncle Botolph would be suffered to stand upon his delivery in open court. He read me his whole letter too, which I had to confess was very simply written and bore the impress of truth.

"You see that he speaks here of councillors to defend him, which is very needful," my father continued, "though the emoluments of that office be higher than I had hoped to find. He writes that a less sum than five hundred pounds would avail little, which, if it include the necessary expenses of seeking out witnesses (of whom he names one in Flanders who must be brought home), if it include this, I say, and the procuring of

documents, that may well be, though I am sorry to find justice sold at so high a rate."

"But, sir, can you employ so much money in this affair?" I asked, for it sounded an infinite treasure to me.

"I think so," he replied, "though I would it were not so urgent. I must however encumber the estate for awhile, Denis; as indeed hath been done before by my grandfather, at the time the Scriptures were printed in English secretly, three score years since; which work he was bold to forward, and spared neither pains nor moneys therein. But that concerns thee not, Denis," he broke off, "and for the getting together of the ransom, for so it is, I will engage to effect it. Only your part will be to convey it to London and deliver it to my brother's agent and good friend, one Mr. John Skene, an attorney of Serjeants Inn, in Fleet Street, who will use it, as your uncle believes, and I doubt not, to advantage."

Our conference ended, and my doubts resolved of what it stood me to do, I went away, leaving my father still in his book-room, who had letters to write to Exeter, about the business of the loan. The discourse I had had, and especially the peril imminent over one so near in blood to us, had excited my imagination greatly; so that 'twas a long while ere I could examine each particular soberly, as a merchant doth a bill of goods, and, as it were, piece by piece. Everything hung confused in my brain like a wrack of cloud, which, parting, discloses now one thing and now another but nothing clearly, nor whole. Immersed in such considerations I had wandered a great way, and unawares

had begun to mount the steep hill that stands above the Combe Court, and now gazed down through the trees upon our house, which I had once likened to a place enchanted, so evenly did all go there and with the regularity of one breathing in his sleep. The old gabled tower, with the great bell in the clochard or belfry beside it, I had oftentimes laughed at with Simon Powell, as at a thing of more pretence than usage; the alarm not having been rung therefrom for nigh a hundred years. But now the sight of it brought tears to my eyes for the very peace which clung about it. For well I knew that I was come at the end of my time of quiet and was to adventure forth of my old home into regions full as strange and difficult as any of Simon's uncouth caves and elvish forests. And I thought of that hero of his which bade them cut off his head and bear it, still sweet, to the White Mount in London, whither I was now going.

Then I looked again down upon the yard before the house, with its fine brick gate upon the road, and behind the house, upon the base court with the offices beside it, and the stables beyond, and beyond again the green bottom of the combe and the cattle feeding. It was a fair estate, and one that no man would encumber in a trivial cause. But once before it had been so laid under bond, which was, as my father said, in order to the advancement of the glory of God; and now, the second time 'twas so to be for no better purpose than the enlargement of a traitor. A youth argues narrowly perforce, being hedged between lack of experience and lack of charity, but the force of his conclusion, for this very

want, I suppose, hath an honest vigour in it which is beyond the competence of many an elder man. So I, being persuaded of my uncle Botolph's villainy, there on that hillside swore that, albeit I would faithfully labour for his release, as I was bound to do, yet I would thereafter bring him to book with a vengeance. And how I kept my word you shall see.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH I SAY FAREWELL THRICE

In the middle of the month of November our business was pretty well settled, and the day of my departure ordained, which was to be upon the Wednesday following, there being a friend of my father's about to journey to Devizes on that day, with whom it was intended I should so far travel. To be honest, it was with some feelings of concern that I expected this my first entrance into the world, where I was to meet with a sort of folk I had no knowledge of: learned attorneys of the Inns, Judges of the Queen's Bench (if we ever got so far); and that gaunt figure of the Constable with the keys of the Tower at his girdle and a constant lamentation of prisoners in his ear. My duty at the beginning was plain enough, my father having often rehearsed the same to me; as that I should take lodging in Fetter Lane at the house of one Malt, a hosier, who should use me honestly, he being a West-Country man. Thereafter and as soon as my convenience would allow, I was to betake myself to a certain goldsmith of repute, whose shop stood hard by the new Burse in Cornhill, and there receive gold in exchange for the letters I bore, the which my father had gotten upon articles signed in Exeter. So provided,

I was to put myself under the direction and command of Mr. Skene, who would employ me as his occasions required.

The last day of my home-keeping broke in fair weather, of which I was glad, for I purposed to spend it in bidding farewell to my neighbours and the persons I especially loved about the estate.

And first I sought my old companion Simon, whom I found by the brook, in a place where there be otters, some ten or twelve furlongs up the valley that descends into our combe from the westward, where the trees grow very thickly and in summer there is a pleasant shade. Thither we had often gone together in times past, and there I shrewdly guessed I should discover him.

I came upon him crouched beside the stream among the withered bracken, his cross-bow laid aside with which he had been fowling, and a great dead pheasant cock in the grass at his feet. I hailed him twice before he heard me, when he rose at once and spreading his sheepskin mantle for me (the air being very bitter) he told me he had thought I forgot him.

"I should not have gone without bidding thee farewell, Simon," I replied, for his reproach stung me the more that I had neglected him of late, and knew not wherefore. "I have been deeply engaged about this journey to London, and the hours I have been idle my mind hath been too anxious for chat. 'Tis an employment I mislike, Simon," I said earnestly, "and one I do not see to the end of."

"When does his worship think it will be concluded?" asked Simon Powell.

"Oh, these things depend upon their law-terms," I said, willing to let him perceive my knowledge in such affairs. "The Bench doth not try causes unremittingly."

"Ay," he said, nodding, the while he regarded me with a strange look of the eyes, "but subject to the judges' convenience, I would have said. Will you return by Lady Day, think you?"

"Why, that is four months distant," I cried, for his question had something startled me. "I shall surely be safe home in half that time."

But Simon shook his head. "Since I first heard of this errand," he said, "the thought of it hath never left me, sleeping nor waking, Mr. Denis. And as there be some things that every man may tell certainly that they will happen, as the seasons to pass in due order, and the red deer to come down to the pools in the evening, and the sun to set and rise; so there be other things, though not in the rule of nature, which a man may yet discern that hath bent his will that way. So did that knight who, in a dream, saw strange and way-worn men bringing tribute to Arthur from the Islands of Greece, which was not then, but was certainly to be, and now in these days we shall see the same; ay, Arthur receiving tribute from all the nations and not Greece only, and everywhere triumphing."

I sat suspended in amaze while he spoke thus, his dark eyes sparkling and his fingers straitly interlaced. It was a mood he had never before revealed, though he had often, as I have said, told me tales of his old heroes and wizards, but not with this stress

of fervour and (as it were) prophetic sureness. Such power as he manifested in his words surely confounds distinctions of rank and erases the badge of servant. For there may be no mastery over them that can convince our souls, as this Welsh lad convinced mine.

When he spoke again, it was with some shame in his voice, as though he had betrayed his secret mind and feared my laughter; which had he known it, he need by no means have done.

"My meaning is," he went on, "that I feel this adventure which you set about will continue longer than you imagine, Mr. Denis, though I have no proof thereof; at least, none I may put into words; and you may well deride the notion. Notwithstanding, it sticks with me that you will not return to the Combe Court until many a strange accident shall have befallen, of which we be now ignorant."

"Why, however long it be, Simon," said I cheerily, for I wished to lighten our conversation somewhat, "you may rest well-assured of my remembrance of you, and that though I wander as far forth as to those same Islands of Greece you spake of, yet shall my affections draw me home again."

He leapt to his feet at that, with an apparent gladness that warmed me marvellously, though 'twas but a frolic sentence I had made, and spoken smiling. So do we often probe into the future with a jest, and, as it were, speak the fool's prologue to our own tragedy.

Our leaving-taking ended in laughter, then, as perhaps 'tis

best, and Simon remaining to shoot fowl, I left him to bid farewell to old Peter Sprot; who gave me good advice in the matter of stage-plays and the choice of food, which I promised, so far as I was able, to observe.

"For other things," he said, "I leave you to your conscience, master, as in the end, 'tis necessary. But this I say: that I have small love of players, and such as, not content with the condition and quality they were born to, must needs pretend to principalities and lordships, which they sustain for a weary hour or so, and after return, like the swine of the Scripture, to their wallowing in the mire."

"I think there is no probability of my playing any prince's part, Peter," quoth I.

"Nor of seeing it played neither, I hope," he replied, "for though we be all sinners, yet we sinners that witness neither stage-plays nor pageants, Mr. Denis, be hugely better than they that do; and mark me, sir, it shall so appear hereafter."

This I knew to be a thrust at Mr. Ptolemy and his puppet-show no less than at the public theatre in Finsbury Fields, which had then been set up about seven or eight years.

"Eat beef and mutton, Mr. Denis," he proceeded gravely, "and fish also. There is a good market for fish in London, though they that vend there be something inclined to blasphemy; I know not wherefore; but strange dishes eschew, and particularly those of the French. For the French nation is given up to Popery, dancing and the compounding of unwholesome foods. Nay, this

late commerce of our nobility with the effeminate and godless Frenchmen hath gone far to the ruin of both stomach and religion that should be simply fed, the one by such meats as I have named, mutton (eaten with onions, Mr. Denis), beef, and in cold weather, pork; the other by sound doctrine and preaching of the Word." He paused awhile, and I thought had concluded his admonition; when he seemed to recover something notable. "There be divers ways of dressing a capon, Mr. Denis," said he, "of which the goodwife hath a particular knowledge, as also of the sauces to be served therewith. These I will, by your leave, procure to be transcribed for your use, and so, God keep you."

I thanked him heartily for his good will, although I secretly admired the fashion in which he interlarded sound doctrine with strong meats. But every man out of the abundance of his heart speaketh, and I knew that Peter dealt with me lovingly in meddling virtue with appetite in so singular a manner. Now, when I had parted from the honest steward, I considered with myself whom next I should salute, and determined that it should be the maidservants and Ursula the cook; and to this end returned toward the house, but unwillingly, for I have ever been abashed in the presence of womenfolk, at least within doors, where a man is at a disadvantage but they at their ease. And so greatly did this distaste and backwardness grow upon me that I hung about the gate of the yard behind the house, fearing to venture forward, and as it were into a den of mocking lions, until I should more perfectly have rehearsed my farewell speeches. It was then

(as I always believe) that a door was opened unto me of that Providence which rules our motions, and a way of escape made plain; the which door was my old pedagogue, Mr. Jordan, whom I suddenly remembered (though I had scarce thought upon him these two years) and whom I had such a compelling inclination to visit as sent the maids out of my head, and my heels out of the yard on the instant. When I bade good-bye to Ursula and the rest on the morrow, I was in the open air and mounted, so that I cared not a jot for their laughter (which indeed soon led into tears; my own being pretty near to my eyes too), but made them a great speech as full of ego as a schoolboy's first lesson in Latin.

Up the hill towards Mr. Jordan's house I climbed therefore to beg his blessing upon me, and to thank him for all he had done for me in times past. It was near dinner-time by this, and I conceived the kindness of cooking the old scholar's meal for him as he lay in bed; for I doubted not to find him so, as I had rarely found him otherwise than on his pallet with a great folio or two by way of counterpane, and a Plato's "Republick" to his pillow. There had been a little snow fallen in the night which still clung upon the uplands, and when I had ascended to his dwelling I found a drift about the door and the thatched eaves considerably laden upon the weather side of them with snow. But what surprised me mightily was certain vestiges before the threshold, and regularly iterated, as by a sentinel's marchings to and fro. My bewilderment increased moreover, or rather gave place to alarm when I chanced to observe beside the window of

that I knew for his study (to wit the room he slept in), a great halberd resting, and a military steel cap. Then did I painfully call to mind those former pursuits of my poor old preceptor when (as was reported) he had been a novice in the old Abbey of Cleeve, and knowing the present ill estimation in which the Papists everywhere were held, I understood that Mr. Jordan had not escaped the vigilance of the Commission, but was now under arrest, or at least that his liberty was so encroached on as made it mere confinement within his own house. Greatly distressed for this opinion, I approached near to the little window, of which the shutter (there being no glass) hung on the jar, and timorously gazed within. The bed stood empty, and no one that I could see was in the chamber. This confirmed me in my suspicion, and at the same time emboldened me to demand admittance. Some hope that my witness (or rather the weight of our authority) would bestead him, moved me to this course, and I knocked loudly on the door. Hardly had I done so, when I heard from within a horrid clatter of arms upon the flags as of a man falling in a scuffle, and so without more ado I lifted the latch and sprang into the house. Mr. Jordan lay at full length along the floor.

"Who hath done this, Master?" I cried out in a sudden gust of wrath, for he was an old man and a reverend. He lifted himself painfully, regarding me as he did so with an inscrutable mildness which I took to be of despair. His assailant was evidently fled in the meanwhile, or perhaps went to summon a posse comitatus for my tutor's apprehension.

"I will undertake your enlargement," said I, and indeed felt myself strong enough to dispose of a whole sergeant's guard unaided.

"I am beholden to you, young master," replied Mr. Jordan, "and now that I look more closely, I take you to be that degenerate young Denis Cleeve, to whom Syntax and Accidence were wont to be as felloes in the wheel of Ixion, and Prosody a very stone of Sisyphus. Art thou not he, my son?"

"I am Denis Cleeve," I answered impatiently, "but I think my lack of Latin concerns us not now, when we are in danger of the law."

"Ah! thou hast come into some scrape," he said, sitting up on the stones, and gathering up his knees. "Such as thou art, was the Telamonian Ajax, whom Homer represents as brave enough, though in learning but a fool. Why, what hast thou done, little Ajax, that thou hast wantonly forfeited the protection of the laws? But be brief in the telling, since I sit here in some discomfort, having entangled a great sword in my legs and fallen something heavily, which in a man of my years and weight is as if Troy herself fell; a catastrophe lamentable even to the gods."

At this I could not contain my laughter, partly for the mistake into which he had been led that I feared a danger which was in truth his own, and partly for the accident of the sword which had tripped him up thus headlong; but more than either for the tragicomick simile he had used in comparing himself in his downfall with the ancient city of Troy.

"To return to my first question," I said as soon as I had settled my countenance. "Who hath set upon you? and whither has he fled?"

"None hath set upon me, young sir," he replied sadly, "and ergo, we need search for no fugitive. I had armed myself, and the harness encumbering me (as indeed I have had little occasion for its use these forty years), I fell, in the manner you saw. And had not nature folded me in certain kindly wrappages of flesh above the common, my frame had been all broken and disjointed by this lapsus, which even now hath left me monstrous sore."

I lifted him to his feet, though with some difficulty, for it was true that nature had dealt liberally with him in the matter of flesh; and having set him in a chair, I asked him how it was he came thus accoutred, since it was not (as he affirmed) to withstand any molestation.

"Why, 'tis in order to molest others, numskull!" he cried, making as if to pass upon me with his recovered weapon. "And for withstanding, 'tis to withstand the Queen's enemies, and affront them that pretend annoyance to her Grace's peace. I am the scholar in arms, boy! the clerk to be feared. I am Sapientia Furens, and wisdom in the camp. Furthermore I am, though a poor professor of the Catholick Faith, yet one that detests the malignity of such as would establish that faith again by force of arms. It is by way of protest therefore, and in the vigour of loyalty, that I buckle on this, alas! too narrow panoply; and when I should be setting towards my grave, go forth upon my first

campaign."

"You are taking service in the Queen's army, Mr. Jordan?" I stammered, for the prospect of it was hardly to be credited.

"If she will receive it, yea," he returned, with a melancholy determination. "And if she reject me as that I am too far declined from juvenility, I will crave at the least a pair of drums, having served some apprenticeship to parchment, Denis, so that I could doubtless sound a tuck upon occasion."

Beneath his apparent levity I could discern the hardness of his purpose, and honoured him extremely, knowing the rigour which attendeth service in the field and the conversation (offensive to a scholar) of the gross and ignorant soldiery. While I thus pondered his resolution, he proceeded quietly in his work of scouring certain antique pieces and notched blades that he told me had been his father's; and when they responded to his liking he would lunge and parry with them according to some theoretick rule he had, the which I suspected to have been drawn from the precepts of a Gothick sergeant, at the Sack of Rome. His pallid broad countenance was reddened by this exercise, and an alertness so grew upon his former unwieldy motions that I admired him for the recovery of the better part of youth, although he must at that time have passed his three score years and ten. And ever and anon as he scoured or smote, he would utter some tag of Latin apposite to the occasion (at least I suppose so) and seemed to gather a secret comfort from the allusion. I have never encountered with a man so little moulded to the age he lived in, nor so independent

of its customary usages. His words were, as I have said, generally spoken in the dead languages, while his features were rather formed upon the model of those divines that flourished half a century since, and are now but seldom met with in any. I have seen a picture of the Archbishop and Lord Chancellor, Warham, which greatly resembled Mr. Jordan, and especially in the heavy eyelids and the lines of sadness about the mouth. On ordinary occasion my old tutor wore moreover a close-fitting cap of black velvet such as Master Warham wore also, cut square over the ears and set low upon the brow.

I have drawn his character somewhat tediously perhaps, but it is because he has become in my imagination a sort of symbol and gigantic figure that stands between my old life and my new. When I look back upon my boyhood there is Mr. Jordan a-sprawl on his bed amid a host of books, and when the prospect of my early manhood opens it is half obliterated by his genial bulk.

I learned to my satisfaction that he purposed to depart on the morrow for London, where also he hoped to pass muster into some company of the Queen's troops. His delight, I think, was equal to my own, when I told him that I was bound thither likewise, and we accordingly parted until daybreak with mutual encouragements and good will.

CHAPTER V

PRINCIPALLY TELLS HOW SIR MATTHEW JUKE WAS CAST AWAY UPON THE HEBRIDES

I awoke long before dawn on that memorable Wednesday which was to set a term to my pleasant and not altogether idle life in the Combe. Yet early as I had awakened, my father preceded me, and coming into my attic chamber where I had always slept in the tower, sat down by my bedside, fully dressed, while I was still rubbing the sleep out of my eyes. What passed betwixt us in that still hour I may not recount, but let it suffice that it left me weeping. There be words spoken sometimes that have the effect and impress of a passage of time, so potently do they dis sever us from the past, leading us into a sudden knowledge which by time only is generally acquired, and that painfully. Such an experience it was mine to gain then, so that my boyish follies and the ignorant counterfeits which make up a boy's wisdom fell away the while my father discoursed gravely of this and that, and I marvelled how I could ever have held such stock of vain opinions. Alas! for my presumption, and alas! too, that opinions as vain may beset a man full as closely as a boy; and follies the more indecent that they be wrought without ignorance.

One thing I find it in my heart to speak of, because it exemplifies my father's forbearance, though at a cost which he would well have spared. My uncle's name having been made mention of between us, my thoughts flew from him to the mother I had never known, and in a luckless hour I demanded whether my father had not any picture of her, that I might carry her image clear in my mind. His brow clouded as I begged this favour, and rising from his seat, he went to the window, where he seemed about to draw aside the shutters that closed it, but desisted. I could have bitten my tongue out for my imprudence, but could think of no words to recover or mitigate it and so sat still, gazing upon his tall figure all dim in the twilight, and wishing for my life that he would refuse my request.

But he did not. For with a strong motion he suddenly flung back the shutters, letting in the grey light, and turned upon me with a smile.

"Why, that is a natural thing to desire, Denis," he said, "and one I ought to have thought to do without your asking." He put his hand into the bosom of his doublet as he spoke, so that I certainly knew he had worn her picture all these years against his heart. He plucked out presently a little case of green leather clasped with silver, and oval in shape, and, having first detached it from the silver chain by which it was secured, he laid it in my hands and straightway left the room.

'Twas a face very pale limned, in which there yet appeared each minutest feature, hue, and lock of hair even, so ingeniously

was all done. Behind the face was a foil of plain blue to show it off; and so exact and perfect as the thing was, it lay in my palm no bigger than a crown piece. I examined it closely. There was a kind of pride in the eyes which looked at you direct, and the eyebrows descended a little inwards towards the nose, as one sees them sometimes in a man that brooks not to be crossed, but seldom in a girl. Her mouth and chin were small and shapely, yet otherwise of no particular account. I judged it to be the picture of one that saw swiftly and without fear, and moreover that the mere sight of things, and a quick apprehension of them, determined her actions. Somehow so (methought) looked that scrupulous Saint that doubted his Lord without proof of vision; whereat calling to mind his tardy and so great repentance, I felt a catch of hope that my mother repented likewise, and by her repentance was justified.

My father entering then, I gave up the locket, which he took from me quietly, saying it was by an Exeter youth that had since gone to Court and painted many notable persons there; one N. Hillyard, whose father had been High Sheriff of Exeter twenty years since, his mother being a London woman named Laurence Wall, and that the lady's father had been a goldsmith; moreover (which was singular) 'twas to one of the same family (I think a son) that I was directed to present my letters of exchange. The hour then drawing towards the time I was to meet with my father's friend, and there being many things to be attended to, I dressed hastily and was soon ready below, where I found my

father again, and Sprot, in the great hall, with my clothes and other necessaries, which they bestowed in two or three deerskin wallets that lay open on the floor. These were to go forward by the carrier, who undertook to deliver them as far as to Devizes, whence I was to hire such means of carriage as seemed advisable, whether by sumpter-beasts or waggon, for the rest of my journey.

A little after, and when I had taken breakfast, we heard a noise of horses in the forecourt, and knew it for Sir Matthew Juke, of Roodwater, my companion, and his retinue. My father went at once to the door and invited him in, but he would not dismount, he said, thinking indeed 'twas already time to set forward. He spoke in a quick petulant fashion and was (as I since discovered) in a considerable trepidation upon certain rumours of thieves in the wild country betwixt Taunton and Glastonbury, the which greatly daunted him. He wore a cuirass over his doublet, and carried his sword loose in the scabbard, while his men bore their pieces in their hands openly. A wain with his goods in, that followed, had an especial guard; though they seemed to be but mere patches spared from the farm, and I was assured, would have dropped their calivers and fled at the first onslaught.

I was soon horsed, with a dozen hands to help, and a ring of women beyond, admiring and weeping and bidding me God speed; to whom I addressed myself, as I have said, with as much gratitude as little modesty; being strangely excited by the circumstance and noise which attended our departure. I had a pair of great pistols in the holsters of my saddle which I could

scarce forbear to flourish in either hand, and the sword at my belt delighted me no less, it being the first I had yet worn.

"'Tis the one you would have given to the cheat," my father had told me as he tightened my belt-strap. "But give it to none now, Denis, nor draw it not, save in defence of yourself (as I pray God you need draw it seldom), and of such as, but for you, be defenceless."

At our parting, I bent at a sign, when he kissed me, and I him, and so set forward with our train. A great shout followed us, and at the hedge-end stood Simon Powell, his bonnet in his hand, which he waved as we went by, crying out a deal of Welsh (having forgot the Queen's English altogether, he told me afterwards), and in so shrill a voice as set the knight's horse capering and himself in a rage of blasphemy.

We fell in with Mr. Jordan, whom I had almost feared had given over his enterprise, some mile or so distant, at a smith's in a little village we passed through, where he was having his armour eased about the middle, and a basket hilt put upon his sword.

"Who is this fellow?" asked Sir Matthew testily, when I hailed and accosted him.

"It is my old preceptor, sir," said I, "who is coming with us, if he have your leave."

"Hast heard of any robbers by the way, Doctor?" inquired the knight at that, and I saw he was marvellous glad of this increase in his auxiliaries.

"I hear of nought else," replied the scholar sturdily, while the

other turned very pale. But continuing, the scholar said: "Seeing that in a treatise I wrote awhile since and caused to be printed, there is a notable paragraph hath been bodily seized upon by a beggarly student of Leyden, and impudently exhibited to the world as his own. Heard you ever such? Robbers quotha? How of my labour, and inquiry into the nature of the lost digamma—"

"Hold!" cried Sir Matthew. "I see we talk athwart. This lost thing or person of yours (for I understand no whit of what it may be) is nothing to the purpose. I spoke of robbers on the highway, villains and cutpurses."

"Of them I reckon little," said Mr. Jordan coolly, "seeing I have no purse to be cut."

"They are dangerous nevertheless," said the other loftily.

"For which reason you go sufficiently attended," muttered the scholar, with a cursory eye backward upon the knight's warlike following; and with that we all fell, although for different causes, into an uniform silence. At length, being come to the top of a hill upon which we had ascended painfully for near the half of an hour, and especially the waggons found it hard to overcome, we stood out upon an open and circular piece of ground, bordered about by noble great beech trees, but itself clear save for the sweet grass that covered it; and the turf being dry and the air refreshing after our late labour, we were glad to dismount there and rest awhile.

Sir Matthew ordered one of his men to fetch cooked meat and two bottles of wine from the cart, and showed himself very generous in inviting us to join him at this repast.

"I have always gone provided in these matters," he told us as we sat together thus, "since I went upon my first voyage to the Baltic, being but a boy then, although accounted a strong one." (I know not wherefore; for he must ever have been little, and his back not above two hands' breadth.) "Howbeit," he continued, "we had the ill luck to be cast away upon the Hebrides, the weather being very tempestuous and our ship not seaworthy; so that about the fourth day it broke in pieces utterly. I held to a piece of the keel," he said, looking anxiously from one to the other as his memory or invention helped him to these particulars, "upon which, too, clung our purser, whom I did my best to comfort in this our common and marvellous peril. How we got to shore I never understood, but we did, although half dead, and the purser raving."

"Since which time," said Mr. Jordan, pausing in the conveyance to his mouth of a great piece of a fowl's wing, "you have, as you say, gone provided against the repetition of such accidents, even upon the dry land."

"And wisely, sir, as I think," added Sir Matthew.

"Was there then no food to be had in Scotland?" asked Mr. Jordan simply.

"Not where we landed, in the Hebrides," replied the knight tartly. "As to the rest of that country I know nothing, save that 'tis a poor starved foggy place, and the people savage, half naked and inclining to Presbytery, which is a form of religion I abhor, and to any that professeth the same I am ready to prove it wholly

erroneous and false."

The knight's tale seeming likely to digress into theology, we ended our dinner hastily without more words; albeit from time to time later, it was evident that Sir Matthew's thoughts were still upon shipping and the sea; so that scarce an accident we met with but he found in it occasion for casting us naked on the Hebrides, or drowning us in the Baltic.

We had halted, I say, upon a considerable eminence, and the ground falling away in our front very steeply, the view thence was of an unparalleled breadth and variety. For stretched at our very feet, as it seemed, lay a fair and fertile champaign diversified here and there with woodland and open heath. Beyond the vale rose the wild and untracked downs all dark and clouded; and to the left hand (as we stood) the bar of the Quantock Hills. Surely a man must travel far who would behold a land more pleasant than this sweet vale of Taunton; nay, were he to do so, as indeed the exiled Israelites found pleasanter waters in Babylon than they had left in Jewry, yet must he needs (as they did) weep at the remembrance of it; for there is no beauty ascendeth to the height of that a man's own country hath—I mean at least if it be the West Country, as mine is.

We continued our progress, going through two or three hamlets where the old folk and children stood about the doors to watch us pass, for we were a notable spectacle, and Sir Matthew Juke a stern figure in the van; travelling thus without any great fatigue, for we kept at a foot's pace on account of the waggon, and

of Mr. Jordan also, who had no horse. I frequently besought him to ride my own mare, but he would not until we were within sight of the great belfry tower of St. Mary's Church in Taunton, when he consented, being indeed pretty faint by that, and thanked me handsomely out of Æsop.

In Taunton we dined, and there too I hired a beast for the scholar because (to speak the truth) I could not bear to be parted any longer from my holsters with the new pistols in. No adventure befell us worthy recording, or rather nothing of such magnitude as Sir Matthew's shipwreck which I have above set down, until we reached Glastonbury, where we were to lie that night.

On the morrow we departed early, observing still the same order, save that we rode more closely before the baggage upon a persistent report in the inn of a horrid robbery with murder on the Frome road: which town lay in our way to Devizes. Even the Baltic dried up at this, and we kept a pretty close look-out as we crossed the flat marsh lands thereabout; and once Juke shot off his piece suddenly upon some alarm, but with so trembling and ill an aim that Mr. Jordan's high crowned hat (that he still wore) was riddled through the brim, and a verse of Ovid's which was in his mouth, cut off smartly at the cæsura. Matter of ridicule though this were, I had been alert to note some other circumstance of more gravity (as I conceived) though I spoke not of it then; the cause of my anxiety being indeed too near for open conference thereupon. For I had, by accident, observed certain becks and glances to pass between two of the fellows of our guard; the one

of whom, a pikeman (by name Warren), trudged beside the cart wherein were laid up the knight's goods, and his fellow in the plot (to call it as I feared it) was the elder of the two horsemen that wore the knight's livery and were particularly engaged in his defence. After two or three such furtive signals run up, as it were, and answered betwixt these twain, I could be in no further doubt of their purpose, but studied what to do, should they fall upon us suddenly. That their main design was to seize upon the contents of the waggon that was by all supposed valuable, I made sure; but what I could not yet guess was the degree of complicity or indifference in which the rest of our company stood towards the projected assault. I conceived them to be chiefly cowards, however, and resolved therefore, if I might, to enlist their aid upon the first advantage: for cowards ever succeed to the party that rises dominant, and protest their loyalty loudest when 'tis most to be questioned.

Because I was a boy, I suppose, but at all events very impudently, my conspirators took small pains to hide their deliberations from my eyes, having first assured themselves that neither Juke nor the scholar had any cognizance of their doings. And this disdain of me it was that brought matters to a head; for I could no longer brook it, but, wheeling my horse about, I faced them both, and drawing a pistol from my holster shouted: "Halt, sirs! here be traitors amongst us."

I never saw men so immediately fall into confusion as did all of them, but chiefly the rearward, that, every man of them, fled

hither and thither with little squealing pitiful cries; some running beneath the waggon or behind it; others leaping off the causeway amidst the fenny ooze and peat-bogs that it wends through in these parts, where they were fain to shelter themselves in the grasses and filthy holes that everywhere there abound. I caught a sight of Sir Matthew, on the instant, exceedingly white, and his sword half drawn; but he then losing a stirrup (as he told me afterwards he did) was borne from the conflict unwillingly a great way down the road ere he could recover himself. Only the younger serving man, whose name was Jennings, and Mr. Jordan, retained their courages, and both came at once to my assistance, which in truth was not too soon. For the footman (that is the villain with the pike) ran in under my guard and dealt me a keen thrust into the thigh which sore troubled although it did not unhorse me. I returned upon him with my pistol, discharging it close to his body, and hurt him in the shoulder, as I knew, because he dropped his pike and clapped his hand there, grinning at me the while like a dog.

Just then I heard the click of a snaphance, and perceived that the caliver that Jennings carried had hung fire; and following upon this, a great laughter from the elder man, whose name was Day, a hard-favoured fellow, having a wicked pursed mouth and little dull green eyes.

"Shouldst 'a looked to thy priming, Master Jennings," he called out mockingly; by which I saw that he had tampered with the poor man's piece while we lay at the inn in Glastonbury; and

this much said, he raised his own piece and fired directly at him, who fell at once all huddled upon his horse's neck, stark dead. Before I could draw forth my second pistol, Mr. Jordan had rid forward very boldly, though armed but with his antique broadsword, and laid about him with good swinging blows, the one of which happening upon his opponent's mare, it cut into her cheek with a great gash, at the same time bursting the rein and headstall, to the end she was quite unmanageable, and despite of Day's furious restraint (who, to do him credit, would have continued the contest, two to one), charged away at a great pace, carrying him with her along the road until they were fairly out of sight.

When I had satisfied myself that the villain would certainly not return, I drew my sword and looked about for his companion, the pikeman, whom I had wounded; but whether he had crept into the concealment of the high bog grass, as the most part of the guard had done, or else had gone backward down the road, I could not get any certainty; and Sir Matthew who now rode up said he had not gone that way, else he would assuredly have met and slain him, which, seeing that the man was disabled, is likely; and so I gave over the search.

It cost us some pains to rally our forces, but in the end we did, Mr. Jordan persuading them very cogently with his great sword wherever he found them: he having groped for the digamma in stranger places, he said, and worn away the better part of his life in the prosecution of things more hard to come by than this, our

bog-shotten escort.

We reverently bestowed the body of poor Jennings upon the stuff in the waggon, and with heavy hearts (though not without some thrill of victory in mine) set onward again towards Frome and Devizes, which last place the knight was now in a fever to attain to before sundown.

"I think I have not been in such jeopardy," he said, "since I suffered shipwreck off the barren coast of the Hebrides, as I related to you yesterday."

"The dangers would be about upon an equality," quoth Mr. Jordan.

Nothing occurred to renew our fears nor to cause us to assume a posture of defence for the remainder of our passage; the only accident any way memorable being that through some mischance we got into the town of Devizes at the wrong end of it, and were diligently proceeding quite contrary to our purposed direction before we discovered our error. I set this down because I have so done since also (in spite of clear information received), and have therefore cause to regard Devizes as something extraordinary in the approaches thereto, although Sir Matthew, to whom I spoke of it, said that such divergences were common enough at sea, where a man might set his course for the Baltic and fetch up off the Hebrides, or indeed the devil knew where.

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE OLD SCHOLAR AND I CAME TO LONDON

I leave you to imagine whether Sir Matthew made much or little of our adventure in the marshes, and of the part he took therein, when, having parted from us, he found himself free to relate the same privately to his family; they having preceded him (without any escort at all) to his new great mansion in Devizes. Upon our part, we, that is Mr. Jordan and I, having inquired out the Inn to which my chattels had been already carried, took up our lodging there for the night, being pretty well fatigued (and I wounded too) so that of all things we desired rest. Nevertheless my old schoolmaster would by no means suffer me to go to bed until he had procured me a surgeon, who bound up my thigh and took his fee without any word good or bad; afterwards going himself into the kitchen (I mean Mr. Jordan did) in order to my more careful attendance, so that the host his daughter brought me up of her best, and called me poor child, though I was older than she by half a year.

Now, I learned next morning that Mr. Jordan at his supper had put so heroical a construction upon our exploit as transformed us

into men above nature almost, and I loathed to descend into the common room where all the ostlers and maids would be gaping after us for a pair of paladins. Mr. Jordan took the prospect of such adulation very coolly, saying that the wise man was he that nothing moved; but for all that I saw he liked it, and indeed he had been at considerable pains to prepare the ovation he now affected to despise. However, it so fell out that when at length we descended amongst the people of the Inn, our arrival quite failed of applause, and that for the simplest, although a tragical, reason.

For it appeared that when, on the yesternight, Sir Matthew, having discharged his baggage-wain and bestowed his goods and valuable stuff within the house, had gone to bed, it being then about midnight and all quiet, comes there, lurking through the dark night, that villain serving-man Day, whose late defeat had nothing distracted him from his hopes of plunder. With his poniard he cuts out a panel of the postern door, and privily entering thereby, goes rummaging through the house from loft to cellar, cutting and wasting what he could not carry off, but for the money, of which he found good store, and sundry gold ornaments thereto that were my lady Juke's, he fills his doublet full of them, as is proved upon him, said the teller, beyond dispute.

"But then," proceeded the man, who now held our whole company expectant, "even as he was about to steal away by the way he had come, he heard a little grating noise, as of a weapon which one struck against some impediment, close beside him in the dark where he was; and supposing this to be the knight

who had unluckily heard him, he drew boldly upon him with his sword. The other thrust out upon the instant, and a horrid conflict ensued, the men coming to grips shortly and stabbing out of all rule. At length the serving-man, whose name is Day, dealt his adversary his death-blow and prepared to flee away with his booty, when it appeared (and as Day himself told me it surprised him out of measure) his legs would not bear him; so that he fell along the floor from sheer loss and effusion of blood, a subtle blow having pierced him unawares and mortally hurt him. Thus they lay both until the morning, when the servants, and I that am the butler, found them there, the one of them already stark and the other close upon his end and all aghast."

"Then thy master be murdered, Roger Butler," cried an old fellow from the tail of the press.

"Not so, Father Time," shouted the butler with a great laugh, "although Day, by that same error, was led into striking down one he should have gone in leash withal, namely his fellow-thief, one Warren, that was gone about the same game as himself."

"Why, 'tis the very knave that dealt Mr. Cleeve here that great wound I told you of," cried Mr. Jordan, when the clamour of voices had somewhat lessened; the which speech of his I could have wished not spoken, for now all turned about, demanding this and that of me, and swearing I was a brave lad; with such a deal of no-matter as put me into an extremity of rage and shame, so that I was glad to escape away to the hall, where I fell to at the ordinary, and drank to their confusion.

But for all my spleen it was indeed a merry tale, beside that it was a marvellous judgment upon two rogues. Day, it seemed, had breath enough left in him properly to incriminate Warren, who was, as I say, already dead, and then rolled over and died too. There was an inquest held of necessity, as well upon the thieves as upon poor Jenning that Day killed before; which process somewhat detained us; but in the afternoon of the day following, having satisfied the Coroner, we were permitted to depart on our way.

Nevertheless there was a deal of time lost upon our reckoning, it being now Saturday morning, and although we were now no further to be hindered with the slowness of Juke's waggon, yet there was still a good four score miles to go, and the Sunday falling on the morrow when we were bound to rest, we could by no means reach London before Monday at night, or even the Tuesday forenoon. My baggage I had sent on by the common carrier, who engaged to transmit it at Reading, whither he plied, to another carrier going to London.

We rode out of the base court of the Inn gaily enough, and soon came upon the high Wiltshire downs, which, there having been a deal of snow fallen in the night, lay about us in that infinite solemnity of whiteness that stills a man's heart suddenly, as few things else have the power to do.

Nought could we discern before and around us but ridge after ridge of snow, above which hung a sky of unchanging grey; all features of the country were quite obliterated, and but that some

cart had gone that way a while since, of which we picked out and followed the wheel marks scrupulously, it had wanted little but we should have ridden bewildered into some deep drift and perhaps perished. Indeed, we were fortunate in that; and keeping close upon the track, although but slow going, in time descended into the market town of Marlborough, which we reached early in the afternoon. Here we refreshed ourselves and our beasts, and then away into the Savernake forest, traversing it without mishap, and so out upon the high road again by Hungerford, and into Newbury a little after nightfall; having covered above thirty miles in all, the ways bad too, and the day, because of the late season, very short.

On the Sunday we remained all day in the Inn, except that I went in the morning to the Church there, when I heard a sermon by the curate upon Wars and the Rumours thereof, wherein he advised us very earnestly to examine our pieces and have them ready to hand and not to keep our powder in the loft under the leaky thatch. He brought in somewhat, too, about the Sword of the Spirit and the Shield of Faith, but listlessly, and I saw that no one attended much to that, all men being full of fear of the Papists, to which they were particularly moved by Mr. Will. Parry's malicious behaviour in the House of Commons. The scholar did not accompany me to the Church, I suppose because he was himself a Papist, though perhaps no very rigorous one, but feigned a stiffness from riding; and when I returned I found him in the larder, where he was discoursing amply of

the Scythians and their method of extracting a fermented liquor from the milk of mares, which was of a grateful potency, but (he lamented) not now to be obtained.

I wrote home a letter to my father after dinner, and in the evening entertained the curate, who had got to hear of our going to London, and came to speak with us thereon. He was an honest man, and of an ingenuous complacency, which he manifested in telling us very quietly that his Grace of Canterbury was of the same university as he, and he doubted not, would be pleased to hear of him, and that he had taken another rood of ground into the churchyard; all which I promised, if I should meet his lordship, to relate.

We departed as was our custom, betimes on the morrow, travelling towards Reading, and thereafter to Windsor, where we beheld with admiration the great Castle of her Majesty's that is there; howbeit we went not into the place, but left it on our right hand, and proceeded still forward. But the night falling soon afterwards, we were fain to put up in the little hamlet of Brentford upon the river Thames, whither we learned that 'twas fortunate we had without accident arrived, a certain haberdasher of repute having been robbed of all he carried upon the heath we had but lately rid over into that place, and left for dead by the wayside.

Perhaps it was this outrage which had made for our safety, and that, being so far satisfied with the spoil of silks and rich stuff taken, the malefactors had hastened to dispose of it to some that make a living by that cowardly means, and are mostly

dwellers about the Stocks market, in the narrow lanes thereby, although some (as Culver Alley) have been stopped up against such notorious use of thieves.

Notwithstanding, I here affirm, that in the morning, when we saw the monstrous charges our lodging stood us in, we found we had not far to seek for a thief as big as any; and having paid the innkeeper, told him so.

But now we were come almost within view of the great City of which I had so many times dreamed, and so beyond limits had advanced its imagined glory, until it seemed to draw into itself all that was noble and rich and powerful in the world; being Rome and Carthage too, I thought, and the Indies added! nay, and only not Paris or Florence, because it scorned the comparison. In such an exaltation I sat my horse, looking to right and left as we rode through the lanes past Hammersmith and Kensington, all the way being still deep in snow; although hardened here by the traffic of country carts, or rather (I said) by great equipages of the Court and the Queen's troops. Mr. Jordan spoke twice or thrice upon indifferent matters, and chiefly, I remember, of Olympus; but I regarded him contemptuously, having come into a place where Olympus would be very cheaply esteemed as a hill, we having our own Ludgate Hill, which, if not so high, is in all other respects as good or better. But when he told me that we must soon each take our leave of the other, all that vain mood left me, and I wished him from my heart a thousand benefits and safety in his enterprise, in which I would have joined him willingly had I not

been bound to this business of my uncle. He told me he should go to Moorfields, where he had heard there was frequent exercise of arms, and there learn how to set about his enrolment.

About this time we came to Charing Cross, where no further speech was possible between us; such strangeness we met with, and unused fashion of things; and proceeding by way of the Strand, we noted an infinite succession of sights, of which the least elsewhere would have staggered me, but now giving place to others as marvellous, or more, they did but increase my appetite for amazement, which they alternately satisfied and renewed. Upon the clamour and the infinite throngs of the townfolk, I but briefly touch, for they transcend all description, as do the palaces of the Savoy and Arundel House that we passed by; and the Earl of Essex his mansion, and other the inns of the great nobles which lie upon the right side of this famous street, and betwixt it and the Thames. Somerset House, moreover, that is still building, we saw, and artificers yet at work thereupon, which will be, I think, when builded, the finest palace of all. At Temple Bar a man leaves the liberty of the Duchy (as it is called) and enters within the liberty (albeit yet without the walls) of the City of London, and here, a little distance further on, I found Fetter Lane upon the left hand, where my lodging was, and so (having first learned where I should have word of him) sorrowfully parted with Mr. Jordan at the end of it, he going still eastward towards Paul's, and I up the lane, that is northward, to Mr. Malt's, where I was well received, and led to a clean and pleasant chamber in

the gable, which he told me was to be mine.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH I CONCEIVE A DISLIKE OF AN EARL'S SERVANT AND AN AFFECTION FOR A MAN OF LAW

I think I overlaid my conscience in the night, seeing I stayed abed until near seven o'clock next morning, a thing I had never before done; but, indeed, I had now some colour of excuse for so doing, for besides my wound in the thigh, which the cold had made woefully to ache, there was my new clothes which the carrier had not yet delivered, and I was mighty loth to go abroad in my travel-stained riding dress and great boots. As I lay there, the light then gathering mistily in my chamber, I could hear the noises of the City and the cries of the multitude of small vendors that go about the streets, as having no booth nor open shop wherein to display their petty merchandise. From a church near by I heard bells pealing, and soon from other churches too. Below my window there was a maid singing, and a man with her that hawked ballads, bawling their titles till my ears tingled. Nevertheless, the confusion of all these strange cries and sounds heartened me marvellously, and had I but got my new-fashioned doublet of dark cloth and hose therewithal, I had

been the merriest man of the parish, as I was certainly the most curious. After awhile I could lie no longer, but leapt up, and running to the casement, found London white, a sky of frost, and a brave gay world before me.

My chamber, as I said, was a sort of great attic in the gable, and full as high up in the house as was my old tower room at home. But 'twas less the height that astonished me, than the nearness into which the houses were thrust together from either side of the street, so as they almost met by the roofs; and I swear, had I been so inclined (and he too) I could have crossed staves with the barber that had his dwelling over against mine, or almost stolen his pewter shaving dish from the sill where it lay. Of these conceits of mine, however, the barber was necessarily ignorant, being then busily engaged upon the exercise of his craft, which he carried on perforce above stairs, the shop below and the other rooms being used by a haberdasher and alderman, that had his goods stored there. I noted the barber particularly as well for his extraordinary grace and courtesy, as for the activity he manifested in his occupation. No hand's turn would he do but a flourish went to it, and always his body bending and his head nodding and twisting to that extent, I wondered how the man he shaved could sit his chair in any degree of comfort. Perhaps he did not, though he seemed to suffer the little man's attentions coolly enough, and when he went away, paid him, I perceived, handsomely, and strode off with a careless ease, that minded me, with some shame, of my own country manners. My

thoughts being thus returned upon my late secluded life, I fell into a melancholy mood which was a little after happily dissipated by the maid bringing me my new clothes and telling me moreover that the family stayed for me at breakfast.

I was soon enough dressed after this and, settling my starched ruff, of which the pleats somewhat galled me, descended to the room where they dined; and there found the whole family of the Malts (that with the infant made up nine) set at the board and very ready for their delayed meal. A long grace was said by the youngest maid, whose eyes were fierce upon the eggs the while, and after that we fell to. Madam Malt spoke kindly to me once or twice of my business, of which I had already given her some slight and grudging particulars, but for the most part she conversed in sidelong frowns with her children, of whose conduct it was evident she wished I should think well. But in truth I cared nothing for their conduct nor much for their persons (for all they were personable enough) being in a fever to be gone upon my errand to the goldsmith's and to commence work in earnest.

Breakfast done then, I lost little time upon formalities and broke in upon Madam Malt's excuse of her third (or fourth) daughter's mishap over the small beer, with excuses of my own for leaving her; and so taking up my hat left her staring. So eager indeed was I, that I ran out of the door into the arms of a gentleman that stood by and nearly sent him on his back in the snow. When he had recovered himself, with my aid, and stood fronting me, I knew him directly for the man whom I had

seen in the barber's chair, and faltering upon my apology let fall some foolish words by which I might be thought to claim his acquaintance. He frowned suddenly at that and gazing upon me earnestly said—

"It were easy to perceive you are of the country, young sir, and not used to our town customs."

"How so?" I asked very hotly, for his disdain went the deeper into me that it was founded upon reason.

"By your pretending to an intimacy with me," he replied, and drew himself up very haughtily as he said it, "who know not your name even, although doubtless you know mine, as all do, seeing the place I keep, and the especial favour of my lord to me; yet I say that is no ground for your familiarly accosting me in the public way."

"Why, as to that," I cried out scornfully, "I know nothing of you save that I saw you but now in the barber's chair, swathed up in a towel and your face all lathered."

He turned very pale at this out of mere discomfiture, and I expected would have run upon me with his sword, so that I clapped my fist upon my own and stepping closely to his side said—

"Sir, I am, as you imagine, but lately come out of the country and therefore know not your customs here in London. But if there be places reserved for the settlement of such brabbles as this, let us go thither with all my heart." And then, after a breath or two taken: "For all that," I added, "I had it in my mind to say I meant

no insult, and if I offended you, I am sorry."

He stood without replying either to my threats or my amends, but gazed upon me with a look that I saw meant mischief; though whether to be done now or at a convenient time and secretly, I could not guess.

He was a fine bold man, of an height a good span greater than my own. He wore no hair on his face, but that I could see under his plumed cap was thick and black. His dress was of rare stuff and I supposed very costly, being all slashed and broidered, and tagged with gold. Indeed, had he not let slip that boast of intimacy with some lord I should have been sure of his being a lord himself and perhaps master of one of those great palaces upon the Strand. Thus, then, we stood thwarting each other a considerable space, and I (at least) doubting of the upshot, when a great fellow in a livery of blue, with a badge on his sleeve, came running up the lane, and casting an eye upon me, pushed in between us and spoke with the tall man low and seriously. There remaining therefore nought to hinder me longer about that brawl, I went off, but asked one that stood by what was the badge the man in livery bore, and he answered 'twas the Earl of Pembroke's emblem of the green dragon, and that they twain that communed together thus secretly were both of his household of Baynards Castle by Blackfriars.

Without further mishap, but pondering rather heavily upon my late one, I made my way through the streets, past the noble church of Paul's on the south side of it, to Mr. Wall the goldsmith hard

by the Exchange. I have neither space nor words nor confidence either, to speak of all the things I met with, beyond imagination marvellous to me; and even where I was disappointed of my expectation; as in the little width of the streets, and of Paul's that it lacked the spire it once had; together with much else that lacked completion or seemed at hazard builded; even there, I say, I found my idea bettered by the fact, and a strange beauty in the irregularity and scant ordering of the City, that the more bewildered me as I went the further into the midst of it.

I found Mr. Wall in his shop, or house rather, a little down the lane named of the Pope's Head tavern, where he expected me with the money ready, that my father had desired him to have at my disposal. He overread my letters of credit somewhat closely, after which he put to me two or three such pertinent questions as sufficed to show a shrewd aptitude in affairs of business, yet without any the least pedantry, or vexatious delays. Indeed he dispatched all with an easy unconcern, as if such matters were of every day and not considerable; although the sum to be paid methought large enough in all conscience. The while I counted over the gold pieces he talked idly, but with a pleasant humour, of Mr. John Davis that was said to be projecting with others a voyage for the discovery of the Northwest Passage (the which he undertook in the summer following), and of Mr. Sanderson, a merchant well known to him, that was especially committed to this adventure.

"I would myself have gone upon this discovery," he said, "but

for the misfortune of a singular queasy stomach that layeth me low or ever I be come upon the ship. Yet I thank Heaven I am not of their number that, having themselves failed, pretend that success is the constant attendant upon incompetence."

When it came to the carriage of my gold he very courteously offered to send his porter therewith, and as the weight was more by far than I had looked for, I thanked him, and gave the bags to the man, who for his part made nothing of them, but walked away briskly down Cornhill, I following him as a convoy might follow a treasure ship, close upon her chase. In such sort we arrived in time at the Serjeants Inn in Fleet Street, where I had engaged to meet Mr. John Skene, that was my uncle's attorney. In that Inn, or warren rather (for indeed it is nothing less), we searched for any of the name of Skene, but could find none; however, a stranger who chanced to pass over the court while we stood at gaze courteously directing us, we soon after came upon his chambers, which were at the head of a narrow stair in the south building and the eastern end thereof; whereupon my porter gave me my leathern sacks into my hands saying he must now go, which (I having paid him) he presently did.

Mr. Skene admitted me with a deal of ceremony, being, I could see, a man of extreme punctuality and withal one to whom I took an immediate liking. He was I think the most handsome-featured man I have ever met with, in height tall, and of a stately port, his body stout although not at all gross, and his hair, which was very plentiful, gone a perfect silver. I supposed his age to

be nearing three score, but he might have been younger. His eye was very bright and kindly and seemed to smile even when his lips were drawn close in meditation. The black gown he wore as suited to his profession very well befitted his grave demeanour; about his neck was a plain linen band, but the cap which the Serjeants generally use he had not on, and I supposed kept it only for wearing in the Court. His business room into which I had come appeared meanly furnished, excepting in books and quires, of which there was a great number scattered everywhere, but his table and the two or three chairs were nothing so good as our own at home, and the floor unswept and foul. While I took notice of these small matters Mr. Skene was reaching from a shelf a great file of papers tied with silk; which having got, he turned about and surprised me at that occupation.

"A poor hole, you think, Mr. Cleeve," he said, with a merry smile at my embarrassment, "but we men of law have scant occasion for leisure in which to look about us, and luxury would be ill circumstanced here where life and death be too often at grips. Come," he added after a pause, "I do not mean to take the pulpit over you, but to bid you expect such plainness in me as you find in my chamber; and so, enough," he ended, and therewith drew out a parchment with a great seal attached to it, upon which he pondered a while.

"You have the main of this affair?" he asked abruptly, touching the skin as he spoke.

"Yes," I replied, "at least so much as that my uncle Botolph

is in the Tower, and hopes to clear himself if he may be brought to trial."

"Then you have it all, or nearly so," he said nodding. "He was arrested upon an order of the Council and secretly conveyed by water to the place where he now lies. By especial grace I have once been admitted to see him, and learned from his own mouth, although I needed not to hear that I was already assured of, namely, the entire innocence that he hath as touching these late revolts."

He sat silent awhile and perhaps awaited my reply, albeit my reply when he heard it seemed not much to his mind, and I myself was surprised at my boldness in speaking it.

"It lies upon my conscience, sir," said I, "to tell you that, had I my will, my uncle should by no means come by this franchise we be deliberating so painfully to procure. I believe him to be a most absolute villain, and had not my father moved herein, I should have let him rot in his dungeon and ne'er stirred a finger in this cause."

I stopped there for mere lack of breath, being quite overcome by my heat of passion against my uncle, but when I would have excused myself, Mr. Skene prevented me with a motion of his hand. The pleasant light in his eyes was clouded with a grave anxiety.

"These be hard words, Master Denis," he said, "and I hope are justified; or rather, I hope not; else I cannot for my honour undertake this prisoner's defence. But tell me briefly upon what

grounds you believe him to be so worthless of relief."

This put me into an unlooked for difficulty, because I could not bring myself to tell him aught of my mother, and yet had I no other reason to give him. But he, as if perceiving he had said something to vex me, hastened to set me at my ease, and leaning forward upon his desk, said—

"You are still very young, Mr. Denis, and the young are apt to prejudge. But for the cause of your anger I may tell you frankly that I know it; and respect you both for it and also for your reticence in naming it. I have been acquainted with your uncle," he went on, speaking still in a thoughtful manner, but as if some pleasure joined with the recollection of which he was to notify me: "I have been acquainted with him above seven years now, and can lay claim to know his private mind so far as a man's friend may do. You spoke of a fault of his, when he was scarce older than yourself. Are we to send him to the block for that? It is not the charge under which he now lies, Mr. Denis, nor is it one"—he spoke this with so great an earnestness that I dropped my eyes before his—"nor is it such an impeachment as you would be willing to stand beside the block where he lay dead and say, 'I let him die because a score of years since a certain frail lady held him higher than her honour.'"

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