

Barrett Frank

The Admirable Lady Bid- dy Fane



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Barrett Frank
The Admirable Lady Biddy Fane / Her
Surprising Curious Adventures In
Strange Parts & Happy Deliverance
From Pirates, Battle, Captivity, & Other
Terrors; Together With Divers Romantic
& Moving Accidents As Set Forth By Benet
Pengilly (Her Companion In Misfortune
& Joy), & Now First Done Into Print

CHAPTER I
I AM TAKEN OUT OF THE PILLORY AND NARROWLY
ESCAPE GOING TO THE WHIPPING-POST

As 'tis the present mode to embellish a history with a portrait of the writer, it will not be amiss if I here at the outset give you some hints by which you may see, as in a frontispiece, the image of that Benet Pengilly who is about to tell you many marvelous things.

What kind of man I am you may better judge when you come to the last page of this history; my business now is to present my image as I was; to which end I would have you picture a man close upon thirty years of age, clad in a jerkin and breeches of leather, six foot and some odd inches in height, gaunt and lean as a famished wolf, fierce visaged, with an unkempt beard of hair, and a shock ragged as a bush, and both as black as any ink; a deep-sunk, bloodshot eye, and a swarthy skin, all besmirched with broken egg, filth and blood. This pretty portraiture you shall frame in the town pillory, which stood over against the church of St. Mary, in the city of Truro, with this very true description writ under the headpiece:

"Benet Pengilly, A Sturdy Rogue."

And now to begin my story, I must tell you that I had stood in this pillory from sunrise, a sport for all the cowards in the town. I say cowards, for surely those who have courage are never cruel to the helpless, and these – the strongest of whom would have fled before me had I been free – had baited me as curs bait a tethered bull, without any kind of mercy, jeering at me, and making me a mark for any beastliness that came to hand, ay, and sharp stones to boot, as the blood from my lips and cheek testified.

There were never less than a couple of score of this rabble about me, hallooing and whooping; for as fast as one left me to go about his business, another took his place. But amongst the constantly changing crowd was one who, seated upon the stone bench where the town porters are wont to rest their loads awhile, never took his eyes off me, nor budged from his place from the time he came hither, which was about ten o'clock, till now, when the sun was past the meridian. He watched me as a surgeon marks the bearing of his subject under the knife; nay, rather 'twas as a fiend might watch

the torment of the damned, for a hellish smile crept over his face as some insult more cruel than the rest provoked me to a state of desperation.

This man I had seen before. His name was Rodrigues. 'Twas he who, in the month of March, came into Plymouth, his ship all decked out with ribbons, his crew arrayed in lace and cambric, and every mother's son as drunk as a beggar; 'twas he who had set tubs of sherries on the Hoe, staved in the heads, and in sheer wantonness and drunken folly cast the wine right and left with his joined palms; to say nothing of divers other senseless tricks whereby in something less than two months he had squandered treasure to the value of nigh upon £7000 and left not enough, when his ship was seized, to pay the King's dues. He still wore the remnants and wreck of his former finery – silk stockings, satin trunks, velvet doublet, and a hat with a feather in it; but, lord! so broken, stained, and bedrabbled through his mad frolics that plain homespun had looked rich beside it.

I have heard that this Rodrigues was of gipsy origin, and indeed he looked fierce and brutal enough for that or anything else. He had a short, curling beard. His hair grew low down on his brows, and fell behind his ears in long, wiry ringlets. His eyes were small, but remarkably piercing, and the aspect of his face was very eager and cruel; but that which made his looks most terrible was his teeth, which were pointed sharp, like a wolf's, so that when he displayed them he looked more like a beast of prey than a natural man. This peculiarity, however, was not due to his birth, but was rather brought about, as I learned, through living many years a captive among cannibal savages, whose practice it is to file their teeth after this fashion. In addition to this disfigurement his ears were slit, and he had a long white scar quartered down his tawny cheek; in short, he was as ill-looking and horrid a scoundrel as ever I did see.

'Twas, as I say, high noon, and matters stood thus, when, of a sudden, the clamor of my persecutors was stilled as by enchantment, and the sound of horse with the jingling of harness struck on my ear; and, casting my eye in that direction, I perceived a company of ladies and gentlemen with their servants, all very richly mounted, drawing hither. I took not much heed of them to discern who they were, being callous sick with the pain and insult I had suffered so many hours, until they drew near within a stone's cast to see what sport was forward, when Rodrigues jumping down from his stone bench, and making them a mighty respectful obeisance of his battered hat with its broken feather, my curiosity was pricked, and I once more looked that way. Then my heart sank lower than ever, and I would have been thankful had my face been beat out of all recognition; for foremost among the company was Lady Bidy Fane, and 'twas clear by the anger in her face that she recognized me. Yet, the next moment was I glad, and my heart was lifted up with a savage exultation; for now, thinks I, she will see to what degradation and ruin hath she brought a man of promise by her cruelty.

I do not think there ever was in the whole world a young woman so beautiful as Lady Bidy Fane; nor is there like to be again. Had I not thought so, should I have abandoned myself to despair because of her cruelty? Nay, nor should I have had this history to tell. And yet may there be women as straight and fairly proportioned as she, though none more so; and others with a skin of that rare pale clearness; and others, again, with eyes as large and dark and spirited, with sweet lips lined with snowy teeth, with a perfect nose (shapely as any Greek's) and wavy, nut-brown hair; still, I say, you shall not find another one woman in whom are combined the graces of so many together, with a spirit so lofty, noble, fearless, and faithful as hers. I might discourse of her beauty for many pages, and yet fail, for want of words, to do her justice; but to make an end of this matter briefly, I say, again, she was incomparable.

On her right hand was my uncle, Sir Bartlemy Pengilly, Knight, the same who adventured with Sir Walter Raleigh in the quest for gold upon the Oronoque; and a hale, lusty old man he was, very personable, with shining white hair curled closely over his head, and a well-clipped beard; on her left hand was Sir Harry Smidmore, a young man of good parts, as I must acknowledge, albeit I hated him exceedingly, by reason of his standing in better grace with Lady Bidy Fane than any other of her suitors, and they were as numerous as butterflies over a fair garden on a summer's day. Besides

these three were many friends of theirs of very good condition; but they enter not into this history, so enough is said of them.

Now, the rabble, thinking this company was drawn up for amusement, presently began to make sport of me; and one caught up a dead cat, which had served before, and flung it at me, and another a cabbage stump, which had likewise served; and a third, finding nothing handier than a broken pantile, was about to cast that, when Sir Harry Smidmore, with the flat of his sword, fetched him a clap on the arm that made him think better of it. Then Lady Bidy, with scorn and disgust on her countenance, turned away, and the whole company followed her thence, whispering together, and all very grave; for it was known that I was Sir Bartlemy's nephew, and a kinsman of Lady Bidy's, and that I had disgraced them before their friends.

After them went Rodrigues also, at a brisk pace to keep up with the horse. They had not been gone long when there came two of the sheriff's men with a cord to loose me, whereupon, seeing that I was about to be taken from the pillory, the whole rout that were in the square took to their heels as though a tiger were about to be let loose on them; for I was a man of terror for many miles about, and was known as "Ben of the Woods."

The sheriff's men first freed my hands from the boards, and, making fast my arms about me with their cord, they unlocked the headpiece, and then, having given me a draught from a pitcher, for I reeled like one in liquor being taken down, they led me up the High Street to the Dolphin Inn, and so into the great room there, where at a table sat the justice who had condemned me to the pillory, with Sir Bartlemy Pengilly, Sir Harry Smidmore, and some others; and against the wall in the shadow I spied Rodrigues.

Being brought to the end of the table facing this company, the justice made me a discourse, and the gist of his matter was that, out of respect for Sir Bartlemy, he had taken me from the pillory before my time, and would absolve me from further punishment if I would give my word to be of better conduct henceforth and agree to the proposal Sir Bartlemy was about to make.

Then Sir Bartlemy, pushing aside the bottle that stood before him, leaned forward and addressed me thus:

"Ben," says he, "I am heartily ashamed of you, and with the greater reason because you are not ashamed of yourself. Look at me, rogue! Do you see that my eyes are full of tears? 'Tis for shame that you are my nephew that I weep, and not for pity, for I do assure you, sir" (turning to the justice), "I loved this fellow, and not so long since neither; a brave-looking and comely man he was but a year ago; of good parts and great promise, whom I had been proud to call my son; and a brave man he should be by reason that his father endured manfully much hardship in adventuring under Sir Francis Drake, and died beside Sir Richard Grenville fighting those fifteen great galleons of the Spaniard. But what a base, desperate rascal are you" (turning again to me in anger) "to abandon yourself to despair, to yield up everything without a struggle and at the first shot of adversity, bringing dishonor upon your family thus! Had you but yourself to think of, vagabond? Had your father thought only of his own comfort, would he willingly have endured hardship and privation, or sought to face the Spanish guns? 'Twas the honor and glory of his queen he thought of before all; and had you truly loved your cousin, you would have set up her happiness before your own, and done naught to make her blush for so base a subject."

"Ay, surely!" cries the justice, frowning upon me.

"Yet must we not be too hard on the fellow, neither," says Sir Bartlemy, turning again to him; "for 'tis not as if he had forsaken a life of pain for one of pleasure, but quite the contrary; for he was light-hearted and gay before this cruel stroke; and now what creature on the face of this smiling world is more deplorable? And, truly, for a man to abandon himself to a life of such desolation and misery as he passes in the woods, his mind must be unstrung, and all its music turned to discord; and there is naught, I hear, like disappointment in love to unsettle the reason, though nothing of the sort has ever troubled mine; for if one lass frowned I'd quickly find another who'd smile; and I warrant,"

says he, merrily, with a sly dig at the stout old justice – "I warrant you have often done the same, Master Anthony."

"Let us go to the point, Sir Bartlemy – to the point," said the justice, severely.

"That will I with no more ado. Look you, rascal," says my uncle, thumping the table and bending his brows on me, "you have done little that I should love you, and much to undo the love I bore you; yet will I make an effort to save you from disgrace for your father's sake – and something for your own – for, God knows, you are a wretch as much to be pitied as hated; so here to the point. I am bent upon getting that treasure which lies, as we know full well, beyond the Oronoque, in order that it fall not into the hands of the Spaniard. 'Tis too late for me to make this venture under my own command, though I fain would; but a worthy commander have I found, and under him you shall take service as his lieutenant and second in command, and share the profits of this enterprise in due proportion."

"Wait!" cries the justice; "here surely is a mistake! You cannot intend to place this fellow taken from the pillory next in position to your commander!"

"He is my brother's son," replies Sir Bartlemy, "and I have faith that he will bear himself well when this present distemper of mind shall be blown off by the wholesome sea gales; for the rest, this matter concerns the crew of the ship and the commander. If they are willing, should I object?"

"But are they willing?" asks the justice. "There is the point."

"Here is the ablest man of the crew – one who has sailed with Drake, gone through many perilous adventures, and been himself a master. Hear what he says. Speak up, Rodrigues."

Rodrigues came out of the shadow, and, pointing his finger at me, says he: "That man is worth any ten men of our crew, and such a man a crew needs for master. We want no puppets, but men who can fight and suffer with stiff lips." Then he dropped back into the shadow again.

I was grateful to this man. Hope – that so long had lain dead within me – sprang up to life, and an eager desire for wild adventure seized upon me. And at that moment the door at the end of the room over against the head of the table opened, and Lady Biddy Fane came into the room; then my imagination, already kindled, blazed up with a mad conception of winning untold gold, glory, and honor – all to lay at her feet, with the possibility that she might accept them and me.

But, lord! there was little in her aspect to encourage such a hope, as she stood there erect and scornful, her pretty brows bent in angry scorn as she looked on me, tapping her silk skirt impatiently with her riding-whip. But this did not daunt my spirit, for I knew how sweet those brows were when they unbent, and that her dainty hand was more apt to caress than to strike.

While my heart was aflame with this sudden return of passion, the justice spoke:

"What says the commander? There the point is, I take it."

"Speak up, Sir Harry," says Sir Bartlemy.

"I will have him for my lieutenant as willingly as I would make him my friend," says Sir Harry Smidmore.

Hearing this my heart being filled with feeling rebelled against my reason, for I knew not until that moment who was to be the commander of this expedition.

"Now, Ben," says Sir Bartlemy, "you have the chance to redeem the past – ay, more than that – to make us love you as we never loved you yet. Will you accept the offer freely made by us?"

"What!" says I to myself, "win gold and honors for Smidmore to lay at her feet? Never!" And so I laughed with a brutal scorn and shook my head.

"An obstinate, contumacious rascal," cries Sir Bartlemy, with one of those sea oaths which he was more free to utter than I have been to set down here; "yet," says he, softening in a moment, "must we bear with him by reason of his misfortunes to the utmost limits. I have failed; plead thou for him, dear girl" (turning to Lady Biddy), "or he must go back again to the pillory."

"Ay, with all my heart," says Lady Biddy, advancing; "and, as you love me, sir," bending slightly to the justice, "I do beg you to favor my pleading. Send him not back to the pillory, for sure when that, together with my uncle's gentle, kind persuasion, fails to win him to a decent behavior, 'tis evident

that a sharper remedy is needed for his disorder. Prythee, then, dear sir, send him to the whipping-post; there to be soundly whipped."

"Why, so I will," cries the justice cheerfully, clapping his fist on the table; "for I've heard no better suggestion this bout. To the whipping-post he shall go."

"Not alive," I muttered; and then straining with all my might I burst the cords that bound me, and turned to the door; whereupon the sheriff's men threw themselves before me. But one I took by the throat and the other by the shoulder, and swinging them together I flung them against the wall with such force that the oak panels cracked again, and they sank to the ground like things of clay. Then I strode out of the room and thence into the pure air, and no one had the stomach to stay me.

CHAPTER II

I AM TAKEN AGAIN BY JACK GEDDES AND OTHERS, AND RESCUED BY RODRIGUES

Sir Bartlemy's house was built upon a hill not far from St. Maw's and looked over Falmouth Haven to Penny-come-quick. His estate was mostly woodlands, and skirting the river Fal extended north beyond Philligh and east as far as Tregony. In the midst of these woods had I lived for many months unmolested, the worthy old knight, with good intent, bidding his foresters let me kill what game I would for my use; and here had I built me a hut as a shelter against the inclemency of the weather, thatching it with broom and sods of turf. But twas a mistaken kindness on his part, for this sufferance only tended to complete that state of savagery into which I was sinking.

From childhood I have loved the woods, and found delight in studying the secrets of nature – the growth of herbs, the places where they may be found; the ways of birds and beasts, and the like; and when my hopes were all cast over, I had fled thither, saying, "Here is a mistress whose smile is not to be wooed in vain!" And, indeed, for a troubled spirit I know no comfort so soothing as the woods after a spring shower, when all is fresh and sweet, and every little blade of grass seems to smile. For the most part my state was that of utter solitude. Many a day I heard no sound but my own footfall, and saw nothing but the still trees. For weeks and weeks I met no human creature; yet I had no inclination to seek a companion. But at times my nature would revolt against this unnatural condition of solitude, and a mad thirst for debauchery would seize me. Then with my bow would I kill a buck, and, selling it to those who were ever ready to buy venison of me at a fourth of its value, I would go into Truro and spend my money in some gross frolic like that which had brought me to the pillory (as I have shown).

And now, having dwelt long enough on my originals, yet not too long, for I would show truly to what degradation may a man bring himself by self-abandonment, I will continue this history without any further digression.

To my hut, then, in the wood did I betake myself after my escape from Truro, refreshing myself on the way with a plunge in the cool river; and being arrived at my home, as I may call it, I went to a hollow oak hard by, which served me as a storehouse, to see if aught was there to satisfy the cravings of my stomach; but finding nothing save a hare which I had hung there before leaving, and which now stank, for I had been absent best part of three days, so that I could not eat it, hungered though I was, I picked up my bow, which also I kept in this place, and, taking a turn in the wood, I had presently the chance to kill a wood-pigeon. Then I built a fire with dry sticks, of which there was no lack at this season, laid my pigeon in the embers, and when it had lain there as long as my patience would endure, I stripped off the skin and feathers, and devoured it, using my fingers for fork and my teeth for knife; and thus having partly quieted my stomach, though I could have eaten half a dozen such small game, but was too tired to seek more, I threw myself on the earth within my hut, and fell asleep at once, nor did any pricking of conscience trouble me in the least.

And here I slept on till about eight o'clock in the evening, as I judge, when an unwonted sound awoke me; for I had contracted the habit of sleeping, as it were, with my ears open. But being mighty heavy with sleep I did no more than sit up and glance stupidly through the opening of my hut. I saw naught but a tranquil glow over the west through the still leaves of the trees; and a nightingale then bursting out into song at no great distance, I concluded there was nothing to fear; and throwing myself on the ground, in a minute I was again sound asleep.

Nothing disturbed me after that through the night, but soon after daybreak, as I take it, my ears were assailed by a confusion of sounds, and ere I could spring to my feet, a fellow threw himself upon

my chest, another knelt upon my legs, and a third laid strong hands upon my shoulders, and in a trice I felt cords cutting into my arms and binding them to my sides.

"You escape not this time, Master Benet," growled a voice, and in truth my captors were as good as this fellow's words, for enough cord was bestowed about me as would have trussed up an elephant. My captors were six; all stout fellows and well armed, amongst whom I recognized one of the men that had served me the day before, and I cursed my folly that I had lain myself open to be taken in this way; for I might have foreseen the pursuit had I given it a thought. However, cursing was no good; there was I clapped up and in a fair way to get my punishment doubled, and more than that. And, as there was no likelihood of escape, the only thing left me was to bear my ill-luck with the fortitude of despair. Yet my heart sank as I saw them take up my bow which I had laid beside me on going to sleep, for I knew I should have it no more, and how could I get food or aught else without that when I got my liberty again? Better to take my life, or rob me for ever of my liberty, than take that by which I lived, thought I.

They haled me out into the open, and there for the first time this day I spied the gipsy Rodrigues. He was seated on a fallen tree, with his elbows on his knees, and his jaws in his hands, smoking tobacco in the end of a clay pipe; and now he had his keen eyes fixed on me, watching how I took this new buffet of fortune with the same look he had worn the day before, when I stood in the pillory.

I guessed it was his step that had aroused me the fore-going evening, and that he led on the sheriff's men to catch me, which was pretty near the truth of the matter, as I shall presently show.

To make sure that I should not escape, the men tied me up to a tree; then they proceeded to regale themselves from a store of meat, with which their wallets were well filled, making very merry with me the time; after which they consulted together in a low voice; and, one of them having parleyed for a few minutes with Rodrigues, they all stretched themselves out on the soft sward, and in a short time were asleep and snoring like so many swine, which surprised me somewhat, seeing that now the sun was getting pretty high.

For some while Rodrigues sat as still as any carved image, smoking his pipe and looking at me; then up he gets, and passing the sleepers as silently as might be, he comes to my side; and putting first his finger on his lips, and jerking his thumb over his shoulders with a sly leer to bid me be silent, he pulls a letter from his breast and showed me my name written upon it. This he thrusts back in his breast, and, after a glance over his shoulder to make sure all were still sleeping, he cut the cords that bound me to the tree with his dagger, and leads me a good stonecast distant, where we might converse in a low tone without being heard.

Here he again lugged out the letter, and, spreading it out (the seal being already broke), he held it before my eyes to read; for he had been careful not to sever the cords that tethered my arms to my side.

It was my uncle's hand and signature.

"You have read this?" says I.

Rodrigues shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "I had been a fool else," and then says he, with the utmost assurance:

"I was to have given it to you last night, but you were sleeping so sweetly I had no heart to wake you. Besides, I thought you would more readily listen to his advice if you were in bonds than if you were free."

"So you betrayed me?"

"Not at once. I led the fellows up and down in the moonlight best part of the night, that they might be overcome with fatigue this morning, and so give me the opportunity of some serious conversation with you. Now read what Sir Bartlemy has to say."

I was in no position to resent this insolence; so I did what was next best – swallowed it, and followed his advice; and this is what I read:

"Nephew Benet, – You are no longer safe in my woods, for I have no power to shield you from the law. Even now the officers are out to apprehend you, and God knows what may befall if you are taken. If you have any feeling for me, any love for your father's memory, or any respect for yourself, you will escape this new shame. My ships lie in the haven ready to depart, and Sir Harry is still willing to accept you as his companion and friend in the noble enterprise now toward. I do beg and implore you be not a fool and a villain as well, but quickly accept this offer. Rodrigues, who bears this, does undertake to carry you safe to Flushing, where a boat lies in readiness to take you on board the *Sure Hawk*, where you shall find all comfort and good cheer, to say naught of the loving gratitude of thine old uncle,
"Bartlemy Pengilly."

This gentle letter did somewhat move my heart; and surely its sensibility had been gone beyond all recovery had it not responded to so warm an appeal; and my first feeling was that I would do his bidding. Then I bethought me what a mean and sneaking thing it was, after refusing this offer when I was free to accept it when I was not free; and what a hang-dog cur I should appear to all the crew when my story became known, and how (under the mask of pity and patronage) Sir Harry Smidmore must scorn me for a paltry fellow. And with that came the remembrance of Lady Bidy's contempt; and, coupling these two together, I was wrought again with fierce jealousy and hatred; and I did resolve that I would die ten thousand deaths rather than give them this food for their scorn.

Rodrigues, subtly watching me, must have seen the madness in my eye, for he whispered at this point —

"Sir Harry is wondrous eager to get you."

"Curse Sir Harry!" I muttered.

"Not I," says he, with a quiet laugh. "He'll give me a score of gold pieces if I take you to him; and no wonder, for he will be well repaid with caresses when he takes the news to Lady Bidy."

"You'll get no pieces from him, nor he kisses from her, through me, I promise you."

"Your ears will be cropped for a certainty if you are taken back to Truro." And then, as I made no reply, he adds, "You are minded to break your uncle's heart rather than your own pride."

"Nay," says I, "there's a way by which I may spare him shame, and myself as well."

"Are you man enough to thrust a knife in your own heart?" says he.

"Ay!" says I joyfully; "do but try me. Give but my forearm fair play and lend me your dagger. You shall be rewarded, I warrant, when you tell Lady Bidy I am no more. Or do you thrust it into me if you doubt the use I should make of the knife. I promise you I will not awake a single sleeper with my groans."

He nodded approvingly, but made no attempt to take me at my word.

"Life isn't worth much," says he, "to a fool. And 'tis only a fool who thinks there's never another loaf to be got when he's eaten the last crust. Look at me," spreading his arms and surveying his rags – "a prince last month, a beggar today. What of that? I'll be a king next year. And so may you be," he adds, after a pause. But that did not tempt me; so presently he goes on:

"If you had seen what I have seen, and if you were as hideous as I am, and as old, yet you would not talk of ending your life. If you had seen as I have seen" – speaking slowly, yet with passion, as, through his half-closed eyes, he seemed to be looking at what he described – "a land where the forests are flower-gardens, more fair than hand of man can make; where trees – not like these stunted things, which are but bushes by comparison – where trees I say, seem hung with precious gems, and waters run on beds of gold and silver, and every rock is dazzling crystal; where rich fruits tempt the appetite they never cloy; where flying birds are like the flash of gems, and their song more sweet than your musician ever heard in dreams; where the sun never parches nor cold winds bite; where the gentle

air is brisk as wine and charged with the scent of leagues of flowers: if you had seen that land, I say, you would want to see it again before you died."

These hints of southern glories I had heard before from my uncle; though between his speech and this poetic gipsy's there was all the difference betwixt north and south.

"To see this land might tempt you to oblige Sir Bartlemy," says he. Then, after a bit, he continues, "But it does not, I perceive. You know the intent of this enterprise – first, to gratify your uncle's whim; and, next, to enrich Sir Harry, that he may wed Lady Biddy. You have no relish to help him that way – to come home with a gruesome face to pull the joy-bells at their wedding?"

"No, by the Lord! that will I never do!" says I.

"Then your answer to that letter is 'No'?"

"A thousand times 'No'!"

"You refuse the offer?"

"I do."

"I see you mean what you say," says he, looking me keenly in the eye, "and I am right glad it is so. I am not mistaken in you, Pengilly. I saw there was mettle in you from the first, else I had not taken all this trouble on myself to win you. Had you said 'Yes' to that letter you would have had me for your enemy, and it would have gone ill with you, I promise. As it is, I am your friend, as I will quickly prove. For, first, I will give you freedom, and after that a voyage to the south; whence you shall speedily return, your ship laden with gold: then shall you have possession of your mistress. All this I promise; ay, and more, for you shall, if you will, revenge yourself of the insults this proud maid has heaped upon you, and humble the man who would have taken her from you, so that he shall not dare to show his face before her. What say you to this?"

I could say nothing on the moment, being greatly perplexed by this unexpected turn; and ere I could command my senses to inquire of Rodrigues how he purposed compassing that which he proposed, we were both mightily startled by hearing, at no great distance behind us, the sound of men's voices; and presently one above the rest set to hallooing "Jack Geddes! Jack Geddes!" which was the name of that sheriff's man who had bound me as aforesaid. Then on the other side we heard the men who lay asleep rousing each other with a great confusion of sound that showed they had discovered my escape. Thus we stood between the party which had taken me and a second party sent after to help them. And the chance of getting freedom, to say nothing of riches and my sweetheart, looked more unlikely than ever. Yet did we contrive to escape, as I shall set forth in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

BY A CUNNING STRATAGEM I AM GOT OUT OF JACK GEDDES' HANDS, AND BROUGHT ABOARD THE "SURE HAWK."

The two parties of sheriff's men were distant from each other, as I took it by the sound of their voices, no more than a hundred yards, so that we could not burst away in any direction without hazard of being seen; and a foolhardy hazard it had been, for Jack Geddes and his party were armed with muskets, and would not have scrupled to use them. Yet how to escape did not appear until Rodrigues (as luck would have it) spied a fairly deep hole which had served at one time for a sawpit, and to this he hurried me, and we both leaped in, and there, in a twinkling, did he scrape aside the loose sawdust that lay at the bottom; and in the trough thus hastily made, I, seeing his intent, threw myself full length, and as quickly was smothered over from top to toe with the sawdust, so that nothing was visible of me.

By this time the two parties were joined, and there they set up a great shouting and cursing because I was no longer bound to the tree as I had been left. And not only did they curse me, but they cursed Rodrigues as heartily, vowing they would pepper him with their bullets as a faithless villain if they saw him. Whereupon this, Rodrigues, laying himself prone upon my body, set a most dismal groaning, like one in pain, hearing which Jack Geddes and the rest came rushing to the pit. Seeing him there all alone and doubled up as though he had been broke, half a dozen, in one breath, began to question him how he came there, what was amiss with him, etc. To which he replies with a groan:

"'Tis all along of that Pengilly! I was but dozing, when I heard one cry 'Jack Geddes'" (here a groan), "and the same moment I saw Pengilly with a mighty wrench tear himself from the tree. Up I started and after him, when, being but half awake, I threw myself in this cursed hole, and here have I broke my arm, I do believe. But do you leave me here (where I am as well as elsewhere), and catch the villain. I would not for the loss of both arms miss seeing his ears cropped."

"Ay! we will catch him: have no fear," says Geddes; "scatter yourselves, my fine fellows, and shoot down the rascal if you do but sight him, for we shall suffer for it if he escape us."

Whereupon the men, more concerned for themselves than for any hurt of Rodrigues, started off like hounds unleashed, and each, in his several direction, bent upon taking me again alive or dead. And it was none too soon, for the sawdust entering my mouth and nostrils when I breathed, I was pretty nigh choked – to say nothing of the oppression I suffered from the cords that pinned my arms and Rodrigues lying upon my back.

So when they were gone and Rodrigues, standing up and peering over the edge, said that all was clear, I lifted my head, shaking off the sawdust and spitting out that which had got into my throat, and breathed again.

"Now," said Rodrigues; "Now may we escape, for being all scattered, our pursuers are less likely to take us."

"Do but cut this cord," says I, "and I warrant not any two shall take me."

"Ay," says he, "I will cut your bonds with a good heart. But first you must swear to be secret and silent; nay, you must swear also to be obedient to my direction without question or murmuring, else will I leave you here to fare for yourself."

I promised him this, for I was in no position to haggle over terms; yet my promise was not enough for him, but he, taking his dagger by the blade, held it to my mouth, and would have me kiss the cross of it, swearing by that sign as a Christian to obey him in every particular. And this I did,

the more readily because of the cord which Jack Geddes had knotted so cruelly about my arms that it bit into my flesh to my intolerable hurt.

Having thus made me take oath, he cut the cord, and I was free; yet for some time could I not use my arms with any freedom, by reason they were so benumbed and bruised. Nevertheless, I managed to scramble up out of the pit after Rodrigues, and thence, I following on his heels, with the stealth of any cats, we pushed our way by bush and briar through the thickest part of the wood, where, at sight of an enemy, we might lie down and be unseen. On we went, Rodrigues leading and keeping the sun well before, for a matter of three miles or thereabouts, without encountering any of my pursuers; and then, perceiving that if we kept on in this direction we must shortly come to Flushing, which lies (as I have said) on the hither side of the Fal, opposite Penny-come-quick, I twitched Rodrigues by the skirt and gave him to understand this, adding that there was not a fisherman there but knew me, and would have me hanged if he could; and this was true, for I was known and feared all round and about these parts, and held to be a wild man of the woods, very dreadful and dangerous, and a bogey to frighten children withal.

"I know well enough where I am going," says he.

"That may be," says I; "yet this is but a stepping out of the frying-pan into the fire, so far as I am concerned."

Whereupon he taps the handle of his dagger as a sign to me to remember my oath, and that is all the satisfaction I got.

So on we go again, still keeping the sun before us; and descending the hill anon we come to the river-side, and here Rodrigues stops, looking to the right and left, as if uncertain; then, putting his hand over his mouth, he gives the cry of "Cuckoo!" as natural as ever I did hear, and straight there comes an answer in the same manner from a thicket further up the river-side. Thither we made our way, but with great care, now being no more than a furlong or thereabouts from the village, screened off by a jutting point of land well timbered; and soon, passing through the said thicket, we came on a little creek, in which lay a boat, wherein sat a couple of seamen as tawny as Rodrigues, but stouter and better favored, albeit one lacked an eye.

All about this creek there lay an open space, from which an alley ran up into the wood; and, lest he should be observed, Rodrigues would not advance beyond the brush, whence he signaled his fellows to know if all were safe. And he with the one eye, rising up and stretching himself as if he were weary, spied up the alley and all round and about, and then signaled, by winking his one eye, that he could see nothing; whereupon Rodrigues bade me cross the open quickly, get into the boat, and lie down under the sail that was there. He came not himself, but was gone when I got to the boat and cast my eye round for him. And here I may tell what I afterwards learnt concerning him. He made his way back with all speed to the sawpit, and lay there as if he had never budged when the men came back from their search after me, still feigning to be greatly hurt with his arm, though happily assured that it was not broken.

Meanwhile I, following his direction without knowing what the end thereof might be, got into the boat, and, lying down in the bottom, was covered over with the sail-cloth by one of the mariners, while the other loosed the boat from its moorings; and this was done none too quickly, for as the fellow was stepping into the boat from untying of the headline, who should come down into the open but John Geddes himself, as I knew full well by his voice.

"Hold, there!" says he, hailing the seamen. "Have you seen a great, sturdy fellow in a leather jerkin pass this way?"

"Not we," replies one; "and we've been on the lookout for such a man since yesterday afternoon – and a pox to him!"

"And, pray, who set you to wait for him?" asked Geddes, and his voice told that he was now close by the boat's side.

"Why, that's my master's business that sent us, and none of yours," said the fellow.

"Hold your clapper, Ned, and lend a hand with your oar," cries his mate, "for the boat is aground, and I can't shove her off. Yo, ho! all together! yo, ho? – there we be! Now off we go, Pengilly or no Pengilly, for, curse me," says he, "my in'ards will stand this griping no longer."

Then there sprang up a dissension between the two seamen and Geddes, who would have them ferry him over to Penny-come-quick, and they would not; and he, laying the stock of his musket on the gunwale to draw the boat so that he might step in, one of them flung it off, while the other fetched him a blow on the head with his oar that laid Master Geddes senseless on his back. Then says the first to the other —

"Lay to, Ned, for God's sake, or mischief will come of this."

All this while I lay still under the sail-cloth, expecting, for the most part, nothing less but to feel Geddes' foot step on to me. But his business being so concluded, I heard nothing more but the dip of the oars, the ripple of water under me, and the working of the rowlocks, until one of the men said to the other, "Pull under her lee, that we be not seen from the shore"; and the next minute the boat bumped, and the sail-cloth being whipped off, I found that we lay under the side of a fine, high ship.

"Up you go, comrade, quick," says Ned (he with one eye).

Then up the rope steps that hung by the ship's side I sped, and being come on deck was as speedily hustled down into the dark hold below, where they who had followed me down barricaded me round about with divers barrels, bidding me lie quiet until I should be told it was safe to venture forth.

And all this time I knew not that I had come as a runaway aboard my uncle's ship the *Sure Hawk*; but so it was.

CHAPTER IV

I COME TO THE CANARIES IN BETTER PLIGHT THAN I STARTED

When the seamen had hidden me away, so that no man not knowing the ways of the ship could well come at me save by discharging the hold of its stores, one brought me some meat and drink, and then I was left to myself in the dark. For some time all was quiet above, but about noon, as I judge, I heard a great bustle on the decks of pulling ropes and the like, and this continued all day until the evening, when the anchors were drawn up and the ship made sail. And the reason of this commotion was that Rodrigues, having got away from the sheriff's men, under pretense of seeking relief for his arm, sped him to Sir Bartlemy Pengilly to tell him how I had refused his offer, but had nevertheless gone aboard the *Sure Hawk* to escape the law; whereupon the knight, mightily pleased with this turn, ordered Sir Harry Smidmore, who then lay at his house, to lose no time in departing, but to take advantage of the breeze then springing up to set sail as soon as might be; and the stores being all aboard and the crew in readiness, Sir Harry set about this business at once. When the men stood at the anchor ready to heave away, Sir Bartlemy and Lady Biddy took an affectionate farewell of Sir Harry, and bidding him with tears God-speed and a happy return, quitted the ship. And so about eight o'clock that evening the *Sure Hawk* (with her companion, the *Adventurer*), sailed out of Falmouth Haven with me, Benet Pengilly, in the hold.

When we were fairly out to sea, Rodrigues came down to me with another fellow bearing a lantern, and bade me come out, and I was not sorry; for besides that it was extremely stuffy down there, so that there was no breathing with any comfort, the ship had begun to roll and pitch in such a manner that I feared every moment nothing less but to be crushed by some chest or barrel being thrown upon me, though, indeed, there was naught to fear in that respect, as I learned when I became better acquainted with the manner of these things. But, indeed, the sea ran unconscionably high, and the ship labored painfully all that night and the next day, and after that the next night again was no better, so that it was surprising to me that we had not foundered. Yet that was the last thing I feared, for, being miserably ill and as sick as any dog, I do truly think that had the ship split I should have made no effort to save myself.

I had been stowed away between decks among some bales of goods packed securely in the fore part of the vessel, and here I lay, with no comfort but a stone jar of water, until, waking from a sound sleep, it might be about noon and were now at sea three days, I perceived that the storm had greatly abated, and that my stomach was no longer qualmish, but quickened with a huge hunger – as well it might be after my long fast, etc. Then, feeling brisker than I had yet felt since we set sail, I sat up, and a savory smell sharpening my appetite, I got upon my legs, and so spied half a dozen seamen seated on chests under the light of the hatchway before a smoking mess of pork and pease. Thither I made my way, though not without difficulty, the ship still rolling immoderately, and begged civilly that they would let me eat with them. Whereupon one shoved the victuals toward me that I might help myself, but not a word, good or bad, did any of them speak, which was more noticeable because they had all been laughing and talking till they saw me. Presently a pipe sounded, and they all went up above; then down comes Rodrigues, and it was the first time I had seen him since we were at sea. He had on his sea skirt and large boots all running with water, for it still was exceedingly foul weather, and his hat tied down about his ears with a red kerchief. But he was in good spirits, and asked me cheerfully how I did as he seated himself beside me and helped himself to meat; and having answered his inquiry, I told him how the seamen scowled at me, and begged to know if I had done aught to deserve this ill-will.

"Why, yes," says he; "for had it not been to save you from the catchpoles, we should never have ventured to sea in such a rising gale. We have had no rest since we left Falmouth, and like at any moment to have gone to the bottom. For aught we know, our consort is lost, and all hands with her, not having been seen these two days. And this is a great loss, besides being a bad beginning to our enterprise, and all is set down to your charge. However, it is in your power to make them amends and win their love, and I make no doubt you will."

"With all my heart," says I, "if you do but show me how."

"All in good time," says he, tearing with his pointed teeth the flesh off a knuckle-bone of pork that he held in his hands; "all in good time. We can do nothing yet, but I look to you for help by-and-by, else had I not run all this risk for you. And yet," continues he, after a pause, flinging the knuckle-bone behind him – "yet it might be well for you to make friends with the captain at once. He asked to see you this morning."

"And who is this captain?" I asked, my curiosity awakening.

"Why, Sir Harry Smidmore, to be sure. Did I not tell you?"

"No," says I, moodily.

"Then you might have guessed it."

And this was quite true, if I had been in a humor for guessing.

"I have been trapped and despatched to sea to please Lady Biddy," says I, savagely.

"Well, you'll bear me no grudge for that. There was no way to save you but by getting you aboard the ship." Then, glancing round to see we were alone, he adds, dropping his voice, "And if Sir Harry Smidmore made to sea with you before you could escape, that he might please his sweetheart and keep you and her well asunder, 'twas no fault of mine. Don't you like it, Pengilly?"

I ground my teeth for response.

"Would you be even with him for this trick?" he asked, in the same low tone, and with a sinister leer.

"Aye, that I would!"

"So would I in your place," says he. "If a man served me that way, I'd –"

Here he stopped, and taking up a jack-knife, he stuck it in the deal board that served as a bench, and pressed on it till the blade came out on the other side, and while he did this his sinewy hand grasped the board as if it were a throat, and his lips were drawn back close to his pointed teeth; then he looked sidelong at me, saying never a word, as if to know how I took this hint.

"I am no murderer," says I, terrified by his manner as much as by his suggestion.

"Why, who said you were?" says he, with great show of indignation. "Cannot a man by steady endeavor go through a difficulty as I have gone through that board with this knife without doing a mischief? What a fool should I be to counsel you to such an end when our true success depends upon you being good friends with our captain. Nay," he adds, "if I thought you would curb your spirit to it, I would beg you to take Sir Harry's hand, when he offers it to you, and accept his friendship."

"That can I never do."

"So I thought. Howsomever, you must do him no injury or insult at this present. And, harkye, I know it for a fact that he wants to give into your hand a sum of money entrusted to him by your uncle for your particular use, that you might furnish yourself presently with an equipment worthy of his nephew; and this you must not refuse to take. Laugh as scornfully as you will, but you must take it, and I will tell you for why. When we get to a port, you will have to make the crew merry in return for the hardships they have suffered on your account. You must win them to your side, for we can do nothing else."

"They shall have every penny I get, and welcome. But tell me what you mean when you say we can do nothing without having the men on our side?"

"I mean," says he, "that without them you will get neither riches nor your sweetheart."

"And how, having them, am I to win these ends?"

"Leave that to me. I have promised the achievement, and if you do but work patiently upon my instructions, I will not fall short of my word. More than this I can not now tell you, but you shall know more hereafter. For the present, you can do nothing but win the affection of the men, and the captain also."

All this was a great mystery to me, and I could nohow fathom to the bottom of it: this only was clear, that I must follow Rodrigues' bidding, not only because I was bound to do so in a certain measure by reason of my oath, but also because it was good policy. So when I had refreshed myself by sousing my head in a bucket of water, I went above, and, holding on by the bulwarks, was much amazed with the sight of the heaving seas, which I had never before seen as now, all around me, and the way in which the great ship would dive down into the hollow of a wave as if to perdition, and yet the next moment ride upon the crest of it as light as any duck.

While I was standing here, one of the seamen came to me, saying that the captain would speak with me; so I went with him into the roundhouse under the poop deck where Sir Harry was, and very cheerful and bright this young man looked in his sea dress. Then, with a noble, easy air, he begs me to sit down, and, sitting himself, discoursed about the late storm, telling me how we should certainly have been all lost but for the admirable skill and exertions of the mate, Rodrigues (and this every one did allow), and all with perfect self-command and natural civility, as though we had been the best friends in the world. But he did not offer me his hand to take, and I was glad of this, for I could not have taken it without shame, feeling as I still did towards him.

"However," says he, "the work is over, and, please God, the first part of our voyage will soon be made; then you will be free to do as you like – either to go back to England or to go on with me. For I have not the power to hold you a prisoner, nor have I the wish to keep you with me, except as a friend. That is for you to decide, and I hope, with all my heart, you will decide to share in this enterprise, and return with me a richer and a happier man than ever you could have been had you not sailed with us. And that your choice may be perfectly free, here is a purse of money that Sir Bartlemy entrusted me with for your use. It will pay your voyage home, but if you have need of more for your necessities, I shall be very happy to place my purse at your disposal."

I took the bag of money he offered, thanking him for his civility as well as my untutored tongue would allow. Then he rose, making me a graceful bow, and bade the man who waited at the door to take me to my cabin, which I found very neat and properly furnished, with everything necessary to my convenience, and two good suits of new clothes, besides shirts, stockings, etc.

Rodrigues was mightily pleased when he saw me in my new clothes and with my hair decently combed, and it seemed to me that the seamen eyed me with more respect than they had yet shown me; indeed, I found that this decency did elevate me in my own opinion a great deal, so that I thought better of myself and more hopefully than I had since the beginning of my misfortunes.

The wind continued very high (but prosperous) for nine days after that, and then, making the Canaries, we came into water as smooth as the heart of man could desire, and so cast anchor at Fuerteventura. And here we were very busy for three days, repairing the mischief done us by the storm, and all that time we saw nothing of the *Adventurer*, our consort, which was to have joined us there in case of being separated, so that we gave her up for lost, and I know not who was more cast down about this, Sir Harry Smidmore or Rodrigues. However, on the fourth day the missing ship bore in sight (to our great joy), and by nightfall was anchored alongside of us, but with one mast gone, and so sorely bruised that she looked not the same ship she had been. And it was curious to see how the crew of the *Adventurer*, coming on board the *Sure Hawk*, the men did hug each other and weep for gladness. Amongst them all the most joyful were Rodrigues and Ned Parsons, the seaman I have spoken of as having only one eye, and who was master aboard the *Adventurer*. But what damped Sir Harry's spirits greatly was this, that his dear friend, John Murray, who was captain on our consort, had been washed overboard in the storm, and was no more; and that the men might not see his grief, he went into his own cabin and shut the door, and I think there was no sad heart on board but his.

Presently Rodrigues came to my side, and says he:

"Now is the time to win the hearts of these men. I shall get leave from the captain for them to go ashore; do you give them something to make merry with."

I agreed to this with all my heart, and fetching the bag of gold from my cabin which Sir Bartlemy had sent, I bade him distribute every farthing amongst them; and this he did, giving every man equal share, so that each got over a pound, for there was the value of a hundred pounds in the bag, and the two crews numbered four score, as near as may be.

When he had thus made the "dividend," as he called it, Rodrigues told them that it was I who gave the money out of love for them, and the hardships they had borne on my account. Whereupon Ned Parsons cried he would do as much again and a hundred times more for so generous a gentleman, and bade his comrades give me a cheer, which they did with all their lungs, and three times. And I thought this Ned Parsons was a good friend to me, but he was not.

CHAPTER V

TO MY MORTAL PERIL I OVERHEAR A SORDID SCHEME OF RODRIGUES AND NED PARSONS

Sir Harry gave leave that all should go on shore who had a mind to, save only such as Parsons and Rodrigues should need to keep on board the *Adventurer* and the *Sure Hawk* for their protection; and Rodrigues bade all be gone, saying that he and Ned Parsons would watch the two ships during the night. So the men went off in the barge, one batch after the other, and last of all Sir Harry himself went also to refresh his spirits after the grief of losing his dear friend; and Parsons rowed him to shore. There were then left on the *Sure Hawk* none save Rodrigues and I. And I being heavy with sleep (it being by that time nine o'clock, as I think) threw myself on my cot within my cabin, and fell off in a doze. While I lay there Rodrigues came to my cabin and saw me by the light of the lamp, as I found out afterwards. But presently awaking, I rose up and went out on the deck, feeling the want of fresh air. And indeed the night would have tempted most men to go forth, being very fair and the moon vastly bright, as it is in those parts.

There was not a soul on the deck, for Rodrigues, seeing me asleep and all clear, had gone into the captain's storeroom to pilfer a bottle of wine; and so without design I sauntered on till coming, as chance would have it, to the main-mast of the ship, I came to a stand, and leaning my back against the stern so that I faced the moon, I fell on meditating on my lot. Whilst I stood there I heard the dip of oars; then the chink of glass as Rodrigues set down his bottles right over against where I stood, but on the other side of the great mast, and after that he went to the side and called over, "Come up, Ned, I've that will make us merry, though we be not ashore."

"For all that I would rather be ashore with our mates," replies Parsons in a grumbling voice as he comes up the side.

"And so we will, man, and many a jolly night will we spend with our mates – when we have no secrets to keep," replies Rodrigues. "Here we have it all to ourselves, and need fear nothing if the drink do give a loose to our tongues."

"Where's Pengilly? He went not ashore," says Parsons, when he had tumbled over the bulwarks on to the deck.

"Asleep in the coach where you see the light burning, and is sound as a log. Sit you down here, and we shall see him if he comes out, which is not likely."

So they sat down together on a chest facing the roundhouse, and just on the other side of the mast where Rodrigues had set the bottles, and presently began to drink and talk; yet still I kept where I was, with my back against the mast; firstly, because the moon seemed to spread a calm over my mind which I cared not to dispel, and after that because I became curious to know what they had to talk about.

"Well," says Parsons, in a more cheerful tone, after taking a drink, "how goes it?"

"Famously," replies Rodrigues, clacking his tongue against his teeth and pouring out more wine.

"Have you sounded the men? Have you opened out to them of our project?"

"Nay; not yet. Nor have you, I hope, or they will blab everything before they get sober again. I bade you keep a still tongue, Ned."

"And so I have. There's been other matters to think on. A rare time it has been with us to keep the ship afloat. But I did my part of the business."

"And bravely, I warrant. Tell me how you did it, Ned."

"I caught him a stroke on the head with a crow as he was at prayer, and heaved his body out into the sea by the galley port." 'Twas thus he had cruelly murdered Captain Murray.

"No one saw you!"

"Never a soul. He was missed in the morning, and all think he was washed over by a sea."

"Well, there's one out of the way. 'Twill be Smidmore's turn next."

"When?" asks Parsons.

"That's as hereafter may be. I'm for leaving everything till we have provisioned at Trinidado."

"And I'm for going at it at once. Curse this hanging fire when there's prize to be taken, I say. Now Murray is out of the way you will be made captain of the *Adventurer*, and I reckon I will be master in your place on the *Sure Hawk*. We are well armed and ammunitioned, and shall not lack provisions. Then why should we wait till we've been to Trinidado, I want to know?"

"Because we should have to victual again before going round to the South Sea, and we want no one to get wind of our intent before we're ready to fly our colors. It would be folly to spoil the venture for the sake of a week or two. Besides, we know not how the men will take it."

"How do we stand for men?" asks Parsons, in his grumbling tone again.

"Why, there's Black, and Jarvis, and Kelly, and all those of our old crew who served with us before – they may be depended on."

"That's thirteen men, and we two make fifteen, all told."

"These men, though they pretend to believe that we are going up the Orinoco after a mare's next, are not such fools as to think that I design to end my days there."

"Ay!" says Parsons with a laugh, setting down his cup again. "Nor would they have been fools enough to engage on any such silly venture unless they felt sure something better was to come of it. Well, there's fifteen – go on."

"Of the rest there's a score as desperate follows as ever trod a deck, and ripe for any mischief."

"Would to Heaven we could have raked up more like them."

"The rest are fools; but sturdy, good seamen, for all that."

Here I was reminded of what I had previously remarked – viz., that there were two sorts of men in our crew and no third. One set were reckless, dare-devil, cursing rascals, and the other were as simple-minded as any children; but, as Rodrigues, said every one a hale, good seaman. And this was due to the cunning of Rodrigues, who, by reason of his knowing the parts to which we were bound, had been entrusted to choose a crew likely for the purpose.

"Well," says Parsons, "here are five-and-thirty men to back us at a sign, and a match for all the rest with their captain and your Pengilly as well. Now, here's my plan, Rodrigues, and if you will hear me you shall own that it is better than all your fiddle-faddle of waiting for this, that, and t'other."

"Well, out with it, Ned. You know that I have never refused to listen to advice, nor to act on it when I saw it was good; else had we never won our way."

"That's true, and I own but for your cursed cool judgment we should all have been strung up like so many weasels."

Over this interchange of civilities they drank another cup and shook hands. Then Parsons started off in high good-humor:

"Here's how I see it. Sir Harry will make you captain of the *Adventurer*; for why? There's no man so fit; and he'll very like make me master of this ship under him, as being best able to navigate her and the like. The men will be fairly divided between the two ships as heretofore. Now, as soon as we set sail I shall make it so cursedly uncomfortable for the foolish fellows of my crew that they shall pray to be exchanged into your ship. To this I shall persuade Sir Harry, taking in their place all those men disposed to our design."

"So we get all the simpletons under me, and all the desperadoes under you," says Rodrigues.

"That's it. And matters being so, I will open out our scheme to my crew, who will jump at it like sharks. Then the first calm night will we order things so that my men shall board your ship after binding Sir Harry, and make prisoner every mother's son: which done, you shall ask the company plump out whether they choose to join in our venture and make their fortunes, or whether they stick

to their articles, and will go a searching for gold where there's naught but serpents and fevers. Who will refuse to join us then, eh?"

"Sir Harry, for a surety."

"Then overboard he goes, and away we sail south with joyous hearts, and no more dallying."

Rodrigues took the time of drinking another cup to consider. But little as I knew of this strange matter, I felt sure he would not agree to this proposal (being a very subtle, painful man), for if he thus parted with all the men proper to his desperate enterprise, what was to prevent Parsons deserting him and going whithersoever he pleased with his desperadoes?

"Yes," says Rodrigues, "your scheme might succeed, but it will be better to turn the tables about so that you send all the dependable men to me, and I send the others to you."

Parsons made no reply to this, whereby he revealed the secret treachery that was in his mind. But Rodrigues taking no notice of this, though he must have perceived it, continues cheerfully, "No, Ned; on second thoughts that plan will not do. For taking the men unprepared in this way, a score of them may hold on to the hope of getting treasure in Guiana, and so rally round the captain. Then we may have to throw them overboard as well as the captain, which will be a great loss to us. For we can make no great success with small means, and it will never do to start short-handed. Besides this," says he, "the men pressed into our service by the fear of death will never serve us as willing hands would."

"Why, that is true," says Parsons, who clearly did not relish the idea of his own scheme being acted upon contrariwise. "You always had a better head for these matters than any of us. So let us hear how you would act."

"In this wise," said Rodrigues. "As soon as we set sail from here – you on the one ship and I on t'other – we will secretly show the dullards the folly of seeking wealth in Guiana, when they can enrich themselves tenfold without leaving the ship, or encountering any of the hazards and hardships of going a-foot through those fearful wilds. And first will I win over Pengilly, who is ripe for this enterprise. When I am sure of him, Sir Harry will be got rid of, and then will Pengilly take his place as commander, being nephew to Sir Bartlemy, whose ships these are. So without the loss of one man we shall have gained our way, and all willingly will obey his directions."

"So far so good," says Parsons; "but how is this to advance us? Are we to take for our share no more than what he chooses to give us as his officers?"

To this question Rodrigues made no reply. And this silence perplexing me, I cast my eyes sidelong to see if they had moved away. And then I perceived what it was had stopped his tongue.

The moon had shifted during their conversation (of which a great deal for the sake of brevity I have not set down), and whereas at the beginning it had shone full on my face, it now struck me somewhat on my left side. So that there down on the deck I spied my shadow revealed beside the great mast, and Rodrigues had spied it also. For before I could turn my head, I felt his long bony fingers upon my throat, and then the flash of his dagger in the moonlight caught my eye.

CHAPTER VI

I AM NEARLY UNDONE BY MY SHADOW. – NED PARSONS AND RODRIGUES, THEIR ARGUMENT, WITH THE COMPACT THAT FOLLOWED

Now, I had not stirred a hair's breadth the whole time this Rodrigues and Ned Parsons were discussing their affairs; and thus I was standing, with my back against the great mast and my feet a couple of spans away from it, when Rodrigues takes me by the throat, flashing his steel before my eyes, as I have said, and, at the same time, Parsons, slipping his foot betwixt my legs and the mast, fetches me a trip which brings me plump down on my back. Then, in a twinkling he throws himself upon me, and had certainly done my business with his jack-knife (both having lugged out upon catching sight of my shadow), but that Rodrigues, catching his arm back, cries —

"Hold, Ned! Don't you see that this is none but our friend Benet Pengilly?"

"I see well enough who it is," answers Parsons; "but he is a spy for all that, and shall pay for stealing on us. Let go my arm, Rodrigues!"

But this Rodrigues would not, being just as quick to fore-see results as Parsons was to lose sight of them.

"Don't be a fool, Ned!" said he. "How could he have stolen on us, and we sitting with our eyes on the cabin? He was here from the first, and I do not blame him for picking up what we were careless to let fall. And what harm in that? He has but learnt what we intended to tell him. Would you ruin everything by spilling his blood, when his loss would draw suspicion on our heads, and set all our mates against us with mistrust? Had it been another he should have died, and I would not have left the business to you neither; but the moment I got my hand on his throat I saw it was our friend."

"That may be," says Parsons; "but, curse me! he shall give me some better assurance that he intends to stand by us in this matter ere I let him rise."

"Nay," says I, "you shall get nothing from me by force"; and, getting my hands under him, I flung him off like an old cloak, and sprang to my feet. "Now," says I, "what is it you want of me?"

All this passed as quick as the words will run, so that the whole business was not more than a minute or so in the doing.

"Well done, Pengilly!" cries Rodrigues. "I like you the better for this taste of your manhood. I never mistrusted a brave man yet, and here's a proof of it now," and with that he sticks his dagger in the deck, and seats himself on the chest, with empty hands, bidding Parsons, as he was a true man and not a born fool, to do the like, which he presently did, sticking his jack-knife in the deck, and sitting alongside of Rodrigues; and to show I feared neither, I seated myself betwixt them.

"Now, Ben," said Rodrigues, clapping me on the knee cheerfully; "what's it to be? You have heard our design. Do you stay in the Canaries, or go with us to the South Sea?"

"What to do?" I ask for this question did still perplex me.

"What to do? Why, to get gold, to be sure."

"I thought you had decided not to set foot ashore," said I.

"And so we have; for what Englishman has ever got gold that went out of his ship to get it? The fools have thrown more gold into Guiana than ever they have taken out of it, a hundredfold."

"Ay! And gold is not the only thing they have thrown away," says Parsons, "but many a good and honest Englishman's life as well."

"For every man that has come home," says Rodrigues, "a hundred have been left behind — slain by Indians, stung by serpents, dead of fevers, or slaves to the Spaniard."

"And them as do come home are none the better for having gone thither," chimes in t'other rascal, "as we do testify; for here am I short of one eye, and Rodrigues a sight to see."

"That there is gold in Guiana no one can doubt," says Rodrigues; "but the only men who can get it are the Indians, and their only masters are the Spaniards and Portugals."

"Then where did you get the treasure you brought to England?" I asked.

"Why, from the Spaniard, to be sure, and as fairly as he got it from the Indian."

"Ay! and fairer," says Parsons; "for we got it by straightforward and honest fighting."

"And if we were more lively in our attack," puts in Rodrigues, "'twas because their galleons were unwieldy with their weight of gold."

"I count we do 'em a service to ease them of their load," says Parsons, "for they have more than they can carry with comfort" (this with a laugh at his own joke).

"Ay! but our love doesn't end there; for, look you, Ben, which is the better – to let your uncle's ships and treasure be cast away in the Orinoco, to lead fourscore men to misery and death in those fearful winds, or to carry them back home, every man rich for life? To suffer the Spaniard to carry that gold into Spain for the encouragement of Papistry and devilish cruelty, and the furnishing out another Armada, or to take it away from them for the benefit of our country and the honor and glory of our king?"

And in this manner they carried on the argument a long while, one playing the part of marrowbone to the other's cleaver, while I sat in silence and lost in wonder, like one who should of a sudden see a strange new sun rise up in the sky. At length I found the sense to speak, and, say I —

"But how can we attack the Spaniard when we are at peace with Spain?"

"Why," says Rodrigues, "peace there may be in these waters, for that matter; but there is no peace below the line, as every one does know."

"Nay," says I, "'tis nothing but piracy you offer."

"You may call it what you like," says he, "but I think it no shame for any man to walk in the shoes of Drake and Candish."

"'Tis a hanging matter, for all that," says I, still objecting.

"A hanging matter for those who fail to take home gold, but a knighting matter for those who do, as witness Sir Francis and others less nice than he. But 'tis the same all the world over, whether a man undertake to find gold or to cure bunions. Raleigh gets his head cut off for failing, and Master Winter is made a peer. And quite right it be so, for it puts a check on men from hazarding foolishly, and encourages them to push their fortunes with zeal, when the chance is on their side."

"And this is the long and short of it," says Parsons, bluntly, for argument was not to his taste. "Are you with us, or are you not?"

"I am with you," says I, and upon that we joined hands – all three.

And in thus readily falling in with this villainous proposal I was moved, not so much by Rodrigues, or his subtle arguments, as by my own fierce and lawless spirit, and a certain brutal craving and lust of blood and treasure, which Lord forgive us, urges too many of us to cruel pursuits, no whit more justifiable in the eye of God than piracy.

CHAPTER VII

THE PERPLEXITY OF BEING NEITHER THOROUGH-FACED ROGUE, ARRANT FOOL, NOR HONEST MAN

We stayed at Fuerteventura nine days, and then made sail, being again in good condition and nothing lacking, and shaped our course for the West Indies. And as Parsons had foreseen, Rodrigues was appointed captain of the *Adventurer*, while Parsons took the place of master on board the *Sure Hawk*. This pleased the *Adventurer's* company vastly, for all looked upon Rodrigues with open admiration, backed up by secret hope; and, indeed, there was no man more proper for this post.

No sooner had we quitted our anchorage than we began, Parsons and I, to work upon the minds of those foolish fellows who had to be prepared for that change we intended to bring about. So now Parsons, instead of painting the glories and delights of Guiana, as he had done with a very free hand, when inducing them to leave their fishing villages and join our ships, did treat all such glories with derision, telling them they were like all to get a good deal more than they expected, and thrusting his tongue in his cheek with a wink of his one eye at me for all to see. Whereupon these fellows did begin to scratch their heads and think they had been hoodwinked, and led into a business which had been better left alone. And from that he went on to tell of all the horrible beasts and worms there existed in the marshes of those parts; the poisonous fruits in the forests, all so like the wholesome that one never knew whether his meal was to give him strength or burst him open by its venomous swelling; of the cannibals, whose shoulders grew higher than their heads, and whose arms were two fathoms long; and such-like wild stories. If any one doubted the truth of what he said, he would appeal to one of those men who had previously voyaged with Rodrigues, and these, seeing which way the cat jumped, confirmed him in every lie, no matter how outrageous. Then he came gradually to talk of Hawkins and Morgan, and fellows of that kidney, exalting them to the skies – in fine, we carried this business so well that by the time we arrived at Trinidado there was not one man aboard the *Sure Hawk* but that heartily wished to rove the South Sea for gold rather than to seek it in Guiana; yet, for all that, a good half of the crew were stanch and faithful to our captain, and prepared to die with him in the wilds; nor would they listen to anything in his disfavor, or any project of desertion. And the reason of this was that Sir Harry Smidmore, being of a lively and sanguine temperament, and having unbounded faith in the success of his enterprise, had ever a cheerful and kind word for his men, and neglected not to comfort the company in every possible way, so that he won all the hearts to him that had any decent feeling. Indeed, as the fresh sea air purged away my splanetic humor, and the society of sturdy men inspired me with a wholesome shame of those contemptible humors which were bred by solitude, I no longer harbored an envious jealousy toward Sir Harry, perceiving plainly how far above mine were his claims to the love of Lady Biddy Fane. Feeling thus with regard to him, I could neither wish to do him a mischief myself, nor to see him come to harm by other hands. Yet every day it became more obvious that a cruel end awaited him. There was no chance of his forsaking the expedition into Guiana to become a pirate on the high seas, and it was therefore clear that he must be privately got rid of to avoid a mutiny amongst these thirty or forty good men who were stanch to him.

I own I was greatly perplexed over this matter, and more than once I was on the point of revealing the conspiracy to him; for I felt that, if he were murdered, I should, in a manner, have his blood upon my conscience; but as many times was I deterred from this confession by recalling my oath to Rodrigues, and by a certain sense of honor which may exist even amongst such rogues as we were. And so I was terribly put to it all the time we lay at Punto de Gallo, revictualing and making the final preparations for going up the Orinoco.

We lay off Punto de Gallo three days, and the men of both ships mingling, Ned Parsons and Rodrigues found occasion to lay their heads together pretty frequently; and this boded me no good, for

Parsons had ever kept a jealous and suspicious watch upon my movements, and must have perceived my growing love for our captain. On the evening of the third day, we three being ashore together, and come to a spot free from observation, Rodrigues says:

"If this breeze holds, we are likely to sail to-morrow; and as we may not get another chance of conversing privily, let us settle what's to be done, and how we are to do it when we are aboard."

"Ay, we've had enough shill-I-shall-I," says Parsons, in his surly tone.

"We should have been further off from success if we had gone a shorter way to work, Ned," said Rodrigues, "as you know well enough, though you won't own to it. If we had followed your advice and thrown the captain overboard when we left the Canaries, half the men would have been against us, and looked upon the first storm that came as a judgment upon us. It's no good setting men to a task before they're prepared for it. Now there's not a man aboard the *Adventurer* who is not thirsting to get at the Spaniard."

"You've had them all to yourself; but it's another matter aboard the *Sure Hawk*," says Parsons; "there's a score of half-hearted fellows amongst us that were better at home."

"That's as you think, Ned. What say you, Pengilly?"

"The men's hearts are as stout as ours," says I; "and as ready to meet the Spaniard as any of your crew. I'll answer for them."

"Perhaps you'll answering for their flinging the captain overboard when the time comes?" says Parsons, with a sneer.

"I'll answer for you, Parsons, if there's a cowardly murder to be done; but for no one on board the *Sure Hawk*," says I. "I warn you, Rodrigues, that if you attempt the life of Sir Harry, you'll have a score of us to settle with, him and Benet Pengilly among the number."

"There, didn't I tell you as much?" says Parsons, nudging Rodrigues.

Rodrigues frowned on him to be still, and turning to me, says, calmly —

"What do you mean by that, Pengilly?"

"I mean this: our captain shall not be murdered," says I.

"And how can you prevent it, pray?" asks Parsons.

"There'll be plenty of time to warn him before you can silence me, Parsons."

"Didn't he swear secrecy by the cross, Rodrigues?"

"Yes, I did," says I; "but I'll break my oath rather than have murder on my conscience!"

"Conscience! How long have you been troubled with that commodity?" asks he.

"Fool! you be still," cries Rodrigues, stamping his foot. "Haven't you sense enough to see that Pengilly's warning saves us from the very thing that I have dreaded all through? I know the mischief of having discontented men in a crew."

"Settle it how you will," says Parsons with an oath, getting up and turning his back on us. "Curse this dodging backwards and forwards, say I!"

"If the captain were out of the way, and you took his place, as lawful representative of your uncle, the men would do your bidding, wouldn't they, Benet?" said Rodrigues in a friendly tone.

"No doubt," says I; "but I will not have any hand in this business if violence is to be done to Sir Harry."

"Then what do you propose we should do?" asks he.

"He lies ashore to-night: why shouldn't we sail without him?"

"That's better than ever!" cries Parsons, turning round. "Leave him here to send a king's ship after us. A plaguey good notion, that," and he burst out into a horse-laugh.

"That won't do, Ben," says Rodrigues; "as Ned says, we should have a man-of-war sent after us, and so have to fight English as well as Spaniards. I think I can offer something better than that"; and drawing me aside that Parsons might not hear, he dropped his voice and said: "Supposing, when we are out at sea, we tell the captain our determination to go roving, and ask him to join us?"

"He will refuse: that's certain."

"Very well; then let us give him one of the ships and let him go with as many of the men as choose to join him. What say you to that?"

I agreed to this readily; for it seemed a better way out of the mess than any I had imagined.

"Good," says he; "so shall it be. Now, leave me alone with Parsons. He is a self-willed, headstrong fellow; but I know how to manage him, and I promise you I will make him hear reason."

So I left them, never dreaming but that Rodrigues, for his own interest, was dealing fairly in this business, and speaking his mind honestly.

That night our captain brought aboard an Indian Cazique named Putijma for our pilot. This man told us that the true mouth of the Oronoque and the best for us to enter was in the Boca de Nairros, and about thirty leagues south of Punto de Gallo; and thither it was agreed, the breeze remaining prosperous, we should sail the next day.

When this news was imparted to our company there was a great cheer, and every man set to with a will getting the ship ready that she might sail at daybreak; and the sky being very fair and clear they worked all night to this end, and there was such bustle of men coming on board, shouting of orders, and getting things in their places, that no sleep was to be got.

A little before daybreak I turned out of my cot, and, going on deck, found that some were already aloft shaking out the sails, while others were heaving up the anchor, and all singing of sea songs, and as merry as any grigs. Ere yet the sun had risen our sails filled; we left our anchorage, and, looking out, I spied the *Adventurer*, her sails spread, following pretty close in our wake. Then, the light growing amain, I perceived one strange face amongst our company, and then another, and after that a third and fourth, and so on, till I numbered a full dozen; yet these men were not so strange to me but that I recognized them as being part of the crew of the *Adventurer*. Upon this, suspecting mischief, I cast my eye about for those men whom I have spoken of as being stanch and loyal to our captain, and not one of these could I find. In this I saw clearly the villainy of that subtle Rodrigues, who, by thus shifting the crew, ensured his plan against opposition, for not one man now on board the *Sure Hawk* could be counted on to side with the captain in going to Guiana, whereas all would readily agree to ridding themselves of him in order that they might follow their own lawless bent uninterrupted; meanwhile, by his own persuasion and the influence of the rascally crew on the *Adventurer*, those simple fellows from the *Sure Hawk* who still held to an honest course could be easily won over to his purpose. To make sure that the change on board was not due to accident, I sought out Ned Parsons; but the rascal, seeing me coming, feigned to be mightily busy, so that I could not get a word out of him in any way, which served to convince me of his treachery. Getting no satisfaction from him, I went into my cabin, and there, sitting on my cot, I turned the matter over in my mind, and, after looking at it this way and that, I resolved I would go and warn Sir Harry of his danger; for, as I told Rodrigues, I was prepared to break any number of oaths rather than be a party to a foul murder. And, lest I should be credited with more generosity in coming to this decision than I deserve, I will here confess that I was not unmindful of my own peril. For, if it served the purpose of these desperadoes to throw our captain overboard, why should they spare me? I laid no faith whatever in the promises of Rodrigues; nay, I was inclined to believe Ned Parsons the honestest rogue of the two. I knew that all he considered was how to advance his own fortune. Had the crew been more difficult to seduce and less disposed to become pirates, then it would have served his turn to carry out his original project, and give the enterprise a fair face by appointing me, as nephew of Sir Bartlemy Pengilly, their generalissimo; but now that it was clear the whole body of men needed no such countenance to their project, it would be expedient to get rid of me as well as Sir Harry. So to the captain, who still lay in the cabin, I went, and asked him if he knew of the change that had been made.

"Ay, Pengilly," says he cheerfully; "I ordered it so. Parsons tells me there is a lawless spirit spreading amongst the men on the *Adventurer*, and he picked out certain of them as being the worst. These Rodrigues begged me to take with us in the *Sure Hawk* in exchange for those he thought might bring the rest to a healthier way of thinking on the *Adventurer*."

"That villain, Rodrigues!" I exclaimed. "I saw his devilish hand in this. We are lost!"

"Lost? What do you mean by that?" asks Sir Harry, bating his breath.

"I mean that you have parted with the only honest men in the crew, and have none but ruffians left about you."

"Nay, you wrong them. Desperate they are, for who but desperate men would dare a desperate enterprise? But they are honest – I'll answer for 'em. They have sworn to follow me, and they will."

"You will be lucky to get away without such followers," says I; "but, in truth, I doubt if we do ever set foot again on dry land."

Sir Harry could not speak awhile for astonishment. At length he says, speaking low:

"Are you sure of this you tell me, Pengilly? Are you honest with me?"

"I'll say nothing for my honesty," says I; "but I'll swear to the truth to what I tell you. There's not a man but is already a pirate at heart; and they only want a signal from Rodrigues to kill us and hoist the bloody flag."

Sir Harry started up, and took a pace or two across the cabin; then, coming to a stand, he turns and says:

"No, Pengilly; I can't believe this. Tell me you have tried to fool me, and I'll forgive you."

"Nay, but you must believe," says I, "or you can not escape else"; and then I laid bare all that I knew, with my own share in the villainous scheme, not sparing myself the shame of this confession. He listened to me patiently, but when I came to an end he says, with passion:

"God forgive you, Pengilly! for my ruin is on your head."

But presently growing calmer, for I made no attempt to defend myself from this charge, he adds:

"Take no heed of what I said, Benet. You have done no more nor less than I, or a better man than I, could have done in your place. You risk your life in trying to save mine, whereas you might have made your fortune (though I doubt if you could ever have enjoyed it) by betraying me."

"He held out his hand, and I took it. Then in a more cheerfull and vigorous tone, he says:

"Come, we are both in the same pickle; let us see how, perchance, we may get out of it."

Then we set our wits to work that we might discover how we two were to overcome the craft and force of all those hardy villains that was against us. I was for knocking Parsons on the head, taking the navigation in our own hands, running the ship ashore, or on the first shoal we came to; and I think Sir Harry would have acted on this design, but that it pleased Providence to give us no chance that way.

CHAPTER VIII

WE ARE OVERCOME, AND WITH BARBAROUS TREATMENT SET ASHORE AND LEFT THERE

Of a truth none are so suspicious as those who should be suspected, and losing sight of this fact was our undoing.

To begin with 'twas a silly thing to go into the captain's cabin at that time; it was still more imprudent to sit there with him discussing our means of escape. For it happened that Ned Parsons, seeing me no longer inquisitive about the shifting of the crews, became curious to know what had become of me, and presently sighted me sitting, as I say, with Sir Harry. Doubtless Rodrigues, in his place, would have taken some crafty means of discovering our design and circumventing it; but this Parsons was of another kidney, and prone to reflect upon the advisability of his actions after they were performed rather than before. Wherefore, at the first sniff of danger, he goes below, collects a dozen choice rogues, and having gone into the armory and furnished themselves with weapons, they slipped on deck, and in a twinkling rushed into the roundhouse and fell upon us. We were the less prepared for this attack because the fellows, having no shoes to their feet, came on noiselessly along the deck; and indeed, from the moment we first spied them to the time they were in the coach, there was barely time for Sir Harry to catch up a short sword for his defence, and I a spyglass that lay on the table. Sir Harry ran the first of the party through the vitals, and I managed to lay Ned Parsons' head open with the spyglass; but we could do no more, for we were thrown down by sheer force of weight and numbers, and after that our bootless struggles did not prolong by a few minutes the work of binding us hand and foot. From these bonds there was no escaping; Ned Parsons himself, with the blood yet trickling down his face and grizzled beard, making fast each knot and testing its security. When this was done, he went out to the main deck and spoke to the men crowded there, and they replied with a great cheer, and so betook themselves to their work, shouting and talking among themselves with much content. But to make more sure of us, and that all might see we were not contriving our escape, this Ned Parsons hauled us out of the roundhouse into the midst of the deck, and there we lay in the burning sun all day, and none had the humanity to give us meat or drink, though they for the most part made themselves as drunk as beggars by midday. Nay, when Sir Harry, who had been as kind to these wretches as any man could be, asked one to give him a cup of water, the villain would not, but replied, with a brutal laugh, that he should have more water than he could drink at sundown, by which cruel speech we perceived that our fate was sealed, and that they only awaited the occasion of Rodrigues' coming on board to cast us into the sea.

The breeze continuing very fresh, we pressed onward; but towards evening the wind abated, as it does in these latitudes about sundown, the sails flapped against the mast, and the anchor was dropped.

Soon after this Rodrigues came aboard, and first he consulted with Parsons, who had contrived to keep more sober than the rest; then they held a council with all the men in the fore part of the ship, after which Rodrigues comes to us, with his hat in his hand, as civil as may be, and with a wicked smile on his face that showed all his pointed teeth, so that with his hypocritical air he did look more like a fiend than a man.

"Gentlemen," says he, "I am sorry to tell you we must part. The men, one and all, have resolved to seek their fortunes elsewhere than in Guiana, and lest their design should be distasteful to you and lead to any further breaking of heads or spitting with steel, they would have me, as being now chief in command, drop you overboard with a shot tied round your necks. I have done my best to alter their disposition, but the most they will consent to in your favor is that you shall be allowed to go your way in consideration of your giving them free permission to go theirs, with a solemn promise on your part that you will hereafter do nothing, if you have the chance, to bring us to the gallows."

"Do with us what you will," answers Sir Harry.

"Ay, and be cursed for the villain you are," adds I.

"As you do not refuse the offer it is my duty to make, I shall hold it you accept," says Rodrigues, taking no notice of me; "betwixt gentlemen no formalities are needed. It is understood that in accepting your life you agree to the conditions, and this understanding will be as binding on you to do us no harm – if, as I say, you get the chance – as though you had put hand and seal to a bond."

Then making us a bow, he went back to the men, who, on hearing what he had to say, gave another cheer, and some set about lowering Sir Harry's own barge, while others went below and fetched up all manner of stores to put in it. All being in readiness, we were taken to the side of the ship, bound as we were, and with a rope reeved through a block at the yard-arm, we were hauled up and lowered like cattle into the barge that lay alongside. For the first time we perceived that the land was distant no more than half a mile or so. After us the Indian Cazique Putijma, whom, as I have said, Sir Harry had brought abroad at Punto de Gallo for a pilot, was made to come down in the barge, and then half a dozen seamen in that boat that had brought Rodrigues from the *Adventurer* towed us with a line to the shore, the crew giving us a jeer as we sheered off, and Rodrigues (with a bow) wishing we might have a pleasant journey to Manoa, and find a kind reception and store of gold there.

Having brought us to land and made our barge fast, the boat's crew, with somewhat more humanity than their fellows, bade us good-bye and god-speed, and then pulled off quickly back towards their ship, for there was no moon that night, and it was now grown so dark that we could but just descry the two ships lying off in the bay.

All this time Putijma, who was unbound, had sat in the barge with his knees up to his chin in profound silence; for such is the stoic character of these Indians when overcome by misfortune from which they see no escape. But now Sir Harry, who spoke Spanish, addressed him in that tongue, begging him to cut our cords, and this he did; but it was yet some minutes ere either of us could move, so benumbed and stiff were we with our long confinement. When I got the use of my limbs and hands, I drew a dram of liquor from the puncheon among our stores, and gave it to Sir Harry, who was thereby much refreshed. Then did we get out of the boat to exercise our legs, and finding the sand still warm and pleasant with the sun's heat, we lay ourselves down to sleep, there being no better thing to do. But first I got from the boat a couple of muskets, with powder and ball, and two hatchets, that we might not be unprovided against the attack of wild beasts or cannibals in the night if any such there might come upon us.

But Putijma never stirred out of the boat, nor could Sir Harry any way cheer him out of his despondent mood; and the last I saw of him he was still sitting with his knees huddled up to his chin, and so we presently fell asleep.

We slept soundly, and nothing disturbed our slumber all through that night. The sun was some degrees above the horizon when I awoke, and a smart breeze ruffling the sea. Sitting up I looked out for the ships, but they were no longer in the bay; yet methought I spied one sail on the horizon to the south. Then I got upon my feet and looked for the barge and the Indian Cazique, but trace or sign of either could I see none. I rubbed my eyes and looked again; then I ran a hundred yards along the shore eastward, and again as far to the west; for I could not at once realize that this man was treacherous to us. But 'twas all in vain; he was nowhere to be seen. So I roused up Sir Harry, telling him how the Indian had played us false and gone away with the boat, which was our only means of getting back to Trinidad, and like distracted creatures we ran along the shore a mile one way and a mile the other, hallooing aloud, as trying to cheat ourselves with the hope of that Putijma had slipped away by accident, and drifted into some creek. But at length we gave up the quest, and stood gazing before us as still and silent as statues of stone, quite overwhelmed by this last stroke of misfortune.

And thus were we two poor men abandoned on an unknown coast. I say we two poor men, for now were we leveled to the same degree by a cruel fate, being possessed of no more than a gun and

a hatchet apiece besides the clothes we stood in, and with the same dismal expectation of perishing unfriended in a wilderness.

CHAPTER IX

WE FIND OURSELVES ON A DESERT ISLAND, AND LITTLE COMFORT BESIDES

After a while we returned to the place where we lay during the night; and, looking about us, found that the cruel Cazique had taken away the keg of powder, the puncheon of rum, ay, the very bread we had brought for our refreshment on landing; thus robbing us of our present subsistence and the means of procuring other.

Seeing this, Sir Harry threw himself on the sand and sobbed out aloud; for as yet he had suffered never any hardship or disappointment. But it was otherwise with me, for many a time had I endured privation and known no hope. Yet did it move my heart to see a strong man, and one naturally light of heart, gay, and of high spirit, so abased; so I sat down beside him, and, laying my hand on his shoulder, spoke such comforting words as my tongue, unused to such exercise, could command. And this may seem strange, seeing that hitherto I had borne him no love, but rather jealousy and hatred. But you shall notice that misfortune doth engender kindness in hearts the least susceptible, so that a man who would jostle another and show no manner of kindness and civility, both being strong, would yet bend down and gently succor him who fell across his path from weakness; for our sympathy is with those weaker than ourselves, and not with those of equal hardiness; and this, I take it, is the reason of the great love of strong men for weak women, and the wondrous tenderness of women for those cast down by sickness.

Sir Harry would not be comforted; but shaking my hand from his shoulder he cries:

"'Tis easy to bear the misfortunes of other people!"

"Nay," says I, "am I better off than you?"

"Ay," says he, "for you have but changed one form of misery for another. These woods for you are as good as those you left in Cornwall. Your prospects here as good as they were there. But I! what have I not lost by this change! All my fortune was embarked in those ships; and with them I lose every hope – fame and riches – my sweetheart. All! all! What now have I?"

"The hope of getting away from this place; the hope that – that she may wait faithfully your return."

"And what if, by a miracle, I get from here, can I hope to recover my fortune? I must go a beggar back to England; nay, a debtor for the ships of Sir Bartlemy that I have lost. And think you if my sweetheart in pity would make me her husband, I would be her pensioner, dependent on her bounty for the bread I eat?"

To me this seemed an overstraining of sentiment; for I would have been content to take that dear girl for my wife, rich or poor; nay, I could not believe that any sense of dependence or bounty could exist in the union of two who love entirely. But I would not contrary him by speaking of this, which he would but have set down to want of decent pride and self-respect on my side.

"There is no hope – no hope!" he continues, bitterly. "I am undone by my enemies, and you are one of them – a man I have sought only to help – a base wretch who would not speak a word to save me from my undoing."

I held my peace, as I had before, when he spoke after this sort. For partly I felt that I deserved reproach, and partly I saw that he was beside himself with despair. So I let him be that he might vent freely all his passion. But he said no more; and for some while he lay there like one who cared not to move again. Then getting upon his feet savagely, as though ashamed of his weakness, he says:

"Let us go from this cursed spot." Then, looking about him in bewilderment, "Where shall we go?"

Be a man never so wretched he must eat and drink; so I told him we must first of all seek a stream to quench our thirst; and the land to the west looking most promising, I settled to explore in that direction; Sir Harry being indifferent so that we got away from this unlucky place where we had been set ashore. We took up our axes and muskets – which the thieving Cazique had left to us because they lay under our hands, as I may say, and he feared to awake us – and marched onwards, keeping to the sand, which was very level and firm, the tide being at low ebb. We kept on this way for best part of a league, and then the shore becoming soft with a kind of black mud, we were forced to seek higher ground; and here our progress was made very painful and slow by reason of the scrubby growth, which was mighty thick and prickly, so that we were torn at every step. To add to our discomfort, the sun, being now high, shone with prodigious heat upon us, and parched us with thirst. There were woods at hand, but here the thorny bush was so high and closely interwoven that we had to use our hatchets to make any way at all, and then were we no better off, but worse; wherefore we were obliged to return to that part where the earth was less encumbered. Some of these brambles had thorns two inches long, and curved like great claws; and one of these tearing my leg gave me much torment. As the sun rose higher, so our suffering increased, until, after marching best part of two hours, we were ready to drop with fatigue. Fruit there was in abundance, spread out temptingly under our feet; for nearly every bush bore some sort of apples or grapes; yet dared we not eat any for fear of its being venomous. Of this venomous fruit I had heard the seamen who had traveled in these parts tell, and how a man eating of it will presently go raving mad; and I pointed out to Sir Harry, who would fain have slaked his thirst with this growth, that we had as yet seen neither bird nor beast, which argued that this food was not wholesome.

However, about midday, when we were as near spent as any living man could be, we came to a turn in the coast where the character of the growth changed; and here we found a great herb with leaves spreading out on all sides; but every leaf was a good twenty feet long and half a fathom across, so that it gave us ample shade to lie in; and never was man more content than I to get out of the sunshine. To our still greater comfort, Sir Harry presently spied at no great distance a low-growing thicket, in the midst of which grew a fruit that he knew for a pine-nut, which is a fruit bigger than any that grows in England, of a yellow complexion, and scaly without, but of excellent condition within. Cutting it in half with his knife, he gave me one part, and bade me eat it without fear; and this I did, though not without compunction, but I found it truly as he said, both meat and drink, and the most delicious ever man did eat, with no ill effects after.

We rested ourselves some while, and then being much refreshed continued our journey over very fair ground, but yet keeping very near the water; and so rounding a headland, and facing pretty nearly due west, we perceived another headland across the water, but at a great distance, which led us to conceive that we were upon one of the mouths of the Oronoque, which, as we know, disembogues itself by many issues into the sea over a length of a hundred leagues and more along the coast of Guiana. And that this was a river, and not an inlet of the sea, we proved by tasting of the water, which was still running out very troubled; it was not salt and bitter, and yet too thick and brackish to drink. And now the trees approached the water-side, some hanging over, with thick growth everywhere; and though I know English trees well, and the different sorts of herbs, yet all here were new to me, and I saw none that I could name. For prodigious height and girth I never saw the like of the trees, which were besides wondrous fair to the eye, but painful to get through by reason of their great abundance, and the maze of vines and bramble (as I must call them, knowing not their names) which netted them together. Surely to one come there for pleasure and to satisfy his curiosity, there was on all sides something to please and interest, there being no end to the variety of flowers and fruits, their colors and forms; but to us, who were mainly concerned to discover where we were situated, we did wish best part of these trees and shrubs further.

We made our way onward for two hours more, yet the land on the other side of the river appeared no nearer, for the rivers in these parts have no parallel for volume; and then we came (God

be praised) to a small stream running from the interior, which we found at some little distance inward to be very sweet and good, so that we drank of it our fill. But what pleased me as much as the discovery of this water was the print of a cloven foot in a slough, hard by, which I judged, by the form and size, to be the foot of a swine; and so it proved, for going still further, but with caution, along the edge of this marshy land, we perceived a whole drove of this cattle stretched out in the warm mire, grunting from time to time as pleasantly as any English hogs. Seeing them thus within range, Sir Harry, ere I could check him, cocked his piece and let fly; and though he killed one dead on the spot, yet was I sorry he had spent his fire on this quarry, for I believe I might have knocked one on the head and done for him with a blow of my hatchet; and now were we left with only one charge of powder and ball to meet any emergency.

We dragged this beast, which was a boar pig of some ten score, as I reckoned, away from the morass, which I dreaded to stay in for fear of serpents or other noxious beasts; and finding a place near the river high and dry, we resolved to stay there the night, for the day was nearly spent, as were we likewise. Here Sir Harry set about to get some dry fuel and make a fire, the while I skinned our pig, and a marvelous thick hide he had; and so much the better was I pleased, for I saw that with this hide cut in thongs I could make us a good gin to entrap other swine when we had occasion for them, also a sling for killing birds, and other things necessary to us in our forlorn, destitute condition. Sir Harry got some dry rotten wood, and grinding a little to powder he set it in the pan of his firelock, and snapping the cock twice or thrice succeeded in setting it burning; then blowing the ember gently on other rotten wood, and that on dry leaves and such-like, he in the end got a flame to put to his bonfire, and over this on pointed sticks we held some slices cut from our swine's ham; enough not only for our supper, but to serve us cold on the morrow; and well it was we did so then, for the next morning the carcass I had hung on a tree overnight was all green and so foul we were fain to cast it in the river to be washed away with the current; but that which we had cooked was sweet and good, though mighty tough eating.

But I must tell of the strange way in which we were awakened that morning, which was by the crowing of a cock, and surely nothing in this land so full of unlooked-for things could be more unexpected than this familiar, homely cry. We two started up together at the sound, rubbing our eyes to be sure we were in a strange country and not at home in England. But again this bird crowed, and casting our eyes about, there we spied a fine red cock perched in the boughs of a tree with three pullets on one side of him and two on the other, all as comfortable as you please, and not yet astir, for the day was scarce broke. Upon this we concluded that there must be human habitation near, and overjoyed at the hope of seeing fellow-creatures in a land where we had thought to be all alone, we started to our feet and hallooed with all our might, not reckoning that the fellow-creatures might be cruel Indians who might murder us, and mayhap eat us afterwards for our pains.

However, though we hallooed till we were hoarse and could halloo no longer, answer came there none, except a clucking of the fowls, who seemed to be at a loss what we were crowing so loud about. Yet from the presence of these fowls and the swine – which seemed to us not natural inhabitants of these parts, we clung to the idea that some sort of fellow-creatures were near, and so with a more cheerful heart than I, for one, had yet felt since we were put ashore, we continued our march when we had eaten and drunk to our satisfaction. But first we took of the thongs I had cut from the swine's hide and stretched to dry between two stakes, one apiece to serve as belts in which to sling our hatchets, another which I had fashioned for a sling, and two or three besides to serve for what occasion might arise. The rest we left behind us, marking well the spot. Our ham steaks were covered up in cool leaves to keep them fresh, and hung them also to the thongs about our middle.

That night we came to a point projecting into the midst of a vast expanse of water, and seeming to cut the river into two, for we found that there were, as I may say, two currents – one running to the southeast, and the other northeast – so that we concluded we were not on the mainland at all, but upon an island in one of the great mouths of the Orinoco. This was made evident as we proceeded,

for still marching with the water on our left hand, our faces were turned to the east, and not to the west as at first; and, in short, on the third day of our march we came again to the ocean, and about midday on the fourth to the very spot from which we had started.

In all this time we had seen no human creature, nor had we met – thank God! – with any serious accident, though inconveniences not a few; and not the least of these was a multitude of flies and stinging gnats, especially upwards away from the sea, which were a great plague to us, and especially to Sir Harry, who had the more tender skin, and was tormented to that degree that he could get no peace night or day for the intolerable itching and smarting of their punctures. Nor did we meet any great beast, save a huge water-lizard that is called a cocodrill, which lies in the waters of these rivers and looks like nothing on earth but a log of timber at a distance. Birds there were in plenty, and with my sling I brought down enough for use, and more; and to speak of all the fruits here were a waste of time. Suffice to say that we lacked nothing to satisfy our appetite, and came to no harm by what we ate of strange things, for we were careful to eat of no fruit or herb but such as we found the swine and other animals feasted upon.

CHAPTER X

I QUIT THE ISLAND AND MY FRIEND

And now, being come back to our starting-place, we had to consider our position and what we were next to be at.

I say we, but in truth I might say I had to consider these things, for Sir Harry seemed to have neither care for the present nor hope for the future, and do what I might to bring him to a more cheerful complexion, it was all to no purpose.

"What is there to do in this cursed island," says he, "but to eat and drink and sleep till we die?"

"The more reason," says I, "for devising some means of getting away from this isle to where we may do better."

He stretched out his hands towards the sea that laid void before us, and laughed bitterly.

"Nay," says I, not to seem discouraged, though, indeed, my hopes were but slight; "it is not so impossible as you think. Take it that the day we left Trinidad the gale was in our favor, we could but have made twenty or thirty leagues at the utmost. Now say that the river to the north is three leagues broad, we may yet, by taking the current at our highest point, contrive to make our way across on some kind of raft, using a bough for paddle. There is nothing lacking to make us a raft."

"Well," says he, "say by good hap you cross the river and get on another isle – what then?"

"Then," says I, "will we make our way to the north of that island and cross to a third, or a fourth, after the same fashion, and so get on till we come to that part of Guiana due east of Trinidad, whence may we with no more difficulty cross the strait."

"Suppose, after all," says he, "that we get to Trinidad – what then? Shall we be better off there than we are here? We run a fair chance of being captured for slaves by the Portugals, to be sure."

"Also," says I, "run a fair chance of escaping them and being picked up by some English ship putting in as ours did to revictual."

"Allowing that your fondest hopes be realized," says he, "is our case mended? Is it worse to sleep away our lives here than to be taken into England as a raree show for men to laugh at and women to pity? No," says he, with more passion than he had yet shown; "no, I say! It is not better, but a hundred times worse, and I for one will never go back to be scorned for a silly fellow who could not hold his own."

It was not for me to reproach him, for had I not also abandoned myself under adversity? I was convinced, and so I am now, that a despair is a malady of mind as much as is ague a distemper of the body; and though men say one should not give way to despair, but should overcome it by an effort of will, yet, I say, that if the will be attacked by a great shock and enfeebled by misfortune, it is powerless to exercise its function. For such as suffer from this disease of the mind there is no help from within, but its only succor is from without. Wherefore, the kindly ministrations of a friend will do as much to restore health in this case as the help of a doctor in any other. For this reason I bore patiently with Sir Harry in his morose and sullen humors, and sought all I could to divert his spirit from brooding over misfortunes not to be undone. But I think all that I did in this way produced me more good than it did him; for whereas he continued despondent and dull, I grew more cheerful and humane. I waited upon him like a servant, and this service, with my pity to see a young, fine man so cast down, engendered a feeling of love in my breast such as I had never before felt for any man. Nay, I even looked to getting with him back to England, and seeing him married to Lady Biddy Fane, without any feeling of jealousy, being not only more gentle of heart, but more reasonable of mind.

At this time we stayed on high ground to the south of our territory, over against that part where we first found the pine-nut; not only because of the shade we got there from the sun, but by reason

that it was adjacent to the stream of good water, and not far from the fen where the swine came to wallow, and where there was abundance of fowl and fruit good to eat.

While we were here, Sir Harry fell sick of a fever, bred partly, as I think, from his low, desponding spirit, and partly from the vapors that rose from the marshy valley below. When I found he could no longer sit upright and began to wander in his speech, I took him on my back, and, by stages of a dozen yards, carried him away from that unwholesome spot right down to the sea-shore, and there, finding an easy slope, I laid him down, and, as speedily as I could, set about making a kind of house to shield him from the sun. The night being fairly light, by dint of many journeys to and fro and much toil, I planted a dozen stakes in the sand, bending them down till they joined at the top, in the form of a great "A", and binding them to a cross tree, then I thatched this framework with those long and broad palmetto leaves of which I have spoken. Here he lay as comfortable as might be for one in his burning condition, the sea breeze passing through the shelter and tempering the heat of the sun.

He could eat nothing; however I made shift to stew a fowl in the shell of a gourd, and when the broth was cold I got him to drink it, for he had a perpetual thirst; and that his drink might be cool and refreshing, I went a score of times during the day almost to the source of the stream, where the water was of the best. Of such fruits as were good also I gave him, particularly the apples from a low, square-boughed tree with egg-shaped leaves, which is called, I believe, guava.

And now I prayed to God that this man's life might be spared, and that I might not be left alone, which more than all proves the great and good change which had been wrought in my heart since the time when I sought but to escape from the society of mankind, and wished harm to all men, and this one above all.

At the end of seven days' very painful watching, Sir Harry's disorder took a turn, and soon after he began to mend (thanks be to God!) so that he could take meat instead of slops to his diet. Yet was he greatly changed, his skin having lost its freshness and healthful color, and his face much wasted. Also he was very weak, and for days lay exhausted and unable to move, yet with his eyes wide open and very bright. After a while I persuaded him to rise in the cool of the morning and evening, and then would he take a turn, leaning on my arm. And though he said nothing, I perceived he recognized the love I bore for him, and was grateful for my care. What pleased me vastly was to perceive that a change had been wrought in his spirit; it seemed as though his sluggish indifference had been purged away. When the fever had quite left him, his eyes continued bright and eager, and there was in his face an eager expression, telling of an anxiety which only exists where there is hope. But what his hope was he told me not. This encouraged me to believe that he designed leaving the island (where there was, as I could see, naught to hope for), and not dying there, as he had at first resigned himself to. I again began to meditate on the means of reaching Trinidad, but I refrained from opening the subject yet awhile, because he was still too feeble to undertake the fatigue of it.

One day, when I had returned to the hut by the shore from the inner parts, where I had been planting a snare to catch a pig, I found Sir Harry absent; but soon after I heard him shouting, and, turning my eyes, I spied him running towards me along the sand with something in his hand, which, as he came nearer, I perceived was the stave of a barrel.

"Look at that," says he, with much emotion; "there have been men on this island before us. Up in the wood there is a broken barrel; this is a stave of it. Men brought it here."

"Why, for a certainty," says I, "this wood never sprang out of the earth fashioned thus?"

"No," says he, "nor did the pigs on this island spring out of the earth."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked, perplexed by this observation.

"I mean," says he, "that the men who came here to fetch water in that barrel left the swine and the fowls to multiply against the time they should come here to revictual. I thought as much as I lay there in my sickness hearing the cock crow, and now I have the proof. Do you doubt it, man – do you doubt it?"

"Not a whit," says I; "and I wonder I have not drawn the conclusion before, for I remember now how Rodrigues told me it was the habit of pirates, who fight shy of towns, to provide for themselves in this wise."

"Then you think," says he eagerly, "that they are pirates who came hither?"

"Ay, and not honest men; that is my fear," says I.

"And I trust they be pirates, and not honest men, if they are to come here again," says he; "for then may I get back all I have lost, and more to boot."

"As how?" says I, not without trouble in my mind.

"By the same means my fortune was taken from me – by strategy and force."

"Surely you would not become a pirate – you, a gentleman of birth and breeding?"

"And what was Drake but a gentleman?" says he; "and Candish: what of him?"

I shook my head, and heaved a sigh to hear this argument from the lips of my friend, which I had listened to from such a rascal as Rodrigues.

"Why," says he, in a rallying tone, "you were not so squeamish aboard the *Sure Hawk*."

"No," says I; "but I thank the Lord I have not taken his warning in vain."

He laughed scornfully, as though thinking my peril had made me prayerful, and caressing the barrel stave with his hand, lifted his head and scanned the sea, as already expecting the return of those pirates we talked of.

"And is your fortune all you expect to get by becoming a pirate?" I asked, laying my hand on his arm.

"What more do I want, forsooth?" asks he lightly.

"Why, sir," says I, "the peace of mind to enjoy it."

"As for that," says he, "however I get it I warrant it shall bring me more enjoyment than I can expect stopping here, or going back to England a beggar."

"Are you so daunted by the outset that you despair of getting gold honestly in Guiana?"

"Hum!" says he; "I cannot see that it is much more honest to take gold from the Ingas of Manoa, who have never done us harm, than from the Spaniard, who has sought to undo us with his flotilla; but, be that as it may, you will show me how we are to get to Manoa, who are not yet beyond the mouth of the Oronoque, ere I give that enterprise the preference."

"Single-handed we can do nothing, but I will answer for it that my uncle, Sir Bartlemy, instead of being discouraged by our first failure, will be more inclined to persevere in it. You know his nature as well as I do. A reverse does but strengthen his determination, as a bite infuriates a bulldog."

"That is true," says he; "he is an Englishman to the very marrow of his bones."

"Well, then," says I, "shall he not fit you out another expedition?"

"Why, man, how can he? Nearly all he had was united to my fortune in buying the two ships I have lost and in equipping them. He is a ruined man. Ruined by me!"

"If he lacks money, other shall be found. He will move heaven and earth to save you from the disgrace of sinking to the level of such wretches as Morgan and Sawkins, and this Rodrigues."

In this sort I argued with him persistently, till at length, seeing that I was not to be shaken off by argument, he turns about and says:

"Look you, Pengilly, I will never go begging in England, even for a second chance to be cast away on this island. I can not easily consent that another should beg for me; for a craven I must appear in either cases. But since your mind is set on this thing, go you to England without me; and if any, for my sake, will make this venture, lead them hither; then, if I be still here and alive, I will attempt this expedition to Manoa. Nay," he adds, interrupting me, when I began to protest that I would not quit him; "leave me here and go about this business as you will, you shall still be the more generous of the two; for I swear to you that if the worst pirate that sails the seas comes here I will cast in my lot with him, whether you accompany me, or whether you refuse to take part with us."

Seeing him very stubborn and resolved upon this point, I then began to think seriously of getting away as best I could; for, thinks I, 'twere more humane to leave him here alone, with the chance of bringing him succor and the means of honestly escaping from his solitude, than to rest here inactive until perchance there comes some villainous sea-rover with whom he shall take his departure. For my own part I had no leaning to piracy; for, though I love the Spaniard no more than any other true Englishman may, yet I knew full well that Rodrigues and such fellows would not question closely whether their prey was Spanish, but would pillage and sink any craft that sailed so that it had not the strength to resist attack.

So, going along the border of that upper stream, which in my ignorance I will call North River. I came upon a great tree that was dead and decayed about the roots, so that it needed but little cutting to make it fall, and that close to the water. This tree was fully three fathoms in girth, and proportionately tall, straight, and fair, decayed only where the humors of the earth had attacked its base, light and very proper in all ways to my use. Wherefore I set to work, and, cutting on that side I wished it to fall, I felled it with no very great difficulty. When it was down I found the upper part sound, as I expected, and not so hard but that with patient labor I succeeded in cutting two lengths each of five fathoms long. These two lengths I set side by side, the thicker end of one against the thinner end of the other; then I got a quantity of those long vines which the Indians call lianas, which are very stringy and tough as good, hemp rope and with this I bound my timbers together in a hundred places, but separately, so that if by chance one broke the rest would still hold. But I must tell you that for the greater convenience of working these huge logs I launched them separately into a shallow before I began to bind them about, which was well, for I could never have moved them else. After that I sought out two slight trees of hard growth that were not more than thirty feet high, and cutting them down, I trimmed them into two poles, each four fathoms long. Then, midway in the length of my logs I made two holes – one in each, and parallel one with the other. To do this I jagged the mouth of my musket barrel about, grinding each jag into a sharp tooth with a hard stone, by which contrivance I made a tool to serve in place of an augur. When I had pierced the logs right through I enlarged the holes by making my musket-barrel red hot in a fire, and working it about in the holes. Into these sockets I fitted my two poles, using every device I could think of to make them firm and secure; and this being done, and both poles standing bolt upright, I turned the logs on their side so as to get the ends of the poles within reach, and these ends I bent until they met, and so bound them together with lianas to make them bite still closer in their closets, and also to be a support one to the other against the gale, for they were to serve me as a mast. For, by the time my logs were cut, launched, and bound together, as I have shown, I had come to the conclusion that it would be better to venture the whole voyage by water, keeping as near as might be to the main, and taking advantage of favorable breezes, rather than to abandon my raft on the other side of the river and make my way onward by land to that point nearest Trinidad, as I had first meditated on, for I knew not what other great rivers there might be to cross, nor how many rafts I might have to make ere I got to my journey's end; and the difficulty of making such a raft, rude as it was, no one can conceive but those who have had a like difficulty to contend with. It cost me four months and ten days of painful labor to achieve that which I have set down.

During this time Sir Harry had not been idle; and though he could not honestly encourage me with a hope of bringing my business to a happy issue, yet he helped me with a willing heart, and said nothing which might discourage me neither. But he was as firmly fixed in his intent as I on mine, and rarely worked up the river with me, lest in his absence the ship he expected might come and go away again. Anything he could do within sight of the sea he did, and this was no trifle. Here every day he provided food for our necessity, and in his spare time he fashioned me a long yard for my mast, and, which was more, he made a shoulder-of-mutton sail – to rig on my mast like a lateen on a zebec – of long reeds very ingeniously woven together. Also he devised two vessels to contain fresh water for my use by stripping a couple of hogs from the neck downward without cutting the skin.

These skins he turned inside out, scraped off all the fat carefully, and then steeping them in the sea until they were cured, and afterward washing them some days in the stream of fresh water, they were found good and sound, each holding a good hogshead of water.

Besides this, he cut a vast quantity of pork steaks and cured them in the sun, which may be done without corrupting the flesh if it be laid where the sun is hot and the air dry. Moreover, he saved all the bladders of hogs that he killed, blew them out, and coated them over with a sort of pitch to preserve them from the attacks of flies and insects. This pitch comes from the sea of those parts, and is washed ashore by the tide, and being melted before a fire, it is as good a pitch as any in the world. These bladders I tied on to the extremities of long poles lashed crosswise to my raft to serve as a sort of buoys to bear up that side to which the sail inclined, and prevent the raft from capsizing in a sudden squall.

I bound some bundles of these transversely to the logs to serve me as a deck, and many other provisions I made, such as a great stone at the end of a line for an anchor, a paddle to serve as a rudder, etc. In fine – not to weary the reader with tedious descriptions – just ten months to a day from the time we were set ashore all was made ready for my departure.

And now, taking Sir Harry's hands in mine and pressing them close, I begged him to come with me.

"Look you," says I, "this offer is not unpremeditated on my part. All through I have borne it in mind, and for that reason have I measured my boat and all things to serve two rather than one. Here is provision for both and to spare; the breeze is favorable, and all things promise a prosperous outcome. Do, then, be persuaded by me, dear friend, to share my fate; if not for your sake and mine, then for those who love you in England and are eagerly hoping for your return."

He was not unmoved by this address, and the tears sprang in his eyes as he wrung my hand in silence; but he shook his head the while.

"No," says he, presently; "no, Pengilly; you know not the pride of my heart. It would kill me with shame to show myself a beggar there," turning his eyes toward the north. "I am a ruined man – ay, ruined body and soul – for I feel that I am unworthy of your love. Go!"

"Nay," says I, "let me stay that my persuasion may work on you. I left my offer to the last, hoping –"

"I know," says he, interrupting me. "You hoped that the prospect of being left alone, coming to be reviewed suddenly, would shake my resolution. But I have foreseen this. I saw that you were preparing for two to make voyage on the raft. I knew that you were not dwelling cheerfully day by day on the prospect of escape, but to excite a desire in me to escape with you. I know what is in your heart, and have just sensibility enough left in mine to value it. But I will not go. I am resolved, and naught can shake my resolution from its centre. Go; and may God bless you."

So with a very sad heart I was fain to accept his decision; and shoving out into the stream I went down swiftly with the current, and had not the courage to look back for that poor lonely man I was leaving behind.

CHAPTER XI

I AM EXCELLENTLY SERVED BY MY FAMOUS INVENTION, AND COME TO ENGLAND NOT MUCH THE WORSE FOR IT

By making vigorous employment of my paddle, first on one side and then on the other, I continued to keep well in the midst of the river, and the tide then ebbing fast, I was quickly swept across the shallows at the mouth, and so out to sea.

And now I thought it proper to hoist my sail; so, laying aside my paddle, I drew up the lateen between my two masts till it was taut, and then making fast the liana found it acted well enough, for at once it filled out very full and fair to the breeze, which was blowing pretty brisk from the southeast.

But now my difficulties and troubles began, for I had no experience in the governing of a sailing boat, and ere I had got to work at my paddle, my raft veered round before the gale, the sail flapping to and fro between the masts, and I had all the pain in the world to get her head round and my sail full again. And when this was achieved, I found a fresh fault, and this was that my buoys were nothing near sufficient to resist the pressure of the sail, so that they dipped deep into the water, the poles to which they were fastened bending to such a degree that I expected nothing less every moment but that they would snap under the strain, and the raft capsize utterly, to my final undoing. Wherefore I was fain to abandon my paddle, and reef the lower part of the sail to lessen the pressure, in which time I again lost the wind, so back to my paddle and more labor to bring me round once more before the breeze.

By this time I perceived that the current of the sea and my bungling together had swept me far from the coast, and rather to the south than to the north. And to my great perplexity I found that I could not get the wind in my sail without drifting still further from the shore to the west, for if I steered to the north, then would the wind go out of my sail, and the craft, losing way would drift with the current to the south, so that if I did nothing matters could be no worse. At last I was constrained to lower my sail altogether and seek to make head against the current by vigorous use of my paddle, first on one side and then on the other, as I say, And, lord! no man could be more encompassed with troubles than I was, or sweat more to overcome them than I did at this time. At length, from sheer exhaustion, I was fain to give over, and let my raft, without sail or oar, go whither it might. I set me down on my deck of rushes, and casting my eyes toward the land was dismayed to find it but an indistinct line on the horizon (I have been out to sea now four hours or more), and to the best of my belief I stood further from Trinidado, after all my trouble than ere I started forth. And let this be a warning to all men that they put not to sea ere they have learned to sail.

When I had refreshed myself with some water and one of my dried pork steaks (which, that they might not be perished by the sea water, I had hanged conveniently high on one of my masts), I rose up, and with a kind of desperate fury essayed again to make a proper course. First, I went at my sail once more, and when I found that of no avail but rather the contrary, I seized my paddle, and worked at it like any galley slave, and though I could see no improvement, yet did I persevere diligently. Then, fancying the breeze was a little abated and blew from another quarter, I went (with a prayer) and once more lifted my sail, but that would not do, and so (with a curse) I dropped it and back to my paddle. In fine, to cut a long story short, I wasted my pains all that day, and had the mortification as I sat down once more to rest my aching limbs, to find the land no longer in sight; nor anything else but the water all around me.

Seeing it was useless to work when I could no longer see for want of light (though not more useless than before, may be), I lay me down on my reeds (the sea, God be praised! having subsided when the wind dropped to an agreeable calm), and presently fell asleep.

The next day there was no need to experiment with my sail, for not a breath of air stirred; so I worked steadily at my paddle pretty nearly the whole day, but I was forced to desist in the noon for some time because of the great heat of the sun, and that while I sheltered myself under the sail, which was, God knows, all the use it ever served me. All that day I heard not a sound but such as I made with my paddles, and the sea was like so much glass extended about me, and a mist all around the horizon caused by the sun sucking up with his great heat the vapors from the water. When the sun set, this mist settled over the whole sea, so that I could see never a star to cheer me, and this made me very sad and prayerful, for it seemed as if a death-pall were being spread over my unhappy being. Then would I gladly have been back with Sir Harry on the island; and thinking of him and our miserable estate, both alone, and like to perish without ever again hearing the sound of a cheerful voice, the tears began to flow from my eyes as from a woman's; and I do think I fell asleep weeping.

About midnight (as I reckon) I was awakened by the freshening of the breeze; yet nothing could I see. I groped my way along very carefully to my masts, that I might have them to hold by, for already the sea was rising; and it was well that I did so, for in an amazingly short space of time the breeze quickened to a gale, and beat the waters so high that I was like to have been swept away by the waves as they burst. I will not dwell on the increasing terrors of that night, for no words can describe the fury of that hurricane, or my dread lest the binding of my logs should be rent asunder and my frail resting-place part under me. And here let me observe that, no matter how a man may desire death at other times, yet in the hour of peril will he ever cling desperately to life.

When morning broke, my case was no better than in the night; and looking around me at the billows that threatened every moment to engulf me, I was appalled, and could but say, over and over again, "God be merciful to me!" For a long while I experienced neither hunger nor thirst but only great fear and terror; but when nature began to crave within me, and I looked to see if I could get at my water vessels, I perceived that they had been washed away in the night, for I had taken no precaution to lash them to the raft for safety. And also I noticed that my deck of rushes was clean gone and my outriggers broken. My only comfort was that the bonds of my raft still, for the most part held good, though the straining of the timbers had loosened them, and it was clear they could support the rubbing of the logs and the wrenching of them but a little longer. I saw that if one or two at the end went, then all must go; therefore, as I crouched between the masts I watched these bonds as a man may watch the preparing of a gallows from which he is in the end to be swung off into eternity. And after my raft had been shot down into a great hollow, and thence rising up, met the fearful buffet of another huge wave, I saw that the end liana was burst asunder. "God be merciful to me!" says I again, and with the greater earnestness that I felt I might the next moment be in his presence.

At this moment, above the bustle and rush of the waves and wind, I heard a report like the firing of a small piece of ordnance, and, casting my eye in that direction, I saw, to my great amazement, a great ship bearing down upon me, and not two fathoms off. And that noise I heard was made by the splitting of her topmast and its striking the side of the vessel as it fell. Scarce had I seen this when the ship, riding down on the wave, ground its foreside against the end of my raft, and the next instant I found myself entangled in the wreck of the broken mast with its yard, which still hung to the ship by its cordage. Some of this cordage passing right athwart me, I sprang up and clasped it; then, though as how I can not tell, but as I best might, I climbed like any monkey upwards, getting no more than a dozen or so good thumps against the ship's side, and knocking the skin off my knuckles, by the way, until I got my head above the bulwarks, where already two stout seamen were severing the wreck from the cordage with hatchets. When these two saw me rise as it were out of the grave over the bulwarks, I say, they were stricken with greater terror than the fury of the tempest had inspired, and fell back from their business with gaping mouths and starting eyes; but as I tumbled over the side and threw myself on the deck, they perceived I was no ghost, but only a poor shipwrecked wretch, they picked me up and bore me into the roundhouse to their captain, for I had no power even to stand, being quite spent with my exertion and trouble of mind.

The captain spoke to me, but I could not understand him, for, as I afterwards found, he was from Holland and spoke Dutch, and I spoke to him with no better effect, for he knew no word of English. Nor did any man on that ship speak anything but Dutch, or understand our tongue. I tried to make him comprehend by signs that I ventured to sea on two logs, but he could make nothing of me till we got to Schiedam (which we did, thanks be to God, in a little over eight weeks), where was a man who spoke English.

The captain was very humane and kind to me, and for my serving him on the voyage, which I did to the best of my ability and cheerfully, he paid me at the same rate he paid his other seamen, besides giving me a decent suit of clothes, of which I stood much in need. Through this good man's generosity was I enabled to pay my passage in a galliot to Yarmouth in England, where, by the good help of Providence, I arrived full safe and sound.

And there had I yet some pieces to spare for my sustenance and to help me onward to Falmouth.

CHAPTER XII

LADY BIDDY GIVES ME A WORD OF COMFORT

I reached Fane Court eighteen months, as near as may be, from the time our first unhappy expedition set out.

When I asked for Sir Bartlemy, the hall servant, seeing me all dusty with travel and out at the heel, told me I must bide my time, as the knight and Lady Bidy Fane were at dinner.

"No matter for that," says I; "tell him his nephew, Benet Pengilly, is here, and I warrant you will fare better than if you kept him waiting for the news."

The fellow started in amaze hearing my name, which was better known to him than my face, and went without a word to carry the tidings of my return to Sir Bartlemy. Almost immediately, afterwards my uncle came out into the hall, and as quickly after him Lady Bidy – Sir Bartlemy as hale and hearty as ever, and Lady Bidy, to my eyes, more beautiful than before; but both pale and greatly amazed in countenance.

"Benet!" gasps the old knight, and that was all he could say. But he held out his hand, which I took and pressed with great love, for my feelings were much softened by hardship, and I was grieved to think of the pain I was to give him instead of the joyful news he looked for. Lady Bidy stepped forward, and her face lighting up with hope, she looked for the moment as if she also might be kind to me, and welcome me for the sake of her lover. But of a sudden she checked herself, seeing my downcast complexion, and bating her breath, she says:

"Where is he? Where are the rest?"

Then says I, with as much courage as I could muster, but with pain that went to my heart —

"I am the only man who has come back." And with that I hung my head, not to see their grief.

"He is not dead – they are not all lost!" I heard her say, in a tone that seemed mingled with, a silent prayer to merciful God.

"No," says I; "Sir Harry is not dead. I left him out there in Guiana; but for the rest, if they be lost, 'tis their just reward."

Then Lady Bidy burst into tears to know that her lover lived, and Sir Bartlemy, taking her by the arm and me by mine, led us into the dining-hall without speaking.

By this time, Lady Bidy's emotion being passed, and her pride returning, she took her arm from her uncle's, as if she would not accept of kindness that was equally bestowed on such as I.

"Sit ye down there, Benet," says my uncle, pushing me to a seat; "and now tell us all as briefly as you may; for I perceive that the case is bad (with a plague to it!) though Harry live (God be thanked!); and if there be a tooth to come out, the quicker it's done the better."

Then I told the bare truth: how Rodrigues and Ned Parsons had led the crew astray and set us ashore, and the means of my coming again to England, in as few words as I could shift with. When I had made an end of this, Lady Bidy was the first to speak.

"Why did not Sir Harry come back with you?" says she.

"He scorns to come back a beggar," says I. "He will never return to England until he can repay his obligations to Sir Bartlemy and ask you to be his wife."

This gave her great joy, admiring in him that quality of pride which she cherished in herself, so that her eyes sparkled again, and her fair bosom swelled with a sigh of satisfaction. Presently she turned again upon me, her pretty lips curved with disdain, and says she:

"And you left him there in that desert alone! Content to save your own life, you abandoned him to hopeless solitude. Oh, that I had been a man in your place!"

I hung my head again in silence, feeling it were better to bear her reproach than to attempt an excuse; for I could not trust my tongue to reveal the main reason of my escaping, for fear I should betray his intention of turning pirate; and this, for the love I bore them, I was resolved to keep secret.

"Nay," says Sir Bartlemy, coming to my help, but with no great enthusiasm neither; "never beat the dog that comes home." He paused, and I could fancy his adding to himself, "Curse him, for a mean-spirited hound, all the same!" Then he continues, in a more hopeful tone, "If he had not come home, how could we have known of Harry's peril? Come, Benet; tell me that in coming hither you hoped to get succor for Harry."

"You might believe that," says I, "of a man with less heart than you credit me withal. I came to beg for help because Sir Harry was too proud to beg it himself."

"I knew as much," says he, taking my hand and shaking it heartily. Then turning to my Lady Bidy, "And now, my dear, what's to do? I have no money, and an expense I must be to you all the days that I live, now that my all is lost, with a pox to those rascals that robbed me! But you of your plenty will charter a ship to go out and fetch this poor man?"

"More than that must be done," says I. "He will only accept such help as will enable him to recover all he has lost."

There was approval in Lady Bidy's looks when I said this.

"Odds my life! he's in the right of it," cries Sir Bartlemy, bumping the table with his fist. "Plague take me if ever I'd come sneaking home with my tail twixt my legs like a whipped cur that has neither the stomach to bite nor to keep away from his sop. I mean nothing ill with regard to you, Benet," he adds, turning about to me, "for I hold you have done the part of a true friend and a good, and have shown more courage and high spirit in this matter than many another. Well, what's to do, girl, eh?" – turning now to Lady Bidy, and rubbing his thighs with his broad hands cheerily.

Lady Bidy, with not less eagerness in her manner, looked to me, and nodded that I should speak all that was in my mind.

"As much must be found as has been lost," says I. "For nothing less in men or treasure will suffice Sir Harry to reach Manoa. And with that it is a venture, and naught can be done without God's good help, for never man saw a country so difficult to penetrate or such currents of rivers to mount. And first, money must be raised."

"Money shall not lack. I will venture my fortune to the last piece," says Lady Bidy.

"Ay, and so would I, if I had aught to lose," cried Sir Bartlemy. "But you, my girl, may well spare enough for this venture, and yet have as much to lay by for another, if that fail."

"No time must be lost," says I.

"Not a moment," cries Lady Bidy, starting up as if she had but to fetch money from her strong chest to accomplish all. "You must see about ships and men at once, uncle."

"Ay," says he, "but who is to command them, and carry help to your sweetheart in Guiana?"

Lady Bidy looked at him, and he at her, wetting his lips, as one with a dainty dish set before him that he would fain eat of.

"I'm an old fellow, but there's life in me yet: there's vigor – there's manhood," says he; "and if I decay 'twill be only for want of use. And I know the seas as well as any man, and I warrant me no crew of mine should take my ship from me, as from this poor lad, who put too great faith in the honesty of seamen. I dream o' nights of ocean seas; and feather-beds I do hate more than any man can – "

"Then why should not you command this expedition?" says Lady Bidy.

He tried to look astonished at this design; then putting his beard betwixt his fingers and thumb, and shaking his head doubtfully, he tried to look grave, but his merry eye twinkled with delight at this notion. Yet presently his chap fell, and he looked truly serious.

"My dear," said he, "what am I to do with you? I can not leave a young girl alone in this place, and you have no relative but me, nor any steadfast friend to whom I may confide you, and a scurvy to it. Lord! I'd have done it, but for this plaguy obstacle."

Then Lady Bidy, as mad as he and as fond, cries:

"Do you think I will be left at home to mope, as I have in these past months? Nay – where my fortune goes, there go I also."

"And why not?" cries my uncle, banging the table again. "Was there ere a better governor than Queen Bess, and she was a woman? And no queen that ever lived had a higher spirit or a braver heart than thou, my dear! Kiss me, for I love you. Now go fetch the chart from my closet. Benet" (turning to me), "you shall go with me and be my counsel (as much as you may, being but a poor sailor, I take it). We'll set to this at once; ships must be bought and men got – honest men – and none of your rascals who have come home with gold, and tell of getting it from the Ingas." In this way he ran on, till Lady Bidy came in bringing the chart; and a very good chart it was, so that I had no difficulty in pointing out the island where we had been set ashore, as I have said.

Then did this uncle and niece lay out their plans gleefully as any children designing a holiday jaunt – reckoning nothing of the perils and terrors that I knew lay before us. But this sanguine temper was of that family's nature. And beautiful it was to see that graceful, lovely girl leaning over beside the old knight, following the course he laid down on the card – her face all aglow with eager hope and love, her eyes sparkling, and her rich, ruddy lips sweetly curved in a smile about her little white teeth.

I know not how it came about – whether it was the pang which shot through my heart as I reflected that this adorable creature was for another and not for me – that for his sake was she hazarding her fortune and life, while, if she thought of me, it was but with scorn; or whether my body was exhausted by the fatigue it had endured in hastening hither and my long fast (I had walked all night and eaten nothing but scraps of cow-salad torn from the banks), I cannot say; only this I know that, while I sat there watching that sweet girl, a great sickness and faintness came upon me, so that I had to rise and go to the window for air.

Then Sir Bartlemy spying me, and how my face was white and the cold sweat standing in beads on my brow, perceived that I was sick. So he brought me a mug of ale and some meat, which was his remedy for all ills. But what did comfort more than these victuals was the kindness that filled Lady Bidy's heart when she saw my case. No angel could have been more tender. And while this mood was yet upon her, she said in my ear:

"Benet, I did you wrong in my too great haste; for I see now that you have served him with great love, and I must love you for so loving him."

CHAPTER XIII

THE CROSSED HEART

When two impetuous streams join and flow together, their course must needs be swift – whether to flow into the sweet and happy valley, or into the dark and horrid gulf. Thus while my uncle occupied himself in one matter, Lady Biddy busied herself in another, and both to the equipment of this new expedition; so that in an incredible short space of time all provision was achieved, and we were ready to set out.

First there were ships to be procured, and seamen to serve them. For better choice, Sir Bartlemy journeyed over to Portsmouth, taking me with him, and a well-stuffed purse, together with a dozen lusty servants for our safe escort through those lawless and dangerous parts which lay betwixt Truro and Exeter, where no man rides safe.

Being come without mishap to Portsmouth, Sir Bartlemy went to an old acquaintance of his, a broker and a very honest man, and with him we went and examined all those ships that were to sell, choosing in the end two that were after his heart; excellent fair ships too, sound and swift, that had sailed the seas, one two years and the other four; for Sir Bartlemy would have no new ships, but only such as had stood the test of tempest, and were fully seasoned.

While this was a-doing I made a discovery which gave me no little concern. The broker would have us look at a French ship, albeit Sir Bartlemy declared he would trust himself in no timbers that had not grown in England; however, to humor him, we went to the side of the harbor where she lay. But at the first sight of her my uncle turned up his nose, and began to find a hundred faults, finally declaring that nothing good ever came out of France save her wines, and that it would be time better spent to drink a pint of Bordeaux than to go further with the examination of such a cursed piece of shipbuilding. With that he invited the broker to crack a bottle in an adjacent tavern, which they did without further ado. But something in the look of this ship arousing my curiosity, I feigned to have no liking for wine, and getting the broker's leave to visit the ship, I hired a wherry and was carried to her.

La Belle Esperance was her name, and she was painted quite fresh in very lively colors, after the sort of French ships; but for all that when I got on board my suspicions were stronger than ever; for the make of the ship (being little altered) was, as I may say, familiar to me. And straight I went into the coach, and so to the little cabin on the larboard side, and there on a certain timber I sought and found this mark, cut deep in the wood:

Then I knew beyond doubt that this ship, despite its new name and fresh paint, was none other than the *Sure Hawk*. For this crossed heart was my cipher (making the letters B. P. after a fashion if looked at sidelong) which I had engraved with my own hand and of my own invention.

I needed no further proof, but, being greatly troubled, went straightway ashore. And there finding occasion to speak privately with the broker, I questioned him concerning this ship: how long she had lain at Portsmouth, etc.

"Why, sir," says he, very civilly, "she has been here three weeks, and no more. To tell you the truth, she was a French pirate, though I said nothing of that matter to Sir Bartlemy to add to his prejudice. But she is a good ship, and was taken by some honest Englishmen trading in spices."

"And what was the name of their ship who took this?" I asked.

"That I cannot tell you," he replies, "for their ship was so disabled in the fight that they had to abandon her and come home in this."

"Do you know these men or their captain?"

"No, sir, for they were of Hull; but I believe the captain's name was Adams, for I heard of him yesterday."

"In what respect?"

"It was in this wise. He bought a new ship of a brother broker here – the French vessel being not to his taste, nor big enough for his purpose – and sailed it hence to fit out and victual at Hull, where his crew would fain see their friends; and to Hull we thought he had gone. But my friend having necessity to go to St. Ives, in Cornwall, did there see this very ship, and Captain Adams with his men ashore, all drunk as any fiddlers; which amazed him, so that he spoke of it as a thing not to be understood."

But I understood this well enough, and therefore I laid the whole matter before my uncle, and would have had him go with me to St. Ives, where I doubted not but we should find Captain Adams to be Rodrigues, and so lay him and his rascally crew by the heels, besides seizing his ship for our redress.

But my uncle would not agree to this.

"For," says he, "in the first place, it is a tedious business to stir the Admiralty to our profit, and in that time this Rodrigues – curse his bones! – may get wind of our intent and slip through our fingers; and, secondly, I hold it best not to stir up a sleeping dog, but to get on while one is safe. Added to which, every moment's delay is as much as a year of suffering to Harry."

To this I could make no objection, so I agreed to keep what I knew secret. But I perceived full well that my uncle, had he not openly expressed to his friend such contempt for the French ship (as he thought her) would have let Sir Harry wait until he had proved her to be the *Sure Hawk* and brought Rodrigues to justice, for he was very revengeful when roused, and full of hatred for the man who cheated him; but because he feared ridicule – having condemned that for worthless which but twelve months before he had bought for the best ship ever built – he would do nothing. For which weakness, God knows, he was fully punished in the end.

Our business being brought to an end at Portsmouth, we sailed our new ships into Falmouth Haven; and their names were the *Sea Lion* and the *Faithful Friend*. And here were piles of merchandise waiting to be shipped, for Lady Bidy Fane had faithfully bought and prepared every sort of thing in just proportion as before our going Sir Bartlemy had set down an inventory; and none but a capable woman of stout purpose and strong heart could have done so much.

To work went all to get this store aboard – the very house servants being pressed into service (such as they could compass), under the direction of Lady Bidy; yet could not all be done in a day, nor much less than three weeks, and no time lost.

All this time my mind was exceedingly uneasy, lest Rodrigues should hear of our expedition, and seek to do us harm. And with this dread I made inquiries (privately) if during my absence any one had called to see me, and I found no one had asked for me. Then I felt sure that Rodrigues or Parsons and his men were at Penzance, and none others but they. For otherwise to a certainty the wives and sweethearts of those men drawn from Penny-come-quick and Truro to our first venture, hearing as they must of my return, would have sought me for tidings of them. And if they were in communication with those men, then must our enemies know that I had come back, and that another expedition was fitting out. I knew the nature of Rodrigues – subtile and daring wretch! – merciless in the pursuit of plunder, and bloody as those beasts of prey which will kill, though they be too surfeited to eat, their quarry.

At length all was ready for our departure. Lady Bidy having paid off all her servants (save a good wench whom she took with her) sent her plate and treasures to a silver-smith in Exeter; and so, to cut this matter short, put her estate in the hands of a trusty steward, and bade farewell to her friends. We all got on board: my uncle and Lady Bidy in the *Faithful Friend*, which was the larger and better ship of the two, and I in the *Sea Lion*. For though Sir Bartlemy would have had me with him, and Lady Bidy said nothing to discourage me therefrom, yet did I feel that it would be better that I should not see her, fearing her beauty might stir up the passion in my breast, and lead me again into evil thoughts.

It was arranged that the breeze proving prosperous the next morning we should depart at break of day; and license was given to the crew to make merry on board till ten o'clock, that they might start with a cheerful heart.

Now while the men were rejoicing after the fashion of mariners, there comes a wherry alongside with a woman in it; and this woman cries out to know if Jack Stone is aboard that ship or the *Faithful Friend*. There was no man of our crew with that name; but this woman being comely and buxom, with a merry face, the men did pretend that Jack Stone was aboard, but too drunk to stir; and with that they asked her to come up and give him a kiss for farewell.

"Why," says she, coming up the side without more ado, "do you start so soon? Jack told me yesterday you did not set out for a week."

"We sail at daybreak, sweetheart," says the gunner, taking her about the waist.

And this was what she had come to learn, as I feel convinced; for as soon as she had heard as much as was to be pumped out of these fuddled fellows, she left them, and was rowed ashore, never having again asked after the man she called Jack Stone.

The purser being a sober man, I asked him if he knew the woman, and he told me he knew her well for a Penzance woman.

"Then," thinks I, "Rodrigues has brought his ship round to be near us, and he has sent this woman for a spy. From Penzance she has come on this mission, and to Penzance she has returned; and so God help us."

CHAPTER XIV

WE ARE DOGGED BY A BLACK SHIP, TO THE GREAT DISCOMFORT OF OUR COMPANIES

We set sail at daybreak with a fair breeze, and if this had held on, then had we got safely on our way, escaping all danger from our enemy; but being only a land wind, such as frequently blows towards the sun at its rising, we found ourselves an hour after clearing Falmouth Haven in a little chopping gale, where we had much ado, by tacking this way and that, to make any progress at all, to our misfortune. While we were thus pottering to and fro, a sail appeared coming down the Channel, whereupon, my fears being that way disposed, I took into my head at once that this was Rodrigues' ship from Penzance, there having been ample time during the night for the wench who had come aboard to take him intelligence of our intent to sail. Then I begged Captain Wilkins, an excellent good man as ever lived, to let me have the ship's barge that I might go speak with my uncle; to which request he acceded instantly, and the barge being lowered and manned I was carried to the *Faithful Friend*. Here, taking my uncle aside, I laid out all that had happened the night before, and pointing to the sail bearing down towards us, I gave him my apprehensions, begging he would put back into Falmouth Haven while we yet might. But this would he not do.

"What!" says he, "put back because a sail is in sight! Why, at that rate might we never get out of Falmouth. Never yet did I put back, for I couet it the unluckiest thing a seaman may do; and in this case 'twere nothing short of folly and rank cowardice; for our foe, if foe he be, is but one, and we be two. You have done your duty, Benet, and therefore I do not scold you for doubting my mettle, your own being much softened no doubt by hardship and suffering, Lord help you! But go back at once to your ship, I prithee, and bid Master Wilkins look to his armament, be sober and prayerful, and hold himself ready to lay on to an enemy."

With this comfort I returned to the *Sea Lion*, and telling Captain Wilkins my fears and my uncle's decision, he lost no time in charging the guns and setting out muskets, swords, and brown bills ready to every hand. Likewise he mustered the crew when all had been prepared, and gave them out a very good prayer, at the same time bidding the men trust to their own defense as well as the mercy of Providence (should we be presently attacked) and give no quarter. To this address would Sir Bartlemy have added a hearty "amen" had he been present, for it was just after his own sturdy heart.

The strange sail bore down to within half a mile of us, being a swifter ship than either of ours, and making way where we could none, etc.; and then she held off on a tack and came no nearer. And though she showed no guns, yet could we see she was a powerful ship, and such as, for the value of her, would not venture abroad in these troublesome times without good arms.

About noon the breeze grew stronger and more steady, and so continued that by sundown we had made in all twelve sea leagues. All this time had the strange sail followed in our wake, standing off never much over half a mile. Then Captain Wilkins and all on board were convinced that this was an enemy seeking to injure us, and it seemed that Sir Bartlemy was equally of our way of thinking, for by means of his signals he bade us double our watch, keep our lamps well trimmed, and hold close to him. And this we did, no man taking off his clothes, but every one who lay down having his arms ready to his hand. For my own part I quitted not the deck all that night; nor could I take my eyes from the lights on board the *Faithful Friend* two minutes together for thinking of the dear girl who lay there, and whose life and honor were in our keeping.

We could see no lights in our track at all during the night, whereby we hoped that our enemy – as I may call her – seeing not ours, had fallen away in the darkness; but when day broke we perceived her still following us, and no further away than ever, so that we knew she had been guided by our lamps, and had lit none of her own. In short, not to weary the reader, as she had followed us that

night and the day before, so she clung to our heels for four days and nights after. And now being off Portugal, Sir Bartlemy might have run into port; but this he would not do; for, firstly, the breeze continued all this time fairly prosperous; and, secondly, his bold and stubborn nature would not permit him to swerve from his course, or show fear of any one.

By this time our company began to murmur because they got no proper rest through constant watching, and because (though they feared no mortal enemy) they began to look upon this pursuing ship as a thing without substance – an unearthly sign of impending destruction, a device of the fiend – I know not what, for seamen are ever prodigiously superstitious and easily terrified by that which passes their comprehension; and it strengthened their dread that this ship was painted black from stem to stern. Indeed, to a mind reasonably free from superstition, there was something dreadful and terrific in this great black ship following us with so great perseverance, which put me in mind of some carrion bird with steadfast patience hovering slowly about wanderers beleaguered in a desert, with some forecast that in the end one must fall to become its easy prey.

These six nights did I get no rest; but only a little dog sleep in the day when my body yielded to the fatigue of watching, my mind being quite disordered with dreadful apprehensions; for well I knew that if by storm we got separated in the day, or by accident of fog or such like lost each other in the night, then would our enemy fall upon us one after the other, and vanish with us; which, though we fought like lions, might well arrive, seeing she was so much greater than either of us, and manned with a greater company, as I could descry through a perspective. My own life I valued not; my fear was all lest Lady Biddy should fall a prey into the wicked hands of that bloody, subtle Rodrigues. What could that dear, sweet creature do to resist? What fate would be hers, being at his mercy? These questions did provoke fearful answers in my anxious imagination, to my inexpressible torment.

At length, on the seventh day, we being then, as Captain Wilkins told me, off the coast of Morocco, and the wind falling to a calm, I took a boat and rowed to my uncle's ship. And when I got aboard I found the company there in not much better case than ours on the *Sea Lion*, for every man had a sullen and unhappy look on his face, and from time to time cast his eye towards the black ship that lay behind us, for all my uncle pacing the deck did rate them most soundly for not going quicker about the business he set them; swearing at them like a heathen Jew, so that one, not knowing his kind and generous heart, had thought him a very tyrant.

My first thought was of Lady Biddy, and casting my eye up and down the deck to see if her fair face and dainty figure were there, my limbs shook and my teeth chattered together with the intensity of my desire. But she was nowhere visible.

"Well, Benet, what the plague has brought you from your ship?" asks my uncle roughly, as he comes to my side. "What do you fear, that you are spying up and down, your cheeks pale, and your lips on a quiver?"

"Lady Biddy," says I, with a thickness in my voice, "is she well?"

"Ay, and if all on this ship were as stout of heart I should have more reason to be grateful," says he.

"Thank God she is well. May no mischance befall her!" says I in a low tone.

"And what mischance may befall her if we act like men in her defense?"

I cast my eyes towards the black ship, and then said I to my uncle:

"Rodrigues is there, I know."

"You shall lend me your spyglass, for I think you have seen him, to be so cock-sure."

"No, sir, I have not seen him; but I am sure he commands that ship. A painter is known by his workmanship."

"I know nothing of painting and such fiddle-faddle. Speak straight to the purpose, man," says my uncle with a curse.

"Well," says I, "no man but Rodrigues could devise such subtle, devilish means for our destruction."

"In this holding on yet holding off, I see nothing but the device of a fool or a coward, be he Rodrigues or another."

"He is neither a fool nor a coward," says I; "he values his ship and his men too high to attack us at a disadvantage. He knows, as well as you do, that this patient following, while it amuses his company and rests them, is fatiguing ours, and sapping the foundation of their courage."

"I warrant their courage will return to the dogs with the first shot that is fired."

"Then may it be too late; for, you may be sure of this, Rodrigues will not fire a ball until he is sure of our defeat," says I.

"Sure of our defeat! And pray when may that be?" asks he, firing up with disdain.

"When accident helps him either to fall in with his comrade Parsons, or by our getting sundered through some mishap. He has as many men on his ship (as you may plainly see) as we have in both our companies, and more. How are we to combat him singly?"

"Why, with God's help and our own good arms," says he sternly; but the moment after that he turned his eyes towards the black ship, measuring it; and his silence proclaimed that he could not overlook his peril. Presently, in a more subdued tone, he says, "Well, nephew, I doubt not you had some better intention than to damp my spirits in coming here, so if you would offer any advice, out with it, for the love of God, and I promise I will listen with as much patience and forbearance as I may command."

"Sir," says I, "you are making for the Canaries, and there, in all likelihood, is Parsons, awaiting the coming of his confederate, so that we are, as it were, going before the tiger into the lair of his mate." My uncle nodded acquiescence. "Now, if I might advise, I would have you alter your course, and make for the Windward Isles, and so down to Guiana. Then, if Rodrigues does also alter his course, I should draw upon him and seek so to disable him with a shot amidst his masts as he should be disabled from following us further."

"Now, indeed, do you talk good sense, and such as is after my heart," cries he joyfully. "This will I do at once; so go you back and bid Wilkins prepare to shape his course this way."

But seeing that I yet lingered, as loth to depart, he claps me on the shoulder and says, "What else would you have, Benet?"

"Why, sir," says I, "I would have you send another with your message, and suffer me to stay here in his place."

"Why, are you so weak-kneed as that?" says he. "Well, 'tis in the nature of mice to be timorous; but I looked for better stuff in a man of our family."

"Nay," says I; "if I feared Rodrigues I should not ask to stay here, for 'tis this ship he will attack, knowing, as he must, by our sailing, that our general and leader is here."

"Why, that is true," says he; and then he fell into a silence, and looked at me keenly to divine why I wished to stay there. After a little while, marking the hot blood in my face, and knowing it was to be near Lady Biddy that, I sought this change of ships, he put his hands on my shoulders, and says he very kindly, and with a little trembling of pity in his voice, "My poor Benet, the best thing you can do for her sake is to go back to your ship and stay not in this. Ay, and for your own sake it were better too. The enemy you have to overcome is the passion of your own breast, which is more capable to bring ruin to your soul and sorrow to our hearts than are the guns of Rodrigues to endanger our bodies. Go back, dear fellow."

And knowing how this passion had before, by its hopelessness, brought me into evil ways and despair of better, I accepted his guidance and went back to my ship, though with a sore heart.

And going back I saw my lady standing in the stern gallery of the *Faithful Friend*. But she did not see me, or, seeing me, made no sign; for why should she trouble to descry whether it were I or another sitting there? And clasping my hands together I prayed God (within myself) to dispose of her to her own happiness and His praise.

CHAPTER XV

WE FALL INTO SORE DISASTERS OF RAGING TEMPEST AND BLOODY BATTLE

As soon as I was got on board I told Captain Wilkins of our generalissimo's intention, which he heard with much satisfaction, and did straightway communicate with his crew, who thereupon set up a great cheer. About two o'clock, the breeze freshening, the *Faithful Friend* changed her course and we with her, and for two hours we ran west, though the wind had been more prosperous for making south. Yet did the black ship follow us in the course persistently as in the other, keeping always the same distance in our wake. Then did Sir Bartlemy signal us to open all our ports for the guns to play, and to stand every man to his post, which we did very cheerfully and as smartly as ever the company on the *Faithful Friend* did. And though this preparation might well be seen from the black ship, we could see with our perspectives no such preparation on her, so that the simple would have conceived she had no lower ports for guns, and was an unarmed trader. Then Sir Bartlemy signaled us to stand-to, yet to be in readiness to come to his help if need arose, which we did; meanwhile he puts about and sails down on the black ship, who kept her ports closed, but stayed his coming patiently.

Being come within speaking distance, Sir Bartlemy takes his speaking horn and spreads out his ancient; whereupon the black ship spread hers, which was true English, and every way as good as ours. Then our general through his horn demanded what ship that was and why she did so persistently dog us. To this a man from the black ship replied, that she was the *Robin Goodfellow*, of Southampton, commanded by Richard Simons, and a very peaceable trader, bound for Campeachy Bay to barter for dye-wood, and that she meant us no harm, but only sought to have protection against pirates by sailing in the company of two ships so well armed as we.

"Then," shouts my uncle, "be you like your ship, a good fellow, and sheer off, for we like your room better than your company; and sheer off at once (adds he) or I will pepper your jacket to a pretty tune."

To show that he meant to be as good as his word, he bade his gunner fire a broadside wide of the black ship, which did the gunner very faithfully, hurting no one. "Though, would to God!" says my uncle afterwards, "I had been wise enough to fire amongst his rigging for a better earnest."

The black ship made no response; but, turning about, held off before the wind half a mile and no more; and my uncle, sailing upon her to make her go to a greater distance, she sheered off, keeping always the same distance; and this maneuver was repeated twice or thrice till Sir Bartlemy, guessing she was endeavoring to lure him away from us, and, seeing it was useless to try and come up to close quarters with a ship that could sail two furlongs to his one, gave up this attempt and rejoined us. Our captain tried to make his men believe that the black ship was what her captain represented, and that he, in still following us – which he did as though he had received no warning, or scorned to accept it – was merely showing a stubborn spirit and not a hostile one, since he had not showed any guns or fired in defiance to us. Some of our better men accepted this; but there were many who could not stomach it, and openly cursed the day when they had come to sea on this venture.

So held we on, and my uncle, hoping the black ship would have to stay for water and refreshment at the Azores (for we had gone from our course that if the black ship were indeed bound for Campeachy she might have no further pretext to hang on our heels), and being himself still very well victualed, would not stay there, but, passing them, bore down towards the Bermudas; but neither would the black ship stay there, but kept to our heels as perversely as ever.

Now, being come to the Bermudas, that befell which I feared, for the seas, which are greatly disturbed at those parts, rose prodigiously, and with it there came a most terrible hurricane, which obliged us to run with a single small sail. This gale did so buffet and hurl us about as we could with

much pain keep to our course and reasonably near our consort during the day; but at night it was worse, for no lamps of ours could be kept burning, nor was any of the *Faithful Friend's* to be seen, though from time to time we fired off our petereros for a signal, yet answer got we none. In this terrible tempest we were sorely bruised, our little sail split to shreds, and no chance to rig another, so that we tossed helpless on the water, expecting every moment to founder. But it pleased God to spare us this time.

I shall not dwell on the terrors of that night, nor of the next day, and the night following, but come briefly to the morning of the third day of our tribulation, when, by help of such sails as we could set, we drifted out of that horrid region and came into calmer waters; in which time we had been swept an incredible distance; but, lord! so broken in our masts, riggings, and elsewhere as it was pitiable to see; besides three men short of our number, who we counted were washed away in that hurricano. Then looking around could we see nothing of the *Faithful Friend*, nor of the black ship neither; so that we reckoned one or both had gone to the bottom.

To think that Lady Biddy was no more affected me so grievously that I threw myself on the deck, not caring what became of me, and lamenting that I lay not at the bottom of that cruel sea with her. But Captain Wilkins kept a brave heart (God be praised!), and, hoping yet to see our consort again, contrived to set up some sort of sails, fresh rig his rudder, and restore order on board, so that ere long we were making good way towards Trinidado (as we judged), where it had been agreed we should in case of separation seek rendezvous. On the morning of the fourth day, ere yet there was full daylight, but only twilight, as I was standing on the poop deck very melancholy and dejected, I heard the sound of guns to the south of the course we were making; and Captain Wilkins, to whom I ran in all speed to communicate these tidings, did likewise believe he heard this sound; whereupon he at once shaped our course in that direction, whereby in a little time we were further assured that these sounds were real, and not bred of imagination. The reports were not apart, like signals, but continuous; so that we knew it was the cannonading of ships in battle, which stirred every man to make all haste; and indeed we did all we could think on to speed our ship; still were we slow, for our want of sail, which made us furious with impatience.

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