

CHAPTER XLV

DANGER

The time of waiting was inconceivably long and dreary. When Marjory and I had been waiting for death in the water-cave, we thought that nothing could be so protracted; but now I knew better. Then, we had been together, and whatever came, even death itself, would be shared by us. But now I was alone; and Marjory away, and in danger. In what danger I knew not, I could only imagine; and at every new thought of fear and horror I ground my teeth afresh and longed for action. Fortunately there was something to do. The detectives wanted to know all I could tell them. At the first, the chief had asked that Mrs. Jack would get all the servants of the house together so that he might see them. She had so arranged matters that they would be together in the servants' hall, and he went down to inspect. He did not stay long; but came back to me at once with an important look on his face. He closed the door and coming close to me said:

"I knew there was something wrong below stairs! That footman has skipped!" For a few seconds I did not realise what he meant, and asked him to explain.

"That footman that went out gallavantin' at nights. He's in it, sure. Why isn't he in the hall where the others are? Just you ask the old lady about him. It'll be less suspicious than me doing it." Then it dawned on me what he meant.

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"There is no footman in the house!" I said.

"That's so, Mister. That's just what I'm tellin'! Where is he?"

"There is none; they don't have any male servants in the house. The only men are in the stables in the village."

"Then that makes it worse still. There is a man who I've seen myself steal out of the house after dark, or in the dusk; and sneak back again out of the wood in the grey of the dawn. Why, I've reported it to Mr. Adams. Didn't he warn you about it; he said he would."

"He did that."

"And didn't you take his tip?"

"No!" here from the annoyed expression of his face I took warning. It would never do to chagrin the man and set him against me by any suspicion of ridicule. So I went on:

“The fact is, my friend, that this was a disguise. It was Mar—Miss Drake who used it!” He was veritably surprised; his amazement was manifest in his words:

“Miss Drake! And did she put on the John Thomas livery? In the name of thunder, why?”

“To escape you!”

“To escape me! Wall, I’m damned! That elegant young lady to put on livery; and to escape me!”

“Yes; you and the others. She knew you were watching her! Of course she was grateful for it!” I added, for his face fell “but she couldn’t bear it all the same. You know what girls are,” I went on apologetically, “They don’t like to be cornered or forced to do anything. She knew you were all clever fellows at your work and didn’t take any chances.” I was trying to conciliate him; but I need not have feared. He was of the right sort. He broke into a laugh, slapping his thigh loudly with his open hand as he said heartily:

“Well, that girl’s a daisy! she’s a peach; she’s “It”![376] To think of her walking out under our noses, and us not having an idea that it might be her, just because we didn’t think she’d condescend to put on the breeches—and the footman’s at that. Well, it’s a pity we didn’t get on to her curves; for it might have been different! Never mind! We’ll take her out of her trouble before long; and Mr. Whisky Tommy and his push will have to look out for their skins!”

This little episode passed some of the time; but the reaction to the dreary waiting was worse than ever. As I began again an endless chain of surmises and misgivings, it occurred to me that Don Bernardino might be made of some use. The blackmailers had evidently watched him; it might be that they would watch him again. If so, he could be the means of a trap being laid. I turned the matter over in my mind, but at present could see no way to realise the idea. It gave me another thought, however. The Don had been very noble in his attitude to me; and I might repay some of his goodness. Although he was so quiet and silent, I knew well that he must be full of his own anxiety regarding the treasure, now exposed as it might be to other eyes than his own. I could ask him to go to see after it. With some diffidence I broached the matter to him, for I did not want in any way to wound him. Since I had determined to relinquish the treasure if necessary, I was loth to make the doing so seem like an ungracious act. At first he almost took offence, reminding me with overt haughtiness that he had already assured me that all the treasures of Spain or of the Popedom were secondary to a woman’s honour. I liked him all the better for his attitude; and tried to

persuade him that it was his duty to guard this trust, as otherwise it might fall into bad hands. Then a brilliant idea struck me, one which at once met the case and made the possibility of a^[377] trap. I told him that as the blackmailers had watched him once they might have done so again, and have even followed him to my house. As I was speaking, the thought struck me of how well Providence arranges all for the best. If Don Bernardino had not taken from the library the typescript of the secret writing, it might have fallen into the hands of the gang. When I mentioned the idea to him he said in surprise:

“But I did not take the papers! I read them on the table; but did not think of moving them. Why, had I done so, I should have at once made suspicion; and it was my purpose to keep the secret if I could.” An idea struck me and I ran over to the table to look where the papers usually were.

There was not a sign of them about. Somebody had secured them; it could hardly have been Marjory who lacked any possible motive for doing so. The Spaniard, eagerly following my face, saw the amazement which I felt; he cried out:

“Then they have taken them. The treasure may yet prove a lure through which we may catch them. If it be that they have followed me to your house, and if they have any suspicions that came to me on reading that paper, then they will surely make some attempt.” If anything were to be tried on this line, there was no time to lose. I had to carry out the matter privately; for on mentioning to Don Bernardino that I should ask one of the detectives to go with him, he at once drew back.

“No!” he said, “I have no right to imperil further this trust. The discovery was yours, and you knew of the hiding place before I did; but I could not with my consent allow any other person to know the secret. Moreover, these men are enemies of my country; and it is not well that they should know, lest they should use^[378] their knowledge for their country’s aid. You and I, Senor, are *caballero*. To us there is, somewhere, a high rule of honour; but to these people there is only law!”

“Well,” I said, “if you are going, you had better lose no time. These people have had nearly six hours already; I left the house with Mrs. Jack a little after ten. But you had better go carefully. The men are desperate; and if they find you alone, you may have a bad time.”

For answer he pulled a revolver from his pocket. “Since yesterday,” he said, “I go armed, till these unhappy businesses are all over!”

I then told him of the entrance to the caves, and gave him the key of the cellar. “Be sure you have light.” I cautioned him “Plenty of light and matches. It will be towards

low water when you get there. The rope which we used as a clue is still in its place; we did not take it away." I could see that this thought was a new source of anxiety to him; if the gang were before him it would have served to lead them to the treasure itself. As he was going, I bade him remember that if there was any sign of the men about, he was to return at once or send us word, so that we could come and catch them like rats in a trap. In any case he was to send us word, so that we might have knowledge of his movements, and inferentially of those of our enemies. In such a struggle as ours, knowledge was everything.

Not long after he had gone, Cathcart and MacRae arrived on horseback. They said there were three other saddle horses coming after them. Cathcart had a list of all the churches, and the manses of all the clergy of all shades of doctrine, in Buchan; and a pretty formidable list it made. He had also a map of Aberdeen County, and a list of such houses as had been let for the summer or at any period during it. Such was of course[379] only an agent's list, and would not contain every letting privately.

We set to work at once with the map and the lists; and soon marked the names which were likely to be of any use to us, those which had at any time lately been let to strangers. Then Cathcart and Gordon and all the detectives, except the chief, went off on horseback with a list of places to visit. They were all to return to report as soon as possible. The chief kept tab of the places to be visited by each. When the rest had gone, I asked him if he knew where any of those supposed to be of the gang lived in the neighbourhood. He said he felt awkward in answering the question, and he certainly looked it. "The fact is," he said sheepishly, "since that young lady kicked those names on the dirt, and so into my thick head, I know pretty well who they are. Had I known before, I could easily have got those who could identify them; for I never saw them myself. I take it that 'Feathers' is none other than Featherstone who was with Whisky Tommy—which was Tom Mason—in the A. T. Stewart ransom case. If those two are in it, most likely the one they called the 'Dago' is a half-bred Spaniard that comes from somewheres over here. That Max that she named, if he's the same man, is a Dutchman; he's about the worst of the bunch. Then for this game there's likely to be two Chicago bums from the Levee, way-down politicians and heelers. It's possible that there are two more; a man from Frisco that they call Sailor Ben—what they call a cosmopolite for he doesn't come from nowhere in particular; and a buck nigger from Noo Orleans. A real bad 'un he is; of all the.... But I hope he isn't in the gang. If he is, we haven't no time to lose."

His words made my blood run cold. Was this the crowd, within whose danger I had consented that Marjory[380] should stand. The worst kind of scoundrels from all over the earth. Oh! what it was to be powerless, and to know that she was in their hands. It

took me all my strength of purpose not to weep, out of very despair. I think the detective must have wished to cheer me a little, for he went on:

“Of course it’s not their game to do her any harm, or let harm come to her. She’s worth too many millions, alive and unharmed, for them to spoil their market by any foolishness. It’s here that I trust Whisky Tommy to keep the rest straight. I suppose you know, Sir, that criminals always work in the same way every time. We know that when the Judge wouldn’t pay up for old A. T., Featherstone threatened to burn up the stiff; but Whisky Tommy knew better than to kill the golden goose like that. Why he went and stole it from Featherstone and hid it somewhere about Trenton till the old lady coughed up about twenty-five thousand. Tommy’s head’s level; and if that black devil isn’t in the squeeze, he’ll keep them up to the collar every time.”

“Who is the negro?” I asked, for I wanted to know the worst. “What has he done?”

“What hasn’t he done that’s vile, is what I’d like to know. They’re a hard crowd in the darkey side of Noo Orleans; and a man doesn’t get a bad name there easily, I tell you. There are dens there that’d make God Almighty blush, or the Devil either; a darkey that is bred in them and gets to the top of the push, doesn’t stick at no trifles!

“But you be easy in your mind as yet, Sir; at present there’s naught to fear. But if once they get safe away, they will try to put the screw on. God knows then what may happen. In the meantime, the only fear is lest, if they’re in a tight place, they may kill her!”

My heart turned to ice at his words. What horrible[381] possibilities were there, when death for my darling was the “only” fear. It was in a faint enough voice I asked him:

“Would they really kill her?”

“Of course they would; if it was their best course. But don’t you be downhearted, Sir. There’s not much fear of killing—as yet at all events. These men are out for dough; and for a good heap of it, too. They’re not going to throw away a chance till the game’s up. If we get on to their curves quick, they’ll have to think of their own skins. It’s only when all’s up that they’ll act; when they themselves must croak if she doesn’t!”

Oh! if I had known! If I had had any suspicion of the dangerous nature of the game we were playing—that I had consented that Marjory should play—I’d have cut my tongue out before I’d have agreed. I might have known that a great nation like the United States would not have concerned itself as to any danger to an individual, unless there had been good cause. Oh fool! fool! that I had been!

If I had been able to do anything, it might not have been so bad. It was necessary, however, that I should be at the very heart and centre of action; for I alone knew the different ramifications of things, and there was always something cropping up of which I had better knowledge than the others. And so I had to wait in what patience I could pray for. Patience and coolness of head were what were demanded of me for the present. Later on, the time might come when there would be action; and I never doubted that when that time did come it would not find me wanting—even in the issues of life and death.

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CHAPTER XLVI
ARDIFFERY MANSE

In the dreary time of waiting I talked with the detective chief. Everything which he told me seemed to torture me; but there was a weird fascination in his experience as it bore on our own matter. I was face to face, for the first time in my life, with that callousness which is the outcome of the hard side of the wicked world. Criminal-hunters, as well as criminals, achieve it; so I suppose do all whose fortunes bring them against the sterner sides of life. Now and again it amazed me to hear this man, unmistakably a good fellow and an upright one, weighing up crime and criminals in a matter-of-fact way, without malice, without anger, without vindictiveness. He did seem to exercise in his habitual thought of his *clientele* that constructive condemnation which sways the rest of us in matters of moral judgment. The whole of his work, and attitude, and purpose, seemed to be only integral parts of a game which was being played. At that time I thought light of this, and consequently of him; but looking back, with judgment in better perspective, I am able to realise the value of just such things. There was certainly more chance of cooler thought and better judgment under these conditions, than when the ordinary passions and motives of human life held sway. This man did not seem to be chagrined, or put out personally in any way, by the failure of his task, or to have any rancour, from this cause, in his heart for[383] those to whom the failure was due. On the contrary, he, like a good sportsman, valued his opponent more on account of the cleverness which had baffled him. I imagined that at first he would have been angry when he learned how all the time in which he and his companions had been watching Crom Castle, and were exulting in the security which their presence caused, their enemies had been coming and going as they wished by a safe way, unknown; and had themselves been the watchers. But there was nothing of the kind; I really believe that, leaving out of course

the possibly terrible consequences of his failure, he enjoyed the defeat which had come to him. In his own way he put it cleverly:

“Those ducks knew their work well. I tell you this, in spite of the softies we have been, it isn’t easy to play any of us for a sucker. Just fancy! the lot of us on sentry-go day and night round the castle, for, mind you, we never neglected the job for one half hour; and all the time, three lots of people—this push, you and the girl, and this Dago lord of yours—all going and coming like rabbits in a warren. What puzzles me is how you and Miss Drake managed to escape the observation of Whisky Tommy’s lot, even if you went through us!”

It had been after five o’clock when the party set out to visit the manses; at six o’clock the reports began to come in. The first was a message scribbled on a leaf torn from a note book, and sent in one of the envelopes taken for the purpose.

“All right at Auquharney.” From this on, messengers kept arriving, some on foot, some on horseback, some in carts: but each bearing a similar message, though couched in different terms. They came from Auchlenchries, Heila, Mulonachie, Ardendraught, Inverquohomery, Skelmuir, and Auchorachan. At nine o’clock the first of the searchers returned. This was Donald MacRae;^[384] knowing the country he had been able to get about quicker than any of the others who had to keep to the main roads. His report was altogether satisfactory; he had been to six places, and in each of them there was no ground for even suspicion.

It was nearly three hours before the rest were in, but all with the same story; in none of the manses let to visitors through an agent, and in none if occupied by their incumbents, could the fugitives have hidden. The last to come in were the two trackers, disappointed and weary. They had lost the track several times; but had found it again on some cross road. They had finally lost it in a dusty road near Ardiffery and had only given up when the light had altogether gone. They themselves thought their loss was final, for they could not take up the track within a quarter of a mile of either side of the spot where they had lost it.

It was now too late to do anything more for this night; so, after a meal, all the men, except one who remained on watch, went to sleep for a few hours. We must start again before dawn. For myself I could not rest; I should have gone mad, I think, if I had to remain the night without doing something. So I determined to wheel over to Whinnyfold and see how Don Bernardino had progressed. I was anxious, as I had not heard from him.

At Whinnyfold all was still, and there was no sign of light in the house. I had brought with me the duplicate key which I had given to Marjory, and which Mrs. Jack found for me on her dressing table; but when I inserted it, it would not turn. It was a Yale lock; and it was not likely that it should have got out of order without the use of some force or clumsiness. I put it down in the first instance to the inexperience of the Don in such mechanism. Anyhow, there was nothing to be done[385] as to entry by that way, so I went round to the back to see if I could make an entry there. It was all safe, however; I had taken care to fasten every door and window on the previous night. As the front door was closed to me, it was only by force that I could effect entrance to my own house. I knocked softly at the door, and then louder; I thought perhaps, for some reason to be explained, the Don had remained in the house and might now be asleep. There was no sound, however, and I began to have grave doubts in my own mind as to whether something serious might have happened. If so, there was no time to lose. Anything having gone wrong meant that the blackmailers had been there. If I had to break open the door I might as well do it myself; for if I should get help from the village, discussion and gossip would at once begin, if only from the fact that I could not wait till morning.

I got a scaffold pole from the yard where some of the builder's material still remained, and managed by raising it on my shoulder and making a quick run forward to strike the door with it just over the lock. The blow was most efficacious; the door flew open so quickly that the handle broke against the wall of the passage. For a few seconds I paused, looking carefully round to see if the sound had brought any one to the spot; but all was still. Then carefully, and with my revolver ready in my right hand and the lamp of my bicycle in my left, I entered the house.

A glance into each of the two sitting-rooms of the ground floor showed me that there was no one there; so I closed the hall-door again, and propped it shut with the scaffold pole. Quickly I ran over the house from top to bottom, looking into every room and space where anyone could hide. The cellar door was locked. It was odd indeed; there was not a sign of Don Bernardino[386] anywhere. With a sudden suspicion I turned into the dining-room and looked on the table, where the several caskets which we had taken from the cave had lain.

There was not a sign of them! Some one had carried them off.

For a while I thought it must have been Don Bernardino. There came back to me very vividly the conversation which we had had in that very room only a day before; I seemed to see the red light of his eyes blaze again, as when he had told me that he would not stop at anything to gain possession of the treasure. It must have been, that

when he found himself in possession, the desire overcame him to take away the treasure to where he could himself control it.

But this belief was only momentary. Hard upon its heels came the remembrance of his noble attitude when I had come to ask his help for a woman in distress—I who had refused his own appeal to my chivalry only a few hours before. No! I would not believe that he could act so now. In strength of my belief I spoke aloud: “No! I will not believe it!”

Was it an echo to my words? or was it some mysterious sound from the sea beneath? Sound there certainly was, a hollow, feeble sound that seemed to come from anywhere, or nowhere. I could not locate it at all. There was but one part of the house unsearched, so I got a great piece of wood and broke open the door of the cellar. There was no one in it, but the square hole in the centre of it seemed like a mystery itself. I listened a moment; and the hollow sound came again, this time through the hole.

There was some one in the cave below, and the sound was a groan.

I lit a torch and leaning over the hole looked down. The floor below was covered with water, but it was only^[387] a few inches deep and out of it came the face of the Spaniard, looking strangely white despite its natural swarthinness. I called to him. He evidently heard me, for he tried to answer; but I could distinguish nothing, I could only hear a groan of agony. I rigged up the windlass, and taking with me a spare piece of rope lowered myself into the cave. I found Don Bernardino just conscious; he was unable, seemingly, to either understand my questions or to make articulate reply. I tied the spare rope round him, there being no time or opportunity to examine him as he lay in the water, and taking the spare end with me pulled myself up again. Then, putting the rope to which he was attached on the windlass, I easily drew him up to the cellar.

A short time sufficed to give him some brandy, and to undress him and wrap him in rugs. He shivered at first, but the warmth soon began to affect him. He got drowsy, and seemed all at once to drop asleep. I lit a fire and made some tea and got provisions ready. In less than half an hour he awoke, refreshed and quite coherent. Then he told me all that had passed. He had opened the door without trouble, and had looked into the dining-room where he found the caskets still on the table. He did not think of searching the house. He got a light and went into the cellar, leaving the door open, and set about examining the winch, so as to know the mechanism sufficiently well as to be able to raise and lower himself. Whilst stooping over the hole, he got a violent blow on the back of the head which deprived him of his senses. When he became conscious again there were four men in the cellar, all masked. He himself was tied up with ropes

and gagged. The men lowered each other till only one remained on guard. He heard them calling to each other. After a long wait they had come back, all of them carrying heavy burdens which[388] they began to haul up by the windlass. He said that it creaked loudly with the weight as they worked it. He had the unutterable chagrin of seeing them pack up in sacks and bags, extemporised from the material in the house, the bullion of the treasure which his ancestor had undertaken to guard, and to which he had committed his descendants until the trust should have been fulfilled. When all was ready for departure—which was not for many hours, and when two of the men had returned with a cart of some sort, whose wheels he heard rumbling—they consulted as to what they should do with him. There was no disguise made of their intent; all was spoken in his hearing with the most brutal frankness. One man, whom he described as with grey lips of terrific thickness, and whose hands were black, was for knifing him at once or cutting his throat, and announced his own readiness to do the job. He was overruled, however, by another, presumably the leader of the gang, who said there was no use taking extra risks. “Let us put him into the cave,” he said. “He may break his neck; but anyhow it does not matter for the tide is rising fast and if anyone should come they will find that he met his death by an accident.”

This suggestion was carried out; he was, after the ropes and gag were removed with the utmost care but with the utmost brutality, lowered into the cave. He remembered no more till the deadly silence around him was broken by the sound, seemingly far away, of a heavy blow on wood which reverberated.

I examined him all over carefully, but could find no definite harm done to him. This knowledge in itself cheered him up, and his strength and nerve began to come back; with his strength came determination. He could, however, tell me nothing of the men who had attacked him. He said he would know their voices again,[389] but, what with their masks and his cramped position, he could not see enough to distinguish anything.

Whilst he was recovering himself I looked carefully round the room and house. From the marks at one of the windows at the back I gathered that this was the means by which they had gained admission. They were expert housebreakers; and as I gathered from the detective that Whisky Tommy was a bank burglar—most scientific and difficult of all criminal trades, except perhaps, banknote forgery—I was not surprised that they had been able to gain admittance. None of the jewels which Marjory and I had taken from the cave were left behind. The robbers had evidently made accurate search; even the rubies, which I had left in the pocket of the shooting-coat which I had worn in the cave, had disappeared.

One thing I gathered from their visit; they evidently felt secure as to themselves. They dared not risk so long delay had not their preparations been complete; and they must have been satisfied as to the mechanism of their escape since they could burden themselves with such weight of treasure. Moreover, their hiding place, wherever it was, could not be far off. There were engaged in this job four men; besides, there were probably watchers. Marjory had only recorded in her cipher six engaged in her abduction, when presumably their full strength would have been needed in case of unexpected difficulties or obstacles. The Secret Service chief presumed at least eight. I determined, therefore, that I would get back to Crom as soon as possible, and, with the aid of this new light, consult as to what was best to be done. I wanted to take Don Bernardino with me, or to try to get a trap to take him on; but he said he would be better remaining where he was. "I can be of no use to any one till I get over this shock," he said. "The rest here, if I remain longer, will do me good; and in[390] the morning I may be able to help." I asked him if he was not afraid to be left alone in his present helpless condition: His reply showed great common sense:

"The only people whom I have to fear are the last who will come to this place!"

I made him as comfortable as I could, and fixed the catch of the door so that the lock would snap behind me. Then I got on my bicycle and rode to Crom as quickly as I could. As it was now nearly early morning the men were getting ready for their day's work. Cathcart and I discussed the new development with the detective chief. I did not tell him of the treasure. It was gone; and all I could do was to spare the Spaniard's feelings. It was enough that they knew of the attack on Don Bernardino, and that they had taken from my house whatever was of value in it. As I went over the practical side of the work before us, I had an idea. It was evident that these men had some secret hiding place not far away; why should it not be an empty house? I made the suggestion to my two companions, who agreed with me that we should at once make search for such a place. Accordingly we arranged that one man of the force should go into Ellon, as soon as it was possible to find any one up, and another into Aberdeen to try to find out from various agents what houses in the district were at present unoccupied. In the meantime I looked over the list of Manses and found that there were two which were open for letting, but had not yet been occupied, Aucheries and Ardiffery. We determined to visit the latter first, as it was nearer, amid a network of cross roads on the high road to Fraserburgh. When we were arranging plans of movement, the two trackers who wanted to resume their work said that we might put them down on our way, as the spot they aimed for lay in the[391] same direction. We left two men behind; the rest of us kept together.

As we drove along in the brake, the trackers showed us how they had followed the carriage. It brought an agonising hope to me to think that we were actually travelling on the same road as Marjory had gone. I had a secret conviction that we were going right. Something within me told me so. I had in former days—days that now seemed so long ago—when I realised that I had the Second Sight, come to have such confidence in my own intuition that now something of the same feeling came back to me as a reality. Oh! how I longed that the mysterious gift might now be used on behalf of her I loved. What would I not have given for one such glimpse of her in her present situation, as I had before seen of Lauchlane Macleod, or of the spirits of the Dead from the Skares. But it is of the essence of such supernatural power that it will not work to command, to present need, to the voice of suffering or of prayer; but only in such mysterious way and time as none can predicate. Whilst I thought thus, and hoped thus, and prayed with all the intensity of my poor breaking heart, I seemed to feel in me something of the mood in which the previous visions had come. I became lost to all surroundings; and it was with surprise that I became conscious that the carriage had stopped and that the trackers were getting off. We arranged with them that after our visit to the Manse at Ardiffery we should return for them, or to see how they had got on with their task. They were not hopeful of following a two-day-old trail of a carriage on these dusty roads.

The cross road to Ardiffery branched off to our left, and then to the left again; so that when we came near the place, we were still within easy distance, as the crow flies, from where we had left our men.

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The Manse at Ardiffery is a lonely spot, close to the church, but quite away from the little clachan. The church stands in its own graveyard, in a hollow surrounded with a wall of considerable dimensions. The garden and policies of the house seem as though carved out of the woodland growth. There is a narrow iron gate, sheer in the roadway, and a straight path up to the front of the house; one arm branches to the right in a curved lane-way through fir trees leading to the stable and farm offices at the back of the house. At the gateway was a board with a printed notice that the house, with grounds, gardens and policies, was to be let until Christmas. The key could be had from, and details supplied by, Mrs. MacFie, merchant at the Ardiffery cross roads. The whole place had a deserted air; weeds were growing everywhere, and, even from the roadway, one could see that the windows were fouled from disuse.

As we drew near, the odd feeling of satisfaction—I can hardly describe it more fully—seemed to grow in me. I was not exultant, I was scarcely hopeful; but somehow the

veil seemed to be lifting from my soul. We left the brake on the road, and went up the little avenue to the front of the house. For form's sake we knocked, though we knew well that if those we sought should be within there would be little chance of their responding to our call. We left one man at the door, in case by any chance any one should come; the rest of us took the other way round to the back of the house. We had got about half way along it, where there was an opening into the fields, when the detective chief who was in front of us held up his hand to stop. I saw at a glance what had struck him.

Whilst the rest of the rough roadway was unkempt and weed-grown, the gravel from this on, to the back of the house, had been lately raked.

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“Why?”

The only answer to the unspoken query of each of us was that Marjory had made some marks, intentionally or unintentionally—or some one had; and the gang had tried to efface them.

Fools! their very effort to obliterate their trace was a help to us.

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CHAPTER XLVII

THE DUMB CAN SPEAK

The Secret Service men spread round the house, moving off silently right and left, in accordance with the nods of their chief in answer to their looks of query. As they moved, keeping instinctively in shelter from any possible view from the house so far as the ground afforded opportunity, I could see that each felt that his gun was in its place. They all knew the gang they had to deal with, and they were not going to take any chances. MacRae said to me:

“I'll go and get the key! I know this country better than any of you; I can run over to the cross roads in a few minutes and it will be less marked than driving there.” As he went out at the gate he told the driver to pull down the road, till the curve shut him out of sight. Whilst he was gone, the men surrounded the house, keeping guard at such points that nothing coming from it could escape our notice. The chief tried the back door but it was shut; from its rigidity it was manifestly bolted top and bottom.

In less than a quarter of an hour MacRae returned and told us that Mrs. MacFie was coming with the key as quickly as she could. He offered to take it, telling her who he was; but she said she would come herself and make her service, as it would not be respectful to him and the other gentlemen to let them go alone. In a few minutes she was with us; the chief detective, Cathcart,[395] and I stayed with MacRae, the rest of the men remaining on watch and hidden. There was a little difficulty with the lock, but we shortly got in, Mrs. MacFie leading the way. Whilst she was opening the shutters of the back room, which was evidently the Minister's study, Cathcart and the chief left the room, and made a hurried, though thorough, search of the house. They came back before the old lady was well through her task, and shook their heads.

When the light was let in, the room presented a scene of considerable disorder. It was evident that it had been lately inhabited, for there were scattered about, a good many things which did not belong to it. These included a washing jug, and a bowl full of dirty water; a rug and pillows on the sofa; and a soiled cup and plate on the table. On the mantelpiece was a guttered out candle. When the old woman saw the state of the room, she lifted her hands in horrified amazement as she spoke:

“Keep's 'a! The tramps must ha' been here. In the Meenster's own study, too! An' turnin' the whole place topsal-teerie. Even his bukes all jumm'lt up thegither. Ma certes! but won't he be upset by yon!”

Whilst she had been speaking, my eyes had been taking in everything. All along one side of the room was a bookcase, rough shelves graduated up in height to suit the various sizes of books. There were in the room more than enough books to fill them; but still some of the shelves towards the right hand end were vacant and a great quantity of books lay on the floor. These were not tumbled about as if thrown down recklessly, but were laid upon the floor in even rows. It looked as if they had been taken down in masses and laid out in the same order as though ready to put back. But the books on the shelves! It was no wonder that the old woman, who did not understand the full meaning,[396] was shocked; for never was seen such seeming disorder in any library. Seldom did a volume of a series seem to be alongside its fellow; even when several were grouped together, the rest of the selection would be missing, or seen in another part of the shelf. Some of the volumes were upside down; others had the fronts turned out instead of the back. Altogether there was such disorder as I had never seen. And yet!...

And yet the whole was planned by a clever and resolute woman, fighting for her life—her honour. Marjory, evidently deprived of any means of writing—there was neither pen nor ink nor pencil in the room—and probably forbidden under hideous threats to

leave any message, had yet under the very eyes of her captors left a veritable writing on the wall, full and open for all to read, did they but know how. The arrangement of the books was but another variant of our biliteral cipher. Books as they should be, represented A; all others B. I signed to the man with the notebook, who took down the words wrought in the cipher as I read them off. Oh, how my heart beat with fear and love and pride as I realised in the message of my dear girl the inner purpose of her words:

“To-morrow off north east of Banff *Seagull* to meet whaler *Wilhelmina*. To be Shanghaied—whatever that means. Frightful threats to give me to the negro if any trouble, or letters to friends. Don’t fear, dear, shall die first. Have sure means. God with us. Remember the cave. Just heard Gardent—” Here the message ended. The shelf was empty; and the heap of books, from which she had selected so many items, remained as they had been placed ready to her hand. She had been coerced; or else she feared interruption in her task, and did not want to cause suspicion.

Coerced! I felt as though choking!

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There was nothing further to be gained here; so we told the old lady that we should write regarding the rental if we decided to take the house. When we went back to our wagonette, we picked up our two trackers—there was no use for them now—and went back to Crom as fast as the horses could gallop. It was necessary that we should arrange from headquarters our future plans; such maps and papers as we had were at Crom, where also any telegrams might await us. In the carriage I asked the detective chief what was meant by ‘Shanghaied’ for it was evidently a criminal class word.

“Don’t you know the word,” he said surprised. “Why I thought every one knew that. It isn’t altogether a criminal class word, for it belongs partly to a class that call themselves traders. The whalers and others do it when they find it hard to get men; as a rule men nowadays don’t like shipping on long whaling voyages. They get such men delivered on board by the crimps, drunk or, more generally, hocused. Then when they get near a port they make them drunk again, which isn’t much of a job after all, and they don’t make no kick; or if things are serious they hocus them a bit again. So they keep them one way or another out of sight for months or perhaps years. Sometimes, when those that are not too particular want to get rid of an inconvenient relative—or mayhap a witness, or a creditor, or an inconvenient husband—they just square some crimp. When he gets his hooks on the proper party, there ain’t no more jamboree for him, except between the bulwarks, till the time is up, or the money spent, or whatever he is put away for is fixed as they want it.”

This was a new and enlightening horror to me. It opened up fresh possibilities of distress for both Marjory and myself. As I thought of this, I could not but be grateful to Montgomery for his message to the man-of-war's[398] men. If once they succeeded in getting Marjory on board the *Seagull* we should, in the blindness of our ignorance as to her whereabouts, be powerless to help her. The last word of her message through the books might be a clue. It was some place, and was east of Banff. I got the big map out at once and began to search. Surely enough, there it was. Some seven or eight miles east of Banff was a little port in a land-locked bay called Gardentown. At once I sent off a wire to Adams at Aberdeen, and another to Montgomery to Peterhead on chance that it might reach him even before that which Adams, whom he kept posted as to his every movement, would be sure to send to him! It was above all things necessary that we should locate first the *Seagull* and then the *Wilhelmina*. If we could get hold of either vessel we might frustrate the plans of the miscreants. I asked Adams to have the touching of the *Wilhelmina* at any port telegraphed to him at once from Lloyds.

He was quite awake at his end of the wire; I got back an answer in an incredibly short time:

“*Wilhelmina* left Lerwick for Arctic seas yesterday.”

Very shortly afterwards another telegram came from him:

“Montgomery reports *Seagull* fishing this summer at Fraserburgh. Went out with fleet two days ago.” Almost immediately after this came a third telegram from him:

“*Keystone* notified. Am coming to join you.”

After a consultation we agreed that it was better that some of us should wait at Crom for the arrival of Adams, who had manifestly some additional knowledge. In the meantime we despatched two of the Secret Service men up to the north of Buchan. One was to go to Fraserburgh, and the other to Banff. Both were to[399] follow the cliffs or the shore to Gardentown. On their way they would get a personal survey of the coast and might pick up some information. MacRae went off himself to send a telegram ordering his yacht, which was at Inverness, to be taken to Peterhead, where he would join her. “It may be handy to have her at the mouth of the Firth,” he said. “She’s a clipper, and if we should want to overhaul the *Seagull* or the *Wilhelmina*, she can easily do it.”

It was a long, long wait till Adams arrived. I did not think that a man could endure such misery as I suffered, and live. Every minute, every second, was filled with some vague terror. *Omne ignotum pro mirifico*. When Fear and Fancy join hands, there is surely woe and pain to some poor human soul.

When Adams at last arrived he had much to tell; but it was the amplification of what we had heard, rather than fresh news. The U. S. cruiser *Keystone* had been reached from Hamburgh, and was now on her way to a point outside the three-mile limit off Peterhead; and a private watch had been set on every port and harbour between Wick and Aberdeen. The American Embassy was doing its work quietly as befits such an arm of the State; but its eyes and ears were open, and I had no doubts its pockets, too. Its hand was open now; but it would close, did there be need.

When Adams learned our purpose he became elated. He came over to me and laid his hand tenderly on my shoulder as he said:

“I know how it is with you, old fellow; a man don’t want more than two eyes for that. But there’s a many men would give all they have to stand in your shoes, for all you suffer. Cheer up! At the worst now it’s her death! For myself I feared at first there might be worse; but it’s plain to me that Miss Drake is up to everything[400] and ready for everything. My! but she’s a noble girl! If anything goes wrong with her there’s going to be some scrapping round before the thing’s evened up!” He then went on to tell me that Montgomery would be joined at Peterhead by two other naval fellows who were qualified in all ways to do whatever might be required. “Those boys won’t stop at much, I can tell you,” he said. “They’re full of sand, the lot; and I guess that when this thing is over, it won’t harm them at Washington to know that they’ve done men’s work of one kind or another.”

It was comfort to me to hear him talk. Sam Adams knew what he meant, when he wanted to help a friend; thinking it all over I don’t see what better he could have said to me—things being as they were. He went back to Aberdeen to look out for news or instructions, but was to join us later at Banff.

We left two men at Crom; one to be always on the spot, and the other to be free to move about and send telegrams, etc. Then the rest of us drove over to Fyvie and caught the train to Macduff.

When we arrived we sent one man in the hotel in Banff in case we should want to communicate, and the rest of us drove over in a carriage to Gardentown. It is a lovely coast, this between Banff and Gardentown, but we should have preferred it to be less picturesque and more easy to watch.

When our man met us, which he did with exceeding caution, he at once began:

“They’ve got off, some of them; but I think the rest of the gang’s ashore still. That’s why I’m so particular; they may be watchin’ us now for all I can tell.” Then he proceeded to give us all the information he had gleaned.

“The *Seagull* was here until yesterday when she went^[401] out into the Firth to run down to Fifeshire, as the fish were reported going south. She had more than her complement of men, and her skipper volunteered the information that two of them were friends whom they were taking to join their own boat which was waiting for them at Burnt Island. From all accounts I gather,” he went on, “that they wasn’t anything extra high-toned. Most of them were drunk or getting a jag on them; and it took the two sober ones and the Skipper to keep them in order. The Skipper was mighty angry; he seemed somehow ashamed of them, and hurried out of port as quick as he could when he made his mind up. They say he swore at them frightful; though that was not to be wondered at when he himself had to help bring the nets on board. One of the men on the quay told me that he said if that was the effect on his men of waiting round for weeks doing nothing, he would see that another time their double-dashed noses were kept to the grindstone. I’ve been thinking since I heard of the trouble they had in carrying on the nets, that there was something under them that they meant to hide. The men here tell me that the hand-barrow they carried would have been a job for six men, not three, for it was piled shoulder high with nets. That’s why the skipper was so wrathful with them. They say he’s a sort of giant, a Dutchman with an evil, cunning face; and that all the time he was carrying the back handles he never stopped swearing at the two in front, though they was nigh speechless with the effort of carrying, and their faces as red as blazes. If I’m right we’ve missed them this time. They’ve got the girl on the fishing boat; and they’re off for the whaler. She’s the one we’ll have to find next!”

As he spoke my heart kept sinking deeper and deeper down. My poor girl, if alive, was in the hands of her^[402] enemies. In all the thoughts which filled me with anguish unspeakable there was but one gleam of consolation—the negro was not on board, too. I had come to think of this miscreant as in some way the active principle of whatever evil might be.

Here, we were again at a fault in our pursuit. We must wait for the reports of Montgomery who was making local inquiries. We had wired him to join us, or send us word to Gardentown; and he had replied that he was on the way.

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CHAPTER XLVIII
DUNBUY HAVEN

We had to-day been so hot in the immediate pursuit of Marjory that we had hardly been able to think of the other branches of our work; but all at once, the turn of the

wheel brought up as the most important matter before us what had been up to now only a collateral. Hitherto the *Seagull* had been our objective; but now it must be the *Wilhelmina*. Adams had been in charge of the general investigation as to these boats, whilst Montgomery had been attending to local matters. It was to the former, therefore, rather than the latter, that we had to look for enlightenment. Montgomery and MacRae were the first to arrive, coming on horseback from Fraserburgh, the former with all the elan and abandonment of a sailor ashore. He was frightfully chagrined when he heard that the *Seagull* had got safely away. "Just like my luck!" he said, "I might have got her in time if I had known enough; but I never even heard of Gardentown till your wire came to me. It isn't on the map." He was still full of lamentings, though I could tell from the way he was all nerved and braced up that we should hear of him when the time for action came. When we arrived at the station at Macduff to meet Adams, we hurried him at once into the carriage which we had waiting; he gave us his news as we hurried off to Gardentown. We felt that it might be a mistake our going there, for we should be out of the way of everything; but we had made arrangements for news to be sent there, and it was necessary we should go there before holding our council of war. Adams told us that the whaler *Wilhelmina* had been reported at Lerwick two days ago, but that she had suddenly left on receipt of a telegram, hurrying in the last of her stores at such a rate that some of them had been actually left behind. He had not been able to gain any specific information by wire. The Master of the ship had said to the Harbour Master that he was going to Nova Zembla; but nothing more definite could be obtained.

When we got together in the hotel at Gardentown we were surprised by another arrival; none other than Don Bernardino, who had come by the same train as Adams, but had had to wait to get a carriage. We had got away so quickly that none of us had seen him.

Things were now at such a stage that it would not do to have any concealment whatever; and so after a moment in private with the Don, I told my companions of the attack on the Spaniard in my house, and of the carrying off the great treasure. I did not give any details of the treasure or its purpose; nor did I even mention the trust. This was now the Don's secret, and there was no need to mention it. We all agreed that if we should have any chance at all of finding Marjory, it would be by finding and following the members of the gang left on shore. Sam Adams who was, next to the Secret Service men, the coolest-headed of our party, summed up the situation.

"Those fellows haven't got off yet. It is evident that they only came to look for the treasure after Miss Drake had been shipped off from Gardentown. And I'm pretty sure that they are waiting somewhere round the coast for the *Wilhelmina* to pick them up;

or for them to get aboard her somehow. They've got a cartload of stuff at the very least to get away; and you may bet your sweet[405] life that they don't mean to leave it to chance. Moreover, you can't lay your hand at any minute on a whaler ready for shanghaieing any one. This one has been fixed up on purpose, and was waiting up at Lerwick for a long time ready to go when told. I think myself that it's more than likely she has orders to take them off herself, for a fishing smack like the *Seagull* that has to be in and out of these ports all the time, doesn't want to multiply the chances of her discovery. Now that she has done a criminal thing and is pretty sure that it can't be proved against her, she'll take her share of the swag, or whatever was promised her, and clear out. If the *Wilhelmina* has to get off the gang it'll have to be somewhere off this coast. They are nearly all strangers to start with, and wouldn't know where else to go. If they go south they get at once into more thickly peopled shores, where the chances of getting off in secret would be less. They daren't go anywhere along the shore of the Firth, for their ship might be cut off at the mouth, and they might be taken within the three-mile limit and searched. Beyond the Firth they can know nothing. Therefore, we have got to hunt them along this shore; and from the lie of the land I should say that they will try to get off somewhere between Old Slains and Peterhead. And I'll say further that, in-as-much-as the shore dips in between Whinnyfold and Girdleness outside Aberdeen, the ship will prefer to keep up the north side, so that she can beat out to sea at once, when she has got her cargo aboard."

"Sam is about right!" broke in Montgomery "I have been all along the coast since we met, surveying the ground for just this purpose. I tried to put myself in the place of that crowd, and to find a place just such as they would wish. They could get out at Peterhead or at Boddam, and so I have set a watch at these places.[406] Some of our sailors who were sent up to me from London are there now, and I'll stake my word that if the *Wilhelmina* tries to come in to either of these places she won't get out again with Marjory Drake on board. But it's not their game to come near a port. They've got to lie off shore, somewhere agreed on, and take off their friends in a boat. There are dozens of places between Cruden and Peterhead where a boat could lie hidden, and slip out safely enough. When they got aboard they could hoist in the boat or scuttle her; and then, up sails and off before any one was the wiser. What I propose, therefore, is this, for I take it I'm the naval expert here such as it is. We must set a watch along this bit of coast, so as to be ready to jump on them when they start out. We can get the *Keystone* to lie off Buchan; and we can signal her when we get sign of our lot. She'll be well on the outside, and these scallywags don't know that she'll be there to watch them. When the time comes, she'll crowd them into shore; and we'll be ready for them there. If she can hunt the *Wilhelmina* into the Firth it will be easy enough to

get her. "Fighting Dick" Morgan isn't a man to stand on ceremony; and you can bet your bottom dollar that if he gets a sight of the Dutchman he'll pretty well see that she hasn't any citizen of the United States aboard against her will. Dick wouldn't mind the people in Washington much, and he'd take on the Dutch to-morrow as well as the Spaniards. Now, if in addition this gentleman's yacht is to the fore, with any one of us here aboard to take responsibility, I guess we can overhaul the whaler without losing time."

"I'll be aboard!" said Donald MacRae quietly. "The *Sporran* is due at Peterhead this afternoon. Just you fit me up with signals so that we'll know what to do when we get word; and I'll see to the rest. My men are^[407] of my own clan, and I'll answer for them. They'll not hang back in anything, when I'm in the front of them."

I wrung the hands of the two young fellows. East and West, it was all the same! The old fighting gallantry was in their hearts; and with the instinct of born Captains they were ready to accept all responsibility. All they asked was that their men should follow them.

They immediately sat down to arrange their signals. Montgomery was of course trained in this work, and easily fixed up a simple scheme by which certain orders could be given by either flags, or lights, or rockets. There was not need for much complication; it was understood that when the *Wilhelmina* should be sighted she should be boarded at once, wherever or however she might be. We were, one and all of us, prepared to set at defiance every law—international, maritime, national or local. Under the circumstances we felt that, given we could once get on track with our enemy, we held a great power in our hands.

Before long, MacRae was off to Peterhead to join his yacht, which would at once start on a sort of sentry-go up and down the coast. The rest of us set about arranging to spread ourselves along the shore between Cruden and Peterhead. We did not arrange watches, for time was now precious to all, on both sides of the encounter. If an attempt was to be made to take off the treasure, it would in all probability be made before morning; every hour that passed multiplied the difficulties and dangers of the blackmailers. The weather was becoming misty, which was a source of inconvenience to us all. Thick patches of white fog began to drift in from the north east, and there was ominous promise in the rising wind of there being danger on sea and shore before many hours had passed. We each took provision with us for the night, and a sufficiency of rockets and^[408] white and red lights for our signalling work, in case there might be need of such.

In disposing of our forces, we had not of course a sufficiency of men to form a regular cordon; but we so arranged ourselves that there was no point at which a boat could land which was not in view of some of us. I was terribly anxious, for as the evening came on, the patches of white mist came driving in more quickly, and getting thicker and more dense. Between them the sea was clear, and there was no difficulty in keeping accurate observation; but as each fog belt came down on the rising wind our hearts fell. It would come on like a white cloud, which would seem to strike the land and then close in on every side, as though wrapping the shore in a winding sheet. My own section for watching was between Slains Castle and Dunbuy, as wild and rocky a bit of coast as any one could wish to see. Behind Slains runs in a long narrow inlet with beetling cliffs, sheer on either side, and at its entrance a wild turmoil of rocks are hurled together in titanic confusion. From this point northward, the cliffs are sheer, to where the inlet of Dunbuy has its entrance guarded by the great rock, with its myriad of screaming wildfowl and the white crags marking their habitation. Midway between those parts of my sentry-go is a spot which I could not but think would be eminently suited for their purpose, and on this for some time I centred my attention. It is a place where in old days the smugglers managed to get in many a cargo safe, almost within earshot of the coastguards. The *modus operandi* was simple. On a dark night when it was known that the coastguards were, intentionally or by chance, elsewhere, a train of carts would gather quickly along the soft grass tracks, or through the headlands of the fields. A crane was easily improvised of two crossed poles, with a longer one to rest on them;[409] one end held inland, could be pushed forward or drawn back, so as to make the other end hang over the water or fall back over the inner edge of the cliff. A pulley at the end of this pole, and a long rope with its shore end attached to the harness of a strong horse completed the equipment. Then, when the smugglers had come under the cliff, the rope was lowered and the load attached; the waiting horse was galloped inland, and in a few seconds the cluster of barrels or cases was swung up on the cliff and distributed amongst the waiting carts.

It would be an easy matter to invert the process. If all were ready—and I knew that the gang were too expert to have any failing in that respect—a few minutes would suffice to place the whole of the treasure in a waiting boat. The men, all save one, could be lowered the same way, and the last man could be let down by the rope held from below. I knew that the blackmailers had possession of at least one cart; in any case, to men so desperate and reckless to get temporary possession of a few carts in a farming country like this would be no difficult task. So I determined to watch this spot with extra care. It was pretty bare at top; but there was a low wall of stone and clay, one of those rough fences which are so often seen round cliff fields. I squatted down behind

a corner of this wall, from which I could see almost the whole stretch of my division. No boat could get into Dunbuy or Lang Haven, or close to the Castle rocks without my seeing it; the cliff from there up to where I was was sheer, and I could see well into the southern passage of the Haven inside Dunbuy Rock. Sometimes when the blanket of fog spread over the sea, I could hear the trumpeting of some steamer far out; and when the fog would lift, I would see her funnels spouting black smoke in her efforts to clear so dangerous a coast. Sometimes a fishing boat on its way up or down[410] would run in shore, close hauled; or a big sailing vessel would move onward with that imperceptible slowness which marks the progress of a ship far out at sea. When any fishing boat came along, my heart beat as I scanned her with the field glass which I had brought with me. I was always hoping that the *Seagull* would appear, though why I know not, for there was now little chance indeed that Marjory would be on board her.

After a spell of waiting, which seemed endless and unendurable, in one of the spells of mist I thought I saw on the cliff a woman, taking shelter of every obstacle, as does one who is watching another. At that moment the mist was thick; but when it began to thin, and to stream away before the wind in trails like smoke, I saw that it was Gormala. Somehow the sight of her made my heart beat wildly. She had been a factor of so many strange incidents in my life of late years—incidents which seemed to have some connection or fatal sequence—that her presence seemed to foretell something fresh, and to have some kind of special significance. I crouched still lower behind the corner of the wall, and watched with enhanced eagerness. A very short study of her movements showed me that she was not watching any specific individual. She was searching for some one, or some thing; and was in terror of being seen, rather than of missing the object of her search. She would peer carefully over the edge of the cliff, lying down on her face to do so, and putting her head forward with the most elaborate care. Then, when she had satisfied herself that what she sought was not within sight, she would pass on a little further and begin her survey over again. Her attitude during the prevalence of a mist was so instructive, that I found myself unconsciously imitating her. She would remain as still as if turned to stone, with one ear to windward, listening with sharp,[411] preternatural intentness. I wondered at first that I could not hear the things that she manifestly did, for the expression of her face was full of changes. When, however, I remembered that she was born and reared amongst the islands, and with fisher folk and sea folk of all kinds whose weather instincts are keener than is given to the inland born, her power was no longer a mystery. How I longed at that moment to have something of her skill! And then came the thought that she had long ago offered to place that very power at my disposal; and that I might still

gain her help. Every instant, as past things crowded back to my memory, did that help seem more desirable. Was it not her whom I had seen watching Don Bernardino when he left my house; mayhap she had guided him to it. Or might it not have been Gormala who had brought the blackmailers to my door. If she had no knowledge of them, what was she doing here now? Why had she sought this place of all places; why at this time of all times? What or whom was she seeking amongst the cliffs?

I determined not to lose sight of her at present, no matter what might happen; later, when I had come at her purpose, either by guessing or by observation, I could try to gain her services. Though she had been enraged with me, I was still to her a Seer; and she believed—must believe from what had passed—that I could read for her the Mystery of the Sea.

As she worked along the cliff above Dunbuy Haven, where the rock overhung the water, she seemed to increase both her interest and her caution. I followed round the rude wall which ran parallel to the cliff, so that I might be as near to her as possible.

Dunbuy Haven is a deep cleft in the granite rock in the shape of a Y, the arms of which run seawards and are formed by the mother cliff on either hand and the[412] lofty crags of the island of Dunbuy. In both these arms there is deep water; but when there is a sea on, or when the wind blows strong, they are supremely dangerous. Even the scour of the tide running up or down makes a current difficult to stem. In fair weather, however, it is fairly good for boating; though the swell outside may be trying to those who are poor sailors. I had often tossed on that swell when I had been out with the salmon fishers, when they had been drawing their deep floating nets.

Presently I saw Gormala bend, and then disappear out of sight. She had passed over the edge of the cliff. I went cautiously after her, and throwing myself on my face so that she could not see me, peered over.

There was a sort of sheep track along the face of the cliff, leading downward in a zigzag. It was so steep, and showed so little foothold, that even in the state of super-excitement in which I then was, it made me dizzy to look at it. But the old woman, trained on the crags of the western islands, passed along it as though it were the broad walk of a terraced garden.

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CHAPTER XLIX
GORMALA'S LAST HELP

After Gormala had disappeared down the zigzag under the rock, where I could no longer see her movements, I waited for her return. At the end of the Haven, where the little beach runs up to the edge of the cliff, there is a steep path. Even this is so steep that it is impracticable to ordinary persons; only fisher folk, dalesmen and hunters can use such ways. For myself I dare not leave my post; from the end of the Haven I could not see any part at all of the coast I had come to watch, except the narrow spot between great cliffs where the channels ran right and left of the Rock of Dunbuy. So I crept back to my hiding place behind the angle of the wall, from which I could watch the entrance to the track down which she had passed.

Time wore away slowly, slowly; and the mist kept coming in more frequent belts, heavier and more dank. After the sunset the fog seemed to come more heavily still, so that the promise of the night was darkness invincible. In Aberdeen, however, the twilight is long, and under ordinary conditions it is easy to see for hours after sunset. All at once, after the passing of a belt of mist, I was startled by a voice behind me:

“And for what is it ye watch, the nicht? Is it the Mystery o’ the Sea that holds ye to the dyke; or maybe it is the treasure that ye seek!” Gormala had evidently come up the path at the end of the Haven. For a while^[414] I did not say a word, but thought the matter over. Now, if ever, was there need to use my wits, and I could best deal with Gormala if I should know something of her own wishes beforehand; so I tried to master her purpose and her difficulties. Firstly, she must have been in search of some hiding place herself, or she would not have come behind the wall; I was quite sure that she had not known of my presence before she went down the sheep track. If she wanted cover, what then was it she was watching? She had been down to the beach of the Haven, and so must have known whether or no it was bare of interest. As she was choosing a corner whence she could watch the track, it was at least likely that she expected some one to go up or down by it. If she were looking for some one to go down, she would surely rather watch its approaches than the place itself. It was, therefore, for some one to come up for whom she wished to watch. As, instead of hurrying away or hiding herself from me when she had seen me without my seeing her, she had deliberately engaged with me in conversation, it was evident that she did not expect whomever she watched for to come up at once. In fine I concluded, she intended to watch for some one who *might* come; with this knowledge I drew a bow at a venture:

“So your friend isn’t coming up yet? Why didn’t you fix matters when you were down below?” For an instant she was betrayed into showing astonishment; the surprise was in both her expression and in the tones of her voice as she replied:

“How kent ye that I was doon the Haven?” Then she saw her mistake and went on with a scowl:

“Verra clever ye are wi’ yer guesses; and a daft aud wife am I to no ken ye better? Why did——”

“Did you find him down below?” even whilst I was^[415] speaking the conviction came to me—I scarcely know how, but it was there as though deep-rooted in my brain all my life—that our enemies were down below, or that they had some hiding place there. Gormala must have seen the change in my face, for she exclaimed with jubilation:

“It would hae been better for ye that ye had taken my sairvice. The een that watched others micht hae been watchin’ to yer will. But it’s a’ ower the noo. What secret there was is yours nae mair; an’ it may be waur for ye that ye flouted me in the days gone.” As she spoke, the bitterness of her manner was beyond belief; the past rushed back on me so fiercely that I groaned. Then came again, but with oh! what pain, the thought of my dear one in the hands of her enemies.

Let no man question the working of the Almighty’s hand. In that moment of the ecstasy of pain, something had spoken to the heart of the old woman beside me; for when I came back to myself they were different eyes which looked into mine. They were soft and full of pity. All the motherhood which ever had been, or might have been, in that lonely soul was full awake. It was with a tender voice that she questioned me:

“Ye are muckle sad laddie. Do I no ken a look like that when I speer it, and know that the Fates are to their wark. What maks ye greet laddie; what maks ye greet?” for by this time the revulsion of tenderness had been too much for me and I was openly weeping. “Is it that the lassie is gone frae ye? Weel I ken that nane but a lassie can mak a strong man greet.” I felt that the woman’s heart was open to me; and spoke with all the passion of my soul:

“Oh, Gormala help me! Perhaps you can, and it may not be too late. She is stolen away and is in the hands of her enemies; wicked and desperate men who^[416] have her prisoner on a ship somewhere out at sea. Her life, her honour are at stake. Help me if you can; and I will bless you till the last hour of my life!” The old woman’s face actually blazed as I spoke. She seemed to tower up in the full of her gaunt height to the stature of her woman’s pride, as with blazing eyes she answered me:

“What! a woman, a lassie, in the hands o’ wicked men! Aye an’ sic a bonnie, gran’ lassie as yon, though she did flout me in the pride of her youth and strength. Laddie, I’m wi’ ye in all ye can dae! Wi’ a’ the strength o’ my hairt an’ the breath o’ my body; for

life or for death! Ne'er mind the past; bad or good for me it is ower; and frae this oot I'm to your wark. Tell me what I can dae, an' the grass'll no grow under my feet. A bonnie bit lassie in the power o' wicked men! I may hae been ower eager to win yer secret; but I'm no that bad to let aught sic come between me and the duty to what is pure and good!" She seemed grand and noble in her self-surrender; such a figure as the poets of the old sagas may have seen in their dreams, when the type of noble old womanhood was in their hearts; in the times when the northern nations were dawning. I was quite overcome; I could not speak. I took her hand and kissed it. This seemed to touch her to the quick; with a queer little cry she gasped out:

"Oh, laddie, laddie!" and said no more. Then I told her of how Marjory had been carried off by the blackmail gang; I felt that she was entitled to this confidence. When I had spoken, she beat with her shut hand on the top of the wall and said in a smothered way:

"Och! if I had but kent; if I had but kent! To think that I might hae been watchin' them instead o' speerin' round yon hoose o' yours, watchin' to wring yer secret frae ye, an' aidin' yer enemies in their wark. First the[417] outland man wi' the dark hair; an' then them along wi' the black man wi' the evil face that sought ye the nicht gone. Wae is me! Wae is me! that I ha' done harm to a' in the frenzy o' my lust, and greed, and curiosity!" She took on so badly that I tried to comfort her. I succeeded to a measure, when I had pointed out that the carrying off of Marjory was altogether a different matter from what had gone on in my house. Suddenly she stopped rocking herself to and fro; holding up one long gaunt arm as I had seen her do several times before, she said:

"But what matters it after a'! We're in the hands o' Fate! An' there are Voices that speak an' Een that see. What is ordered of old will be done for true; no matter how we may try to work our own will. 'Tis little use to kick against the pricks."

Then all at once she became brisk and alert. In a most practical tone of voice she said:

"Noo tell me what I can dae! Weel I ken, that ye hae a plan o' yer ain; an' that you and ithers are warkin' to an end that ye hae set. Ye hae one ither wi' ye the nicht; for gude or ill." She paused, and I asked her:

"Why did you go down the sheep path to the Haven. For what or for whom were you looking?"

"I was lookin' for the treasure that I suspect was ta'en frae your hoose; an' for them that took it! 'Twas I that guided them, after the dark man had gone; and watched whiles they were within. Then they sent me on a lang errand away to Ellon; and when I

got back there was nane there. I speered close, and saw the marks o' a cairt heavy loaden. It was lost on the high road; an' since then, nicht an' day hae I sought for any trace; but all in vain. But I'm thinkin' that it's nigh to here they've hid it; I went down the yowes' roadie,[418] an' along the rock, an' up the bit beach; but never a sign did I see. There's a many corners about the crags here, where a muckle treasure might lie hid, an' nane the wiser save them that pit it there!" Whilst she was talking I was scribbling a line in my pocket-book; I tore out the page and handed it to her:

"If you would help me take that letter for I must not leave here. Give it to the dark gentleman whom you know by sight. He is somewhere on the rocks beyond the Castle." My message was to tell Don Bernardino that I believed the treasure was hidden somewhere near me, and that the bearer of the note would guide him if he thought wise to join me.

Then I waited, waited. The night grew darker and darker; and the fog belts came so thick and so heavy that they almost became one endless mass. Only now and again could I get a glimpse of the sea outside the great rock. Once, far off out at sea but floating in on the wind, I heard eight bells sound from a ship. My heart beat at the thought; for if the *Keystone* were close at hand it might be well for us later on. Then there was silence, long and continuous. A silence which was of the night alone; every now and again when some sound of life from near or far came to break its monotony the reaction became so marked that silence seemed to be a positive quality.

All at once I became conscious that Gormala was somewhere near me. I could not see her, I could not hear her; but it was no surprise to me when through the darkness I saw her coming close to me, followed by Don Bernardino. They both looked colossal through the mist.

As quickly as I could, I told the Don of my suspicions; and asked his advice. He agreed with me as to the probabilities of the attempt to escape, and announced his willingness[419] to go down the path to Dunbuy Haven and explore it thoroughly so far as was possible. Accordingly, with Gormala to guide him, he went to the end of the Haven and descended the steep moraine—it was a declension rather than a path. For myself I was not sanguine as to a search. The night was now well on us, and even had the weather been clear it would have been a difficult task to make search in such a place, where the high cliffs all around shut out the possibilities of side light. Moreover, along the Haven, as with other such openings on this iron-bound coast, there were patches of outlying rock under the cliffs. Occasionally these were continuous, so that at the proper state of the tide a fairly good climber could easily make way along them. Here, however, there was no such continuity; the rocks rising from the sea close under

the cliffs were in patches; without a boat it would be useless to attempt a complete exploration. I waited, however, calmly; I was gaining patience now out of my pain. A good while elapsed before the Don returned, still accompanied by Gormala. He told me that only the beach had been possible for examination; but as far as he could see out by either channel, there was no sign of anyone hiding, or any bulk which could be such as we sought.

He considered it might be advisable if he went to warn the rest of our party of our belief as to the place appointed, and so took his way up north. Gormala remained with me so as to be ready to take any message if occasion required. She looked tired, so tired and weary that I made her lie down behind the rough wall. For myself sleep was an impossibility; I could not have slept had my life or sanity depended on it. To soothe, her and put her mind at rest, I told her what she had always wanted to know; what I had seen that night at Whinnyfold when the Dead came up from the sea. That[420] quieted her, and she soon slept. So I waited and waited, and the time crept slowly away.

All at once Gormala sat up beside me, broad awake and with all her instincts at her keenest. "Whish!" she said, raising a warning hand. At this moment the fog belt was upon us, and on the wind, now risen high, the white wreaths swept by like ghosts. She held her ear as before towards seaward and listened intently. This time there could be no mistake; from far off through the dampness of the fog came the sound of a passing ship. I ran out from behind the wall and threw myself face down at the top of the cliff. I was just at the angle of the opening of the Haven and I could see if a boat entered by either channel. Gormala came beside me and peered over; then she whispered:

"I shall gang doon the yowes' roadie; it brings me to the Haven's mooth, and frae thence I can warn ye if there be aught!" Before I replied she had flitted away, and I saw her pass over the edge of the cliff and proceed on her perilous way. I leaned over the edge of the cliff listening. Down below I heard now and again the sound of a falling pebble, dislodged from the path, but I could see nothing whatever. Below me the black water showed now and again in the lifting of the fog.

The track outwards leads down to the sea at the southern corner of the opening of the Haven; so I moved on here to see if I could get any glimpse of Gormala. The fog was now on in a dense mass, and I could see nothing a couple of feet from me. I heard, however, a sort of scramble; the rush and roll of stones tumbling, and the hollow reverberating splash as they struck the water. My heart jumped, for I feared that some accident might have happened to Gormala. I listened intently; but heard no sound. I did not stay, however, for I knew that the whole effort of the woman, engaged on such

a task, would[421] be to avoid betraying herself. I was right in my surmise, for after a few minutes of waiting I heard a very faint groan. It was low and suppressed, but there was no mistaking it as it came up to me through the driving mist. It was evident that Gormala was in some way in peril, and common humanity demanded that I should go down to help her if I could. It was no use my attempting the sheep track; if she had failed on it there would not be much chance of my succeeding. Besides, there had been a manifest slip or landslide; and more than probably the path, or some necessary portion of it, had been carried away. It would have been madness to attempt it, so I went to the southern side of the cliff where the rock was broken, and where there was a sort of rugged path down to the sea. There was also an advantage about this way; I could see straight out to sea to the south of Dunbuy Rock. Thus I need not lose sight of any shore-coming boat; which might happen were I on the other path which opened only in the Haven.

It was a hard task, and by daylight I might have found it even more difficult. In parts it actually overhung the water, with an effect of dizziness which was in itself dangerous. However, I persevered; and presently got down on the cluster of rocks overhung by the cliff. Here, at the very corner of the opening to the Haven, under the spot where the sheep track led down, I found Gormala almost unconscious. She revived a little when I lifted her and put my flask to her lips. For a few seconds she leaned gasping against my breast with her poor, thin, grey hair straggling across it. Then, with a great effort, she moaned out feebly, but of intention keeping her voice low lest even in that lone spot amid the darkness of the night and the mist there might be listeners:

“I’m done this time, laddie; the rocks have broke me when the roadie gav way. Listen tae me, I’m aboot to[422] dee; a’ the Secrets and the Mysteries ’ll be mine soon. When the end is comin’ haud baith my hands in ane o’ yours, an’ keep the ither ower my een. Then, when I’m passin’ ye shall see what my dead eyes see; and hear wi’ the power o’ my dead ears. Mayhap too, laddie, ye may ken the secrets and the wishes o’ my hairt. Dinna lose yer chance, laddie! God be wi’ ye an’ the bonny lass. Tell her, an’ ye will, that I forgie her floutin’ me; an’ that I bade the gude God keep her frae all harm, and send peace and happiness to ye both—till the end. God forgie me all my sins!”

As she was speaking her life seemed slowly ebbing away. I could feel it, and I knew it in many ways. As I took her hand in mine, a glad smile was on her face, together with a look of eager curiosity. This was the last thing I saw in the dim light, as my hand covered her filming eyes.

And then a strange and terrible thing began to happen.

[423]

CHAPTER L

THE EYES OF THE DEAD

As I knelt with the dead woman's hands in one of mine and the other over her eyes, I seemed to be floating high up in the air; and with amazing vision to see all round for a great distance. The fog still hung thick over the water. Around, the vast of the air and the depths of the sea were as open as though sunshine was on them and I was merely looking through bright water. In the general panorama of things, so far as the eye could range, all lay open. The ships on the sea, and the floor under it; the iron-bound coast, and the far-lying uplands were all as though marked on a picture chart. Far away on the horizon were several craft, small and large. A few miles out was a ship of war; and to the north of her but much closer in shore lay a graceful yacht, slowly moving with the tide and under shortened sail. The war ship was all alert; on every top, and wherever there was a chance of seeing anything, was the head of a man on the look-out. The search-light was on, and sea and sky were lit alternately with its revolving rays. But that which drew my eyes, as the magnet draws the iron, was a clumsily rigged ship close in shore, seemingly only a few hundred yards beyond the Dunbuy Rock. She was a whaler I knew, for on her deck were the great boats for use in rough seas, and the furnace where the blubber was melted. With unconscious movement, as[424] though my soul were winged as a bird, I hung poised over this vessel. It was strange indeed, but she seemed all as though composed of crystal; I could see through her, and down into the deep below her where her shadow lay, till my eyes rested on the patches of bare sand or the masses of giant seaweed which swayed with the tide above the rocks on which it grew. In and out amongst the seaweed the fishes darted, and the flower-like limpets moved ceaselessly outside their shells on the rocks. I could even see the streaks on the water which wind and current invariably leave on their course. Within the ship, all was clear as though I were looking into a child's toy-house; but a toy-house wrought of glass. Every nook and cranny was laid bare; and the details, even when they did not interest me, sank into my mind. I could evermore, by closing my eyes, have seen again anything on which in those moments of spiritual vision the eyes of my soul had rested.

All the time there was to me a dual consciousness. Whatever I saw before me was all plain and real; and yet I never lost for a moment the sense of my own identity. I knew I was on shore amid the rocks under the cliff, and that Gormala's dead body was beside me as I knelt. But there was some divine guiding principle which directed my thought—it must have been my thought, for my eyes followed as my wishes led, as though my whole being went too. They were guided from the very bow of the ship

along the deck, and down the after hatchway. I went down, step by step, making accurate and careful scrutiny of all things around me. I passed into the narrow cabin, which seemed even to me to smell evilly. The rank yellow light from the crude oil lamp with thick smoky wick made the gloom seem a reality, and the shadows as monstrous. From this I passed aft into a tiny cabin, where on a bunk lay Marjory asleep. She^[425] looked pale and wan; it made my heart sick to see the great black circles round her eyes. But there was resolution in her mouth and nostrils; resolution fixed and untameable. Knowing her as I did, and with her message "I can die" burned into my heart, it did not need any guessing to know what was in the hand clenched inside the breast of her dress. The cabin door was locked; on the outside was a rough bolt, newly placed; the key was not in the lock. I would have lingered, for the lightning-like glimpse made me hungry for more; but the same compelling force moved me on. In the next cabin lay a man, also asleep. He was large of frame, with a rugged red beard streaked with grey; what hair remained on his head, which was all scarred with cicatrices, was a dull red turning white. On a rack above him, under the chronometer—which marked Greenwich time as 2.15,—ready to his hand, were two great seven shooters; from his pocket peeped the hilt of a bowie knife. It was indeed strange to me that I could look without passion or vindictiveness on such a person so disposed. I suppose it was the impersonal spirit within me which was at the moment receptive, and that all human passion, being ultimately of the flesh, was latent. At the time, though I was conscious of it, it did not strike me as strange; no more strange than that I could see far and near at the same glance, and take in great space and an impossible wilderness of detail. No more strange, than that all things were for me resolved into their elements; that fog ceased to deaden or darkness to hide; that timber and iron, deck and panel and partition, beam and door and bulkhead were as transparent as glass. In my mind was a vague intention of making examination of every detail which could bear on the danger of Marjory. But even whilst such an idea was in its incipient stage, so swift is the mechanism of thought, my eyes beheld, as though it were^[426] through the sides of the ship, a boat pass out from a watercave in the cliffs behind the Rock of Dunbuy. In it I saw, with the same seeing eye which gave me power in aught else, seven men some of whom I knew at a glance to be those whom Marjory had described in the tunnel. All but one I surveyed calmly, and weighed up as it were with complacency; but this one was a huge coal-black negro, hideous, and of repulsive aspect. A glimpse of him made my blood run cold, and filled my mind at once with hate and fear. As I looked, the boat came towards the ship with inconceivable rapidity. It was not that she moved fast through the water, for her progress was in reality slow and laboured. The wind and the sea had risen; half a gale was blowing and the seas were running so high that the ship rose and fell, pitched and

rolled and tossed about like a toy. It was, that time, like distance, was in my mind obliterated. Truly, I was looking with spirit eyes, and under all spiritual conditions.

The boat drew close to the whaler on the port side, and I saw, as if from the former, the faces of several men who at the sound of oars came rushing from the other side of the ship and leaned over the bulwarks. It was evident that they had expected arrival from the starboard. With some difficulty the boat got close, for the sea was running wilder every moment; and one by one the men began to climb the ladder and disappear over the bulwark. With the extraordinary action of sight and mind and memory which was to me at present, I followed each and all of them at the same time. They hurriedly rigged up a whip and began to raise from the boat parcels of great weight. In the doing of this one of them, the negro, was officious and was always trying to examine each parcel as it came on board; but he was ever and always repulsed. The others would not allow him to touch anything; at each rebuff he retired scowling. All[427] this must, under ordinary conditions, have taken much time, but to my spirit-ruled eyes it all passed with wondrous rapidity....

I became conscious that things around me were growing less clear. The fog seemed to be stealing over the sea, as I had seen it earlier in the evening, and to wrap up details from my sight. The great expanse of the sea and the ships upon it, and all the wonders of the deep became lost in the growing darkness. I found, quicker and quicker, my thoughts like my eyes, centred on the deck of the ship. At a moment, when all others were engaged and did not notice him, I saw the great negro, his face over-much distorted with an evil smile, steal towards the after hatchway and disappear. With the growing of the fog and the dark, I was losing the power to see through things opaque and material; and it came to me as an actual shock that the negro passed beyond my vision. With his going, the fear in my heart grew and grew; till, in my frantic human passion, all that was ethereal around me faded and went out like a dying flame....

The anguish of my soul, in my fear for my beloved, tore my true spirit out of its phantom existence back to stern working life....

I found myself, chilled and sick at heart, kneeling by the marble-cold, stiffening body of Gormala, on the lone rock under the cliff. The rising wind whistled by me in the crannies above, and the rising sea in angry rushes leaped at us by the black shining rocks. All was so dark around me that my eyes, accustomed to the power given in my vision of making their own light, could not pierce the fog and the gloom. I tried to look at my watch, but could only see the dial dimly; I could not distinguish the figures on it and I feared to light a match lest such might betray my presence. Fortunately my watch could strike[428] the hours and minutes, and I found it was now half past one

o'clock. I still, therefore, had three-quarters of an hour, for I remembered the lesson of the whaler's chronometer. I knew there would be no time nor opportunity to bring Gormala's body to the top of the cliff—at present; so I carried her up to the highest point of the underlying rock, which was well above high water mark.

Reverently and with blessing I closed her dead eyes, which still looked up at the sky with a sort of ghostly curiosity. Then I clambered up the steep pathway and made my way as quickly as I could round to the other side of the Haven, to try if I could discover any trace of the blackmailers, or any indication of the water-cave in which their boat was hidden. The cliffs here are wofully steep, and hang far over the sea; so that there is no possibility of lying on the cliff edge and peering over. Round here also the stark steepness forbids the existence of even the tiniest track; a hare could not find its way along these beetling cliffs. The only way of making search of this channel would be to follow round in a boat. The nearest point to procure one would be at the little harbour beside the Bullers O'Buchan, and for this there was not time. I was in dire doubt as to what was best to do; and I longed with a sickening force for the presence of Montgomery or some of our party who would know how to deal with such a situation. I was not anxious for the present moment; but I wanted to take all precautions against the time which was coming. Well I knew that the vision I had seen with the eyes of the dead Gormala was no mere phantasm of the mind; that it was no promise of what might be, but a grim picture of what would be. There was never a doubt in my mind as to its accuracy. Oh! if I could have seen more of what was to happen; if I could have lingered but a few instants longer! For with the speed at which things had[429] passed before my inner eye in that strange time, every second might have meant the joy or sorrow of a lifetime. How I groaned with regret, and cursed my own precipitancy, that I could not wait and learn through the medium of the dead woman's spiritual eyes the truths that were to be borne in mind!

But it was of no use to fret; action of some sort would be necessary if Marjory was to be saved. In one way I might help. Even alone I might save her, if I could get out to the whaler unknown to her crew. I knew I could manage this, for anyhow I could swim; for a weapon which the water could not render useless I had the dagger I had taken from Don Bernardino. Should other weapons be necessary I might be able to lay hands on them in the cabin next Marjory's, where the red-bearded man lay asleep. I did not know whether it would be better to go in search of some of my comrades, or to wait the arrival of the Don, who was to be back within an hour of the time of leaving. I was still trying to make up my mind when the difficulty was settled for me by the arrival of the Spaniard, accompanied by one of the young American naval officers.

When I told them of my vision I could see, even in the darkness which prevailed, that neither of them was content to accept its accuracy in blind faith. I was at first impatient; but this wore away when I remembered that neither of them had any knowledge of my experiences in the way of Second Sight, or indeed of the phenomenon at all. Neither in Spain nor America does such a belief prevail; and I have no doubt that to both of them came the idea that worry and anxiety had turned my brain. Even when I told them how I meant to back my belief by swimming out beyond the Dunbuy Rock in time to reach the ship before the boat would arrive, they were not convinced. The method of reception of the idea by each^[430] was, however, characteristic of his race and nation. To the high-bred Spaniard, whose life had been ruled by laws of honour and of individual responsibility, no act done in the cause of chivalry could be other than worthy; he did not question the sanity of the keeping of such a purpose. The practical American, however, though equally willing to make self-sacrifice, and to dare all things in the course of honour and duty, looked at my intention with regard to its result; was I taking the step which would have the best result with regard to the girl whom we were all trying to save. Whilst the Spaniard raised his hat and said:

“May God watch over your gallant enterprise, Senor; and hold your life, and that of her whom you love, in the hollow of His hand!” The American said:

“Honest injun! old chap, is that the best you can do? If it’s only a man and a life you want, count me in every time. I’m a swimmer, too; and I’m a youngster that don’t count. So far as that goes, I’m on. But you’ve got to find the ship, you know! If she was there now, I should say ‘risk it’; and I’d come with you if you liked. But there’s the whole North Sea out there, with room for a hundred million of whalers without their jostling. No, no! Come, I say, let us find another way round; where we can help the girl all together!” He was a good young fellow, as well as a fine one, and it was evident he meant well. But there was no use arguing; my mind was made up, and, after assuring him that I was in earnest, I told him that I was taking a couple of rockets with me which I would try to keep dry so that should occasion serve I would make manifest the whereabouts of the whaler. He already knew what to do with regard to signalling from shore, in case the boats of the whaler should be seen.

When we had made what preparations we could for the work each of us had in hand, the time came for my^[431] starting on my perilous enterprise. As my purpose became more definite, my companions, who I think doubted in their hearts its sincerity, became somewhat more demonstrative. It was one thing to have a vague intention of setting out on a wild journey of the kind, and even here common sense rebelled. But on the edge of the high cliff, in the dark, amid the fog which came boiling up from

below as the wind puffs drove it on shore; when below our feet the rising waves broke against the rocks with an ominous sound, made into a roar by the broken fastnesses of the cliffs, the whole thing must have seemed as an act of madness. When through a break in the fog-belt we could catch a glimpse of the dark water leaping far below into furious, scattering lines of foam, to dare the terrors of such a sea at such a time was like going deliberately to certain death. My own heart quailed at moments; when I saw through the fog wreaths the narrow track, down which I must again descend to where Gormala's body lay, fading into a horrid gloom; or when the sound of breaking water drove up, muffled by the dark mist. My faith in the vision was strong, however, and by keeping my mind fixed on it I could shut out present terrors. I shook hands with my two friends, and, taking courage from the strong grip of their hands, set myself resolutely to my journey down the cliff. The last words the young navy man said to me were:

“Remember, if you do reach the whaler, that a gleam of light of any kind will give us a hint of where you are. Once the men of the *Keystone* see it, they'll do the rest at sea; as we shall on land. Give us such a light when the time comes—if you have to fire the ship to get it!”

At the foot of the cliff path the prospect was almost terrifying. The rocks were so washed with the churning water, as the waves leaped at them, that now and again^[432] only black tops could be seen rising out of the waste of white water; and a moment after, as the wave fell back, there would be a great mass of jagged rocks, all stark and grim, blacker than their own blackness, with the water streaming down them, and great rifts yawning between. Outside, the sea was a grim terror, a wildness of rising waves and lines of foam, all shrouded in fog and gloom. Through all came a myriad of disconcerting sounds, vague and fearsome, from where the waves clashed or beat into the sounding caverns of Dunbuy. Nothing but the faith which I had in the vision of Marjory, which came to me with the dead eyes of the western Seer, could have carried me out into that dreadful gloom. All its possibilities of horror and danger woke to me at once, and for a moment appalled me.

But Faith is a conquering power; even the habit of believing, in which I had been taught, stood to me in this wild hour. No sceptic, no doubter, could have gone forth as I did into that unknown of gloom and fear.

I waited till a great wave was swept in close under my bare feet. Then, with a silent prayer, and an emboldening thought: ‘For Marjory!’ I leaped into the coming water.

[433]

CHAPTER LI IN THE SEA FOG

For a few minutes I was engaged in a wild struggle to get away from the rocks, and not to be forced back by the shoreward rush and sweep of the waves. I was buffeted by them, and half-choked by the boiling foam; but I kept blindly and desperately to my task, and presently knew that I had only to deal with the current and the natural rise and fall of the rollers. Down on the water the air was full of noises, so that it was hard to distinguish any individual sound; but the fog lay less dense on the surface than above it, so that I could see a little better around me.

On the sea there is always more or less light; even in this time of midnight gloom, with moon and stars hidden by the fog, and with none of that phosphorescence which at times makes a luminous glow of its own over the water, I could see things at an unexpected distance. More than all, was I surprised as well as cheered to find that I could distinguish the features of the land from the sea, better than I could from land discern anything at sea. When I looked back, the shore rose, a dark uneven line, unbroken save where the Haven of Dunbuy running inland made an angle against the sky. But beside me, the great Rock of Dunbuy rose gigantic and black; it was like a mountain towering over me. The tide was running down so that when I had got out of the current running inland behind the rock I was in comparatively calm water.[434] There was no downward current, but only a slow backwater, which insensibly took me closer to the Rock. Keeping in this shelter, I swam on and out; I saved myself as much as I could, for I knew of the terrible demand on my strength which lay before me. It must have been about ten minutes, though it seemed infinitely longer, when I began to emerge from the shelter of the Rock and to find again the force of the outer current. The waves were wilder here too; not so wild as just in shore before they broke, but they were considerably larger in their rise and fall. As I swam on, I looked back now and then, and saw Dunbuy behind me towering upward, though not so monstrously as when I had been under its lee. The current was beginning already to bear me downwards; so I changed my course, and got back to the sheltered water again. Thus I crept round under the lee of the Rock, till all at once I found myself in the angry race, where the current beat on and off the cliff. It took me all my strength and care to swim through this; when the force of the current began to slacken, as I emerged from the race, I found myself panting and breathless with the exertion.

But when I looked around me from this point, where the east opened to me, there was something which restored all my courage and hope, though it did not still the beating of my heart.

Close by, seemingly only a couple of hundred yards off to the north east, lay a ship whose masts and spars stood out against the sky. I could see her clearly, before a coming belt of fog bore down on her.

The apprehension lest I should miss her in the fog chilled me more than the sea water in which I was immersed; for all possibilities of evil became fears to me, now that the realisation of my vision was clear. I was glad of the darkness; it was a guarantee against discovery.[435] I swam on quietly, and was rejoiced to find as I drew close that I was on the port side of the ship; well I remembered how in my vision the boat approached to port, to the surprise of the men who were looking out for it on the other side. I found the rope ladder easily enough, and did not have much difficulty in getting a foothold on it. Ascending cautiously, and watching every inch of the way, I climbed the bulwark and hid behind a water barrel close to the mast. From this security I looked out, and saw the backs of several men ranged along the starboard bulwark. They were intent on their watching, and unsuspecting of my proximity; so I stole out and glided as silently as I could into the cabin's entrance. It was not new to me; I had a sense of complete security as to my knowledge. The eyes of Gormala's soul were keen!

In the cabin I recognised at once the smoky lamp and the rude preparations for food. Thus emboldened, I came to the door, behind which I knew Marjory lay. It was locked and bolted, and the key was gone. I slid back the bolt, but the lock baffled me. I was afraid to make the slightest noise, lest I should court discovery; so I passed on to the next cabin where was her jailer. He lay just as, in the vision, I had seen him; the chronometer was above him and the two heavy revolvers hung underneath it. I slipped in quietly—there were not shoes to remove—and reaching over so that the water would not drip from my wet underclothing on his face, unhooked the two weapons. I belted them round my waist with the strap on which they hung. Then I looked round for the key, but could see no sign of it. There was no time to lose, and it was neither time nor place to stand on ceremony; so I took the man by the throat with my left hand, the dagger being in my right, and held with such a grip that the blood seemed to leap into his face in a second. He[436] could utter no sound, but instinctively his hand went back and up to where the revolvers had hung. I whispered in a low tone:

“It's no use. Give me the key. I don't value your life a pin!” He was well plucked, and he was manifestly used to tight places. He did not attempt to speak or parley; but whilst I had been whispering, his right hand had got hold of a knife. It was a bowie, and he was dexterous with it. With some kind of sharp wrench he threw it open; there was a click as the back-spring worked. If I had not had my dagger ready it would have been a bad time for me. But I was prepared; whilst he was making the movement to strike at me, I

struck. The keen point of the Spanish dagger went right through the upturned wrist, and pinned his hand down to the wooden edge of the bunk. Whilst, however, he had been trying to strike with his right hand, his left had clutched my left wrist. He tried now to loose my grasp from his throat, whilst bending his chin down he made a furious effort to tear at my hand with his teeth. Never in my life did I more need my strength and weight. The man was manifestly a fighter, trained in many a wild 'rough-and-tumble', and his nerves were like iron. I feared to let go the hilt of the dagger, lest in his violent struggling he should tear his wrist away and so free his hand. Having, however, got my right knee raised, I pressed down with it his arm on the edge of the bunk and so freed my right hand. He continued to struggle ferociously. I knew well it was life and death, not only for me, but for Marjory.

It was his life or mine; and he had to pay the penalty of his crime.

So intent was I on the struggle that I had not heard the approach of the boat with his comrades. It was only when I stood panting, with the limp throat between my fingers which were white at the knuckles with the strain,[437] that the sound of voices and the tramp of feet on deck reached my intelligence. Then indeed I knew there was no time to lose. I searched the dead man's pockets and found a key, which I tried in the lock of Marjory's cabin. When I opened the door she started up; the hand in her bosom was whipped out with a flash, and in an instant a long steel bonnet pin was ready to drive into her breast. My agonised whisper:

"Marjory, it is I!" only reached her mind in time to hold her hand. She did not speak; but never can I forget the look of joy that illumined her poor, pale face. I put my finger on my lip, and held out my hand to her. She rose, with the obedience of a child, and came with me. I was just going out into the cabin, when I heard the creak of a heavy footstep on the companion way. So I motioned her back, and, drawing the dagger from my belt, stood ready. I knew who it was that was coming; yet I dared not use the pistols, save as a last resource.

I stood behind the door. The negro did not expect anyone, or any obstacle; he came on unthinkingly, save for whatever purpose of evil was in his mind. He was armed, as were all the members of the blackmail gang. In a belt across his shoulder, slung Kentucky fashion, were two great seven shooters; and across his waist behind was a great bowie knife, with handle ready to grasp. Moreover, nigger-like, the handle of a razor rose out of the breast pocket of his dark flannel shirt. He did not, however, manifestly purpose using his weapons—at present at any rate; there was not any sign of danger or opposition in front of him. His comrades were busy at present in embarking the treasure, and would be for many an hour to come, in helping to work

the ship clear into safety. Every minute now the wind was rising, and the waves swelling to such proportions that the anchored ship rocked like a bell-buoy in a storm. In the cabin I [438] had to hold on, or I should have been shot from my place into view. But the huge negro cared for none of these things. He was callous to everything, and there was such a wicked, devilish purpose in his look that my heart hardened grimly in the antagonism of man to man. Nay more, it was not a man that I loathed; I would have killed this beast with less compunction than I would kill a rat or a snake. Never in my life did I behold such a wicked face. In feature and expression there was every trace and potentiality of evil; and these superimposed on a racial brutality which made my gorge rise. Well indeed did I understand now the one terror which had in all her troubles come to Marjory, and how these wretches had used it to mould her to their ends. I knew now why, sleeping or waking, she held that steel spike against her heart. If—

The thought was too much for me. Even now, though I was beside her, she was beset by her enemies. We were both still practically prisoners on a hostile ship, and even now this demon was intent on unspeakable wrong. I did not pause; I did not shrink from the terrible task before me. With a bound I was upon him, and I had struck at his heart; struck so truly and so terrible a blow, that the hilt of the dagger struck his ribs with a thud like the blow of a cudgel. The blood seemed to leap out at me, even as the blow fell. With spasmodic reaction he tumbled forwards; fell without a sound, and so quickly that had not I, fearing lest the noise of his falling might betray me, caught him, he would have dropped like a stricken bullock.

Never before did I understand the pleasure of killing a man. Since then, it makes me shudder when I think of how so potent a passion, or so keen a pleasure, can rest latent in the heart of a righteous man. It may have been that between the man and myself was all the antagonism [439] that came from race, and fear, and wrongdoing; but the act of his killing was to me a joy unspeakable. It will rest with me as a wild pleasure till I die.

I took all the arms he had about him, two revolvers and a knife; they would give me fourteen more shots were I hard pressed. In any case they were safer, so far as Marjory and I were concerned, in my hands than in those of our enemies. I dragged the body of the negro into the cabin with the other dead man; then I closed the door on them, and when Marjory joined me, I locked the door of her cabin and took away the key. In case of suspicion this might give us a few minutes of extra time.

Marjory came with me up on deck; and as she caught sight of the open sea there was an unspeakable gladness on her face. We seized a favourable opportunity, when no

one was looking, for all on deck were busy hauling up the treasure; and slipped behind the cask fastened to the mast. There we breathed freely. We both felt that should the worst come to the worst we could get away before any one could touch us. One rushed to the bulwarks and over. They would never attempt to follow us, and there was a chance of a swim to shore. I gave Marjory a belt with two revolvers. As she strapped it on she felt safer; I knew it by the way she drew herself up, and threw back her shoulders.

When the last of the bags which held the treasure came on board, the men who had come with it closed in a ring around the mass as it lay on deck. They were all armed; I could see that they did not trust the sailors, for each moment some one's hand would go back to his gun. We heard one of them ask as he looked round: "What has become of that damned nigger? He must take his share of work!" Marjory was very brave and very still; I could see that her nerve was coming back to her. After a little whispered conversation, the newcomers[440] began to carry the bags down to the cabin; it was slow work, for two always stood guard above, and two remained down below evidently on similar duty. Discovery of the dead man must come soon, so Marjory and I stole behind the foremast which was well away from every one. She was first, and as she began to pass behind she recoiled; she got the drop on some one in front of her. There was a smothered 'h-s-s-sh' and she lowered her weapon. Turning to me she said in a faint whisper:

"It is the Spaniard; what is he doing here?" I whispered back:

"Be good to him. He is a noble fellow, and has behaved like a knight of old!" I pressed forward and took his hand. "How did you get here?" I asked. His answer was given in so faint a voice that I could see that he was spent and tired, if not injured:

"I swam, too. When I saw their boat pull out of the northern channel, I managed to scramble down part of the cliff, and then jumped. Fortunately I was not injured. It was a long, weary swim, and I thought I should never be able to get through; but at last the current took me and carried me to the ship. She was anchored with a hawser, not a cable. I managed to climb up it; and when I was on board I cut it nearly through."

Even as he spoke there was a queer lurch of the ship which lay stern forward, and a smothered ejaculation from all the seamen.

The hawser had parted and we were drifting before wind and tide. Then it was that I felt we should give warning to the yacht and the battleship. I knew that they were not far off; had I not seen them in my vision, which had now been proven. Then it was also

that the words of the young American came back to me: "Give us a light, if you have to fire the ship to get it."

[441]

All this time, from the moment when I had set foot on the whaler's deck till this instant, events had moved with inconceivable rapidity. There had been one silent, breathless rush; during which two lives had been taken and Marjory set free. Only a few minutes had elapsed in all; and when I looked around under the altered conditions, things seemed to be almost where they had been. It was like the picture in one's mind made by a lightning flash; when the period of reception is less than the time of the smallest action, and movement is lost in time. The fog belt was thinning out, and there was in the night air a faint suggestion that one might see, if there were anything to be seen.

The great Rock of Dunbuoy towered up; I could just distinguish so much on the land side. Whilst I was looking, there came a sudden light and then a whirr; high overhead through the sea fog we could see faintly the fiery trail of a rocket.

Instantly out at sea was an answer; a great ray of light shot upwards, and we could see its reflection in the sky. None of us said anything; but instinctively Marjory and I clasped hands. Then the light ray seemed to fall downward to the sea. But as it came down, the fog seemed to grow thicker and thicker till the light was lost in its density. There was stir of all on our ship. No loud word was spoken, but whispered directions, given with smothered curses, flew. Each man of the crew seemed to run to his post, and with a screeching and straining the sails rose. The vessel began to slip through the water with added speed. Now, if ever, was our time to warn our friends. The little rockets which I had brought had been sodden with water and were useless, and besides we had no way of getting a light. The only way of warning was by sound, and the only sound to carry was a pistol shot. For an instant I hesitated, for a shot meant a life if we[442] should be pushed to it. But it must be done; so signing to the others I ran aft and when close to the mast fired my revolver. Instantly around me was a chorus of curses. I bent double and ran back, seeing through the darkness vague forms rush to where I had been. The fog was closing thicker around us; it seemed to boil over the bulwarks as we passed along. We had either passed into another belt of fog, or one was closing down upon us with the wind. The sound of the pistol shot had evidently reached the war ship. She was far off us, and the sounds came faintly over the waste of stormy sea; but there was no mistaking the cheer followed by commands. These sounded faint and hoarsely; a few words were spoken with a trumpet, and then came the shrill whistle of the boatswain's pipe.

On our own deck was rushing to and fro, and frenzied labour everywhere. The first object was to get away from the searchlight; they would seek presently, no doubt, for who had fired the betraying shot. If I could have known what to do, so as to stay our progress, there would have been other shots; for now that we were moving through the water, every second might take us further from the shore and place us deeper in the toils of our foes.

[443]

CHAPTER LII

THE SKARES

I whispered to Marjory and Don Bernardino:

“If they once get away we are lost! We must stop them at all hazards!” The Spaniard nodded and Marjory squeezed my hands; there was no need of speech. Then I fixed the order of battle. I was to fire first, then the Spaniard, then Marjory, each saving his fire till we knew whether another shot was required. This precaution was necessary, as we had no reserve ammunition. We took it for granted that the chambers of the revolvers were full; my one shot had been satisfactory in this respect. When the sails were set and we began rushing through the water I saw that even at the risk of betraying ourselves to our enemies we must give warning again, and so fired. There was an answering cheer from the *Keystone* through the fog; and then a sudden rush forward of those on our own deck. When they were close to us, the seamen hung back; but the men of the gang kept on firing as they came. Fortunately we were in a line behind cover, for I could hear the ‘ping’ and the tearing wood as the bullets struck the mast. I fired a shot just to show that we were armed; and heard a sharp cry. Then they fell back. In a moment or two they also had formed their plan of battle. These were men used to such encounters; and as they knew that at such times a quick rush may mean everything, they did not let the grass grow under their feet. I could see[444] one of the seamen remonstrating with them, and hear the quick, angry tones of his voice, though I could not distinguish the words.

He pointed out into the fog, where now there was distinctly a luminous patch of light: the searchlight was moving towards us. The *Keystone* was coming down on us.

The blackmailer shook off the seaman and, then gave some directions to his comrades; they spread out right and left of us, and tried to find some kind of cover. I lifted Marjory and put her standing on the barrel fastened behind the mast, for I thought that as the flash of my pistol had come from the deck they would not expect

any one to be raised so high. Don Bernardino and I curled down on the deck, and our opponents began to fire. In the thickening fog, and with the motion of the ship which threw us all about like ninepins, their aim was vague; fortunately no one was hit. When I thought I had a chance I fired, but there was no response; the Don got a shot and Marjory another, but there was no sound, save that of the bullets striking on wood or iron. Then Marjory, whose traditional instinct was coming into play, fired twice in rapid succession; there was a quick exclamation and then a flood of horrible profanity, the man was only winged. Again and again they fired, and I heard a groan behind me from the Don.

“What’s that?” I whispered, not daring to stop or even to look back:

“My arm! Take my pistol, I cannot shoot with my left hand.” I put my hand back, and he placed the revolver in it. I saw a dark form rush across the deck and fired—and missed. I tried another shot; but the weapon only answered with a click; the chambers were exhausted. So I used the other revolver. And so for a few minutes a furious fight went on. Marjory seldom[445] fired, she was holding herself in reserve; but before I knew what was happening my second revolver was empty. Our antagonists were no chickens at their work; there was little to teach any of them in such a method of contest as this. Some one had evidently been counting the shots, for he suddenly called out:

“Not yet boys! They’ve at least three shots still!” With a sudden simultaneous rush they ran back into shelter.

During this time we had been tearing through the water at our full speed. But behind us on the port quarter was the sound of a great ship steaming on. The roar of the furnaces could be heard in the trumpeting of the funnels. The boatswain’s whistles were piping, and there were voices of command cutting hoarsely through the fog. The searchlight too was at work; we could see its rays high up on the mist, though they did not at the moment penetrate sufficiently to expose us to the lookout of the *Keystone*. Closer on our starboard quarter was another sound which came on the trailing wind, the rush of a small vessel running fast. We could hear down the wind the sharp ‘slap slap’ of the waves on the bows, and the roaring of the wind among the cordage. This must be the *Sporran* following us close with grim disregard of danger. The commander of the whaler, recognising the possibility of discovery, put his helm hard to starboard. I could myself not see through the darkness; but the seaman did and took his chance of grounding in Cruden Bay. When we had run in a little way the helm was jammed hard down again, and we ran on the other tack; for the moment we were lost to both the war ship and the yacht. Marjory looked at me appealingly and I nodded; the

situation was not one to be risked. She fired another shot from her pistol. There was an immediate reply from far out on our port side in the shape of more directions spoken with the trumpet and answering[446] piping from the boatswains. Several shots were fired towards us by the gang; they were manifestly on chance, for they went wildly wide of us. Then we could hear an angry remonstrance from the whaler captain, and a threat that if there were any more firing, he would down with his sails and take chance of being captured. One of the gang answered him:

“That packet can’t capture you within the three-mile limit; it’s a cruiser of Uncle Sam’s and they won’t risk having to lie up in harbour here till the war is over.” To which the other surlily replied:

“I wouldn’t put money on it. Anyhow someone will! You keep quiet if you can. There’s enough against us already if we should be caught!” The reply of the blackmailer was at least practical. I could not see what he did, but I took it that he put his pistol to the captain’s head as he said with a frightful oath:

“You’ll go on as you arranged with me; or I’ll blow your brains out where you stand. There’s quite enough against any of us, you included; so your one chance anyhow is to get out of this hole. See?” The captain accepted the position and gave his orders with a quiet delivery, to the effect that we ran first shorewards and then to starboard again till we were running back on our tracks like a hare.

Suddenly, however, this course was brought to an end by our almost running into a small vessel which as we passed I could see by its trim appearance was a yacht. We were so close for a few seconds, whilst we ran across her stern, that I shouted out:

“All right, MacRae. All safe as yet. She’s trying to run out to sea. Try to tell the *Keystone*.” The answer was a cheer from all aboard.

As our ship swept into the fog, several of our enemies ran at us. I handed Don Bernardino his own dagger[447] and took the bowie knife myself. Then we stood ready in case our foes should get to close quarters. They got nearly up to us, firing as they came; but we were just then sheltering behind the mast and no injury was done. They hesitated to come on, not seeing us; and we waited. As we stood with beating hearts the ship began to come to starboard again. We must have been sheltered in some way, for we did not seem to feel either wind or tide so much as before. Suddenly one of the seamen said:

“Whist! I hear breakers!” The rest paused and listened, and the captain called out:

“Hard to starboard; we are running on shore!” The ship answered at once, and we began to run across the wind, feeling the tide at the same time. But as we went, a searchlight flashed on the fog before us. We could not stop or change quick enough to quite avoid the ship from which it came, but the helm was put hard to starboard again and we ran close along side a great war ship. I could see her tower with protruding cannon as we ran by. A voice came through a speaking trumpet, and I could just catch the first words as the vessel swept by us:

“Rocks ahead!” The instinct of the seaman spoke, even at such a time, to keep another vessel from harm. The answer from our vessel was a volley of curses. Then the searchlight swept our deck, and we could see all our enemies. They were round us in a great ring and closing in upon us. They saw us, too, and with a shout began to run in. I took Marjory by the waist and ran with her to the bow of the ship; I flung her up on the bulwark and jumped up beside her. Don Bernardino joined us in a moment, and we saw the searchlight as it passed us and pierced into the fog ahead. Already the bulk of the battleship was almost lost in the mist; there was only a faint indication of her presence in a monstrous mass behind the searchlight, and the end of a spar rising above the fog.[448] In front of us there was a great roaring of water and that sharp rushing sound which comes from the back sweep of a broken wave. Our skipper saw the danger, and in a voice like a trumpet gave his orders.

But it was too late to do anything. As the searchlight again swept our deck, I saw the ring of men break up and scatter; almost at the same moment the rays passing beyond us, fell on a low rock rising from the sea up whose sides great waves were dashing. We were rushing to it, borne by wind and tide in a terrible haste.

At that instant we struck a rock below the water. With the shock we three were thrown forward into the sea. I heard a despairing shout behind us; and then the water closed over my head.

When I rose it was in a wild agony of fear for Marjory. She had been sitting to my left on the bulwark and must therefore have fallen to seaward of me. I raised myself as well as I could and looked around; and, by God’s grace, saw two hands rising above the water a few yards from me. With all my might I struggled towards them, and was able to drag my wife up to the surface. When I had her with me, though my terror and anxiety increased, I could think. At such moments the mind acts with lightning speed, and in a second or two I came to the conclusion that the rock we had struck must be amongst the Skares. If so, the only chance was to edge in with the tide and try to avoid striking any of the underlying rocks which I knew well were so deadly. Had not I seen Lauchlane Macleod come to his death through them.

It was a desperate struggle before us. The tide was racing amongst the rocks, and even were there no waves it would have been a difficult task to have won through it into shore. For myself I was a strong enough swimmer to have found my way in, even if I had had to round the outer rock and keep up to the harbour of Whinnyfold.[449] But with Marjory to care for, too—Marjory who had only lately learned to swim.... The prospect was indeed a terrible one. We must not lose a chance, and so I made my wife loose her skirts which fell away in the drag of the water; she could then swim more freely and to the best of her power.

The wind beat fiercely, and the tops of the breaking waves nearly choked us as they flew. There was just light enough down on the water level to see rocks a few yards ahead; the line of the shore rose like one dim opaque mass. In the darkness and the stress of the tide race there was little I could do, save keep Marjory's head and my own above the water and let the current bear us on. I must avoid the rocks as well as I could, and let all my efforts tend to bring us shorewards. There was not time for fears or doubting, or hoping; the moments must pass and the struggle be made, never-ending though it seemed to be.

After a few minutes I began to tire; the strain of the last few days and my late effort in reaching the whaler had begun to tell on me. I had now and again a passing thought of Don Bernardino and the friends who had been helping us; but they were all far off. The Spaniard I should probably never see again; the others might never see us.... I was relapsing into the lethargy of despair.

With a violent effort I woke to the task before me, and kept sternly on my way. Marjory was striving her utmost; but her strength was failing. Her weight was becoming deader.... That nerved me to further effort, and I swam on so frantically that I drew closer to the mainland. Here there was shelter of a kind; the waves broken by the outer rocks were less forceful. The crested tops which the wind had driven on us were weakening also. There was hope in this and it kept me up.[450] On I fought—on—on—on. Oh! would the struggle never end! I shut my teeth, and forged on fiercely. I could feel that we were going with the rush of the waves through a gully between sunken rocks.

Joy! there was shore beneath my feet, rough pebbles which rolled and worked against each other. The wave pulled us back. But my heart was renewed again. I made one more frantic effort, and swam closer to the land. Then as I saw the wave began to recoil I put down my feet, and with the last of my strength lifting Marjory in my arms I fought fiercely with the retreating wave. Staggering over the screaming pebbles,

exhausted to the point of death, I bore her high up on the beach and laid her down. Then I sank lifeless beside her cold body.

The last thing I remember was the faint light of the coming dawn, falling on her marble-white face as she lay on the shore.

[451]

CHAPTER LIII
FROM THE DEEP

It could not have been more than a few minutes before I recovered consciousness, if indeed I were ever absolutely unconscious. It was rather the inevitable yielding to a strain on nerve and muscle and brain, than a time of oblivion. I think that I always knew that I was by the sea, and that Marjory was beside me and in trouble; but that was all. I was in the nightmare stage, when one can understand danger and realise terror; and when the only thing impossible to one is to do anything. Certainly, when I came to myself I was fully conscious of my surroundings. I was even surprised that I did not see on Marjory's pale face, the cold faint gleam of light which had been there when last I saw her. The general light had, however, increased. The strand and the rocks looked now not black, but inexpressibly drear in the uniform grey which seemed to make all colour and shape and distance into one sad flat screen. My first work was of course to attend Marjory. For a while I feared that she was dead, so white was she amid the surrounding grey. But her heart still beat, and her breast moved, though very slightly, with her breathing. I could now see that we were in Broad Haven and, so, close to my own home. I could see through the pierced rock called the "Puir Mon." I took my wife in my arms and carried her, though with infinite difficulty for I was sorely exhausted, up the steep path, and brought her into the[452] house. I had to break the door in again, but there was no one to help me or to interfere in the matter. I got some brandy and poured a few drops into her mouth, and laid her in a pile of rugs whilst I lit the fire. The supply of whin bushes in the wood house was not exhausted, and very soon there was a roaring fire. When Marjory opened her eyes and looked around the room, a certain amount of consciousness came to her. She imagined the occasion of her being with me was the same as when we had escaped from the flooded cave; holding out her arms she said to me with infinite love and sweetness:

"Thank God, dear, you are safe!" A moment later she rubbed her eyes and sat up, looking wildly around as one does after a hideous dream. In her survey, however, her eyes lit on her own figure, and a real wave of shame swept over her; she hastily pulled

the rug round her shoulders and sank back. The habit of personal decorum had conquered fear. She closed her eyes for a moment or two to remember, and when she opened them was in full possession of all her faculties and her memory.

“It was no dream! It is all, all real! And I owe my life to you, darling, once again!” I kissed her, and she sank back with a sigh of happiness. A moment later, however, she started up, crying out to me:

“But the others, where are they? Quick! quick! let us go to help them if we can!” She looked wildly round. I understood her wishes, and hurrying into the other room brought her an armful of her clothes.

In a few minutes she joined me; and hand in hand we went out on the edge of the cliff. As we went, I told her of what had happened since she became unconscious in the water.

The wind was now blowing fiercely, almost a gale. The sea had risen, till great waves driving amongst the rocks had thrashed the whole region of the Skares^[453] into a wild field of foam. Below us, the waves dashing over the sunken rocks broke on the shore with a loud roaring, and washed high above the place where we had lain. The fog had lifted, and objects could be seen even at a distance. Far out, some miles away, lay a great ship; and by the outermost of the Skares a little to the north of the great rock and where the sunken reef lies, rose part of a broken mast. But there was nothing else to be seen, except away to south a yacht tossing about under double-reefed sails. Sea and sky were of a leaden grey, and the heavy clouds that drifted before the gale came so low as to make us think that they were the fog belts risen from the sea.

Marjory would not be contented till we had roused the whole village of Whinnyfold, and with them had gone all round the cliffs and looked into every little opening to see if there were trace or sign of any of those who had been wrecked with us. But it was all in vain.

We sent a mounted messenger off to Crom with a note, for we knew in what terrible anxiety Mrs. Jack must be. In an incredibly short time the good lady was with us; and was rocking Marjory in her arms, crying and laughing over her wildly. By and bye she got round the carriage from the village and said to us:

“And now my dears, I suppose we had better get back to Crom, where you can rest yourselves after this terrible time.” Marjory came over to me, and holding my arm looked at her old nurse lovingly as she said with deep earnestness:

“You had better go back, dear, and get things ready for us. As for me, I shall never willingly leave my husband’s side again!”

The storm continued for a whole day, growing rougher and wilder with each hour. For another day it grew less[454] and less, till finally the wind had died away and only the rough waves spoke of what had been. Then the sea began to give up its dead. Some seamen presumably those of the *Wilhelmina* were found along the coast between Whinnyfold and Old Slains, and the bodies of two of the blackmailers, terribly mangled, were washed ashore at Cruden Bay. The rest of the sailors and of the desperadoes were never found. Whether they escaped by some miracle, or were swallowed in the sea, will probably never be known.

Strangest of all was the finding of Don Bernardino. The body of the gallant Spanish gentleman was found washed up on shore behind the Lord Nelson rock, just opposite where had been the opening to the cave in which his noble ancestor had hidden the Pope’s treasure. It was as though the sea itself had respected his devotion, and had laid him by the place of his Trust. Marjory and I saw his body brought home to Spain when the war was over, and laid amongst the tombs of his ancestors. We petitioned the Crown; and though no actual leave was given, no objection was made to our removing the golden figure of San Cristobal which Benvenuto had wrought for the Pope. It now stands over the Spaniard’s tomb in the church of San Cristobal in far Castile.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

“In the First Edition of his work “The Two Bookes of Francis Bacon, of the proficience and advancement of Learning, divine and humane” published at London in 1605, the Author only alludes briefly to his Bi-literal Cipher. Speaking of Ciphers generally (Booke II) he says:

“But the vertues of them, whereby they are to be preferred, are three; that they be not laborious to write and reade; that they bee impossible to discypher; and in some cases, that they bee without suspicion. The highest Degree whereof, is to write OMNIA PER OMNIA; which is undoubtedly possible, with a proportion Quintuple at most, of the writing infoulding, to the writing infoulded, and no other restraints whatsoever.”

It was not till eighteen years later that he gave to the public an explanation of this ‘infoulding’ writing. In the rarely beautiful edition of the work in Latin printed in London by Haviland in 1623, the passage relating to secret writing is much amplified. Indeed the entire work is completed in many ways and greatly enlarged as is shown by its title.

“De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum. Libros IX.”

The following is his revised statement:

“Ut vero suspicio omnis absit, aliud Juventum subijciemus, quod certe, cum Adolescentuli essemus Parisiis, excogitavimus; nec etiam adhuc visa vobis res digna est, quae pereat. Habet enim gradum Ciphrae altissimum; nimirum ut *Omnia per Omnia* significari possint: ita tamen, ut Scriptis quae involuitur, quintuplo minor sit, quam ea cui involvatur: Alia nulla omnino[458] requiritur Conditio, aut Restrictio. Id hoc modo fiet. Primo, universae literae Alphabeti in duas tantummodo Literas solvantur, per Transpositionem earum. Nam Transpositis duarum Literarum, per Locos quinque, Differentiis triginta duabus, multo magis viginti quatuor (qui est Numerus Alphabeti apud nos) sufficiet. Huius *Alphabeti*. Exemplum tale est.”

“But for avoiding suspicion altogether, I will add another contrivance, which I devised myself when I was at Paris in my early youth, and which I still think worthy of preservation. For it has the perfection of a cipher, which is to make anything signifying anything; subject however to this condition, that the infolding writing shall contain at least five times as many letters as the writing infolded; no other condition or restriction is required. The way to do it is this: First let all the letters of the Alphabet be resolved into transpositions of two letters only. For the transposition of two letters through five places will yield thirty-two differences; much more twenty-four, which is the number of letters in our Alphabet. Here is an example of such an Alphabet.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
aaaaa	aaaab	aaaba	aaabb	aabaa	aabab	aabba	aabbb

I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
abaaa	abaab	ababa	ababb	abbaa	abbab	abbba	abbbb
R	S	T	V	W	X	Y	Z
baaaa	baaab	baaba	baabb	babaa	babab	babba	babbb

“Nor is it a slight thing which is thus by the way effected. For heere we see how thoughts may be communicated at any distance of place by means of any objects perceptible either to the eye or ear, provided only that those objects are capable of two differences; as by[459] bells, trumpets, torches, gunshots, and the like. But to proceed with our business. When you prepare to write, you must reduce the interior epistle to this bi-literal alphabet. Let the interior epistle be:

Fly.

Example of reduction.

F	L	Y
aabab	ababa	babba

“Have by you at the same time another alphabet in two forms; I mean in which each of the letters of the common alphabet, both capitals and small, are exhibited in two different forms,—any forms that you find convenient.”

[For instance, Roman and Italic letters; “a” representing Roman and “b” representing Italic.]

“Then take your interior epistle, reduced to the bi-literal shape, and adapt it, letter by letter, to your exterior epistle in the biform character; and then write it out. Let the exterior epistle be:

“Do not go till I come.”

Example of reduction

F	L	Y
aabab	ababa	babba

DONOT GOTIL LICOM—E

do not go till I come

From the above given dates it would almost seem as if Bacon had treated the matter in a purely academic manner, and had drawn out of his remembrance of his younger days a method of secret communication which had not seen any practical service. Spedding mentions in his book "Francis Bacon and his Times" that Bacon may have got the hint of the 'bi-literal cypher' from the work of John Baptist Porta, "De occultis literarum notis," reprinted[460] in Strasburg in 1606, but the first edition of which was published when Porta was a young man. It is however manifest from certain evidence, that Bacon practised his special cipher and used it for many years. Lady Bacon, mother of the philosopher, writing in 1593, to her son Anthony, elder brother of Francis, speaking of him, Francis, says, "I do not understand his enigmatical folded writing." Indeed it is possible that many years before he had tried to have his invention made use of for public service. His was an age of secret writing. Every Ambassador had to send his despatches in cipher, for thus—and even then not always—could they be safe from hostile eyes. The thousands of pages of reports to King Philip made by Don Bernardino de Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador at the Court of Queen Elizabeth, before the time of the Armada, were all written in this form; the groaning shelves of the records at Simancas bear evidence of the industry of such political officials and of their spies and secretaries. An ambitious youth like Francis Bacon, son of the Lord Keeper, and so traditionally and familiarly in touch with Court and Council, who in his baby days was addressed by Elizabeth as her "young Lord Keeper," and who spent the time between his sixteenth and eighteenth years in the suite of the English Ambassador in Paris, Sir Amyas Paulet, must have had constant experience of the need of a cipher which would fulfill the conditions which he laid down as essential in 1605—facility of execution, impossibility of discovery, and lack of suspiciousness. When, in a letter of 16 Sept. 1580, to his uncle Lord Burghley, he made suit to the Queen for some special employment, it is possible that the post he sought was that of secret writer to Her Majesty. His letter, though followed up with a more pressing one on 18th October of the same year, remained unanswered. Whatever the motive or purpose of these last two letters may have been, it remained on his mind; for eleven years later[461] we find him again writing to his uncle the Lord Keeper: "I ever have a mind to serve Her Majesty," and again, "the meanness of my estate doth somewhat move me." In the interval, on 25th August, 1585, he wrote to the Right Hon. Sir Francis Walsingham, Principal Secretary to the Queen: "In default of getting it, will go back to

course of practice (at Bar) I must and will follow, not for my necessity of estate but for my credit's sake, which I fear by being out of action will wear." His brother Anthony spent the best part of his life abroad, presumably on some secret missions; and as Francis was the recipient of his letters it was doubtless that "folded writing" which so puzzled their mother which was used for the safety and secrecy of their correspondence. Indeed to what a fine point the biliteral method must have been brought by Bacon and his correspondents is shown by the extraordinarily minute differences given in his own setting forth of the symbols for "a" and "b" etc., in the "*De Augmentis*" of 1623 and later. In the edition printed in Latin in Paris the next year, 1624, by Peter Mettayer, the differences, possibly through some imperfection of printing, are so minute that even the reader studying the characters set before him, with the extra elucidation of their being placed under their proper headings, finds it almost impossible to understand them. The cutting for instance of the "n" which represents "a" and that which represents "b" seems, even after prolonged study, to be the same.

It is to be noticed that Bacon in setting forth the cipher in its completeness directs attention to its infinite possibilities and variations. The organised repetition of any two symbols in combinations of not more than five for one or both symbols may convey ideas. Not letters only but colours, bells, cannon, or other sounds may be used with effect. All the senses may be employed, or any or some of them, in endless combinations.

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Again it is to be noted that even in his first allusion to the system in 1605, he says, "to write Omnia per Omnia, which is undoubtedly possible, with a proportion *Quintuple at most*, of the writing infolding, to the writing infolded."

"Quintuple at most!" But in the instances of his system which he gives eighteen years later, when probably his time for secret writing as a matter of business had ceased, and when from the lofty altitude of the Woolsack he could behold unmoved any who had concealments to make—provided of course that they were not connected with bribes—there is only one method given, that of five infolding letters for each one infolded. In the later and fuller period he speaks also of the one necessary condition "that the infolding writing shall contain *at least five times as many letters* as the writing infolded"—

Even in the example which he gives "Do not go till I come," there is a superfluous letter,—the final "e;" as though he wished to mislead the reader by inference as well as by direct statement.

Is it possible that he stopped short in his completion of this marvellous cipher? Can we believe that he who openly spoke from the first of symbols "*quintuple at most*," was content to use so large a number of infolding letters when he could possibly do with less? Why, the last condition of excellence in a cipher which he himself laid down, namely, that it should "bee without suspicion," would be endangered by a larger number than was actually necessary. It is by repetition of symbols that the discovery of secret writing is made; and in a cipher where, manifestly, the eye or the ear or the touch or the taste must be guided by such, and so marked and prolonged, symbols, the chances of discovery are enormously increased. Doubtless, then, he did not rest in his investigation and invention until he had brought his cipher to its least dimensions; and it was for^[463] some other reason or purpose that he thus tried to divert the mind of the student from his earlier suggestion. It will probably be proved hereafter that more than one variant and reduction to lower dimensions of his biliteral cipher was used between himself and his friends. When the secrets of that "Scrivenry" which, according to Mr. W. G. Thorpe in his interesting volume, "The Hidden Lives of Shakespeare and Bacon," Bacon kept at work in Twickenham Park, are made known, we shall doubtless know more on the subject. Of one point, however, we may rest assured, that Bacon did not go back in his pursuance of an interesting study; and the change from "Quintuple at most" of the infolding writing of 1605, to "Quintuple at least," of 1623, was meant for some purpose of misleading or obscuration, rather than as a limitation of his original setting forth of the powers and possibilities of his great invention. It will some day be an interesting theme of speculation and study what use of his biliteral cipher had been made between 1605 and 1623; and what it was that he wished to conceal.

That the original cipher, as given, can be so reduced is manifest. Of the Quintuple biliteral there are thirty-two combinations. As in the Elizabethan alphabet, as Bacon himself points out, there were but twenty-four letters, certain possibilities of reduction at once unfold themselves, since at the very outset one entire fourth of the symbols are unused.

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APPENDIX B

ON THE REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF SYMBOLS IN BACON'S BILITERAL CIPHER

When I examined the scripts together, both that of the numbers and those of the dots, I found distinct repetitions of groups of symbols; but no combinations sufficiently

recurrent to allow me to deal with them as entities. In the number cipher the class of repetitions seemed more marked. This may have been, however, that as the symbols were simpler and of a kind with which I was more familiar, the traces or surmises were easier to follow. It gave me hope to find that there was something in common between the two methods. It might be, indeed, that both writings were but variants of the same system. Unconsciously I gave my attention to the simpler form—the numbers—and for a long weary time went over them forward, backward, up and down, adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing; but without any favorable result. The only encouragement which I got was that I got additions of eight and nine, each of these many times repeated. Try how I would, however, I could not scheme out of them any coherent result.

When in desperation I returned to the dotted papers I found that this method was still more exasperating, for on a close study of them I could not fail to see that there was a cipher manifest; though what it was, or how it could be read, seemed impossible to me. Most of the letters had marks in or about them; indeed there were[465] very few which had not. Examining more closely still I found that the dots were disposed in three different ways: (a) in the body of the letter itself: (b) above the letter: (c) below it. There was never more than one mark in the body of the letter; but those above or below were sometimes single and sometimes double. Some letters had only the dot in the body; and others, whether marked on the body or not, had no dots either above or below. Thus there was every form and circumstance of marking within these three categories. The only thing which my instinct seemed to impress upon me continually was that very few of the letters had marks both above and below. In such cases two were above and one below, or *vice versa*; but in no case were there marks in the body and above and below also. At last I came to the conclusion that I had better, for the time, abandon attempting to decipher; and try to construct a cipher on the lines of Bacon's Biliteral—one which would ultimately accord in some way with the external conditions of either, or both, of those before me.

But Bacon's Biliteral as set forth in the *Novum Organum* had five symbols in every case. As there were here no repetitions of five, I set myself to the task of reducing Bacon's system to a lower number of symbols—a task which in my original memorandum I had held capable of accomplishment.

For hours I tried various means of reduction, each time getting a little nearer to the ultimate simplicity; till at last I felt that I had mastered the principle.

Take the Baconian biliteral cipher as he himself gives it and knock out repetitions of four or five aaaaa: aaaab: abbbb: baaaa: bbbba: and bbbbb. This would leave a

complete alphabet with two extra symbols for use as stops, repeats, capitals, etc. This method of deletion, however, would not allow of the reduction of the number of symbols[466] used; there would still be required five for each letter to be infolded. We have therefore to try another process of reduction, that affecting the variety of symbols without reference to the number of times, up to five, which each one is repeated.

Take therefore the Baconian Biliteral and place opposite to each item the number of symbols required. The first, (aaaaa) requires but one symbol “a,” the second, (aaaab) two, “a” and “b;” the third (aaaba) three, “a” “b” and “a;” and so on. We shall thus find that the 11th (ababa) and the 22nd (babab) require five each, and that the 6th, 10th, 12th, 14th, 19th, 21st, 23rd and 27th require four each. If, therefore, we delete all these biliteral combinations which require four or five symbols each—ten in all—we have still left twenty-two combinations, necessitating at most not more than two changes of symbol in addition to the initial letter of each, requiring up to five quantities of the same symbol. Fit these to the alphabet; and the scheme of cipher is complete.

If, therefore, we can devise any means of expressing, in conjunction with each symbol, a certain number of repeats up to five; and if we can, for practical purposes, reduce our alphabet to twenty-two letters, we can at once reduce the biliteral cipher to three instead of five symbols.

The latter is easy enough, for certain letters are so infrequently used that they may well be grouped in twos. Take “X” and “Z” for instance. In modern printing in English where the letter “e” is employed seventy times, “x” is only used three times, and “z” twice. Again, “k” is only used six times, and “q” only three times. Therefore we may very well group together “k” and “q,” and “x” and “z.” The lessening of the Elizabethan alphabet thus effected would leave but twenty-two letters, the same number as the combinations of the biliteral remaining after the elision. And further, as “W”[467] is but “V” repeated, we could keep a special symbol to represent the repetition of this or any other letter, whether the same be in the body of a word, or if it be the last of one word and the first of that which follows. Thus we give a greater elasticity to the cipher and so minimise the chance of discovery.

As to the expression of numerical values applied to each of the symbols “a” and “b” of the biliteral cipher as above modified, such is simplicity itself in a number cipher. As there are two symbols to be represented and five values to each—four in addition to the initial—take the numerals, one to ten—which latter, of course, could be represented by 0. Let the odd numbers according to their values stand for “a”:

a=1
aa=3
aaa=5
aaaa=7
aaaaa=9

and the even numbers according to their values stand for “b”:

b=2
bb=4
bbb=6
bbbb=8
bbbbb=0

and then? Eureka! We have a Biliteral Cipher in which each letter is represented by one, two, or three, numbers; and so the five symbols of the Baconian Biliteral is reduced to three at maximum.

Variants of this scheme can of course, with a little ingenuity, be easily reconstructed.

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APPENDIX C

THE RESOLVING OF BACON’S BILITERAL REDUCED TO THREE SYMBOLS IN A NUMBER CIPHER

Place in their relative order as appearing in the original arrangement the selected symbols of the Biliteral:

a a a a a
a a a a b
&c

Then place opposite each the number arrived at by the application of odd and even figures to represent the numerical values of the symbols “a” and “b.”

Thus aaaaa	will be as shown	9
aaaab	will be as shown	72
aaaba	will be as shown	521

and so on. Then put in sequence of numerical value. We shall then have: 0. 9. 18. 27. 36. 45. 54. 63. 72. 81. 125. 143. 161. 216. 234. 252. 323. 341. 414. 432. 521. 612. An analysis shows that of these there are two of one figure; eight of two figures; and twelve of three figures. Now as regards the latter series—the symbols composed of three figures—we will find that if we add together the component figures of each of those which begins and ends with an even number they will tot up to nine; but that the total of each of those commencing[469] and ending with an odd number only total up to eight. There are no two of these symbols which clash with one another so as to cause confusion.

To fit the alphabet to this cipher the simplest plan is to reserve one symbol (the first—“0”) to represent the repetition of a foregoing letter. This would not only enlarge possibilities of writing, but would help to baffle inquiry. There is a distinct purpose in choosing “0” as the symbol of repetition for it can best be spared; it would invite curiosity to begin a number cipher with “0,” were it in use in any combination of figures representing a letter.

Keep all the other numbers and combinations of numbers for purely alphabetical use. Then take the next five—9 to 45 to represent the vowels. The rest of the alphabet can follow in regular sequence, using up of the triple combinations, first those beginning and ending with even numbers and which tot up to nine, and when these have been exhausted, the others, those beginning and ending with odd numbers and which tot up to eight, in their own sequence.

If this plan be adopted, any letter of a word can be translated into numbers which are easily distinguishable, and whose sequence can be seemingly altered, so as to baffle inquisitive eyes, by the addition of any other numbers placed anywhere throughout the cipher. All of these added numbers can easily be discovered and eliminated by the scribe who undertakes the work of decipheration, by means of the additions of odd or even numbers, or by reference to his key. The whole cipher is so rationally exact that any one who knows the principle can make a key in a few minutes.

As I had gone on with my work I was much cheered by certain resemblances or coincidences which presented themselves, linking my new construction with the existing[470] cipher. When I hit upon the values of additions of eight and nine as the component elements of some of the symbols, I felt sure that I was now on the right track. At the completion of my work I was exultant for I felt satisfied in believing that the game was now in my own hands.

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APPENDIX D

ON THE APPLICATION OF THE NUMBER CIPHER TO THE DOTTED PRINTING

The problem which I now put before myself was to make dots in a printed book in which I could repeat accurately and simply the setting forth of the biliteral cipher. I had, of course, a clue or guiding principle in the combinations of numbers with the symbols of “a” and “b” as representing the Alphabetical symbols. Thus it was easy to arrange that “a” should be represented by a letter untouched and “b” by one with a mark. This mark might be made at any point of the letter. Here I referred to the cipher itself and found that though some letters were marked with a dot in the centre or body of the letter, those both above and below wherever they occurred showed some kind of organised use. “Why not,” said I to myself, “use the body for the difference between “a” and “b;” and the top and bottom for numbers?”

No sooner said than done. I began at once to devise various ways of representing numbers by marks or dots at top and bottom. Finally I fixed, as being the most simple, on the following:

Only four numbers—2, 3, 4, 5—are required to make the number of times each letter of the symbol is repeated, there being in the original Baconian cipher, after the elimination of the ten variations already made, only three changes of symbol to represent any letter. Marks at the top might therefore represent the even numbers[472] “2” and “4”—one mark standing for “two” and two marks for “four”; marks at the bottom would represent the odd numbers “3” and “5”—one mark standing for “three” and two marks for “five.”

Thus “a a a a” would be represented by “a” or any other letter with two dots below: “a a a a b” by ä b, or any other letters similarly treated. As any letter left plain would represent “a” and any letter dotted in the body would represent “b” the cipher is complete for application to any printed or written matter. As in the number cipher, the repetition of a letter could be represented by a symbol which in this variant would be the same as the symbol for ten or “0.” It would be any letter with one dot in the body and two under it, thus—t̄.

For the purpose of adding to the difficulty of discovery, where two marks were given either above or below the letter, the body mark (representing the letter as “b” in the Biliteral) might be placed at the opposite end. This would create no confusion in the mind of an advised decipherer, but would puzzle the curious.

On the above basis I completed my key and set to my work of deciphering with a jubilant heart; for I felt that so soon as I should have adjusted any variations between the systems of the old writer and my own, work only was required to ultimately master the secret.

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The following tables will illustrate the making and working—both in ciphering and deciphering—of the amended Biliteral Cipher of Francis Bacon:

CIPHER FOR NUMBERS AND DOTS.

P (Plain) means letter left untouched D (Dot) means letter with dot in body

One Dot—(.) at Top (t) = 2

One Dot—(.) at Bottom (b) = 3

Two Dots—(..) at Top (t) = 4

Two Dots—(..) at Bottom (b) = 5

Bacon Cipher.	No. of Symbols Required	Number Cipher.	Alphabet to be arranged in order.	Dot Cipher
		No. Values of Symbols reported.		
A — 1 — a a a a a	— 1 —	9	— A	— P..b
B — 2 — a a a a b	— 2 —	7.2	— D	— P.t — D
C — 3 — a a a b a	— 3 —	5.2.1	— Y	— P .b — D — P
D — 4 — a a a b b	— 2 —	5.4	— B	— P .b — D.t
E — 5 — a a b a a	— 3 —	3.2.3	— T	— P .t — D — P.t
F — 6 — a a b a b	— 4 —	3.2.1.2		
G — 7 — a a b b a	— 3 —	3.4.1	— X.Z.	— P .t — D.t — P

H— 8	— a a b b b	— 2 —	3.6	— O	— P . t — D . b
I— 9	— a b a a a	— 3 —	1.2.5	— P	— P — D — P . b
K— 10	— a b a a b	— 4 —	1.3.3.2		
L— 11	— a b a b a	— 5 —	1.2.1.2.1		
M— 12	— a b a b b	— 4 —	1.2.1.4		
N— 13	— a b b a a	— 3 —	1.4.3	— R	— P — D . t — P . t
O— 14	— a b b a b	— 4 —	1.4.1.2		
P— 15	— a b b b a	— 3 —	1.6.1	— S	— P — D . b — P
Q— 16	— a b b b b	— 2 —	1.8	— E	— P — D . t
R— 17	— b a a a a	— 2 —	2.7	— I	— D — P . t
S— 18	— b a a a b	— 3 —	2.5.2	— K . Q .	— D — P . b — D
T— 19	— b a a b a	— 4 —	2.3.2.1		
V— 20	— b a a b b	— 3 —	2.3.4	— H	— D — P . t — D . t
W— 21	— b a b a a	— 4 —	2.1.2.3		
X— 22	— b a b a b	— 5 —	2.1.2.1.2		
Y— 23	— b a b b a	— 4 —	2.1.4.1		
Z— 24	— b a b b b	— 3 —	2.1.6	— G	— D — P — D . b
25	— b b a a a	— 2 —	4.5	— U . V .	— D . t — P . b

26	— b b a a b — 3 —	4.3.2	— M	— D .t — P.t — D
27	— b b a b a — 4 —	4.1.2.1		
28	— b b a b b — 3 —	4.1.4	— L	— D .t — P — D.t
29	— b b b a a — 2 —	6.3	— C	— D .b — P.t
30	— b b b a b — 3 —	6.1.2	— N	— D .b — P — D
31	— b b b b a — 2 —	8.1	— F	— D .t — P
32	— b b b b b — 1 —	9	— Repeat	— D .b

Note.—When there are to be two dots at either top or bottom of a letter, the dot usually put in the body of a letter which is to indicate “b” can be placed at the opposite end of the letter to the double dotting. This will help to baffle investigation without puzzling the skilled interpreter.

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KEY TO NUMBER CIPHER

Divide off into additions of nine or eight. Thus if extraneous figures have been inserted, they can be detected and deleted.

Cipher.	De-Cipher.
A = 9	O = Repeat Letter
B = 54	125 = P
C = 63	143 = R
D = 72	161 = S
E = 18	18 = E
F = 81	216 = G
G = 216	234 = H

H = 234 252 = K or Q
 I = 27 27 = I
 K.Q = 252 323 = T
 L = 414 341 = X or Z
 M = 432 36 = O
 N = 612 414 = L
 O = 36 432 = M
 P = 125 45 = U or V
 R = 143 521 = Y
 S = 161 54 = B
 T = 323 612 = N
 U.V = 45 63 = C
 X.Z = 341 72 = D
 Y = 521 81 = F
 Repeat = O 9 = A

Finger Cipher.

Values the same as Number Cipher.

The RIGHT hand, beginning at the thumb, represent the ODD numbers,

The LEFT hand, beginning at the thumb, represent the EVEN numbers.



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KEY TO DOT CIPHER

P—Letter left plain.

.—Dot.

D—Dot in centre or where are two dots t or b in other end (b or t).

t—top of letter.

b—bottom of letter.

Cipher.	De-Cipher.
A = P.. b	P — D — P . b = P
B = P . b — D . t	P — D . t — P . t = R
C = D . b — P . t	P — D .. t — = E
D = P .. t — D	P — D . b — P — = S
E = P — D .. t	P . t — D — P . t = T
F = D .. t — P	P . t — D . t — P — = X or Z
G = D — P — D . b	P . t — D . b — = O
H = D — P . t — D . t	P .. t — D — = D
I = D — P .. t	P . b — D — P = Y
K.Q = D — P . b — D	P . b — D . t — = B
L = D . t — P — D . t	P .. b — = A
M = D . t — P . t — D	D — P — D . b = G
N = D . b — P — D	D — P . t — D . t = H
O = P . t — D . b	D — P .. t — = I
P = P — D — P . b	D — P . b — D — = K or Q
R = P — D . t — P . t	D . t — P — D . t = L
S = P — D . b — P	D . t — P . t — D — = M
T = P . t — D — P . t	D . t — P . b — = U or V
U.V = D . t — P . b	D .. t — P — = F
X.Z = P . t — D . t — P	D . b — P — D — = N
Y = P . b — D — P	D . b — P . t — = C

Repeat = D .. b (W=U repeated) D .. b — = Repeat (W)

Memoranda.

Begin fresh with each line.

Take no account of stops.

Take no account of Capitals or odd words.

y^{is} one letter.

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APPENDIX E

Page —

NARRATIVE OF BERNARDINO DE ESCOBAN, KNIGHT OF THE CROSS OF THE HOLY
SEE AND GRANDEE OF SPAIN

When my kinsman who was known as the “Spanish Cardinal” heard of my arrival in Rome in obedience to his secret summons, he sent one to me who took me to see him at the Vatican. I went at once and found that though the carriage of his great office had somewhat aged my kinsman it had not changed the sweet bearing which he had ever had towards me. He entered at once on the matter regarding which he had summoned me, leaving to later those matters of home and family which were close to us both, and prefacing his speech with an assurance—unnecessary I enforced on him—that he would not have urged me to so great a voyage, and at a time when the concerns of home and of His Catholic Majesty so needed me in my own place, had there not been strictest need of my presence at Rome. This he then explained, ever anticipating my ignorance, so lucidly and with sweet observance of my needs, that I could not wonder at his great advancement.

Entering at once on the enterprise of the King as to the restoration of England to the fold of the True Church he made clear to me that the one great wish of His Holinesse was to aid in all ways the achievement of the same. To such end he was willing to devote a vast treasure, the which he had accumulated for the purpose through many years. “But” said my kinsman, and with so much smiling as might become his grave office “the King hath here[477] at the Court of Rome one to represent him, who, though doubtless a zealous and faithful servant of his Royal Master, hath not those qualities of discretion and discernment, of the subjugation of self and the discipline of his own ideas, which go to make up the perfection of the Ambassador. He hath already many times and in many ways, to many persons and in many Countries, said

of His Holinesse such things as, even if true—and they are not so—were, in the high discretion of his office as Ambassador, better unspoken. This, moreover, in an Embassy wherein he wishes to acquire much which the mundane world holds to be of great worth. The Count de Olivares hath spoken freely and without reserve of the Holy Father's reticence in handing over vast sums of money to His Catholic Majesty as due to parsimony, to avarice, to meanness of spirit, and to other low qualities which, though common enough in men, are soil to the name of God's Vicegerent on Earth! Nay" he went on, seeing that my horror was such as to verge on doubt, "trust me in this, for of the verity of these things I am assured. Rome hath many eyes, and the hearing of her ears is widecast. The Pope and his Cardinals are well served throughout the world. Little indeed happens in Christendom—aye and beyond it—which is not echoed in secret in the Vatican. I know that not only has Count de Olivares spoken of his beliefs regarding the Holy Father to his mundane friends, but he has not hesitated in his formal despatches to say the same to his Royal Master. It hath grieved His Holinesse much that any could so misunderstand him, and it hath grieved him more that His Catholic Majesty should receive such calumnies without demur. Wherefore he would take some other means than the hand of the King of Spain to accomplish his own secret ends. He knoweth well the high purpose of His Catholic Majesty, your Royal Master, in the restoration[478] of England to the True Faith; but yet his mind is much disturbed by his recent pronouncements regarding the Bishoprics. The See of Rome is the Arch Episcopate of the Earth, and to its Bishop belongs by God's very ordinance the ruling of all the bishoprics of the Church. "Upon this Rock shall I build my Church." Now His Holinesse hath already promised a million crowns towards the great emprise of the Armada; and he hath promised it so that it be handed over to the King when his emprise, which is after all for the enlargement of his own kingdom, hath begun to bear fruit. But Count de Olivares is not content with this promise—the promise remember of God's Vicegerent—and he is ever clamorous, not only for the immediate payment of this promised sum, but for other sums. His new request is for another million crowns. And even in the very presence of His Holinesse, he so bears himself as if the non-compliance with his demand were a wrong to him and to his Master. From all which His Holinesse, consulting in privacy with me who am also his friend—such is the greatness with which he honoureth me—hath determined that, whereas he will of course keep to the last letter his promise of help, and will even exceed largely the same, he will dispose in other ways of the great treasure which he had already set aside for this English affair. When he honoured me by asking my advice as to whom should be entrusted with this high endeavour, and had shown that of necessity it should be some Spaniard so that hereafter it might not be said that the emprise of the Armada had not his full sanction and support, I ventured to suggest

that in you first of all men this high trust should be reposed. For yourself, I said that I had known you from childhood, and had found you without a flaw; and that you came from a race that had gone clothed in honour since the time of the Moors.”

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Much other of like kind, my children, did my kinsman tell me that he had said to His Holinesse; which so satisfied him that he had commanded him to send for me so that he could have the assurance of his own seeing what manner of man I was. My kinsman then went on to tell me how he had told His Holinesse of what I had already taken in hand regarding the Great Armada. How I had promised the King a galleon fully equipped and manned with seamen and soldiers from our old Castile; and how His Majesty was so pleased, since my offer had been the first he had received, that he had sworn that my vessel should carry the flag of the squadron of the galleons of Castile. He told him also that the galleon was to be called the *San Cristobal* from my patron saint; and also that so her figurehead should bear the image of the Christ into English waters the first of all things that came from my Province. Which idea so wrought upon the mind of His Holinesse that he said: “Good man! Good Spaniard! Good Christian! I shall provide the figurehead for the *San Cristobal* myself. When Don de Escoban comes here I shall arrange it with him.”

When my kinsman had so informed me as to many things he left me a while, saying that he would ask the Pope to arrange for an audience with me. Shortly he returned with haste, saying that the Holy Father wished me to come to him at once. I went in exaltation mingled with fear; and all my unworthiness of such high honour rose before me. But when I came to His Holinesse and knelt before him he blessed me and raised me up himself. And when he bade me, I raised my eyes and looked at him in the face. Whereat he turned to the Spanish Cardinal and said: “You have spoken under the mark, my brother. Here is a man indeed in whom I can trust to the full.”

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And so, my children, he made me sit by him, and for a long time—it was more than two hours by the clock—he talked with me about his wish. And, oh my children, I would that you and others could hear the wise words of that great and good man. He was so worldly-wise, in addition to his Saintly wisdom, that nothing seemed to lack in his reasoning; nothing was too small to be outside his understanding and considerations of the motives and arts of men. He told me with exceeding frankness of his views of the situation. All the while, my kinsman smiled and nodded approval now and again; and it filled me with pride that one of my own blood should stand so close to the counsels of His Holinesse. He told me that though war was a sad

necessity, which he as himself an earthly monarch was compelled to understand and accept, yet he preferred infinitely the ways of peace; and moreover believed in them. In his own wise words, “the logic of the cannon, though more loud, speaks not so forcibly as the logic of the living day between sunrise and sunset.” When later he added to this conviction that, “the chink of the money-bag speaks more loudly than either,” I ventured an impulsive word of protest. Whereupon he stopped and looking at me sharply asked if I knew how to bribe. To which I replied that as yet I had given none, nor taken none. Then smilingly he laid his hand in friendliness on my shoulder and said: “My friend, Saint Escoban, these be two things, not one; and though to take a bribe is to be unforgiven, yet to give one at high command is but a duty, like the soldier’s duty to kill which is not murder, which it would be without such behest.” Then raising his hand to silence my protest he said: “I know what you would say: ‘Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh,’ but such argument, my friend, is my province; and its responsibility is mine. Ere you proceed on your mission you shall have indemnity for[481] the carriage of all my commands. You go into an enemy’s country; a country which is the professed and malignant enemy of Holy Church, and where faith and honour are not. God’s work is to be done in many ways. It is sufficient that He has allowed instruments that are unworthy and unholy; and as unworthy and unholy we must use them to His ends. You, Don de Escoban, shall have no pain in such matters, and no shame. My commands shall cover you!” Then, when I had bowed my recognition of his will, he resumed his instructions. He said that in England in high places were many men who were open to sell their knowledge or their power, and that when once they had accepted payment it were needful for their own credit and even for their safety, that they should further the end which they had undertaken. “These English,” he said, “are pagans; and it was said of this our Holy City in pagan times ‘*Omnia Romae venalia sunt!*’” Whereupon there was borne upon me a recollection of years before when I was in the suite of the Ambassador at Paris, how a boy in the British Embassy who was shewing me a cipher of enclosed writing which he had just perfected had written in it with uncouth lettering as an illustration “*Omnia Britanniae venalia sunt.*” And further did remember how we had enlarged and perfected the cipher when we resided together at Tours. His Holiness told me that in great seasons it were needful to scatter favours with a lavish hand, and that no season was or could be so great as that which foreran the restoring to the fold a great and active nation who was already beginning to rule the seas. “To which end,” he said, “I am placing with you a vastness of treasure such as no nation hath ever seen. The gifts of the Faithful have begun it and enlarged it; and the fruits of many victories have enhanced it. Regarding it, there is only one promise which I will exact from you, and that I shall exact in the[482] most solemn way of which the Church has knowledge;

that this vast treasure be applied to onely that purpose to which it is ordained—the advancement of the True Faith. It will add also, of course, to the honour and glory of the Kingdom of Spain, so that for all time the world may know that the comfort of the Roman See is on the emprise of the Great Armada! In proof of which should, for the sins of men, the great emprise fail, you or those who may succeed you in the Trust are, if I myself be not then living, to hand the Treasure to the custody of whatever monarch may then sit upon the throne of Spain for his good guardianship, in trust with me.”

So he proceeded to detail; and gave full instructions as to the amount of the treasure. How it was to be placed in my hands, and when; and all details of its using when the Armada should have made landing on English shores. And how I should use it myself, in case I were not told to hand it over to some other. If I were to yield up the treasure, the mandate should be enforced by letter, together with the showing of a ring, which he took from the purse where he kept the Fisherman’s ring wherewith he signs all briefs, and allowed me to examine it so that I might recognize it if shown to me hereafter. All of which things of using are not now of importance to you, my children, for the time of their usefulness has passed by; but only to show that the treasure is to be guarded, and finally given to the custody of the King of Spain.

Then His Holiness spoke to me of my own vessel. He promised me that a suitable figurehead, one wrought for his own galley by the great Benvenuto Cellini, and blessed by Himself, should be duly sent on to me. He promised also that the Quittance to me and mine, which he had named should be completed and lodged in the secret archives of the Papacy. Then once more he blessed me, and on parting gave me a relic of San Cristobal,[483] whose possession, together with the honour done me, made me feel as I left the Vatican as though I walked upon air.

On my return to Spain I visited the ship yard at San Lucar, where already the building of the *San Cristobal* was in progress. I arranged in private with the master builder that there should be constructed in the centre of the galleon a secret chamber, well encased round with teak wood from the Indies, and with enforcement of steel plates; and with a lock to the iron door, such as Pedro the Venetian hath already constructed for the treasure chest of the King. By my suggestion, and his wisdom in the doing of the matter, the secret chamber was so arranged in disposition, and so masked in with garniture of seeming unimportance, that none, unless of the informed, might tell its presence, or indeed of its very existence. It was placed as though in a well of teak wood and steel, hemmed in on all sides; without entrance whatever from the lower parts, and only approachable from the top which lay under my own cabin, down deep in the centre of the galleon. Men in single and detachments, were brought from other ship yards for the doing of this work, and all so disposed in Port that none might have

greater knowledge than of that item which he completed at the time. Save only those few of the guilds whose faith had long been made manifest by their rectitude of life and their discretion of silence.

Into this secret receptacle (to continue this narrative out of its due sequence) when the final outfitting of the Invincible Armada came to pass, was placed, under my own supervision, in the night time and in secret, all the vast treasure which had before then been sent to me secretly by agents of His Holiness. Full tally and reckoning made I with my own hand, nominating the coined money by its value in crowns and doubloons, and[484] the gold and silver in bullion by their weight. I made a list in separate also of the endless array of precious stones, both those enriched in carvings and enriching the jewells of gold and silver wrought by the cunning of the great artizans. I made list also of the gems unplanted, which were of innumerable number and of various bigness. These latter I specified by kind and number, singling out some of rare size and quality for description. The whole table of the list I signed and sent by his messengers to the Pope, specifying thereon that I had them in trust for His Holiness to dispose of them as he might direct; or to yield over to whomsoever he might depute to receive them whenever and wherever they might be in the guardianship of me or mine, the order of His Holiness being verified by the exhibition by the new trustee of the Eagle Ring.

Before the *San Cristobal* had left San Lucar, there arrived from Rome, in a package of great bulk—brought by a ship accredited by the Pope, so that corsairs other than Turks and pagans might respect the flag, and so abstain from plunder—the figurehead of the galleon which His Holiness had promised to supply. With it came a sealed missive cautioning me that I should open the package in privacy, and deal with its contents only by means of those in whom I had full trust, since it was even in its substance most precious. In addition to which it had been specially wrought by Benvenuto Cellini, the Master goldsmith whose work was contended for by the Kings of the earth. It was the wish of His Holiness himself that on the conversion of England being completed, either through peace or war, this figurehead of the *San Cristobal* should be set over the High Altar of the Cathedral at Westminster, where it would serve for all time of an emblem of the love of the Pope for the wellbeing of the souls of his English children.

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I opened the case with only present a chosen few; and truly we were wonderstruck with the beauty and richness of the jewell, for it was none other, which was disclosed to us. The great figure of San Cristobal was silver gilded to look like gold, and of such

thickness that the hollow within rang sweetly at a touch as though a bell sounded there. But the Figure of the child Christ which he bore upon his shoulder was of none other than solid gold. When we who were present saw it, we sank to our knees in gratitude for so great a tribute of Holinesse, and also the beauty of the tribute to the Divine Excellence. Truly the kindness of the Pope and the zeal of his artist were without bound; for with the figurehead came a jewell made in the form of a brooch carven in gold which represented it *in petto*. It was known to all the Squadron that the Pope himself had sent the figurehead of the *San Cristobal*; and as our vessel moved along the line of galleons and ships, and hulks, and pataches, and galleys of the Armada, the heads of all were uncovered and the knees of all were bent. We had not any christening of the galleon, for the blessing of the Holy Father was already on the figurehead of the ship and encompassed it round about.

None knew on board the *San Cristobal* of the existence of the treasure, save only the Captain of the galleons and ships, and hulks, and pataches, and galleys of the Squadron of Castile, to both of whom I entrusted the secret of the treasure (though not the giver nor the nature of the Trust nor the amount thereof), lest ill should befall me, and in ignorance the whole through some disaster be lost. And let me here say to their honour that my confidence was kept faithfully to the last; though it may be that had they known the magnitude of the treasure it might have been otherwise, men being but as flax before the fire of cupidity.

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For myself after I embarked, I went on the journey with mixed feelings; for my body unaccustomed to the sea warred mightily with my soul that had full trust in the enterprise. The many days of storm and trial after we had left Lisbon, until we had found a refuge in Corunna did seem as though the comings of eternity had been made final. For the turmoil of the winds and the waves was indeed excessive, and even those most skilled in the ways and the wonders of the deep asseverated that never had been known weather so unpropitious to the going forth of ships. Truly this time, though less than three weeks in all, did seem of a durance inconceivable to one on land.

Whilst we lay in the harbour of Corunna, which was for more than four weary weeks, we effected some necessary repairs. The *San Cristobal* had been taking water at the prow, and we should find the cause and remedy it. Possibly it was that the bow was left unfinished at San Lucar for the better fixing of the figurehead, and that some small flaw thus begun met enlargement from the straining of the timbers in the prolonged storm. To the end of this repairing the work was given to some of the ship-men on

board, Swedes and other Northerns, the same being expert calkers on account of their much experience of their repair of ships injured in their troublous seas. Among them was one whom I mistrusted much, as did all on board, so that he should not have been retained save only that he was a nimble and fearless mariner who be the seas never so great would take his place in the furlment of sails or in other perilous labour of the sea. He was a Russian Finn and like all these heathen people had strange powers of evill, or was by all accredited with the same. For be it known that these Finns can, by some subtile and diabolic means, suck or otherwise derive the strength from timbers; so that many a tall ship has through[487] this agency gone down to the deep unknown. This Finn, Olgaref by name, was a notable calker and with some others was slung over the bow to calk the gaping seams. I made it to myself a necessity to be present, for I regarded ever the cupidity of man together with the inestimable value of the Pope's gift. Right sure was I that no Spaniard or no Christian would lay a sacrilegious hand on the Sacred Figure of Our Lord or of the good Saint who bore Him; and hitherto the esteem of all had been so great that none would dare so much. But with a pagan such considerations avail not, and I feared lest even his suspicions might be aroused. Well indeed were my fears justified. For as I leaned over the prow, I saw him touch the metal of the Christ and of the Saint as though some of the same diabolic instinct which had taught him to deal infamously with the timbers of ships had guided him to the discernment of the metals also. Then as I looked, he, all unknowing of my observation, tapped softly with his calking-mallet on both the metals which in turn gave out sounds which no one could mistake. He seemed satisfied with his quest, and resumed his work upon the oakum with renewed zeal. Thenceforth during our stay in Corunna I so arranged matters that ever both day and night there was a sentinel on the prow of the *San Cristobal*. When the day came when, praise be to God, 8,000 soldiers and sailors confessed to the friars of the fleet on an island in the harbour in which the Archbishop of Santiago had arranged altars—for we had no Bishop on the Armada—I feared lest Olgaref should make, through some inadvertence of those left behind, some attempt upon the precious gift. He was too wary, however, and behaved with such discretion that for the time my suspicion was disarmed.

On the 22nd. July, after a Council of War in the Royal Galleon in which the chief Admirals of the Fleet took[488] part, our squadron, which had been waiting outside the harbour of Corunna with the squadron of Andalusia, the Guipuzcoan Squadron and the squadron of Ojeda, set sail on our great emprise.

Truly it did seem as though the powers of the seas and the winds was leagued against us; for after but three days of fair weather we met with calms and fogs and a very

hurricane which was as none other of the same ever known in the month of Leo. The waves mounted to the very heavens, and some of them broke over the ships of the fleet doing thereby a vast of damage which could not be repaired whilst at sea. In this storm the whole of the stern gallery of our galleon was carried away, and it was only by the protection of the Most High that the breach so made was not the means of ultimately whelming us in the sea. With the coming of the day we found that forty of the ships of the Armada were missing. On this day it was that that great and bold mariner the Admiral Don Pedro de Valdes by his great daring and the hazard of his life saved my own life, when I had been swept overboard by a mighty sea. In gratitude for which I sent him that which I held most dear of my possessions, the jewell of the San Cristobal given me by the Pope.

Thenceforth for a whole week were we hourly harassed by the enemy, who, keeping aloof from us, yet managed by their superior artillery to inflict upon us incalculable damage; so that our carpenters and divers had to work endlessly to stop the shot holes above water and below it with tow and leaden plates.

On the last day of July two disasters befell, in both of which our galleon afterwards had a part. The first, was to the ship *San Salvador* of Admiral Miguel de Aquendo's squadron, through the diabolic device of a German gunmaster, who in revenge for punishment inflicted on him by Captain Preig, threw, after firing his gun, his^[489] lighted linstock into a barrel of powder, to the effect of blowing up the two afterdecks and the poop castle, and killing over two hundred men. As on this ship was Juan de Huerta the Paymaster General with a great part of the treasure of the King, it was necessary that she should if possible be saved from the enemy who were rushing in upon her. The Duke, therefore firing a signal gun to the fleet to follow, stood by her to the dismay of the English, thus baulked of so rich a prey. In the strategy of getting the wounded ship back to her place in the formation came the second disaster; for the foremast of the flagship of Don Pedro de Valdes *Nuestra Senora del Rosario* gave way at the hatches, falling on the mainsail boom. The rising sea forbade the giving her a hawser; the Duke ordered Captain Ojeda to stand by her with our pataches together with Don Pedro's own vice flagship the *San Francisco* and our own *San Cristobal*. A galleon also was to try to fix a hawser for towing; but the night shut down on us, and the wiser counsel of the Admiral-in-Chief advised by Diego Flores forbade so many ships to remain absent from the going on of the Armada lest they too should be cut off. So we said farewell to that gallant mariner Don Pedro de Valdes.

That same evening the wind began to blow and the sea to rise so that the injured ship of Admiral Oquendo was in danger of sinking; wherefore the High Admiral, on such word being brought to him, gave orders that we should keep close to her and take in

our care the mariners and soldiers on board her and also the King's treasure chest; for it was said that His Catholic Majesty had on the Armada half a million crowns in bullion and coined money. It was dark as pitch when we saw the signal made when the flagship shortened sail—two lanterns at the poop and one halfway up the rigging, put out for^[490] the guidance of the fleet. Fearsome their lights looked shining over the dark heaving waters which now and again so broke with the oncoming waves that the tracks of light seemed in places to rise and fall about as though they could never be reunited. But our Mariners answered to the call, and the boats soon rocked by our sides and with a flash of our blades in the lamplight—for the battle lanterns were lit to aid them—one by one they were swept into the dark. It was long before they came back, for the wild sea made their venture impossible. But before noon of the next day they again made essay; and in several voyages brought back many men and great store of heavy boxes, which latter were forthwith lodged in the powder room which was guarded by night and day. This made greater anxiety for Senor de las Alas, in that his seamen and mariners, and worse still the foreigners, knew that there was such a store of wealth aboard.

Thenceforth we bore our part in the running fight which ensued between our Armada and the Squadrons of Drake and the Lord Admiral Howard; and also that of John Hawkins which assailed us with such insistence that we fain thought the Devil himself must have some hand in his work. At last came a time when by God's grace the flagship of the enemy was almost within our grasp, for she lay amongst us disabled. But many oar-boats of her consorts flocked to her, and towed her to safety in the calm which forbade us to follow. In this action a dire disaster had almost befallen us, and Christendom too, for a shot struck us athwart the bow and so loosened the girding of our precious figurehead that almost it had fallen into the sea. San Cristobal watched over his own, however; and presently we had with ropes haled it aboard and held it firmly with cables so that it was immediately safe. It was covered up with tow and sacking and so hidden under pretence of safety that none might^[491] discover the secret of its intrinsic preciousness. Ere this was completed we were again called to action, as for our fleetness we were required to chase with the *San Juan* of Portugal, the flagship of the enemy which was flying from our attack. For the English ships, though not so large, were swift as our own and more easy of handling; and by their prerogative of nimble steerage could so thwart our purposes that ere we could recover on following their tacking, they were well away with full-bellied sail. By this, however, we were saved much pain of concern, for when off Calais roads the Armada lay at anchor we, coming amongst the latermost, were placed on the skirts of the fleet. Thus when the English on the night of Sunday August 7th. sent their fire ships floating with

wind and tide down on the Armada, so that in panic most of the great vessels had to slip their anchors or even to cut their cables, we could weigh with due deliberance and set sail northerly according to our orders from the Duke.

When by Newcastle we saw the English ships drop off in their pursuit we knew thereby that their finding was at an end and their magazines empty. Whereupon, setting our course ever northwards, so that rounding Scotland and Ireland we might seek Spain once more, we began our task of counting our scars, and thence to the work of the leech. Truly we were in pitiable plight, for the long continued storm and strain had opened our seams and we took water abominably. In that we were of the most swift of the vessels of the fleet, our galleon and the *Trinidad* of our own squadron outsailed the rest, and bearing away to the eastward, though not too much so, and thence north, found ourselves on the 11th day of August, off the coast of Aberdeyne. The sea had now fallen so far that though the waves were more than we had reckoned upon at the first yet they^[492] were but mild in comparison with what had been. Here in a sandy bay close under Buquhan Ness we cast anchor and began to overhaul.

Both our ships had been very seriously damaged, and repairs were indeed necessary which required careening, had such been possible. But it could not be in a latitude where, even in the summer, the seas rose so fast and broke so wildly. Our consort the *Trinidad*, though in sad plight, was not so bad as we were; and it was greatly to be feared that if occasion was not to be had for making good the ravages of the storm and the enemy she might meet with disaster. But such amending might not be at this time. The weather was threatening; and moreover the enemy would soon be following hard behind us. From one of our foreign seamen, a Scotchman who in secret visited Aberdeyne, we learned that Queen Elizabeth was sending out a swift patache to scour the whole northern coast for any traces of the Armada. Though we were two galleons, we yet feared such a meeting; for our stores were exhausted and our powder had run low. Of ball we had none, for such fighting as these dogged Englishmen are prone to. Moreover it is the way of these islanders to so hold together that when one is touched all others run to aid; whereby were but one gun of ours fired, even off that desolate coast, in but a little while would be an army on the shore and a squadron of ships upon the sea. It began therefore sorely to exercise my conscience as to how I should best protect the treasure entrusted to me. Were it to fall into the hands of our enemies it were the worst that could happen; and matters had already so disastrously arranged themselves that it was to be feared we should not hold ourselves in safety. Therefore, taking much^[493] counsel with Heaven, whose treasure indeed it was that I was guarding, I began to look about for some secret place of storage, to the which I might

resort in case danger should threaten before we could get safely away from the shore. The Artificers said that two days, or perhaps three, would be required to complete our restorations; and on the first of these I took a small boat, and with two trusty mariners of my own surroundings I set out to explore the land close to us, which was of a veritable desolation. The shallow bay, in whose mouth we were anchored in a sufficiency of water at all tides, was lined with great sandhills from end to end save at the extremities, where rocks of exceeding durability manifested themselves even at high tide, but which shewed with ferocity at low water. We essayed at first the northern side, but presently abandoned the quest, for though there were many deep indentures, wherein the sea ran at times with exceeding violence, the simple contours of the rocks and of the land above gave little promise of a secret place of storage.

But the south side was different. There had been in times long past much upheaval of various kinds, and now were many little bays, all iron-bound and full of danger, lying between outflanking rocks of a steepness unsurpassable. Seaweed was on many great rocks rising from the sea whereon multitudinous wild fowl sat screaming; between them rose numberless points often invisible, save when the surges fell from them in their course, and amongst which the tide set with a wonderful current, most perilous. Here, after we had many times escaped overturning, being borne by the side of sunken rocks, I at last made discovery of such a place as we required. Elsewhere I have recorded for your guidance its bearings and all such details as may be needful for the fulfillment of your duty. The cave was a great one on the south side of [494] the bay, with many windings and blind offsets; and as best met my wishes in accordance with my task, the entrance was not easy to be discovered, being small and of a rare quality for concealment. Here I made preparation for the landing of the treasure, in so far as that I took note of all things and made perfect my designs. I had left the mariners in the boat, enjoining them to remain in her in case of need, so that none of them, much though I trusted them, knew of the discovered cave. When we had returned to the galleon night had fallen.

Forthwith, after secret consultation with our admiral, I visited the captain of the *Trinidad* and obtained his permission to use on that same night one of his boats with a crew for some special private service. For I had thought that it were better that none of our own crew, who might have had suspicion of what wealth we carried, should have a part in our undertaking. This my own kinsman Admiral de las Alas had advised. When night came, he had so disposed matters on the *San Cristobal* that whilst our debarkation was being made, not even the sentries on deck or in the passage ways could see aught—they being sent below. The Captain himself onely remained on deck.

We made several voyages between the ship and the shore, piling after each our weighty packets on the pebble beach. None were left to guard them, there being no one to molest. Last of all we took the great figurehead of silver and gold, which Benvenuto had wrought and which the Pope had blessed, and placed it on the shore beside the rest. Then the boat went back to the *Trinidad*. Climbing on the rock overhead, I saw a lantern flashed on her deck, as signal to assure me that the boat had returned.

Presently a boat of our own vessel drew near, as had been arranged, manned by three trusty men of my own;^[495] and in silence we brought the treasure into the cave. In the doing so we were mightily alarmed by a shot from a harquebuss from one of the ships in the bay. Eagerly we climbed the rocks and looked around as well as we could in the darkness. But all was still; what so had been, was completed. In the darkness, and whilst the tide was low, we placed the treasure in a far branch of the cave, placing most of it in the shallow water. The sides of the rock were sheer in this far chamber, save onely at the end where was a great shelf of rock. On this we placed the image of San Cristobal, not thinking it well that the Sacred Figure should lie prone. In this far cave the waters rose still and silent, for the force of the waves was broken by the rocks without. It was risen so high in places as to cause us disquietude as we made our way out. My chosen mariners made, before we left the shore, solemn oath on the Holy Relic of San Cristobal which the Pope had given to me that they would never reveal aught of the doings of the night.

Before dawn, which cometh early in these latitudes, we were back on board ship; and sought our various quarters silently that none who knew of our absence might guess whence we came.

Morning brought only more trouble to me. I was told that in the night the harquebussier on sentry had seen a man swim from the ship and had fired at him. He could not tell in the darkness if his aim had been true. I said nothing of my suspicion; but later on discovered that the Russian Finn, Olgaref, had disappeared. I knew then that this man, having suspicions, had watched us; and that if he was still alive he perhaps knew of the entrance of the cave.

All day I took much counsel with myself as to how I should act; and at the last my mind was made up. I had a sacred duty in protecting the treasure. I should seek^[496] Olgaref if he had reached the shore and should if need be kill him; and by this and other means, secure the secret of the entrance of the cave. Thus, you will see, oh! my children, the heavy nature of the Pope's Trust, and what stern duty it may entail on all of us who guard it.

Secretly during the day I made preparation for my enterprise. I placed on board the small boat which we had used, some barrels of gunpowder, wherein I had very much difficulty for our store of armament had run low indeed and only the Admiral's knowledge of the greatness of my Trust and the measure of my need inclined him to part with even so much. I rowed myself ashore in the afternoon, and harquebuss in hand made search of all the many promontories and their secret recesses for the Finn. For some hours I searched, examining every cranny in the rock; but no sign could I find of Olgaref. At last I gave up my search and came to the cave to complete the work which I had determined upon. Lighting my lantern I waded into the shallow water which lay in the entrance and stretched inland under the great overhanging rock flanked by two great masses of stone that towered up on either hand. Patiently I waded on, for the tide was low, through the curvings of the cave; the black stone on one hand and the red on the other giving back the flare of the lantern. Turning to the right I waded on, knowing that I would see before me the golden figure of San Cristobal. But suddenly I came to an end and for a moment stood appalled. The Figure no longer stood erect as placed on the wide shelf of rock, but lay prone resting on something which raised one end of it. Lifting high the lantern, I saw that this mass was none other than the dead body of Olgaref.

The wretched man had after all escaped from the galleon and in secret followed us to the cave. He had^[497] climbed upon the shelf and in an endeavour to steal the precious figure had pulled it over on himself; and the weight of the gold which formed the Christ had in falling killed him. He had evidently not known of the other treasure, and had followed only this of which he had knowledge. As I was about to shut the entrance to the cave until such time as I could come with safety to open it, I did not disturb the body, but left it underneath the Holy Image which he had dared to touch with sacrilegious hand.

At the Judgment Day, should the treasure not be recovered, he will find it hard to rise from that encumbrance that his evil deed had brought upon him.

With sad heart I came away; and then, for that I had to guard the Pope's treasure, I fixed the barrels of gunpowder in place to best wreak the effect I wished. After piling them with rocks as mighty as I could lift, I laid a slow match which I lighted; then I stood afar off to wait and watch.

Presently the end came. With a sound as of many cannon, though muffled in its coming, the charge was fired, and with a great puff of white smoke which rose high in air together with stones and earth and the upheaval of a great mass of rock which seemed to shake the far off place on which I rested, the whole front of the cave blew

up. Then the white cloud sank lower and floated away over the grass; and for a few minutes only a dark thin vapour hung over the spot. When this had gone too I came close and saw that the great stone pinnacles had been overthrown, and that so many great rocks had fallen around that the entrance to the cave was no more, there being no sign of it. Even the channel of water which led up to it was so overwhelmed with great stones that no trace of it remained.

Then I breathed more freely, for the Pope's treasure[498] was for the present safe, and enclosed in the great cave in the bowels of the earth, where I or mine though with much labour could find it again, in good season.

In the dark I came back to the *San Cristobal* where my kinsman the admiral told me that already rumours were afloat that I had gone to hide some treasure. Whereupon we conferred together, and late that night, but making such noise that many of the soldiers and mariners could hear what was being done and give news in secret of our movements, we made pretense of making a great shipment into the *Trinidad* so that the suspicions of all were thereupon allayed.

In the morning the Armada—all that was left of it—hove in sight; and joining it we began a dreary voyage, amid storms and tempests and trials and the loss of many of our great ships on the inhospitable coast of Ireland, which lasted many days till we found ourselves back again in Spain.

Thence, in due season, anxious to see that the Pope's treasure had not been discovered, I made my way in secret again to Aberdeyne where there overtook me, from the rigours of this northern climate and from many hardships undergone, the sickness whereof I am weary.

Where and how the place of hiding will be found I have told in the secret writing deposited in the place prepared for it, the chart being exact. I have written all these matters, because it is well that you my sonne, and ye all my children who may have to look forward so much and so long to the fullfillment of the Trust, may know how to look back as well.

These letters and papers, should I fail to return from that wild headland, shall be placed in your hands by one whose kindness I have reason to trust, and who has sworn to deliver them safely on your application. Vale.

Bernardino de Escoban.

[499]

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

- DRACULA
- THE WATER'S MOU
- THE SNAKES' PASS
- UNDER THE SUNSET
- THE SHOULDER OF SHASTA
- MISS BETTY

Transcriber's note

Some punctuation errors were silently corrected, but a lot of seemingly missing commas were not added. (In sentences like: "There is so much to tell" I said "that I hardly know where to begin.")

Oddities like the repeating of parts of a sentence ("at all at all" on page 314), and possibly misspelled foreign words ("clientele" without accent) were not corrected.

Errors in the chapter numbers were corrected.

Inconsistently spelled or hyphenated words were usually not corrected, the few exceptions are mentioned in the following list.

These corrections are made, on page

ix "510" was changed to "310" (The Duty of a Wife 310)

29 "fulfilment" changed to "fulfillment" (realisation or fulfillment of the old prophecy)

36 "felt" changed to "fell" (I fell in a sort of spiritual trance.)

49 "jugment" changed to "judgment" (that you should sit in judgment on me.)

54 "MacNeil" changed to "MacNiel" (the greedy eyes of Gormala MacNiel.)

86 "as" changed to "is" (This is why I thanked God then)

165 paragraph break added between "if you don't dislike telling me." and "So she went on:"

247 "Marjorie" changed to "Marjory" (Deftly Marjory stretched sections of her gossamer thread)

310 "night" changed to "nights" (If she knew of the last two nights)

332 "embarassment" changed to "embarrassment" (With manifest embarrassment he went on)

350 "subleties" changed to "subtleties" (better than the subtleties which)

473 “33” changed to “23” (—23—b a b b a)

477 “Ambasador” changed to “Ambassador” (his office as Ambassador)

485 “galleons leons” changed to “galleons” (Captain of the galleons and ships).

Otherwise the original was preserved.