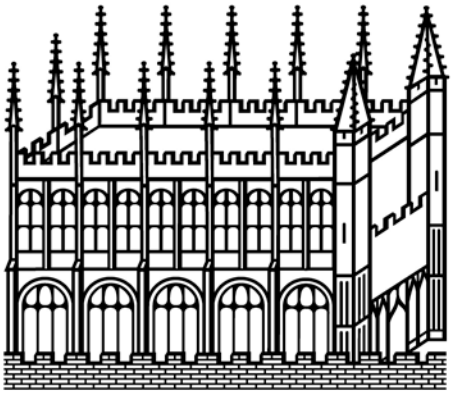

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The RAKE and the HUSSY

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

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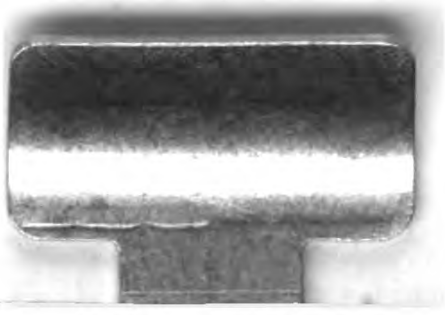

THE RAKE AND THE HUSSY

Novels by ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

THE RAKE AND THE HUSSY
THE PAINTED MINX
THE SUN HAWK
THE DRUMS OF AULONE
THE MAN THEY HANGED
THE MYSTERY LADY
THE GIRL IN GOLDEN RAYS
AMERICA
THE HI-JACKERS
ERIS
THE TALKERS
THE FLAMING JEWEL
THE SLAYER OF SOULS
IN SECRET
THE LITTLE RED FOOT
THE CRIMSON TIDE
THE LAUGHING GIRL
THE RESTLESS SEX
BARBARIANS
THE DARK STAR
THE GIRL PHILIPPA
WHO GOES THERE!
ATHALIE
THE BUSINESS OF LIFE
THE GAY REBELLION
THE STREETS OF ASCALON
THE COMMON LAW
THE FIGHTING CHANCE
THE YOUNGER SET
THE DANGER MARK
THE FIRING LINE
JAPONETTE
QUICK ACTION
THE ADVENTURES OF A MODEST MAN
ANNE'S BRIDGE
THE HAPPY PARROT
THE ROGUE'S MOON
BETWEEN FRIENDS
THE BETTER MAN
POLICE!!!
SOME LADIES IN HASTE
THE TREE OF HEAVEN
THE TRACER OF LOST PERSONS
THE HIDDEN CHILDREN
THE MOONLIT WAY
CARDIGAN
THE RECKONING
THE MAID-AT-ARMS
AILSA PAIGE
SPECIAL MESSENGER
THE HAUNTS OF MEN
LORRAINE
MAIDS OF PARADISE
ASHES OF EMPIRE
THE RED REPUBLIC
BLUE-BIRD WEATHER
A YOUNG MAN IN A HURRY
THE GREEN MOUSE
IOLE
THE MYSTERY OF CHOICE
THE CAMBRIC MASK
THE MAKER OF MOONS
THE KING IN YELLOW
IN SEARCH OF THE UNKNOWN
THE CONSPIRATORS
A KING AND A FEW DUKES
IN THE QUARTER
OUTSIDERS

THE RAKE AND THE HUSSY

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
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I

THE HELL-RAKER

IT was half past eleven in the morning. Dinner was to be served at once. I had been prowling around looking for Viscount Mordhurst, to discover how matters stood between him and me, when the Prince Regent sent for me. Tom Raikes fetched the summons.

His Royal Highness was still abed. He wore a red silk night-cap and embroidered night-shirt, and had just been shaved, curled, and scented. He did not appear to be very gracious.

It had come to his ears, he said fretfully, that Lord Mordhurst and I had exchanged impolite civilities the night before. He hoped that he had been misinformed.

Having nothing to say to that I bowed, which always is a safe answer.

"Mr. Brooke," said he, "the frequency of your deplorable affairs is not agreeable to me. I am glad to hear that you contemplate no mischief."

There was nothing to say to *that,* either; so I made His Royal Highness another submissive bow. Which, however, seemed to irritate him.

"For God's sake, Mr. Brooke," he said peevishly, "do you really *like* to fight?"

"S-sir?" I stammered.

"I am informed," said he, "that you never let such an opportunity pass. Twice you have been obliged to flee to France. Except for my friendly offices, where would you be at this moment?"

A penitent bow was the most prudent reply.

Tom Raikes, who had been busy by the window, came to the bedside with a pot of hot chocolate. As I caught his eye he winked mournfully.

Well, there was a little more of it; then I was told to let my lord Mordhurst alone. So I backed from the presence, bowing myself out, very greatly relieved. Because, no matter what was said about me, I knew very well that I was not by nature a brawler. Unfortunate circumstances linked with bad luck seemed to push me into troubles of this nature. And I now was content to be forbidden any further notice of my lord Mordhurst's rudeness.

Hastening downstairs to the withdrawing room I felt regenerated and generous, and meant to find Mordhurst and tell him I was very sorry that we had had a difference. What a back-fence quarrel!

Ladies were playing macao. Lady Swilton was for hazard. Nobody had seen Mordhurst—or Lady Kympton either. I hoped they were somwhere haymaking together.

I played picquet with Mrs. Millis until the Prince Regent appeared and dinner was magnificently announced.

At Thanes Close, George Visby's beautiful seat,

dinner always was served at one o'clock, and usually continued until three or four, His Royal Highness being a great guzzler.

About three I felt half suffocated and longed for the outer air. The hall was flooded with September sunshine, but all windows were closed, candles blazed everywhere, and the place stank of wine and wilted flowers.

His Royal Highness, as usual, ate too much and was sick. He left the table assisted by Lord Yarmouth and Jack Payne.

Tom Raikes told me that he had been too tightly laced. Yes, and too tight the night before.

While Prinney was being unlaced and purged, card tables had been fetched to the west terrace, now thronged with belles and beaux—Harry Pierrepoint, Poodle Byng, Tom Raikes—Viscount Mordhurst, too —all the bow-window set from White's.

There was my lord Yarmouth again—I mean the depraved pup who married Selwyn's charming Mic-Mic, and who was far worse a man than poor old Q., whatever the world might think about it.

Here, also, strutted young Gronow, of the 1st Guards, not quite of the bow-window company, and bitter because excluded. Here, too, sauntered Sir B. Tarleton, the dark little cavalryman lately black-balled at White's, whose reputation in America, during our late Revolution, had been sadly spattered with blood.

Other intimates of Royalty crowded the terrace at

Thanes Close, where servants in yellow and silver livery were placing card tables.

Here was Lord Seacrest, too, a big, beefy youth whom all gamblers were busy butchering, he being already £180,000 the worse, since the New Year. That kind of ox was born to be felled. I helped flay him.

As for the women, all were intimates of the Prince Regent: all gamblers, some notorious for beauty, some for wit, others for odalisquetic talents—an impudent, frolicsome company, tireless dancers, expert in the game of Love, but very buzzards at cards, greedy, grasping, crooked as a game leg.

There was the handsome Mrs. Millis, the wanton Duchess of Kympton, Lady Swilton of the tiny feet and swanlike figure, the Hon. Linda Veining—lesser nymphs and goddesses, the vices of the one supplementing what few vices might be lacking in the next.

Little Tarleton, who had inherited the exquisite Perdita, remarked to me en passant: "It seems that your country is bent on war again, Mr. Brooke. I have it from Prinney."

I looked at him almost stupidly, as though I had quite forgotten I had a country.

"What's that you say, sir?" I demanded.

Tarleton was already beyond earshot, but Mordhurst, who had overheard us, took it up like a fool, saying that America was likely to declare war against England but that nobody in England cared a damn. Yarmouth and Seacrest, passing, paused to observe us.

His lean lordship's words and manner were not perfectly agreeable to me.

"Do you insinuate," said I, "that England holds my country in contempt?"

He said sneeringly that he had not understood that America was particularly practised in the art of war.

"Perhaps," said I, "your lordship will find it convenient to offer me a few moments' practice in that art!"

"Sir," said he, "I offered you no reason for offense. Permit me to add that you are far too eager to pick quarrels."

At that, Seacrest bellowed out his bovine laughter, but Yarmouth interposed with an oath and took hold of my arm which twitched impulsively toward Mordhurst's nose.

"Gentlemen," remarked Yarmouth, "will scarcely have the effrontery to pursue a dispute in the presence of His Royal Highness."

I twisted around to look. I had not noticed the return of the Prince Regent. Now I saw him, and remembered his reproof.

Mordhurst said to Yarmouth: "I was merely assuring Mr. Brooke that a possible declaration of war by America had no slightest interest for England."

"That remark is offensive," said I. "And, further, I believe you added that you considered me to be a picker of quarrels. Very well, sir. It would be a pleasure to give you a *personal* reason for thinking so."

Seacrest bellowed again like a bereaved bull-calf.

"Let it alone," growled Yarmouth, linking his arm in mine and drawing me aside so that other people might pass between Mordhurst and myself—there being a great stir and bustle along the line of the royal progress.

Meanwhile, Yarmouth told me in his frankly filthy way that the Prince Regent had had a good vomit and felt better, and was eager for play.

His Royal Highness appeared on the terrace now, inquiring for cards, fatter than ever, bursting out of his clothes, belly bulging under blue evening coat, white waistcoat and starched neckcloth; his puffy feet in striped stockings, crowded into shiny boots the polish for which George Brummell had invented.

So play began; and there were wines and spirits and ices, and preparations for desperate gaming. The Earl of Seacrest—that clumsy oaf—kept one bank; lisping George Visby another. Others already were hard at macao and whist at a roleau of £50 the point, and a hundred guineas the rubber.

Tweedle, tweedle, toot, toot, went the orchestra of violins, horns, and hautbois.

Tom Raikes and I played against young Gronow and George Visby. Yarmouth, chasing some petticoat or other, paused to say to me: "I lay you a hundred guineas even that No-grow Gronow plucks you this time."

"Done," said I. "Do you hear that, No-grow, my lad?"

"Done and done," said Yarmouth, booking it, and starting on his love-quest again.

But I plucked him back by the elbow and whispered in his ear: "I lay you £50 to £5 that I trim George Visby till he squeaks!"

"Done," said he. "But I hope you do."

"Done and done," said I, noting it. "George, this means trouble for *you!*"

He looked at me like a frightened white rabbit.

Yarmouth took up the trail of the fleeing petticoat; I returned to the flaying of young Gronow.

That gallant little gamecock and George Visby had had enough of it before the gold-washed light of a September evening faded to ashes of lilies over terrace, flowers, and fountains.

I did not desire to win Gronow's money, but delighted in landing that lisping, affected dandy George Visby, who was far too rich to suit me, but too timid to long endure the gaff.

The sky overhead had become a lake of clear, greenish gold—light enough, still, for cards—but His Royal Highness loved a hot room smelling of candle-flame and wine and human sweat; so very soon the windows of Thanes Close were ablaze again, and the noisy crowd drifted thither, buck, blood, beau, and dandy; and, with them, the frail partners of their vices, as eager for more play as the hardest gamester among us all.

The Prince Regent—known among us familiarly as Prinney, and, insultingly, as Big Ben—ambled into the

card room. Fat as he had become, he remained a graceful dancer and had, when he chose, the most winning manners in the world. God pity him, he had been born royally handsome, and clean and generous and kind. It was the world's wickedness, and his aptitude for it, that had turned him from the finest gentleman of Europe into the world's worst blackguard.

Yarmouth, still in chase of his ever-vanishing petticoat, paused to challenge me again:

"Ten guineas to five that I catch her yet, Mr. Brooke."

"Done, sir. Who is she?"

"Done and done, though I be undone," said he. "She's a new divinity fetched here by Lady Vulper. God, what a tender morsel!" He booked the bet and hurried on.

People were already dancing in the new ball room, hard at it, fiddle, horn, and bassoon.

What Prinney and Mordhurst had said to me still stuck in my mind. As I was standing by a fountain in the gathering dusk, reflecting, a figure approached me. It was Poodle Byng.

"Oh, I say, Joshua," said he, "Big Ben knows you've had more trouble with Mordhurst. He's annoyed. May I be quite frank with you?"

"Certainly," said I, taking his arm.

He said: "I think you should pull up and consider your situation, Joshua. It's rather perilous."

"Proceed, Poodle."

"Then let us briefly recall your three years among

us. You appeared at Oxford three years ago, from your Columbia College in New York. Everybody at Magdalen became your friend. You formed fashionable acquaintances. You got on, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And after you were plucked and sent down you already knew desirable people in London. You had no trouble in making White's and Watier's and the Hell Fire Club. You took as naturally to a fashionable life of pleasure as a duck takes to a dirty puddle. You're known as the luckiest gambler in England—luckiest at cards and at the races. You began to rake it as a one bottle man; you passed on to five; and nobody knows your limits now. Women love you because your American manners please them——"

"This," said I, "begins to sound like an obituary."

"An obituary is likely unless you stop quarreling."

I represented politely that gentlemen were born to differ; and that, otherwise, the world would be but a dull domicile.

He replied: "Don't be in such a damned hurry to shoot people. Don't pick a man up before he knows what he's saying. The trouble with you is you *like* to fight——"

"I tell you I *don't!* You wrong me, Poodle. If any other man dared say that to me——"

"Well, everybody thinks so. How many duels have you had in these three years?"

"Not many——"

"*How* many?"

"Nine," I said sulkily.

"Very well, then. Take my affectionate advice and have no more. Prinney won't stand any further scandal from you! He'll let you go to prison next time. He told Tom Raikes he would——"

"My dear Poodle, am I to swallow Mordhurst's insults?"

"What insults?"

"He made too free with Lady Kympton. He spoke of America with contempt——"

"My God, first you want to exchange shots with him because he pinched Lady Kympton's knee. Everybody pinches it. And now you wish to blaze away at him because he doesn't care for your native land. Few Englishmen do care for it—if you want the spitting truth."

"*I* care for it!"

"By God, you ought to. For between Bonaparte and Prinney your country hasn't a friend on earth!"

"She needs none," said I angrily.

"What America needs is a good trouncing," said he.

It was God's mercy I did not strike him. I caught his eye in time and saw he was laughing at me.

"Poodle," said I in a rage, "ever since the Revolution your country has snubbed and bullied and kicked and buffeted mine. One of your Admirals remarked that no Englishman would tolerate from America what Americans endure from England.

"If my goaded country finally turns on yours, I turn,

too. If America becomes England's enemy, I become her enemy, also."

"What bosh, my dear fellow——"

"Poodle, if my country fights you I shall do yours all the damage I can——"

"My God, sir, you have already damaged nine of my fellow subjects—two past all repair—with your plagued pistols. As far as war is concerned, I should hope you had already done your part!"

"Well, haven't I had a few bullets picked out of my own carcass, too?"

He said: "Don't fight any more, Joshua. If our countries want to fight, let 'em. We English don't become excited whenever England goes to war. I don't yell for my pistols and start for the Peninsula just because England is fighting Bonaparte down there. I wouldn't wish to pull Mordhurst's nose merely because he said that nobody cared whether America declared war on England or not. Besides, there'll be no war. A King's messenger passed through yesterday and there was no news of any such declaration. I have Prinney's word for it."

He took my arm in his friendly way. We walked slowly around the three fountains, the spray touching us pleasantly when a breeze stirred.

"Why are Americans so cursed sensitive?" said he. "We are not."

"Too many British kicks and blows have left our skins both bruised and irritable," said I. "You've behaved very shamefully to your own flesh and blood."

"Brothers always bully," said he.

We strolled toward the great, lighted house.

"Well," said he, "let it alone, Joshua. We all love *you.* Are you for dancing and supping, or for play?"

As we entered the withdrawing room I saw Lady Vulper come in; and, with her, a bright-cheeked, wide-eyed damsel who seemed a trifle breathless from swift walking, or perhaps from nervous anticipation of an evening's excitement.

I heard somebody say, "American." Everybody looked at her with curiosity, surprised by her beauty; and very quickly she was beset by beaux—Yarmouth, Scrope Davies, Seacrest, Tom Raikes, George Visby, Mordhurst, a dozen others eager to pay their compliments to Lady Vulper and to this charming and very youthful stranger.

I heard somebody behind me say: "The Vulper has fetched her for Prinney." Which no doubt was true. We all called her Dame Quickly.

I would not have cared, depraved cub that I had become, had I not heard somebody say that this stranger was American. That seemed to stir up something irritable within me.

"Better rush to the rescue of your pretty national," whispered Byng with a light laugh. "Fine material for a quarrel yonder. Look at Yarmouth! Curse him out and take a shot at him."

"Where the devil did the Vulper steal her?" I demanded, watching their approach toward Royalty.

His Royal Highness was polite to Lady Vulper and

to her protégée. No man on earth had more royal manners. But he wanted to gamble just then. Big Ben's surviving passions were cards and clothes. Only an amatory flicker remained. He had already been at high play with Linda Veining, Mrs. Millis, and the Earl of Seacrest, and had plundered Seacrest to his last sixpence. It was plain, now, that he desired to continue; defer the siege of this new beauty, and resume the robbery of Seacrest.

Which vexed Lady Vulper, who had expected instantly to sweep His Highness off his fat feet. Now she encountered his chilling coolness, and the amused and derisive eyes of men and women about her as Prinney resumed his play.

I caught her angry, reddish eyes, and I went to pay my devoirs, and was gratefully presented to the beautiful Miss Strayling, of New York. But I had had scarcely a really useful word with her before I was being jostled and crowded by other impatient gallants. I squared my shoulders to maintain my advantage, 'spite of young Gronow pirouetting about her, and Tom Raikes, very assiduous; and Yarmouth, leering ever nearer.

A confused, excited child she seemed—good God, what a début for her! And what a she-devil she had found to introduce her to the world of pleasure!

Well, I was obliged to give place. Yarmouth got her. Mordhurst disputed her with Yarmouth.

I'd not have cared had she not been American. That stuck in my mind as I lingered, watching her and

the Vulper being swallowed and engulfed by the mounting sea of beaux.

Later I played at George Visby's table again against the bank. I was in a cold and evil humour, and won six thousand guineas; and so sauntered away leaving Visby with his face as gray as a dirty handkerchief. Yet, the bank had won at hazard from everybody else. But Visby was a wretched loser and chicken-livered to boot.

There had been too much wine drunk since dinner —everybody was thick-tongued, careless; and some of the dancing had become impudent. I saw Miss Strayling dancing a country dance with little Gronow who, however, always remained well bred; which oddly relieved my mind until I noticed Mordhurst and Yarmouth dogging them.

Prinney became sick again. Jack Payne told me that His Royal Highness refused to be put to bed and meant to return and dance with Miss Strayling as soon as he felt better. He went into the withdrawing room and was sick on the sofa.

I strolled out to the terrace for a breath of air; a cool breeze arose; fountain spray powdered my face very pleasantly.

Nobody else was on the terrace. I walked on along a pleached avenue under the stars, thinking about my winnings, about war, about Mordhurst, about the lectures from Prinney and from Poodle Byng, and about this new American.

As I turned to retrace my path I saw her. She was

running and holding up her bouffant skirts garter-high, and had the most lovely legs I ever beheld, though for the rest she seemed as thin as a boy.

Where I stood under the shadow of the pleached limes she did not notice me at all until close upon me and running like the devil.

For an instant she seemed frightened, and dropped her skirts with some violence; then, when I stepped out into the lustrous starlight, she recognized me.

"Oh," said she with a little sobbing laugh, "I was afraid you were my lord Yarmouth!"

"Is that beast still in chase of beauty, Miss Strayling?"

"He laid £1,000 with my lord Mordhurst that he'd take off my garter. So I ran. Let us hide in that shrubbery. Shall we?" She was still panting.

I lent her my arm and we turned to the left among the rhododendrons and laurel, and continued straight through to where the great beeches sprawled along the little river.

In the starry dusk one or two fallow deer rose up awkwardly and galloped away through the woods.

On the stream bank stood a columned Temple of Love, after the manner of the Grand Monarque, only clumsier.

"What's this?" says she; "sanctuary?"

"The Temple of Love," said I. "He won't catch you here."

"You mean Lord Yarmouth?"

"Yes! did you think I meant Lord Cupid?"

She laughed. "Who's afraid of Cupid!" said she. "I'd never run from *him!*"

"Look out," said I, "he's hiding somewhere about."

She pretended to look all about her: "I don't see him, Mr. Brooke."

"Would you really like to catch a glimpse of him?"

"I think I'd like it."

"You *think?* Don't you *know?*"

"You are very curious, sir," said she, seating herself on the marble bench and arranging her billowing skirts.

She was a lovely thing, childishly pretty in her fresh, dewy way, slim, rather than frail, but had little more shape to her than a lad; no bosom, no rounded curves excepting legs and cheeks.

She still appeared to be excited, almost breathless. It seemed to be a trick of hers—those parted lips, and her breath a little out of rhythm.

"Are you very much frightened?" said I.

"Oh, no, I am enjoying everything."

"I thought you said that Yarmouth——"

"Yes, he was too enterprising."

"So you ran."

"Yes, I did." She fanned her pretty nose with her handkerchief. "Oh, lord," says she, "what a deal of life I've seen since I eloped."

"Eloped!"

"Oh," said she, "I'm in a sorry pickle and scarce know what has happened or what I'm about. What *am* I about, Mr. Brooke?"

"You're about sixteen, I suppose."

She laughed. "Nineteen and near to twenty. Would you like to hear about my pickle?"

I begged her to tell me.

"Well, sir, you are to learn, then, that last April I was at a finishing school for young ladies in Passy. And I eloped——"

"With whom, in God's name, ma'am!"

"I eloped with a dark young man in red."

"In *red,* madam!"

"In a bright red uniform—one of Prince Murat's Hussars. He wore, also, a little gold sabre-tache and a fur dolman. He was a Vicomte."

"Is that all you know about him?" I asked, laughing.

"Just that. And his name. I got out of the window the way we all do in novels, you know—and over the convent wall I shinned, and into his arms and away in a chaise to Paris——"

"Vlan!" said I, my laughter now uncontrolled.

"Vlan!" said she. "We supped in his beautiful apartment"—she rattled on—"all gilt and boiserie and flowers and crystal—just a blaze of gold and candles! I ate everything and I was beginning to enjoy the champagne very much when it occurred to me that I had better arrange with him about our marrying each other, as it was now near morning.

"Oh, heaven!"—she made a graceful appeal to the stars with both arms—"why, I discovered that he hadn't the idlest intention of marrying me! What do you think of *that!*"

I tried not to laugh. "What happened then?"

"Why, then," said she, "I had some more champagne and some sweets and another ice. Hector was talking very rapidly all the time, first on one knee, then on both. I reflected while I finished my supper. It was a delicious supper.

" 'My dear Hector,' said I, 'you seemed quite different to me by moonlight. At close view, by candle light, you are not very handsome, and you are shorter than I am. I'd rather not marry you, and I certainly am not going to be your mistress—if that's what you're talking about.' "

"Is that what you said to him?" I asked, stifling my laughter.

"Yes, that's what I said to him. A violent scene developed immediately, Mr. Brooke. So I pulled the bell-rope with all my strength until finally they let me have my cloak.

"So downstairs I marched, poor Hector clattering along beside me, sobbing and making dreadful noises with his sword and spurs. But I couldn't help that.

"There was a violent scene in the entresol, Hector being excitable and refusing to drive me back to Passy. I knew I'd be expelled, anyway, but had nowhere else to go. So I told him, very well, I'd find a fiacre —he growing wilder and noisier all the while. Then a door opened and a lady in curl papers came out cursing us—Lady Vulper—and, said she to me:

" 'What a damned uproar you two are making. Is this gentleman your husband?'

" 'No,' said I, 'we eloped from my boarding school in Passy this evening, but I've changed my mind and would be glad of a bed.'

" 'Why,' says she, laughing, 'you may share mine, if you like, my child.'

"So, with that, Hector wept and pulled me about, but I boxed both his ears with all my might. . . . And next day I sailed with Lady Vulper. . . . And I've had a very agreeable time in London."

After a moment—she was watching me, brightly breathless—"Is that all you know about Lady Vulper?" I asked drily.

"All?"

"In other words—is this sort of life to be your chosen career?"

"Career?"

"I mean," said I, impatiently, "are you going to remain all alone in England under the—protection—of this woman?"

"Where would you have me go, sir?"

"Home. Haven't you a home?"

"In New York. But I was sent to Passy to keep me out of mischief."

"Are you inclined to it?" I inquired, amused.

"I lack discretion."

"You seem to."

"Yes," said she with an enchanting smile, "I have no sense. It's one pickle after another. I fell in love several times, and one of them was married. He was my music teacher. He was fifty and bald, but I

thought him god-like. I told my grandfather that I loved him."

"And he packed you off to Passy?"

She nodded and sighed, and spread out her skirts and looked down at her small feet which presently she tilted up a little for closer inspection.

"I paid £10 for those slippers," she remarked, "and fifteen guineas for my stockings."

I let my eyes rest on her pretty feet for a few moments, then looked up at the stars. I hadn't the slightest idea whether I had to do with a seasoned and sophisticated youngster who understood very clearly what path she was taking; or with a pretty fool whom Chance, so far, had spared.

Had she been anything except American I'd not have meddled.

But, somehow, the idea of Prinney lolling lustfully at those childish feet—Yarmouth mouthing that soft, small hand—George Visby lisping impudence into her little ears; Mordhurst—

I took my eyes from the high stars where they say one's destiny abides, if only one may learn to decipher it.

"Why did you elope?" I asked bluntly.

She gave me a calm look: "I was lonely."

"And you thought marriage might cure loneliness?"

"All women think it. Doesn't it?"

"Not usually. Moreover," said I, "if it's of marriage you're dreaming, Thanes Close is no place for

you. Those rakes yonder don't marry. But"—and I gave her a hard look—"every scoundrelly one o' them —including myself—would be glad to make an 'arrangement' with you—as your little French Vicomte wished to—and they'd pay Lady Vulper handsomely for the opportunity."

That was plain talk, but the girl did not even wince when I added: "Because that's Lady Vulper's business with pretty young creatures like you, Miss Strayling."

"Is it so?"

"Certainly. The woman's notorious. She'll sell you to Prinney if she can. Or to any other who pays her enough commission."

"Sell *me!*"

"What do you think she's doing now over there in that big, noisy house?"

"What?"

"Trying to dispose of you, ma'am."

She sat very silent for a while.

"All those people," I went on, "are hell-rakers. Don't you know it?"

She said in a low voice: "Are you one of them, Mr. Brooke?"

"Yes, I am. It's in my bones. But beware that it doesn't get into *your* bones."

"What threatens my bones, sir?"

"The fashionable and prevailing fever."

She made a peculiarly graceful gesture, body and hands eloquent of resignation.

"There seems to be some sort of mischief in every pleasure," said she.

"There is, if it's offered to you with the left hand."

She hung her head but continued to swing her feet. Then she looked up at me with her lovely smile:

"Are *you* left-handed, Mr. Brooke?"

"I told you so. And here's my left hand, if you'll accept it," I said, laughingly.

"Are you going to abandon me if I don't?"

"I shan't do that."

"Well, then?"—with a breathless smile.

"Whatever you please, ma'am."

"Protection?"

"That's an ugly word in England."

"Is 'kindness' an ugly word, too, Mr. Brooke?"

"Fashion misuses it."

"But you won't abandon me?"

"Let that be our understanding," said I, smiling but utterly perplexed.

She sprang up, shook out her skirts.

"Lend me your *right* hand, if you please, sir. It is merely a loan."

I did so; and we sauntered toward the house under the great beeches.

As we arrived on the west terrace I saw a hussar ride up—Charles Standish, of Prinney's regiment.

When he saw me he waved a gloved hand: "The United States have declared war against England," he said gaily. "The news is out in London. Their priva-

teers are already in the Channel and have taken sixteen sail!"

I felt an odd shock, not wholly disagreeable. Standish dismounted, flung the bridle to a lackey, and went into the house carrying his crested despatch pouch and whistling merrily.

Little Miss Strayling loosened her fingers from mine and nestled her hand close within my arm with a slight shiver.

"I never have seen a war," said she. "Where will they fight? What will *you* do, Mr. Brooke?"

"I don't know, ma'am. . . . I think I'll go back."

"To America?"

"Certainly."

"Would you—take me?'

I'd scarcely bargained for that, and I said so.

"I want to see a war," said she. "Why won't you take me back with you?"

"You'll have to travel as my sister, then."

"Had I not better go as your wife, sir?"

"If you choose," said I impatiently. "We can discuss it another time. Shall we go in?"

Scrope Davies and Jack Payne came out to the terrace, laughing. Seeing us they joined us.

"Mordhurst is in a rage," said Davies. "War really has been declared, and he is obliged to join his regiment in Canada. Charlie Standish has all the latest London news——"

As he spoke I saw Mordhurst come out of the house.

Scrope whispered that he had lost frightfully at hazard and might even be ruined.

He seemed distraught, dishevelled, and in a devil's humour, pushing a lackey out of his way, who fetched him a cushioned chair, and giving the chair a kick aside.

Then, in a harsh voice he bade the poor fellow bring him a light for his cigar and be damned nimble about it.

The taper's flame cast a lurid glare over his dark, thin visage.

"God, what a foul humour!" whispered Scrope. "Better keep clear of him, Joshua."

I don't know whether Mordhurst heard him, but he looked around, suddenly, and, seeing me, and Miss Strayling on my arm:

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said he. "Well, your damned country has been kicked into action, after all!"

I could scarcely find my voice. I drew Miss Strayling's hand from within mine and laid it gently on Scrope's arm. He understood, but she seemed bewildered when he led her away in the starlight.

Then I approached to Mordhurst, leisurely.

"My lord," said I, "let me save you a tiresome voyage to Canada."

"What d'ye mean, you damned Yankee?"

"I think you know what I mean."

He flung away his cigar, got up from his chair.

"Jack," said I to Payne, "will you be so kind?"

"Jack," said Mordhurst, "will you find Seacrest and fetch what is necessary?"

"Damnation, gentlemen, would you conclude this

business by starlight?" remonstrated Payne in a low voice.

"Yes," said I, "I'm going to London tonight."

He scowled at me, at Mordhurst, turned on his heel with an oath and went into the house.

"Would the Temple of Love suit your lordship?" I asked politely.

"Anywhere."

I walked slowly away across the terrace. There was a slight mist over the fountains.

Later, Jack Payne overtook me. Behind him I saw a shadowy group following us.

Under the beeches the deer sprang up and trotted patiently away. It was misty down by the river's edge, but all the east was whitening into dawn. I sat down in the Temple of Love.

Seacrest, Mordhurst, Dr. Ellingwood arrived. Mordhurst paced the misty river's edge. Jack Payne and Seacrest were busy by a lighted lantern, kneeling on the grass.

Presently they separated; Mordhurst came up from the river; Jack Payne and Seacrest placed us, gave us our weapons and our warning.

It was a poor light; Mordhurst seemed but a vague shape in a thin mist. Payne's voice was stilled for a few moments, then he began to count aloud——

Bang-bang! Something burned my thigh. Then a bullet dropped down my trouser-leg into my left boot.

"Are you hit, Mr. Brooke?" asked Payne.

I was looking hard at Mordhurst. He lay very still where he had fallen.

Seacrest lumbered over to him, lifted him a little from the grass. Payne and the doctor went to him. I followed slowly. Somebody turned up the wick of the oil lantern.

"I'm sorry, Mordhurst," I whispered.

"You damned duellist," he gasped, "you've done for me."

Then the doctor became busy with him, waving me aside.

Jack Payne said to me: "I told Scrope to have a horse for you at the east park gates. You'd better go at once."

"Is Mordhurst badly hurt?"

"Yes. You'd better get yourself into France. Prinney—this is a damnable business, Joshua——"

"Yes, I know."

Payne said: "I sent your servant to Faithness. There are plenty of fishing smacks there. It's only ten miles. Have you money?"

"Plenty. . . . Thank you, Jack. . . . I'll just say a word to Mordhurst——"

"For God's sake, no!"

"Tell him I'm cursed sorry, will you?"

"Yes, if he can still hear. . . . Good luck!"

I went slowly away along the river and presently came to the east gate. The lodge-keeper was half dressed. He came in his shirt and let me out.

Poodle Byng had my horse and a valise.

"Damnation," said he, "what did I tell you!"

There were tears in his kind eyes.

I stripped off my evening clothes, got into spurred boots, buckskins, and riding coat.

"I'm terrible sorry," said I. "I hope to God he lives. I aimed at his shins, but there was a mist——"

"You'd better ride hard, Joshua."

He gave me his hand very sorrowfully; then I wheeled my horse and set spurs to him.

Dawn whitened the world. I rode hard through the rising mist. A few farmers were astir in byre and barn and orchard close.

Cows filed out of their night pastures. Rooks were on the wing.

Miles fled like spindrift before a gale. It seemed but a very little while before I smelled the sea. Very soon I saw it, glittering, the sun's edge ablaze above it.

As I galloped into the fishing hamlet of Faithness I saw my servant on a wharf where a brown fishing smack lay rocking.

He ran to hold my horse. "All's aboard and stowed, sir. The lady has been much worried——"

"Lady! What lady!"

"My God, sir, are you not running away with one?"

I stared at the smack. Miss Strayling, clinging to the rocking mast, waved a joyous hand to me——

It was then, and suddenly, I realized that the world for me had changed in the twinkling of an eye.

People, surroundings, habits, familiar things—all were going to vanish—already *had* vanished—forever.

Everything was ended for me, leaving me at the edge of the sea, facing only a horizon.

I went aboard. The smack stank of fish. Her master came to me, cap in hand, to inquire my pleasure.

"France," said I.

"It will be fifty guineas, sir," said he.

I had a hundred in a silk bag. They had once been Visby's.

I gave them to him and told him to hoist sail and put to sea.

Then I went forward toward my pretty acquaintance of the night before. She stood awaiting me, and hugging the swaying mast with one arm.

She gave me a spray-wet hand—I supposed for me to kiss. I kissed it, tasting the salt.

"You promised not to abandon me," she said.

"I had no time to lose, ma'am; or to remember you."

"I've remembered *you,*" she said. "Did you fight?"

"What wild business is this you are planning, madam?" said I. "Do you really mean to go with me?"

"I told you I desired to go."

"How did you learn my plans?"

She blushed. "I knew you were going to have a duel. But Mr. Davies wouldn't admit it until I began to weep and tell him that we were very desperately in love——"

"What!"

"I had to tell him something. He was much moved. He said the Prince Regent would let you go to prison this time."

"Did Mr. Davies tell you I'd leave England by way of Faithness?"

"Yes. I made him tell me. And then I begged him to get me a chaise and post-boy. He was afraid to. So I tried fainting——"

"What!"

"I fainted. I had to."

"And then he fetched you a chaise?"

"He did. I have all my own luggage and yours——"

"Mine!"

"Yes, I sent Mr. Davies to your chambers to pack it and fetch it to the mews. It's down in the cabin with mine."

"This is amazing," said I.

"Ah, yes," said she, "but that is life, Mr. Brooke —just one astonishing experience after another! Indeed, I've found it so ever since I eloped with Hector."

I gazed at her, astounded, and she looked at me with one of her lovely breathless expressions.

"Everything—everything is before us," she said. "The world is wonderful; life a miracle. I've discovered that much. . . . Why do you stare so hard at me?"

"Do you mean to travel as my wife, ma'am?"

"Isn't that easiest?" She began to laugh. "Why do you look at me so wildly? I don't expect you to marry me—with either hand—Mr. Brooke——"

The crew of two—an old man and a lad—came forward to cast off and hoist sail.

The wind was brisk, the tide on the turn.

As our sails filled belly-full with a mellow report, and we heeled over and boiled away seaward, I saw several mounted constables gallop into Faithness. They shouted at us; but we now were clear o' land and law.

"Big Ben," thought I to myself, "must be vexed. This is nasty of him."

One of the constables waved something at me; probably a warrant.

"Bye-bye, Prinney," thought I to myself.

I glanced at the youngster beside me and noticed how pale she was in the morning light.

"You require sleep, ma'am," said I.

"So do you, Mr. Brooke."

I remarked that I was accustomed to play at cards all night and hunt the hounds all next day.

However, I handed her down the rough stairs to the cabin. There was a bunk there.

Our luggage lay piled beside it.

I said: "You had better lie down and go to sleep. I feel no inclination for repose."

She stifled a yawn. "There is room for you, also," she said, "—and two pillows."

She crept into the bunk on hands and knees and lay flat upon the farther side. There she yawned again and gazed at me with a vague smile. "Of what are you thinking, Mr. Brooke?"

"I was wondering," said I, "whether you really are as innocent as you look."

"No," said she, "I'm not. But I'm not as stupid as I seem, either."

"Innocent or otherwise," said I, "you are clever."

"One need not be wanton to be wise, sir."

I laughed and began to pull the valises, satchels, and boxes about. Scrope had forgotten nothing of mine. She seemed to have many boxes.

"Is all yours here?" I asked her.

"Everything, sir."

Then I noticed a military pouch bearing the crest of the 10th Hussars.

"What's this?" said I, astonished.

She turned her head to look. "Isn't it yours?"

I picked it up. The chained key dangled from the flap. I slipped it into the lock and opened it. Inside was a packet bearing government seals. It was addressed to Prinney!

"Good heavens," said I, "what's all this?"

"What is it?" she asked, sitting up in her bunk and looking over.

"I think," said I, "that Charles Standish must have brought this pouch from London last night. It ought to have been fetched by a King's Messenger. That's how carelessly things are managed by Big Ben's government."

"Well," said she, "as long as we are at war with England hadn't you better examine it?"

I knew it would be a hanging matter if ever I were

taken. Nevertheless, I took a penknife from my fob and slit up the packet.

Her curiosity, now, was thoroughly aroused, and she asked me to sit on the bunk beside her and let her see what I was doing.

So I seated myself on the bunk's edge, tumbled out the papers into her lap, and unfolded the first.

"Read it to me," she begged, bringing her shoulder and head so close to mine that I was conscious of the warm, breathing fragrance of her.

The first paper I read in a whisper. It was a transcript of orders in council, and had to do with the war in Spain.

I opened another paper.

"This," said I, "is in British military cipher. I can't make it out, of course."

The third and last paper I unfolded and read very slowly; she read it over my shoulder; and it was the wickedest document I ever read.

For here were the carefully studied outlines of a plan to send money, officers, and arms among all the Indians in the United States and Canada, and turn loose ten thousand ferocious warriors upon the men, women, and little children of our native land!

I read it, read it again, re-read it. I could scarcely credit my eyes.

As I sat thinking, the damnable paper lying on my knees, the girl beside me lay back with a sigh, pillowing her rounded cheek on one frail elbow.

"That seems a very strange way to make war," she

murmured. . . . "And His Royal Highness appears to be a mild and gentle Prince."

But I was thinking about what Poodle Byng had said to me—that I had damaged nine of his fellow countrymen. Counting Mordhurst I had damaged ten. And now I wished I had accounted for the whole damned nation—if this was what was being planned by the ministers of a crazy king and of his fat sot of a misbegotten son!

Good God, did they really understand what devils out of hell they proposed to let loose against the humble folk on our frontiers? Would Big Ben actually subscribe to this?

As I sat a-thinking I became conscious of very gentle breathing beside me. Little Miss Strayling slept where she lay in the rolling, pitching cabin. For a while I sat motionless, turning over and over the papers in my hand, wondering how I might deliver them to my outraged Government.

It had been a jail matter at worst had I been stopped at Faithness for duelling. But this violation of Prinney's despatches would be a hanging matter at best—no slightest doubt of that—with such damning documents as these in my possession.

As I sat there I heard a sudden scuffle of sea-boots on deck overhead; then, suddenly, a cannon shot, very near; and a hoarse shouting from our deck. The smack yawed violently, fell away, taken aback, and lay hove to a-wallowing and pitching.

As I got to my feet, trying to nerve myself for what

was coming, the skipper, in dripping oilskins, thrust his wet, red face below.

"B-by God, sir," he stammered, "there's a corvette just abeam what's stopped us with a round shot! Her longboat's out already and a-coming fast, sir!"

I have, I suppose, enough of the gambler in me to take with courage what adversity sends.

But my mouth and throat went dry, and I fumbled at my neckcloth as though it had been a hempen noose already choking me to death. My desperate glance fell on the sleeping girl. She was wide awake, sitting up and looking intently at me. I strove to smile as carelessly as I could with so stiff a countenance:

"A British warship has spoken us," said I. "Doubtless some coast telegraph signalled her to stop us. If there's to be any question concerning me, ma'am, you are to swear that I carried you off by force."

"Do you suppose they are after those papers, Mr. Brooke?"

"I don't know."

"Throw them overboard. Here's the satchel, too—" She sprang from the bunk, seized it, thrust it toward me. "Sir," she whispered, "these might be very fatal if discovered!"

But, as I placed the papers in the satchel, I heard a voice hail us close aboard:

"Smack ahoy! Stand by to throw us a rope!"

I flung the satchel to the floor. A gambler knows when he's done for. Then I held out my hands, and she caught them nervously.

"Remember," said I, "you are to disassociate yourself from me. Remember that I forced you and that you know nothing about this packet!"

"What are they going to do with you, Mr. Brooke?"

"Oh, nothing serious," said I lightly. I kissed her relaxing hands with a reassuring smile, released them. "I think," said I, "I'll step on deck and take a look at this impertinent ship that stops honest folk in the chops of the Channel."

The cabin stairs were like the stairs of Tyburn gallows to me. I had to stiffen my weakened knees to attempt them. But I mounted them whistling "Old Jack Ketch" under my breath.

There was a wet sky aloft and a wet wind blowing. A ship's longboat tossed under our stern where armed men already were boarding us.

At that instant, to leeward, I noticed a beautiful corvette, hove to. And then, at the very instant I caught sight of her, she broke out the United States flag!

"She's a Yankee!" roared our skipper in an agonized voice; "now they'll cut our throats for us, oh, my Gawd!"

"Shut your jaw, Johnny Bull!" retorted a burly, good-humoured American boatswain, climbing leisurely aboard us. "Listen, son; we need a few of your fresh fish. Avast there, and break 'em out lively, John."

"We ain't got none, Jonathan, and that's Gawd's spitting truth!" bawled our demoralized skipper. "Go

and rummage if you don't believe me, you damned Yankee pirut!"

The boatswain was not at all offended. On the contrary, he laughed.

"Wa'al, if y'ain't got none, y'ain't got none," he drawled. "What 'n' hell hev yeh got aboard yeh?"

"I only got a gentleman and his wife, 'n' that's Gawd's sp—"

"Wot 'n' hell they a-doin' of into a empty old hencoop like this here smack?" demanded the boatswain.

I called out to him: "Step over here, bo'sun, if you wish to help two Americans out of trouble!"

He stared at me for a moment, rolling his quid; then came rolling toward me across the heaving deck, his cutlass clapping his muscular thigh. I told him bluntly I'd had a duel and must run for it.

"Ho-ho!" said he, "so you been a-shootin' of a Englishman, hev yeh?"

"Yes," said I, "will you take us aboard?"

"You gotta ax the cap'n, sir."

"What's your ship?" said I, "and who's her master?"

"The *Wild-cat,* privateer," said he; "Cap'n Clancy. How d'yeh like her lines, sir?"

"Beautiful. Where are you bound?"

"A French port for water and then home, sir. And, by God, sir, if they're after you, you'd better come aboard Cap'n Clancy. We got a pair o' heels, sir, what there ain't nothing as can catch!"

I laughed aloud. He shouted to a brace of brawny

blue-jackets and I led the way below. I was in wildest spirits. The very devil seemed to be singing in every vein.

"My dear," said I to little Miss Strayling where she sat huddled up on the edge of her bunk, with her face in both hands, "we're going aboard the United States privateer *Wild-cat*. These kind sailor-men will stow our luggage for us—if you'll jump up and give 'em room——"

She lifted a pallid face from her hands, then rose with an effort as though dazed, and stood beside me, drooping. It was very plain that a life of pleasure with all its swiftly shifting and bewildering emotions had been a trifle too much for little Miss Strayling. But I felt like a two-year-old, and was in a crazy humour, very blithe, who, but a moment since, had believed myself already rubbing noses with the fatal Queen of Spades.

"Dear wife," said I mischievously, putting a hardy arm about her, "bear up a little longer for the sake of our seven children, and you shall have a snug berth aboard the prettiest corvette that ever swam the seven seas."

She rested her head wearily against my shoulder while the blue-jackets carried our baggage on deck.

"Now, you pretty thing," said I, "I'll carry you aboard."

As I passed one hand under her knees and lifted her, her grey eyes unclosed and she quietly put both arms around my neck.

"By the way, dear wife," I whispered, "what is your Christian and maiden name?"

"Naïa," she said.

"Naïa Strayling," said I, "I believe I'm going to be scoundrel enough to kiss you."

As she lay in my arms, pale, unsmiling, I kissed her on the mouth. I might as well have kissed a snowflake.

"My poor little wife," I murmured.

At that the faintest of smiles touched her lips and she turned her head against my shoulder.

Half an hour later she was fast asleep aboard the United States privateer *Wild-cat;* and Captain Clancy, smoking black cigars, and I were brewing a bowl of bishop in his cabin, and laughing our heads off over the gay and godless yarns we swapped together.

We made a swallow's passage of six swift weeks. The *Wild-cat,* on her dashing cruise, had taken a total of eight sail, all in the very chops of the Channel, had carried them one by one into Dieppe, had sold them there, every one. So we were now a very rich morsel for any English man o' war.

Two weeks out we sighted a British squadron at sea, which chased us in vain for two nights and a day. We stopped a Martinque man in mid-ocean, but took from him only water, molasses, and biscuit. Two British frigates chased us the following day, but old Clancy laughed at them; and in the rushing wings of the night

they dissolved into darkness and vanished like a bad dream; and we never sighted them again.

On October twelfth, when we were off Sandy Hook, I beheld a superb and thrilling sight—a United States squadron under full sail! Blue, silver, and rose flew our starry flags above them; their sails, tinted ivory and gold by the rising sun, swept up over the ocean like the huge rolling clouds of heaven.

Little Miss Strayling was sleeping. She had shared the bunk of the Captain's wife who cooked for the quarter-deck, a gnarled, hard bitten, grey-haired New England woman who never yet had failed to keep her man company at sea, either in peace or in war.

As I had passed for Miss Strayling's husband when we boarded the *Wild-cat* I was supposed to have access to her—and whether the gay impudence of inopportune visits with which I sometimes plagued her, really embarrassed her I could not be quite sure. For she took my airy indiscretions with a kind of flushed coolness, and my tormenting gaiety with a half-shy, half-humorous equanimity, so that, for the life of me, I could not be certain whether it was youthful sophistication or the trustful innocence of stupidity.

Mrs. Clancy was getting breakfast; she gave me a pot of chocolate and some buttered biscuit from the galley, and I went below to knock at my youngster's door.

Her sleepy face was all rosy when she awoke to see me seated there beside her, with my tray on my knees.

"It's very kind of you," said she submissively, yet

smilingly defiant. You may call this a paradox, but it expresses what I mean.

I told her that I was happy to be at any pains for so charming a wife. Which made her smile like a teased kitten. Kittens smile, you know.

"We are off Sandy Hook," said I. "Be brisk, my love, and when you come on deck you shall see four fine warships bearing down on us—the *President,* the *United States,* the *Congress,* and the *Argus!*"

"If you'll go out," said she, "I'll put on my slippers and chamber robe and run on deck."

"Yes," said I, "but how about our morning and conjugal kiss?"

"You always say that."

"And you never do it, Naïa."

She smiled, unstirring, patiently enduring.

"Mr. Brooke," said she, "if you will take yourself —and your left hand—to the deck, I will swallow my chocolate and join you in half a minute."

"Why not a little morning dalliance, dear wife?" said I.

A faint blush rewarded my delighted and significant eye; and, having tormented her with all the gaiety of kindly malice, I left the tray on her bunk and went on deck.

Bang! bang! We were saluting the broad pennant of Commodore Rodgers with our broadside carronades.

The *President* replied. A string of signals fluttered vigorously from her masthead. Answering signals were hoisted aboard us. Bang! bang! The smoke of our

carronades whirled up from our triced ports as the gossip of the flags continued.

Naïa Strayling, in wool robe and naked, slippered feet, came on deck and stood beside me, her hands over both ears, her ruddy hair flying about me like a flashing, silken banner.

"Bang!"

"Oh, lord, how beautiful!" she cried. "How amazing to behold our pretty flag at sea!"

A very strange and unaccustomed emotion was meddling with my throat and voice as I looked up at those wildly flying and star-strewn flags through the whirling smoke of our salute. Whither were they headed, those high little flags winged with scarlet and silver and shot with stars?

A vague sickness of dismay came over me as I thought of old England's thundering, cloud-compelling navies—of her tremendous majesty and might imposing her vast and immemorial will upon the seas.

As the flag-ship passed us, outward bound, I heard aboard her a thin, far, wind-blown music of fifes and drums playing "Yankee Doodle."

CHAPTER II

COCK-CROW HALL

WHEN the United States privateer *Wild-cat* passed in Sandy Hook, her crew gave nine wild-cat cheers, and her drums and fifes played "Halifax Station," a new tune given us the week before by the privateer *Mewing Gull,* outward bound.

With a good glass we could make the new forts abuilding at Sandy Hook and along the Narrows.

The Staten Island telegraph with its high masts and strings of black and white balls was plainly visible beyond Fort Richmond between Princess Bay and Telegraph Hill. The fort, which had been signalling the Hook, now hailed us and bade us report, which we did by flag.

We were then signalled that there were spies among the British sympathizers in New York, who held constant communication with the British cruisers off our coasts; that our arrival had been expected by the enemy for a week or more, and that all British warships had been ordered to make every effort to sink or take us. Which news amazed our Captain Clancy who was at a loss to understand why such extraordinary exertions should be directed toward the capture of a single American privateer. It did not entirely surprise me.

I had told this skipper nothing about the British Government despatches which had so accidentally come into my possession, because he was only a privateersman armed with letters of marque and reprisal.

But during our six weeks at sea, little Miss Strayling and I had made a careful copy of these papers; and, on the bare chance that there had been no duplicate code-keys employed in the message written in British military cipher, we had searched the cipher for some key based upon the usual numerical alphabetical frequency; and we had discovered it very easily; and had decoded that entire despatch.

I hoped to God that Prinney's Government might prove as stupid in other matters as it had in its cipher code, which was the same code employed during our Revolutionary War.

Now, however, as we entered the Narrows, I thought it best to tell Captain Clancy about it; and I did so; and showed him my duplicate, clearly decoded, and copied in a neat, fair hand by my pretty companion. And I begged him to signal to Telegraph Hill that we carried particular despatches to be forwarded to Washington by express, which I knew could be done in three days.

Our skipper had no more than glanced over this monstrous plan for a vast British invasion of the United States, and which provided three huge armies to overwhelm us from Louisiana to the Great Lakes, and from Champlain to the Virginia Capes—than he

set his signals wildly flying and fired a gun to leeward. And never had I heard such cursing.

"My God, Mr. Brooke," said he, "had I known you carried such news as this I had never closed an eye in sleep since we sneaked into the fogs of Dieppe!"

Very soon from Fort Hudson—the water-battery off our starboard bow—artillery bugles rang out; a boat pulled for us; and presently a marine guard boarded us. To the fat lieutenant in charge I consigned my sealed duplicates, including a copy of the de-coded cipher, addressed to the Secretary of War at Washington—never dreaming him to be the old ass that he was, or that President Madison and the entire Administration had no more vision and understanding than a company of black cats in a caved-in coal mine.

God is good to the Irish; but the dull-brained Yankee is His special pet; and little Jimmy Madison and old granny Dearborn are the spitting testimony of Divine protection.

Well, our anchor a-trip and a-drip once more, and wind and tide favouring, we saluted the red Castle with our single tier of guns and stood for the upper bay. The first sea-gulls of the autumn followed us in.

Dusk fell before harbour and port regulations had been complied with. Slowly we passed in the forts and batteries, and, as directed from the Castle on Governor's Island, came to an anchor off the wharf at the foot of Whitehall. But nine o'clock had sounded from the city bells before my sleepy youngster and I were ready to go ashore.

It was a clear, windy night and a high sea running when our blue-jackets pulled us to the water stairs, piled our baggage on the spray-spattered pier, and fetched for us a rickety hackney coach to await our further pleasure. For which I gave them a handful of guineas, and they cheered us as bride and groom, and wished us many babies.

Northward we could see a golden rain of fireworks drifting above Vauxhall Gardens. A military band on the Battery, near Marketfield Street, was playing "Haste to the Wedding," their brass and cymbals resonant in the fresh night air.

More distant still, from somewhere over toward the Bowery, came a confused racket of marching fifes and drums where, we were informed, Tammany Hall was parading to celebrate our victories at sea. Which put me into an excellent humour.

I looked at the feather-brained youngster who so rashly had accompanied me from England when I fled the consequences of that fatal duel with my lord Mordhurst.

She was seated upon our piled luggage, her wet straw hat over one ear—a wind-blown little figure forlornly preoccupied with her disordered hair.

"Well, ma'am," said I cheerily, "here we are disembarked at last—beau and belle, bag and baggage—and, at any rate, have made that much progress!"

"Yes," she murmured, "the Rake's Progress." She looked up at me, busy with her dishevelled hair. "What

do you wish to do with your Baggage, sir—meaning myself?"

"Whoever called you a Baggage?" said I, laughing.

"Well—packet, then, or hussy, or minx, or whatever you think me—I am dreadfully sleepy," said she, "and desire a bed as soon as convenient. Oh, lord, I've lost every damned hair-peg I possess—"

Down she dropped on her knees, groping in the starlight; I bade the hack driver to fetch one of the coach lamps, and presently she found a few of her hair-pegs and thrust them wearily into her hair.

"You are very tired," said I. "If you will tell me where you reside, I will take you home at once."

At that her hands fell from her hair and she gave me a startled, bewildered look.

"Lord," said she, "I'm not going *home!*"

"Not going home, ma'am!"

"Good heavens, no!"

"But where—"

"I am not going home, sir, and that's flat!"

"Permit me to represent very seriously to you the consequen——"

"Oh, hang the consequences!" She stuffed her tangled curls under her hat and tied the sea-stained ribbons under her chin with a jerk.

"I don't suppose," said she, "that you mean to abandon me here at night on this very dirty dock."

"What do you expect me to do with you, ma'am?"

"You *could* take me home with you. You have more

than one bed in your house, I presume. Anyway, I'm too sleepy to care."

"I live," said I, "at Cock-crow Hall in Westchester. It's too far and too late for us to drive there now."

"Then take me to some respectable tavern. There is one in New York, I suppose."

"Several," said I, laughing, "—there's the City Hotel, for example, and the Merchant's Hotel, and The Tontine, and Fraunces—but I advise you to go home—"

"Mr. Brooke, when my grandfather took me to France and put me in school, he swore that if I ever again misbehaved he'd turn me out of the house."

"I hope," said I, "that you are not going to tell your peppery ancestor about your elopement with that Frenchman."

"I might as well. The Mother Superior will write him anyway. Besides, I'm inclined to tell the truth——"

"Well, the Lady Superior doesn't know you went to London with that Vulper woman and raked it in the Prince Regent's set and came home aboard a privateer as my wife——"

"But I *did* do all those things!"

"Good God, suppose you did! Are you obliged to shout it into your aged relative's ear-trumpet?"

"What else am I to shout at him?" She looked at me wearily, stifling a yawn. "Now you understand," said she, "why I do not care to go home tonight. I

don't choose to sleep with homeless cats under somebody's front stoop."

There seemed to be nothing further to say.

The City Hotel is on Broadway just across from Trinity Church. Thither we drove, bag and baggage, in our jolting old hack, like some country couple just married. And I utterly disgusted.

The harness broke as we turned into the Bowling Green. While the driver was mending it, little Miss Strayling fell asleep, her spray-drenched hat in her lap, her dishevelled head fallen upon my shoulder. Her face was delicately flushed, her head as warm and sweet as a child's. It was difficult to think ill of so lovely a youngster.

She was still asleep when we rattled on again up Broadway and came to a stop before the hotel.

The band of the 2nd Regiment of Artillery was playing there; a vast crowd swarmed over the sidewalks and filled the lobby, which was brilliant with uniforms and with the gay silks and jewels of ladies and gentlemen of fashion.

It seemed that the Red Fort Guard was giving a banquet in honour of the artillery stationed at the White Fort. Scarlet plumes waved everywhere; epaulettes, spurs, swords, gorgets glittered; scented fans were waving, diamonds flashed in frilly shirt fronts.

As for Bandmaster Moffat, he was a pillar of scarlet and gold under his cascades of tri-coloured plumes.

I awoke little Miss Strayling. She tied on her wet hat with a confused, half-blinded look. So, with her

arm through mine, we made our difficult way to the hotel desk.

As I was about to write her down in the register as my sister I saw Captain Clancy in full uniform, slightly tipsy, leaning over the desk beside me and regarding us benevolently.

"Servant, Mrs. Brooke, ma'am," said he, taking off his cocked hat with a very elegant flourish. And to the hotel clerk: "Pray, sir, be 'ticular show every 'tension, 'ticular frens, Mr. 'n' Mrs. Brooke."

So I had no choice, and wrote us down as Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Brooke of Westchester. Which annoyed me vastly.

Our baggage was carried upstairs; we followed it to our suite of two rooms. She chose her own chamber. I went sulkily into mine.

Standing in the open doorway which connected our two bedrooms, little Miss Strayling regarded me with a mischievous, sleepy gaze while she slowly divested herself of her outer attire. Her straw hat she tossed at hazard upon one chair, her reticule upon another; her fur-trimmed walking coat she flung upon her bed, and cast her scarf after it. And all the while I was aware of a kind of malicious sweetness in the vaguely remote expression of her brooding gaze.

"How impulsive of you," said she with another yawn, "to write us down as Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Brooke! I never supposed your intentions were so flattering, sir."

Sleepy as she was, and yawning with every other

word, she still found enough gaiety of spirit to discover my uneasiness and to plague me.

"I never knew before how simple it is to acquire a husband," said she. "Why, 'twas but the scratch of a quill on a hotel register, and presto! I am yours!"

"What else was I to write?" said I, "—with that fool of a skipper recommending us at the top of his lungs!"

"You *could* have written us down as the Rake and his Baggage—" She bent over her dressing table and shook the remaining hair-pegs from her thick and glossy hair.

Presently I heard her laughing to herself, and I walked over to the connecting door. She was seated before her mirror, her naked feet thrust into sandals, and wearing a night robe of pale silk.

"Dear husband," said she, "I was only wondering whether you really are very much frightened to find yourself married to a wife. Are you?"

"Not very. Would you like some supper?"

"No, thank you. But tomorrow you may take me to supper at Vauxhall, dear spouse."

"I'm sorry," said I, "but I'm going home to Cock-crow Hall in Westchester tomorrow."

"Why, sir?"

"Because, ma'am, I happen to be a militia officer in Lieutenant-Colonel Odell's 2nd Regiment of Cavalry."

"Oh, lord," said she, rumpling her rippling hair with both hands. Then she asked me very sweetly what I meant to do after that.

"I'm going to the war," said I drily; and walked back into my room.

"Could you take me, too, sir? I've never seen a war," she called out to me.

"You are likely to see one tomorrow when you go home," said I, grimly.

"Oh, heaven," said she, "how unkind is my new husband to me upon our wedding night! What the dickens ails you, sir? But I think I can guess——"

She rose and came to the connecting door and closed slowly until the opening merely framed her impertinent face under its lovely tangle of chestnut hair.

"You are alarmed!" said she, regarding me through the door crack. "You always have been horribly afraid that I might get myself into a very fatal pickle and beg you to marry me. Pray have no such concern, sir. Whatever happens, I never shall ask you to marry me!"

"I have no slightest intention of doing so," said I, "unless a point of honour compels—which God forbid——"

At that her face clouded: "What point of honour?" said she, "imperils your innocent state of single blessedness?"

"The discovery of our coupled names would mean your ruin. Noblesse oblige. A gentleman, sometimes, is compelled, ma'am."

Her features darkened and grew stormy: "I knew it," she exclaimed; "I knew he was terrified! Well, sir, you may dismiss all matrimonial dread from your

agitated mind! I wouldn't marry you to satisfy your point of honour if the whole world believed you had seduced me. More than that, I wouldn't marry you even if you had!"

With that she pulled a very impudent and childish face at me, the rosebud tip of a derisive tongue just visible between her lips.

"You and your point of honour may go to the deuce," said she; and slammed the door.

However, it opened again immediately, disclosing a flushed young face from which the healthy scowl was already melting into a most lovely smile both friendly and audacious:

"Good night, dear spouse," said she; "sleep sweetly on our wedding night!" And gently closed the door.

Being accustomed to do with very little sleep, and having no mind for it now, I went down to the billiard room and there played several games with the marker.

Cards in the adjoining room were in progress, but the stakes seemed trifling to me, and although several respectable gentlemen bowed to me very civilly I was at no pains to make acquaintances. So presently commanded a julep to my room and went thither.

And to my astonishment discovered a strange gentleman in my room.

He *was* a gentleman; that seemed plain enough; and he apologized with perfect grace, explaining that he had mistaken his room; and so took leave of me with every ceremony and politeness.

I noticed he had opened a drawer in my bureau—

probably seeking for his night-shirt—and I was very glad he had not opened the drawer where I had carelessly placed the portfolio containing the British secret papers.

My julep came presently, and also a jar of tobacco. So I undressed and got into bed to smoke and sip my julep, and to continue my study of those same secret and damnable despatches which chance had given into my possession—particularly the British ministerial plan for turning every Indian in North America against us.

To think of that fat beast Prinney approving so murderous a plan! The Prince Regent—heir to the English throne—conspiring with his ministers to procure a wholesale murder of women and children along our frontiers!

And I had read in the newspapers that the horrible work already had begun. Fort Dearborn had surrendered, and all there had been slaughtered—one item alone of twelve children in a single wagon, butchered with knives and hatchets and their little mangled heads scalped of the baby hair! By the red allies of Merry England! Prinney's pets!

I lit another cigar and took a pull at my julep, striving to realize that the northern and western savages were now actually a part of the British armies, marching with them, manœuvring, scouting, ambushing, attacking, scalping our regulars and militia and turning every unprotected settlement into a shambles.

And this devilish Winnebago, or Miami monster,

Tecumseh—whatever he was—what was he doing now? Who were these British officers that newspaper rumour reported already meddling with our south-western tribes?

There were ten thousand savage warriors in the Creek Confederacy alone—Tallasees, Chickasaws, Cherokis, Seminoles, Creeks—bound to peace with the United States by solemn treaty.

Was Tecumseh already among them? Was it possible that British officers as secret emissaries of England were already attempting by bribery not only to turn the Creek Confederacy against us and to embroil us with Spanish Florida, but to inflame and raise the vast, black slave population in the South and subject the white men, women, and children of the Southland to the unspeakable horrors of a negro revolution!

Had England then become so rotten as to countenance such things? Had the decadence of the times—the looseness, cynicism, universal immorality in the Prince Regent's England—so perfectly demoralized all English traditions of honour and decency?

My God, but the world was growing wicked! I ought to know. I had been part of it—quite as rotten as any—as reckless, as hard, as remorseless, as debauched as any other rake who ruined his fellows at play, or drank till morning at the Hell Fire Club, or casually entertained any man's idle wife or mistress who proved convenient and complacent.

And, somehow, now, the sudden recollection of my father in his pig-tail and knee-buckles made me ashamed

of myself. . . . Six feet two in his stockings!—a gray, stern man, yet with unmarred sweetness of manner and a speech almost boyish; and with a wistful, perplexed expression in his dim old eyes as though he still were peering through the cannon smoke at Monmouth——

"Hang it," said I aloud, "*he* was a man!" And I began to wonder what the devil I might be and what were those fellows who strutted in boots and epaulettes along Broadway; and those others who had run at Queenstown and those who were now facing court-martial for that cowardly business at Detroit.

And what, also, I wondered, was that strange and charming youngster who lay asleep the other side of the closed door yonder? In England there were many such as she—quite as young, even younger—slim, lovely, unformed creatures, yet already wise as the serpents of old Egypt. But was America also beginning to breed them?—daughters of our gentle and valiant mothers whose calm, innocent eyes had never flinched amid the flaming fury of our Revolution? Had fashion already set its fangs in us to teach the New World all the glittering harlotry of the Old?

I blew out my candle, settled cheek to pillow and closed my eyes, glad that I had had no part in the undoing of this saucy youngster who lay upon her own pillow beyond the closed door yonder——

Something awoke me in darkness—soft fingers touching my cheek:

"Mr. Brooke!"

"Yes?"

"Somebody is meddling with the lock on my door!"

I sat up to listen. I heard nothing in the darkness except her rapid breathing beside me, and the thudding of my own heart.

"How long ago did you hear it?" I whispered.

"A moment ago. It stopped when I got out of bed."

"What did it sound like?"

"Somebody outside my door trying different keys in the lock."

"Go and get into bed. Let them hear you do it. Then lie quietly and maybe they'll begin again. You're not afraid, are you?"

"No."

She stole out like a ghost. I heard her bed creak; then silence.

I do not know how long I lay there, listening, before my ears caught a faint sound from the corridor. But this time it was somebody at my own door, very gently trying the knob.

With infinite precaution I slipped out of bed, drew on slippers and trousers, groped for my pistol case, extracted one of the pair of always loaded weapons. But I dared not risk the noise of cocking it, so took it by the muzzle to deal a blow with it.

Now, moving stealthily to the locked door, I gave a swift twist to the key, jerked it open, and launched a blow at hazard with the butt, into utter darkness.

The pistol struck something; somebody uttered a stifled yell; but unseen hands had already grasped me

and were strangling me, forcing me back into my own room. Suddenly a dazzling lantern slid open; but little Miss Strayling was out of her bed in an instant and had already seized her bell-cord; and the distant darkness resounded with the alarm.

One of three men, cursing savagely, turned to intercept her; but it was too late; and the three seemed to realize it. Yet, even then, the man who had left me paused to tear open my portmanteau and one of my trunks; and I, divining what they really were after, fought desperately to keep hold of the other two; but found it impossible; and all three broke away and ran for it through the unlighted hallway.

How they got out I don't know, for I encountered a fat servant waddling to answer the bell summons, and carrying a flaring candle. He seemed a stupid lout and had not encountered anybody on the stairs. Or so he said.

Well, the warning from Fort Richmond was proving true enough. Fast work, indeed! For there could be no slightest doubt that those were British spies, and already hot-foot after the lost despatches. And such impudence in the very heart of New York City staggered me.

I sent the stupid servant, with his smoky candle, about his cursed business. Small doubt that he had been bribed to keep his puffy eyes shut, even if he himself were not in regular British pay.

So I walked back to my room, put on a chamber robe to cover a night-shirt torn to ribbons, and went in

to confer with my clever youngster who lay on her pillows, brilliant eyed, smiling breathlessly to see me.

"Oh," cried she, "I have actually beheld a war! What a glorious fight! You are magnificent in battle, Mr. Brooke!"

"You pulled victory out of defeat with your bell-rope," said I. "What devil's impudence is this, then, that they dare attempt such a stroke in this city and in this hotel! They came here after those despatches. It is just as well that I sent our duplicate to General Dearborn."

"Oh, heaven," said she, "what a charming excitement does war engender in the human breast! Never in all my life, Mr. Brooke, have I experienced such pleasure. . . . You have a bruised eye, sir; did you know it?"

I laughed and walked to her door to examine it. Finding it undamaged, I locked and bolted it again; locked and bolted my own; drew the charges from both my pistols, set fresh flints, reloaded and primed both. She, in her silken chamber robe, and bare feet, trotted about following me to and fro, and hovered over me with the curiosity of a delighted child while I prepared my pistols.

She begged of me the loan of one of them to lay upon her night table, arguing that these were war times, and that all Americans should do their duty and therefore she ought to have a weapon to do it with in case of further invasion by the enemy.

For the sake of peace, and to be rid of her, I showed

her how to cock and fire the slender duelling pistol; and, making her promise not to use it except under orders, placed it upon her night table.

Whereupon she bade me a happy and excited good-night, and returned to her bed, enchanted.

As for me, I placed the secret documents beneath my pillow, laid my pistols within reach, but, knowing very well that the affair was ended, and such precautions a mere formality, went presently to sleep without the least concern.

The brilliant sunshine of a cold October day awoke me.

I could scarcely realize I was in New York again. My windows gave on Cedar Street and Broadway; and from them I took a swift look at my native city.

Never before had I beheld so many national flags. They filled the sky above the roof tops like great, vivid, wind-blown blossoms.

I pulled the beaded bell-rope and commanded a tin tub. As soon as I was bathed, shaved, and dressed I knocked gaily at the intervening door in liveliest spirits.

"Is it *you?*" she asked sleepily.

"Beloved wife," said I, "who else would take so conjugal a liberty?"

In the dusk of the room I heard her stirring on her pillow.

"Mr. and Mrs. Joshua Brooke of Cock-crow Hall," she murmured. "Think of that, now."

"May I come in?" I asked.

"I suppose you will, anyway. So pray come in, kind spouse, and close my open windows for me."

"Unlock your door to me, then, my own."

"It has not been locked, dear spouse."

I went into the darkened chamber, pulled aside the purple silk window curtains. The sun dazzled her grey eyes as she sat up, and she rubbed them lazily with both snowy fists.

"Oh, mercy—oh, Mr. Brooke, please send me up some buttered rolls and chocolate, because I am starving!"

"You are extremely pretty this morning, dear wife," said I, "do you know it?"

"Yes, I know it. But we've been married too long for *you* to notice it, haven't we?"

"I wonder," said I, "whether you have any idea how lovely you really are?"

"My face, yes. But I have no figure. That's my trouble. So if you'll send me up some breakfast perhaps I'll begin to develop one."

"I'll order it as soon as you offer me your wifely morning kiss——"

"Oh, please, Mr. Brooke—not in bed!"

"Conjugal refusal means divorce, madam——"

"Well, after you take me to Vauxhall you may divorce me. And—would you be kind enough, dear husband, to place my sandals on the floor near my bed?"

I had kissed her once or twice aboard ship, but carelessly. For the first time, now, I really desired to kiss her.

But I set her sandals by the bedside, closed her windows, and walked toward the door.

As I was going out I caught her eye, full of demure malice.

"*Dear* Mr. Brooke!" said she, and kissed her hand after me.

At the desk below, a brisk, smirking young clerk, full of French pomade and busy curiosity, hoped that we had found our quarters comfortable.

"Old gentleman—Colonel Hallet—noticed your name on the register this morning, sir," he added; "—asked if you were the Mr. Joshua Brooke of Cock-crow Hall. I had the privilege of saying to him that I believed so."

Annoyed at his inquisitiveness I took no notice of him, and sauntered on toward the coffee room door, where, to my further annoyance, I walked into old Peter Hallet, a friend of my late father.

"Ha, Joshua," cried he, "home again, eh? And with a wife! I saw the names on the register and wondered if it might be you. I wish you joy of a happy marriage! Pray make my compliments acceptable to your lady, sir!"

His warm, kindly clasp left me ashamed. What could I say?

He was an old, old gentleman, and, like many old gentlemen in New York who had lived during our Revolution, he still wore his hair in a military queue; sported knee-breeches, also, and buckles, silk stockings, and a cocked hat.

"Well, well," said he, still wringing my reluctant hand, "you'll be taking your young bride to Cock-crow Hall. Ha! We called it Cork-screw Hall in your father's day! The finest cellar in America, and the finest company, sir!"

I bowed in respectful appreciation of the compliments.

Here was an awkward and sorry business. The thought of the youngster above worried me anew. Not that I had minded telling Colonel Hallet that I was not married; but if he should chance to know little Miss Strayling, and if he should catch a glimpse of her, it must be very fatal to her.

"Yes, yes," said he, "you'll be taking your pretty wife to Cock-crow Hall. And then you'll go to the war—ah, yes—like every Brooke who ever lived!—yes, yes; yours is a fighting race, Joshua."

"Yours, also, Colonel Hallet."

"Surely, surely, sir. Your father and I saw it through in the grand old days—in the great days of great deeds and great gentlemen. . . . His Excellency always condescended to notice us with marked kindness when the Cincinnati met."

He wrung my hand again and again, saying that he was breakfasting with an old crony on Chatham Street and must be going, but otherwise would have been honoured by our company at breakfast. Later he hoped to offer himself the honour of waiting upon my wife at Cock-crow Hall.

"Joshua," said he, "God bless you both and fill your lives with many babies!"

I bowed the lower to hide my smile.

Finally rid of him, and considerably disturbed in mind, I continued on toward the coffee room.

But here I was obliged to await my turn, for it was crowded. In fact, there was no getting into the coffee room at all. So a waiter took my name for the breakfast room; and I seated myself in the lobby and looked about me with much curiosity until invited to a table.

The City Hotel was thronged with soldiers. Citizens and militia officers filled the corridors, bar, coffee room, and the breakfast room where, presently, I also commanded coffee. There were cavalry officers in scarlet jackets and high gilt-spurred boots; others in blue jackets and buckskin breeches. There were rifle officers wearing light green tunics and skin-tight white pants. Here and there I noticed naval officers in chin-chokers and high collared blue coats heavy with glittering epaulettes and gold galloon.

Every one of these gorgeous warriors was reading a morning newspaper. So I bought one; and I read all about the arrival of the *Wild-cat,* privateer, the evening before; and all about her gay and profitable career in the English Channel.

There was, also, much in the paper concerning Captains Hull and Porter; and now I first learned about the capture of the British frigate *Guerriere* by our frigate *Constitution,* and of the victorious battle between our *Essex* and the British warship *Alert.*

The news began to go to my head and give me vainglorious emotions. But in the coffee room and bar I discovered back files of *The Commercial Advertiser* and *Evening Post;* and from these I learned another and mortifying story—all about the real situation in America—how wretchedly unprepared we were on land and sea to face the fury of old England—how utterly divided we were in council and opinion concerning this war—differing so violently among ourselves that it seemed as though the Union must be torn to pieces even before the British lion could get his teeth well into us.

I learned with growing disgust that New England was infamously disloyal to the United States—that Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut refused to furnish either troops or arms to the Federal Government; that New Jersey, angry and reproachful, grudgingly obeyed the National call to arms; that New York—God bless her—would fight to the bitter end although she preferred to fight France first; and that Pennsylvania and the South and the West stood sturdily by Government.

I learned that our little regular army was to be increased eight fold; that Mr. Madison, our President, had called out 100,000 militia, assigning to each state its quota. And, with inexpressible amazement, I learned that our Western and Northern frontiers had been scenes of cowardice, imbecility, and disaster beyond parallel; that our towns had been surrendered and our armies made prisoners at Detroit and Queenstown; that officers had flinched and militia had run; that

blackest disgrace had overwhelmed all our land forces in their invasion of Canada; that our generals were either prisoners or under arrest, or dismissed from the service.

And also I learned that six thousand painted savages were burning, plundering, and murdering their way eastward along our borders from the rapids of the Miami to Niagara Falls.

Never before in all my life had news so amazed and sickened me. I couldn't finish my cigar. The air of the bar nauseated me. My God, were we really such a nation of poltroons?

Then I thought of our pitifully small navy—eight frigates and twelve sloops—facing the overwhelmingly magnificent navy of England—great battleships of the line, huge seventy-fours and frigates by the hundreds—a thousand and sixty ships of war manned and armed by men who had ruled the oceans since England became a nation!

And I remembered that gallant little squadron we passed at sea, heading toward these thousand hostile ships. And I seemed to hear again the thin, wind-blown music of their fifes and drums playing "Yankee Doodle," as one by one they stood out to sea—three lonely frigates and a little sloop—to brave the mighty armament of England!

I went out through the crowded lobby of the hotel and gazed upon Broadway.

Of New York's hundred thousand citizens, every one o' them seemed to be abroad in the brilliant autumn

weather; throngs moving up Broadway, throngs passing down Broadway; crowds in the park by the beautiful marble City Hall; people swarming along St. Paul's and Trinity; eastward through scores of streets leading toward the East River; westward through endless streets running down toward the North River.

The foliage in the park had turned to glowing October tints—like little Miss Strayling's hair—under a sky of deepest blue. And all New York was afoot, or in hacks or private vehicles, or a-horse.

Indeed, the clatter of horsemen resounded everywhere, and everywhere sober citizens and doughty officers were riding to take the morning air.

Never anywhere—not even in Paris—had I beheld such a lively riot of military movement and gay colour. Officers of mounted militia rode in scarlet and buff, with collars, cuffs, and "wings" of black; staff officers wore dark blue lined with white, scarlet facings, and white breeches; the cavalry wore jackets of blue and silver, or of dark green with black facings, white vests and breeches, top boots, and leather helmets faced with gold from which a shock of black or scarlet horsehair fell about the shoulders.

Almost all officers wore the chapeau with its cockade and brilliant plume—the points of the chapeau being parallel with the epauletted shoulders, and the black cockade centered by a gold eagle.

Everywhere I noticed, with rising astonishment, details of extravagance odd to me who had so long been accustomed to the smart and soldierly details of British

uniforms. Here, among our militia, volunteers, and regulars, fashions seemed to be inspired by the gaudy, theatrical uniforms of Bonaparte's soldiery; everywhere gold bullion, gold lace, gold and silver embroidery, bell-buttons, tall feathers extravagantly French. I never had beheld so many buttons. Or so many field officers; or so many epaulettes. What a very rainbow! What an aurora borealis!

My God, I never saw so many stars on collars—so many tall, gilt-spurred boots, and yellow sashes, and plumes—feathers, feathers everywhere—white, white and green, white and scarlet, white and blue!—or so many long, straight, yellow-hilted swords—curved sabres seeming to be rare excepting in the cavalry and one or two staff departments.

Such a sunburst was to be beheld nowhere on earth except in Bonaparte's Imperial Paris.

I wondered if these were specimens of that wretched soldiery which had refused to cross the river at Queenstown Heights? If these dapper officers were of the same kidney as those who fled at Lewiston Landing?

Were yonder Birds o' Paradise really hatched out by our loyal and courageous Revolutionary mothers? Had all this befeathered poultry been fathered by our gaunt, powder-blackened sires?

As I gazed upon all this prancing military trumpery I felt ashamed. The recollection of what I had just read in the back files of the New York newspapers made me impatient to go home and prepare to join in this damned war as soon as possible.

As I turned to enter the hotel I remembered the youngster upstairs. What would happen to her if some friend of her family should discover her here masquerading as somebody's wife?

I determined to be involved in no such point of honour. So I went upstairs and rapped upon her door, and, bidden to enter, discovered her tying on a primrose coloured hat before her glass.

She glanced at me absently, then gazed at herself in the mirror.

"Do you like it?" she inquired, re-tying the pale yellow ribbons under her chin and curling the tendrils of bright hair over both cheeks. "I bought it in Paris," she added, smiling at her own reflected face.

"Very pretty," said I, "—and what do you propose to do next, ma'am?"

"Shall we promenade?" she suggested, preoccupied with her curls which, one by one, she was winding about her forefinger.

"I've concluded," said I, "that you'd better go home immediately."

At that she swung around upon her chair, letting fall both hands with a childish gesture wholly helpless.

"Home!" she repeated, "oh, lord, he really is going to desert me!" And hung her head.

"Well, what on earth did you expect to do when you left England, ma'am? Reside permanently with me?"

She glanced up at me, lifting her grey eyes but

not her lowered head—which was a way with her, and would have ruined me had I been of a sentimental breed.

"You seem out o' humour," said she sorrowfully. "What ails you, sir?"

Said I, "For one thing, I have just learned that the war goes very badly for us."

She seemed astonished at that.

"Further," said I, "half an hour ago an old gentleman of my acquaintance discovered our names on the hotel register, and wished me joy of my marriage and many children!"

That seemed to horrify her, for she flung up her arms in wild appeal. But it seemed to be an appeal to the god of laughter; and her slender body fairly swayed with it.

When she had recovered a little she asked me whether I had been much frightened at the prospect. Then she stood up and spread her delicately embroidered skirts to show me the flowery pattern of the daffodil gown she had chosen in Paris. Lord, she was a pretty thing!

But, seeing how sober had become my face, she came over to me and, placing both hands very lightly on my elbows, looked at me with charming confidence and understanding:

"You really are concerned for me," said she. "Let us go, then, at once, and face my awful granddad."

"Do you wish me to go with you?"

"I require a little moral support, do I not, sir?"

"But what am I to say to your peppery ancestor?"

"Nothing. Merely look moral—even if you are not——"

She was laughing again, now, and so was I, and vastly relieved.

"You're a good youngster," said I.

"You *did* once offer me your left hand!"

"In jest——"

"This dear Mr. Brooke," she murmured, "—he shoots his fellow rakes in duels, but he is very moral to wandering youngsters."

"You'd better be careful, you minx!"

"I am, sir. Extremely. And I know my moral Mr. Brooke——"

At that I took her rather violently into my arms and kissed her mouth.

"Oh, please," said she with charming equanimity, "I have a new gown on, and have just made up my mouth."

So I loosed her waist and she smoothed her gown and sat down before the glass to repair damage with lip red and iris white.

Presently she was ready to draw on her gloves and close her beaded reticule; and she gave me a sidelong glance of sheerest malice as we went out.

At the hotel door she took my arm very sedately and we strolled up Broadway and out across the park toward the City Hall.

Everything seemed to divert and delight her—the sunshine through yellowing foliage of poplar, maple,

and catalpa; the high clock-tower with its figure of Justice atop; the crowds of people, the brilliant uniforms afoot and a-horse.

Rub-a-dub-dub! Clash! Bang! The scarlet tunics of a foot artillery band filled Chatham Street; drums, bugles, cymbals, and fifes thundered out "The President's March." Behind, rank after rank, towered the tall, plumed, brass-set shakos of the artillery; mounted officers pranced; a disorderly rabble of barefoot urchins preceded the parade, yelling.

We waited for this noisy pageant to pass, then with her slender arm resting lightly on mine we crossed decorously into Chatham Street—the most elegant and fashionable district for private residences in all New York.

And presently, straight up the stoop of the handsomest house on the street danced my reckless youngster, with a flip of her blue-flowered gown and a click of slim, high heels.

"Are you afraid?" said I.

"I never was afraid of anything in my life, sir."

"Is this where you live?"

"I did once," said she, "but I may be roofless in a few minutes."

I bade her cheer up, and gave the bell a discreet tug. Presently a black servant, in blazing red livery and a white tie-wig, opened the door.

"Lan's sakes, Miss Naïa," he gasped, rolling astonished eyes, "wha' fo' is you come home su'prisin' yuh

folks lak' you wuz de blessed, blinkin' ghos' of yo'se'f, ma'am?"

"Oh, Saul, I've done it this time! I've run away from school! Where's my granddaddy?"

"A-eatin' of his brekfus' in de liberry, ma'am. Oh, blazin' glory! Oh, lawzy me, what he gwine say when he see yuh walk in dat-a-way?"

"I don't know, Saul——" She took hold of my sleeve with a gay but rather desperate smile.

"Anyhow, *you'll* stick by me, won't you?" she whispered. And, to the demoralized old Negro: "I hope granddad is alone. Is he, Saul?"

"Yaas'm, 'scusin' de ole Kunnel——"

"Oh, lord, is the Colonel here, too?"

"Yaas'm. He done come to brekfus', ma'am——"

"Well, it can't be helped," said she, taking tighter hold of my sleeve and pulling me through a dim, crimson drawing-room toward an oval library full of sunshine.

A wood fire burned there and, near it, two old gentlemen sat comfortably at breakfast—one small and florid, wearing a truculent queue and a flowered dressing gown; his companion—good God!—was no other than old Peter Hallet who had just wished me joy of my marriage!

They looked up mildly at the interruption; then an incredulous expression altered and distorted the features of the little old gentleman in the flowered dressing gown.

"Granddaddy," said little Miss Strayling, "I'm here. Are you going to be angry?"

At the sound of her voice, corroborating what his pop eyes had refused to believe, her grandfather's congested features became brightly infuriated.

"I'm afraid," said she, "that you *are* going to be angry——"

"*Going* to be!" he shouted; "damnation! I *am!* What the devil are you doing in New York!"

"I shall have to confess, dear grandfather, that I eloped from school——" Here she caught Peter Hallet's astonished eye and smiled a confused smile: "Oh, how do you do, Colonel Hallet!" Then, to her grandfather—"It was with a different gentleman I eloped, not with this one, whom I beg permission to introduce to you——"

"In God's name," roared her grandfather, "how many gentlemen *have* you eloped with?"

But Colonel Hallet laid a restraining hand on him:

"I saw their names on the register of the City Hotel this morning," said he, "but had no slightest idea that it was your granddaughter whom my young friend has married——"

"He hasn't! We're *not* married," protested little Miss Strayling with fatal candour.

For one awful moment the two old gentlemen stared at us.

"Sir," said I to her grandfather, "I am distressingly aware that all this has a most unfortunate and guilty appearance, but——"

He got to his feet, glaring at me out of convulsed features, and his pig-tail on end with wrath.

"You scoundrel," said he, "if you don't marry her instantly I'll have satisfaction of you!"

"Sir," said I, annoyed, "that might suit me if you were a little younger——"

"I may be too old for swords," he shouted, "but I can still sight a horse-pistol! Are you going to marry her or not, you rake!"

"Oh, granddad," she cried, "he doesn't have to——"

"Well, by God, who is this fellow, then, who writes you down in a hotel register as his wife!"

"He's just—just a k-kind and respectable gentleman I met——"

"So you are become common property? So *that's* what you've learned at school in France—to take any lover at hazard when it suits you——"

"Oh, lord," said she, "the few I've had have done me no harm! If only you would listen to me a moment——"

"Take her away!" he said passionately; "take her out o' my sight and out o' my house! She was born a vixen and she'll die a minx! She's bedevilled every two-legged man she ever looked at! She was a coquette in her cradle; and at ten she made eyes at the milkman; she kept winking at the bishop when he confirmed her; she flirted with her bald-headed music master; she's led dozens of young gentlemen as many devil's dances. God alone knows how my son begat such a jade! But I'm done with her. She has a for-

tune of her own. Let her go to the devil and squander it!"

There was a deathly silence. I had a sickly feeling in my stomach's pit. But, noblesse oblige!

"Sir," said I, "if my marrying your granddaughter would reinstall her in your respect and affections——"

"I *won't!*" she said.

"You shall!" he roared. "If he offers you reparation you shall marry him at once!"

"He has nothing to repair," said she. "I *won't* marry him. I told him I wouldn't. I'd rather kill myself! I'd rather even be his mistress——"

"Take away that harlot!" thundered her grandfather.

She became a little pale: "I am not what you say," said she. "But I'll go if you want me to."

A terrible silence; then I drew her arm through mine:

"There is nothing more to be done here," said I calmly.

I bowed; she curtsied, deathly pale. In stony silence we departed through the dim, crimson drawing-room, down the stoop, and walked back across the park to our hotel where we slowly mounted to our rooms.

"What," said she, quite calmly, "am I to do now, Mr. Brooke?"

"Would you care to marry me?"

"No, thank you."

"Have you any relatives to whom you could go?"

She shook her head.

"No friends?"

"None sufficiently intimate, sir."

"Would you care to come with me to Cock-crow Hall?"

"Yes, if you please."

So I jerked the bell-rope savagely and commanded a travelling coach and four; and had our luggage stowed aboard it. Then I settled our account at the desk.

When the travelling coach arrived from the mews we got into it and started up Broadway, both of us very silent, staring out at the city through which we jolted until the unpaved country road replaced the city pavements, and away trotted our horses along the dusty Broadway road, and, through Sandy Lane, to the Bloomingdale road.

Her face was serene; she seemed to regret Vauxhall Gardens as much as anything.

"The dreadful things my grandfather said about me are true," she remarked, "—except about being a harlot. It's been just one fatal pickle after another. There seems to be a devil in me, for which I am very sorry."

I listened sulkily but said nothing.

The King's Bridge road swings to the west at the crossing of the Middle Road and Eastern Post Road, and thence continues on toward McGowan's Pass. I gazed sullenly upon the familiar countryside.

"It is kind of you not to abandon me," said she, looking at me sideways.

We rolled on through open country, past handsome estates, cultivated gardens, and stubble fields and patches of woods. And I was wondering what the devil was to be done with this wild youngster. Every added hour in my company might have been fatal to her had she not already completely done for herself.

We passed the new fortifications at McGowan's where artillery was in camp, and continued through Harlem Lane and Manhattanville.

When finally we pulled in at Yonkers we descended and ate cold cuts, salad, and ice cream at an ordinary called The Philipse Arms. She had, apparently, recovered her spirits; seemed vastly diverted by this new adventure; went with me to see our horses changed; fed crusts to a parcel of ducks in a dirty puddle.

But now it was time to embark again; we turned eastward from the Dobbs Ferry road, and, about four o'clock, crossed a bridge over the brook which flows through my own domain of Cock-crow Hall.

Of course I supposed that my arrival would be utterly unexpected; and I was astonished when my old lodge-keeper, Jerry Dunn, who opened the gates for us, came a-grinning to the coach window to tell me that two cavalry officers had called about noon, with a message to me from the Governor of New York; and that they seemed surprised and uneasy to learn that I had not yet arrived at Cock-crow Hall.

"What message did they leave, Jerry?" I asked.

"Why, sir, they said they belonged to Colonel Odell's regiment—which I know is yours, sir."

"What did they say?"

"They told me that your ship had already come in, and that the Governor knew it and had sent them here with an important message for you regarding your commission."

"Did they say they would return?"

"They said they would call again later today, sir; but I have not seen them so far."

"Very well," said I, "open the gates to them whenever they arrive."

We had a quarter of a mile, yet, to drive, through the curving avenue of silver maples.

My spirits rose rapidly at prospect of immediate service, and I smiled at the youngster beside me and gazed gaily about me at the fertile fields and stately woods of Cock-crow Hall.

"This is very beautiful," said little Miss Strayling to me. "Have you a spare horse in your stables for me, Mr. Brooke?"

"Evidently," said I, laughing, "you mean to remain for a visit. Yes, I have a horse to suit you, dearest wife."

"We will ride," said she. "I have a London habit in my trunk, chosen by Lady Vulper, and copied from one which Mrs. Robinson wears."

We now came in sight of the lawns and the square, many-chimneyed mansion of grey stone called Cock-crow Hall, with its barns, stables and quarters. On

the peak of the pointed and dormered roof a high weather-vane glittered, fashioned like a gilded game-cock, crowing for victory.

There was a ladder on the roof where workmen had been mending the slates which framed two bull's-eye dormer windows. The wooden shutters below seemed to be closed.

"Cock-crow Hall was a famous place for cock-fighting in colonial days," said I. "If it were not for this war I'd have leisure to revive it."

"Yes," said she, "we must all go to the war—Beau and Belle, Rake and Baggage, and even our game-cocks and their loving pullets——"

"Oh, no," said I, laughing, "*we* do the fighting and *you* do the loving!"

"I don't know how."

"Study the art in books against my return."

"Would you really abandon me after all we have endured together, sir?"

"My God, ma'am, every time I set one foot before the other you tell me I abandon you!"

"If you go to the war and leave me here, you abandon me, don't you?"

"Nevertheless, I must go to the war, ma'am."

"I've never seen a war—except that one last night."

"Pray heaven you never will, then."

"All the same," she murmured, "I go to the war in your company or I go alone. So take your choice."

I laughed as I helped her to descend from the coach; and turned to greet my major-domo, Skerret,

in his yellow-barred waistcoat and long, old-fashioned livery surtout. Behind him I saw my housekeeper, Mrs. Skerret, a new footman, new housemaids, and an unfamiliar lackey.

"Ah, Skerret," said I, heartily, "I see you've already collected new servants against my arrival—though how the devil the news got here before I did I can't quite make out."

I shook hands with him and with Mrs. Skerret and nodded smilingly to the bobbing and curtseying group behind them.

I did not quite like the appearance of my new valet, with his powerful frame, heavy features, and gaunt eyes. He had solicited the office, it seemed, but a few hours before our arrival. But I had something more important to consider.

For an instant I hesitated, but there was no use pretending to relationship with this pretty creature beside me, because I was the last of my race and everybody knew it. Also, I knew that any other than a lawful status would render my youngster's sojourn at Cock-crow Hall an endless mortification to her.

"I am confident," said I to Mrs. Skerret, "that you all will welcome the new mistress of Cock-crow Hall with every sentiment of duty, affection, and obedience; and that my lady may enjoy the happiest confidence in your zeal and loyalty."

Little Miss Strayling seemed astounded. They came, one by one, led by Skerret, to bob and scrape and curtsey to my lady.

Then I gave her my hand and led her into the hall hung with fox masks and pads and whips and portraits of noble game-cocks which had died for the glory of Cock-crow Hall.

Up the polished stairway I conducted her, with never a word from her; and into the parlour of the blue bedroom suite which faced to the west and south.

Alone, standing there in the late afternoon sunshine, she looked up at me out of disturbed grey eyes.

"It would have been no falsehood of yours," said she, "had you let them suppose me to be your mistress. Why did you lie, sir?"

"Nobody except your grandfather and Peter Hallet knows we are not married," said I. "Let the rest of the world believe us to be husband and wife."

"I'd rather they believed the other than have you lie about it."

"Let it alone," said I sharply. "The falsehood is mine, anyway, and none of your affair. And I don't suppose you stupid enough to mortify me by denying it!"

She flushed painfully. "You are somewhat rough with me, sir. Be at ease; I shall not contradict you to put you to further shame in your own house."

I said: "To spare a woman a man may lie without shame, ma'am, who would not lie to spare himself."

She flushed more deeply at that; placed an impulsive hand on my sleeve.

"*Dear* Mr. Brooke," said she with her lovely, childish smile.

I don't know exactly what it was that gave my train of thought a strange and sudden twist into a new and amazing channel. But it came to me of a sudden—why the devil should I not marry her?

I said to her: "I told your violent ancestor that I stood ready to marry you. And I will, if you wish."

"Why marry me?" said she.

"Well, it would make matters easier. And Cockcrow Hall should have a mistress sooner or later anyway. Shall we marry, ma'am?"

She gave me a straight look and a long one.

"No," said she; "there is no love between us. A looser bond—with love—is more respectable."

"More respectable than marriage, ma'am?" said I, astonished.

"More respectable than a loveless marriage. . . . Or so it seems to me."

She laughed, turned with a whirl of her primrose skirt and click of high heels on the parquet, and moved lightly about, inspecting her new abode.

"And you?" she asked me over her shoulder, "—where do you reside, sir?"

"My old quarters are across the corridor."

At that moment her trunks and boxes were fetched up, and I had them set in a row along the wall, and ordered mine to be carried to my own rooms.

Her maid, a newcomer who looked like a Westchester Dutch girl, fetched out a tin bath for her and, kneeling, fell to unstrapping and unlocking her boxes and valises.

I smiled at my tranquil youngster, and she smiled at me; and presently I went across to my own quarters where a new valet was fetching water for my bath.

I gave him keys—to everything except the British despatch pouch—and he laid out fresh evening clothing and brand new Hessians for me, and very soon I was bathed and shaved and arranging my starched neckcloth in highest spirits, contented to be at home again after three long years, and gaily whistling the air of an old Continental army song which had been a favourite of my father's.

Out across the corridor I stepped; the youngster was dressed and ready—my God, how lovely in her soft French evening gown that revealed the firm, plump neck and shoulders and, partly, the bosom so exquisitely immature.

Her silvery slippers of a child, narrow as arrows, kept dainty pace with my brand new Hessians as we descended the stairs, her finger-tips resting on my palm.

Dinner waited. Skerret, in a clean yellow and silver livery with chains, directed our two waiters who seemed willing enough but had haymakers' knuckles and two sorry pairs of legs which had been fashioned by God to follow furrows.

We had claret and a Westchester country wine. She scarcely tasted either.

Dusk had fallen when we left the table. The night air had turned frosty; fires burned in library and draw-

ing-room. She chose the former; and there we seated ourselves with our cakes and sherry and port, and a church-warden for me full of fragrant Virginia fine-cut.

She was perfectly at her ease. Sometimes she read a little from a book chosen at random from the shelves; sometimes she lay back in her great Queen Anne chair and gossiped with me, recalling, almost hour by hour, the six weeks of our acquaintance, gaily marvelling at the battle of the night before, and happy that all had now led to this; and vowed that nobody in the world would believe it to be as innocent as it had been from the very beginning.

"And still is," said she, nibbling a macaroon dipped in ruby port.

"So far," said I.

"And to the end of the chapter, sir."

"The book of life has many chapters, ma'am."

She laughed. "Too late, now, for any doubt, sir, regarding the story's end."

She tasted her wine, daintily. "Life," said she, "is not a book; it is random music lacking an air. We have run the entire gamut of the piano in search of it; we've swept every string of the harp in quest of it. All harmonies we have explored and sounded. There remains no unknown chord to surprise us; no harmony enchanting enough to seduce us to further search. Life is only music without an air; and we know it, you and I."

I made no answer where I lay watching her and ad-

miring her whimsical philosophy and the engaging picture she made lying there in the great wing-chair by the fire.

The hours seemed to go very swiftly. Skerret came to learn our pleasure. I sent him off to bed and bade him dismiss the servants.

We gossiped and gossiped by the fire. The silvery tones of the mantel clock seemed to be continually ringing through the candle light, so lightly time flew with this youngster there in the great wing-chair by the fire.

I don't know what hour it might have been when we heard a sudden clatter of horses on the gravel drive outside.

I rose and stepped to the window, and saw, in the light of the porch lantern, four cavalry officers in the uniform of my militia regiment, followed by two troopers and a led-horse. The officers were swathed in their long, blue riding mantles.

"Naïa!" I cried gaily, "I lay you two to nothing that they carry a captain's commission and instant marching orders for me from our Governor!"

Her face was expressionless and seemed to have lost colour. We watched the officers dismount and fling their bridles to the two troopers.

Then, as I had sent all servants to bed, I went out, unchained and opened the great door, and bade the gentlemen welcome.

They followed me, spurs and sabres clanking, to

the fire-lit library, and there they named themselves one by one, with every ceremony and politeness; and, one by one, in turn, I presented them to the mistress of Cock-crow Hall.

I had been away three years, and these were new faces to me—three subalterns and a lieutenant—all gentlemen of quality at first glance—from the Queens and Suffolk troops they said, and lately transferred from Captain Bogart's battery of Flying Artillery—which explained their perfectly new uniforms.

They were charming young men, graceful, courteous, and seemed full of spirit and a kind of subdued excitement which instantly convinced me that my regiment had received its marching orders and that the led-horse was for me.

So my youngster and I fetched decanters and glasses from the sideboard, and what biscuits and little cakes remained.

Then I opened the sealed packet which their lieutenant had brought to me, and read the first paper with much pleasure:

Headquarters, City of New York,
21st October, 1812.

The Commander-in-Chief is pleased to assign and brevet Joshua Brooke as Captain in the new Westchester troop of light cavalry attached to the 2nd New York Regiment of Light Dragoons, Lieutenant-Colonel Jacob Odell, third cavalry brigade, Brig.-Gen'l Aquila Giles commanding.

By order of the Commander-in-Chief,
R. MACOMB, AIDE-DE-CAMP.

Flushed with pleasure I turned to the lieutenant who had given me my commission. He merely smiled and begged me to read the other paper very carefully.

So, while they were enjoying their wine and, with their gay voices and my youngster's pretty laughter in their ears, I unsealed and unfolded the remaining paper; and read:

Make no movement and no outcry, Mr. Brooke, or you die as you read this warning!

At the same instant I heard Naïa Strayling saying in a bewildered voice: "What is the matter, gentlemen——"

With a jerk my head went up; I was looking at the muzzles of four horse-pistols.

CHAPTER III

A FLYING COURT

"BETTER make an end of him," said somebody behind me. I heard him cock his pistol and felt the cold muzzle touching the back of my neck.

Evidently they were trying to frighten me. I was too disgusted even to turn around.

Nevertheless, here was a pretty kettle of fish! Caught in my own house by a parcel of enemy agents disguised in the uniform of my own regiment of militia cavalry! What humiliation!

I watched their pretended lieutenant's eyes squinting at me over his heavy horse-pistol; all these armed men were now rising, surrounding me, ringing me with levelled weapons.

Suddenly Naïa Strayling sprang to her feet only to be flung back upon her chair. One of them whipped off her scarf and tied it tightly across her parted lips.

"No outcry, madam!" came the harsh warning.

Then, with unspeakable annoyance, I saw my new valet enter the room, carrying the British despatch pouch. What an amazing trap had I sauntered into!

Yet, even now I failed to appreciate the gravity of my predicament; and the sight of Prinney's despatch pouch grimly amused me. If that was what they were after they had arrived too late.

"This is a clumsy comedy," said I; "you miss your aim, gentlemen!"

"*You* miss yours," came a low voice.

"You will discover," said I, "that I have hit my target."

"You will discover," said he, "that we have hit *ours*."

"You think so?"

"And so shall you, Mr. Brooke; your express messenger was shot out of his saddle last night, and the papers he carried have already convicted you without a court!"

Here was an element more sinister than I had expected in this theatrical masquerading. I heard my ex-valet's guarded voice suggesting that my affair should be concluded without further ceremony. Somebody behind me remarked that there was a decent procedure to be observed in all such matters.

Incredulous, I rose from the chair, but their pistols, jabbing my body, held me where I stood.

"Gentlemen," said I, "pray loosen the scarf from my wife's lips. I give you my word of honour that she will make no outcry——"

"You had better concern yourself with your own business," said their lieutenant; "we shall take every care of your wife."

"I hardly suppose," said I, "that you mean to harm her."

My ex-valet drew nearer and stared at me with an unfeigned ferocity that amazed me.

"You damned spy," he said, "you not only stole despatches written in British military cipher, but you de-coded them and sent them by express to your Government in Washington. And now we are going to destroy you."

A kind of stunned numbness invaded me for a moment. Here it was at last—that cursed card which all gamblers dread—the ominous Queen of Spades. Death!

Instantly my mind became clear again. I understood, now, what all this meant. I realized I was no better than a dead man, and had, already, been sentenced by this flying court.

Somebody asked me if I had anything to say. In a low voice I bade them shoot and be damned.

My ex-valet told them that they might safely lock us up in my wife's bedroom where the bell-rope had been cut and the windows and shutters nailed fast. He added to me: "Get along, you cursed spy!"

The icy muzzle of somebody's pistol against the back of my neck permitted no argument. Two of them took hold of my poor youngster and pulled her to her feet, which enraged me.

"My wife has nothing to do with this," said I sharply; "take your filthy hands from her person!"

As I spoke she stepped calmly to my side and passed her arm through mine without a tremor. Slowly, silently, we mounted the stairs.

When we arrived before her bedroom door, their

lieutenant untwisted the scarf tied across her lips and raised a flaring candle so that the ruddy light of it illumined her pallid face.

"Madam," said he harshly, "it was *you* who stole the despatches at Thanes Court and fetched them to your husband at Faithness!"

Before I could deny it she had nodded.

"Did you also aid your husband to de-code the cipher?"

"No!" I cried.

"Yes," said she, "I helped him."

At that the heavy features of my pretended valet darkened with fury:

"By God, madam," he blurted out, "you're as damned a spy as any other and ought to suffer according!"

She flung up her proud little head and her pallor faded in the bright resentment which swept her face.

"Be at pains, my good man, to speak respectfully when you address your betters," said she.

Somebody whispered: "If she knows what her husband knows we can't let her go."

"She ought to hang," muttered my valet.

Another said aloud: "You frighten her with your hanging talk."

"I am not frightened," said she tremulously.

Their lieutenant stepped toward me, shouldered me into the bedroom, pushed the dauntless youngster after me, and set a lighted candle on her dressing table.

"Yours," said he to me, "is plainly a hanging matter. You wove your own rope. Here is no case for a military court, or even for drum-head.

"You stole the military cipher belonging to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent. You deserved to be destroyed instantly; yet, we have given you a flying court."

He drew the bedroom key from the inside and thrust it into the outside keyhole.

"You have fifteen minutes," said he, "to arrange your affairs with your wife and reckon with your Creator."

When the door was closed and locked upon us I turned to look at my unhappy youngster; but she was already at the window and striving to raise the sash with all her desperate, slender strength.

"No use," she breathed brokenly, as I joined her; "there's nothing to be done here!"

I looked in vain for the bell-rope. It had been entirely cut away. But, high up on the wall, my desperate gaze fell upon one of the bull's-eye dormers set with a hinged pane of glass. Escape lay that way if we could reach it. We piled up every stick of furniture in the room beneath it—table, chests, chairs. It was useless. There was nothing to cling to.

And, cruelly adding to our exasperation, we could see, through the dormer, against the starlit sky, the shadow of a ladder where workmen had been repairing the roof.

"The chimney!" she whispered, "can you climb it?"

I ran to it, entered the great fireplace, mounted both andirons, and attempted the ascent. The flue was too narrow for my shoulders.

In desperation I threw off coat, waistcoat and shirt and tried again. My shoulders would not pass. As I dropped to the hearth and faced her in the candle light she seemed to lose courage:

"Oh, God," she whimpered, "they mean to murder you!"

"But not you, ma'am. Calm yourself."

Bleeding, blotched with soot, I looked up desperately again at the high dormer overhead, and saw the shadowy ladder athwart the stars.

A metallic sound behind me made me turn. She had been attempting the chimney, and was just emerging from the fireplace, black with soot.

"My clothing catches," she panted; "I can do it, I think, if I undress and smear myself with ointment."

She ran to her dressing table where her maid had arranged a wilderness of crystal jars and flasks. In an instant she was back again with her cosmetics.

"Blow out the candle," she said breathlessly, "—this is no pretty thing I do, God knows——"

A dry sob checked her. In total darkness I heard her strip herself and rub her naked body with the slippery, scented ointments. And all the while she was whimpering drearily to herself, "Oh, God, they mean to murder him! Oh, hurry—hurry—hurry——"

I stepped backward from the hearth.

"Where are you?" she breathed. Her groping fin-

gers brushed me, pushed me aside; I heard a velvet tread cross the floor; the scrape of iron.

"Open the bull's-eye and lower the ladder," I whispered.

"I understand."

Time tortured me with its every second as I stood listening to the sound of her supple body rustling like a fluttering swallow in the chimney.

Higher, fainter came the sound. Then silence.

As I stood under the bull's-eye, looking up, listening, I seemed to hear the stealthy step of Death outside the door.

Suddenly, high against the stars, I saw a slender shadow-shape; the bull's-eye creaked, swung open; down slipped the ladder, grounding at my feet.

At the same instant I heard her guarded voice from above: "I'm cold; bring me something to cover me."

I snatched a blanket from the bed, ran up the ladder, thrust the blanket through to her, and stepped out onto the leads.

Then I drew up the ladder, carried it along the rail to the east portico, lowered it to the lawn.

She descended first, clutching her blanket to her throat; I followed swiftly.

On the dim, wet grass I swathed her more closely in the blanket, swept her up into my arms and ran as though all hell were at my heels, feeling her weight no more than a clinging snowflake.

In a hemlock grove I stopped to look back. The bull's-eye was beginning to gleam with ruddy light; and

I knew that they were entering the empty bedroom to make an end of me.

"I tire you," said she, her voice muffled by the blanket. "Set me down and save yourself; I'll try to follow you——"

"Look yonder," said I.

She raised her head and looked; and shivered in my arms.

"Set me down," she pleaded; "yours is the greater danger——"

"There is blood on your knees and feet——"

"A chimney scratch——"

"Lie quiet, you dauntless child," said I; "we are safe here. . . . And I am passionately your servant who, in this hour, owe my life to your resourceful wit and courage——"

"Oh, lord—" She buried her face in her blanket a moment; then, "Oh, lord," said she, "he doesn't know that I am frightened out of my wits, and that my legs are still begging me to run!"

She raised her head from my shoulder again and gazed at the house.

"Look yonder," she whispered; "they are coming out of the front door and are mounting their horses!"

"They mean to run for it!" said I.

"They might come hunting us, Mr. Brooke!"

"They dare not. If they are caught they hang."

They had left the front door wide open; candles blazed in the hall. A bright light streamed out upon them where they were tightening girths and getting

into their saddles. One horseman left the group and, with lifted pistol, cantered entirely around the house as though in savage quest of us. But when again he joined the main group, all gathered bridle, swung horses, and went off at a lively scamper across the foggy grass. And I was convinced that we were rid o' them for the night at least.

But I had no mind to let that murderous crew ride off unpunished.

"Now," said I, "let us see what can be done about this monstrous business of hanging honest people by the neck in their own homes!"

And, with my youngster in my arms, I ran for the house. The front door gaped wide; I set her upon the stairs, seized the bell-rope and rang it violently, filling the house with a most alarming noise.

Up the stairs fled my poor youngster, in her blanket, and had vanished before old Skerret came a-running in his shirt and night-cap.

Seeing me all clotted with blood and soot, he begged in trembling tones to know if I had been murdered in my bed.

"Damned near it," said I cheerily. "Rout out the stable lads and grooms. Load what pistols and fowling pieces you can find. Tell 'em to saddle and fetch horses for all who can ride!"

Little Miss Strayling came out on the landing in her blanket: "Skerret," she called, "fetch me Mr. Brooke's hunting clothes!"

It touched me deeply to think that the child wished

to look them over before I wore them. I kissed my hand to her and she did the like to me as she fled to her room.

I was already halfway upstairs, but called back to Skerret to send a maid to my lady. Then I entered my own room, dowsed head and body; washed my person free of soot and blood, dressed in a passion of impatience. Skerret lagged with my clothes so I dressed in others; and, booted and spurred, rapped on Naïa's door.

I supposed she would be all nervous, lax, and pale from fatigue and shock.

She flung open her door, flushed, eager, expectant—a strange, laughable little figure!—for she had on my spurred boots and breeches and scarlet coat for fox hunting, and had pulled the black velvet cap over her chestnut hair till it covered her ears.

"What do you mean to do?" I asked, astonished.

"I told Skerret to fetch me a good fast horse——"

"Where do you think you're going at five in the morning?"

"I'm going with you," said she with that breathless smile of hers which lent to her a certain recklessness that charmed.

"What folly! If we come up with those rascals there'll be a fight! Do you suppose I would permit you to stand their fire?"

"Please let me ride with you——"

"You can't go!"

She hung her head and fell to fiddling with her whip

and gloves—then she gave me one of her melting, upward glances out of forlorn grey eyes.

"You can't go," I repeated. "I'll take no chance of your being shot."

But hers was a mind of infinite resource.

"Suppose," said she, "they return and discover me alone here. And murder me."

I had not considered that and it startled me.

For an instant my wavering gaze met hers triumphant.

"Wait—" I began; but she sprang past me and clattered down the stairs in boots too big for her, and hunting coat a-trail; and I heard her outside on the porch calling joyously for her horse and cracking her hunting whip with happy impatience.

As I descended the stairs and walked out to the mounting block, her mare was brought around and I heard her say:

"There are no holsters and no pistols on my saddle! Pray see to it—somebody!"

"What's that?" I said sharply.

She cast a spirited, mischievous glance at me. "I suppose, at least," said she, "you will allow me to defend myself."

A groom strapped two holsters to her pommel and thrust in a pair of loaded pistols; and, before anybody could aid her, she was in her saddle and kicking at her stirrups which I sullenly took up and shortened.

To be so bullied by anybody perplexed and bothered me; yet, what else to do with her I did not know. For

there might be a possibility of those murderous vagabonds returning to Cock-crow Hall; and I hesitated to leave her here alone.

All around us, now, was a great stir of preparation—stable-boys leading out horses, hostlers with lanterns, grooms bearing saddles, servants fetching pistols, fowling pieces and blunderbusses from my coach, and fastening holsters and buckets to saddle-bows.

When finally I got onto my horse to marshal my cavalcade of stable-warriors, I saw little Miss Strayling exercising her mare by jumping her back and forth across the box-hedge edging the kitchen garden. And though my hunting clothes were much too large for her, the strange figure she cut in the saddle was almost charming—like a child in its daddy's skirted coat and boots.

She cantered across the grass to my side as my cow-yard cavalry fell into double column—a head groom, two under-grooms, three stable-lads, all mounted and armed.

I addressed them briefly, saying that the marauders were probably making for a boat at Orienta Point, and that if we rode cross-country we might cut them off at the long causeway.

Then, leaning from my saddle, I whispered to Murphy, my head groom, that if bullets flew he was to turn my wife's horse and carry her out of range.

"No matter what my lady says about it," I added.

He touched his cap; I swung my horse, and away we cantered across the foggy lawn.

At the lodge the old gate-keeper shuffled out in shirt and slippers to open the gates. He said that the marauders had turned eastward on the Mamaroneck Road.

Outside, I called to one of the lads to dismount and let down the cattle-bars; but my reckless youngster instantly put her mare to them and sailed over; and I realized that the excitement was making her as wild as a hawk.

No need to ask her if she minded a stiff cross-country; neither she nor her headlong mare were hesitating at brook or ditch, or fence or wall. Only woodlands slackened their pace, where I had to shout in her ear to halt her while Murphy guided us along some cattle path or deer runway into the next cleared land.

"You annoy me," I said to her impatiently. "Are you trying to break your neck?"

"Why, sir," said she, "your mare refuses nothing, and I have no heart to deny her."

"You've gone mad," said I, "and so has she. Control yourself and your horse; I'll set the pace."

We came out among huge oaks, sycamores, and maples. A salty freshness from the Sound invaded the mist-dimmed fields and thickets; and I heard the high clamor and rush of wild fowl overhead.

Even in the fog this country was familiar to me, for I had hunted all over it. The causeway lay just ahead. It was here that I hoped to intercept and punish those ruffians who went about to hang people in their own homes.

But when our horses' feet echoed on the flinty way the long neck of land was empty and silent.

"They may have passed already," I said to Murphy, as we rode through the fog toward Orienta Point.

There were no sounds on the long causeway except the lap and shoaling wash of waves, a sea-gull's cry, the clatter of our horses' hoofs.

But, as we rode out among the great pines on Orienta Point, there was a flash in the fog, a report, and a bullet whined over us.

"Here they are!" I cried. "Murphy! Carry my lady out of their fire!"

As my head groom reached for her bridle, the reckless youngster made her mare pivot and dance sideways; and I saw her pull a pistol from her holster, cock it, and spur forward.

"Damnation!" I shouted, "will you come back and mind your business!"

Even as I spoke, the shore fog lighted up with a volley, and a hail of bullets streamed through the pine woods around us.

I launched my horse after the crazy jade, calling to her to rein in; and after me galloped my stable brigade, blazing away at the pistol flashes.

When I came up with the mad youngster she had already fired both her pistols, and now she held them out helplessly to me.

"I've nothing to load them with," said she. "Have you any powder and ball?"

A stable-lad was calling to me:

"They're in a boat, sir, and rowing out fast!" he bawled.

We had missed them by no more than a minute. I could scarcely bear it.

We could not see their boat for the fog; but we heard it plainly; and from the headland we fired toward the sound of the oars as fast as we could reload.

Suddenly, far out across the unseen water, a red glare split the mist, and, with the stunning report, came a shrieking round-shot tearing through the tops of the pines.

Yonder, then, lay their ship! This was no place for us.

My youngster, fascinated, sat her saddle, gazing up at the shattered tree-top when I seized and turned her horse without ceremony.

"Come on!" said I, exasperated. "Do you want your silly head blown off!"

Far out on the shrouded sea another monstrous flash split the mist; the ground shook with thunder; above us a pine snapped like a pipestem, and the whole top-hamper fell crackling and swishing to the ground.

I shouted to my men to gallop for the mainland, and bade my youngster ride for her life. But the spectacle seemed to enchant her, for no sooner had she spurred her horse than she pulled in again to gaze upon the wreckage of the pine.

At that I lost all patience, and fetched her horse

such a clip that it bounded forward beside mine, almost unseating her.

Her grey eyes fairly blazed at me as she recovered from the indignity; but there was no time to reason with a lunatic, and I told her so as she tore back across the causeway.

Behind us the unseen cannon flashed and thundered once again. Then a sinister and foggy silence reigned over land and sea.

Once across the causeway, I had no further concern for the safety of my people.

There was a thin mist over Mamaroneck where, in the main street, the entire village had run out, half clad, alarmed by the heavy firing.

As we rode through town we encountered the night watch marching with pike and lantern, and I stopped them to give them the news and make inquiries.

They informed me that a British cruiser had entered the Sound the day before and that an express had gone to New York with the news.

That was all they knew; so we rode on through the misty, autumn-tinted countryside where damp leaves were falling constantly from yellowing elms and maples, and curlew and plover called from shoreward meadows.

The rising sun spun a pale halo in the east as we turned inland on the road to Cock-crow Hall.

My ill humour, born of alarm for my youngster's safety, and of my general concern for my barnyard cavalry, had entirely subsided.

She gave me a stormy glance when I asked pardon for touching her mare, but presently smiled at me in swift relenting, which ever recommends a person to me, showing, as it does, no disposition to cherish malice.

She was cheerful although she had had no sleep at all that night, and very little the night before last, at the City Hotel. She laughed gaily at her own appearance in scarlet coat, cord breeches, and spurred boots too big for her, and pulled the peaked cap of black velvet more firmly over her red-gold hair to confine the disordered curls.

"If my behaviour," said she, "has reassured you in regard to my character, I hope that you have concluded to take me to the war with you."

I explained very gently and kindly that it could not be done.

"Some officers take their wives," said she, "when troops march out."

To put an end to further argument I asked her if she was prepared to share my blanket.

After a flushed silence: "Must I do that if I go, sir?"

"That is what is expected of officers' wives who go campaigning, ma'am. Armies don't carry extra tents and beds for single ladies."

I glanced sideways at her lowered head and vexed lips bitten in perplexity, but felt no inclination to laugh at her.

We rode on at a slow canter, our horses being some-

what jaded; and I was contented to see my own broad acres once more, and the familiar woods and roadside wall.

At the lodge the gates stood wide open; and here, to our astonishment, we came among a whole regiment of red-jacketed dragoons with their wagons, forges, and mules encamped along the highway, their horses picketed under the trees, campfires lighted, and men at breakfast.

When the officer on guard at my gates learned who we were he told us that this was a provisional regiment and a part of New York's cavalry quota; that His Excellency the Governor of New York and other officers were stopping at Cock-crow Hall for breakfast; and that the regiment had just been inspected and had been ordered to the Army of the Centre which was preparing to invade Canada.

Here, at last, was a stroke of luck! I put my horse to a gallop in the gayest of spirits and with a vast load off my mind.

At the porch I sent my stable-cavalry, with our horses, about their business, bade my poor youngster put on her prettiest gown, and ran upstairs beside her to change for more suitable attire.

"Look as charming and attractive as you can," said I, "because I want you to captivate His Excellency and so incline him to listen to my request for immediate service in the field. Remember! Be clever. It all may depend on you."

As I turned away her hand caught my sleeve:

"For heaven's sake, sir," she begged, "take me with you to this war or I shall break my heart on it!"

"Come," said I, "are you going to whimper and fail me now?"

She gave me an indescribable look; her hand fell from me.

"No," said she, "I shan't fail you." And she closed her door.

By the time I was dressed, she also was ready, and came dancing from her room to take my arm, brilliant-eyed, dewy-fresh as a child in her gown of clinging white with its sash and ribbons; and her chestnut curls like burning autumn gold.

In the drawing-room His Excellency who, on learning of our arrival, had politely waited breakfast for us, rose to greet us—a tall, handsome man with confident manner and keen, shrewd eyes. He wore the blue and gold uniform of a Major General.

He kissed my youngster's hand and named, to us, General Morton, General Steddiford, Colonel Wickham, and Major Warner of the cavalry, and Captain Macomb, aide-de-camp.

Then he gallantly led my delighted youngster to her place at the head of the table, whereupon she curtsied and assigned him to her right hand, and Steddiford to her left, with all the self-possession in the world. So we sat, and so were served with buckwheat cakes, with bacon, eggs, and coffee.

I lost no time in acquainting these gentlemen of what

had taken place the night before, and what attempt we had made to intercept these impudent miscreants.

When His Excellency learned from us exactly what had taken place, he and his officers appeared to be vastly disturbed. They all plied us with anxious questions; and His Excellency told us very frankly that New York City had been plagued by a host of enemy agents and spies; and that a considerable number of citizens were not only opposed to the war but that some, even, were suspected of disloyalty and intrigue with the enemy.

Breakfast was a brief affair and soon finished. At His Excellency's request we withdrew to the library; and he asked us to close the doors against interruption from servants.

"Sir," said he to me as soon as we were seated, "the signal service which madam your wife performed when she aided you to solve the British cipher has been rendered in vain unless either she or you can remember enough about it to aid us."

"I remember a portion of it," said I, "and some of the names of the British emissaries who were to be sent to gain the Indians."

He looked at Naïa Strayling: "And you, Mrs. Brooke?"

"I think I remember it all, Your Excellency," said she.

A smile flashed in his keen, humorous eyes:

"If you do, madam," said he, "I'll make you a Brigadier General on the spot!"

I was looking at her in doubt and surprise when she turned smilingly to me and asked me to write down for her the substance of the de-coded document as she remembered it.

I scarcely believed that she remembered more than I did; but I seated myself at the writing table, with pen and paper, striving to do my part toward recollecting the names of people mentioned in the cipher.

In the silence which followed she began to speak; and every word fell clearly from her lips, leisurely, exquisitely enunciated. There was no slightest hesitation. She had committed the entire document to memory.

As I wrote, my amazement and admiration grew, while from her lips gradually, concisely, the British plan of operations, framed by orders in Council, took gruesome shape—the proposed method of invasion was revealed—and three separate armies were recommended which were to strike at us from Canada, from Louisiana, from the Chesapeake, all three ultimately converging on New York City.

Almost word by word she recollected the recommendations concerning a naval blockade to seal all our ports from Maine to Spanish Florida and the Mississippi, including the proposed destruction of Baltimore, Wilmington, and Washington; the permanent occupation of New Orleans, Ohio, all of Maine, and Northern New York, and all territory west of the Ohio River and the Mississippi.

And I wrote down every word, wondering, aware that her memory had not failed her in a single detail.

Then, slowly and carefully, she recited the infamous plan concerning the Indians.

Ten thousand savage warriors were to be secured as British allies and turned loose upon our defenseless frontiers. The nations to be approached by British agents were the Miamis, the Ottawas, Wyandottes, Shawanese, in the Northwest; the entire Creek Confederacy in the South and Southeast, including Choctaws, Cherokis, Tallasees, and Seminoles in Spanish Florida.

Amid the tense silence of those around her, she gave the names of two Indians under whose supreme leadership this monstrous conspiracy was to be accomplished. They were Tecumseh the Shawanese, and Pemquatawa, his brother, called The Prophet.

And now she repeated for us the names of the British officers and agents who were to be entrusted with this dreadful mission to the savage nations: Captain Vulper was to go to the Cherokis; a Mr. Forney to the Seminoles; to the fierce Shawanese and Wyandottes, a Doctor Grieve; a Mr. Welp was to be detailed to stir the blacks to insurrection from Georgia to the Carolinas.

And, above all, the British Colonel Proctor was to be charged with the absolute winning over of Tecumseh and The Prophet, and was ordered to provide for their mission to the Creek Confederacy.

When Naïa Strayling had ended, she glanced over the table at me; seemed to understand the troubled

wonder in my gaze, blushed slightly, and smiled at me.

"Can you remember anything that I may have forgotten to mention?" she asked demurely.

"You neglected to mention," said I, "that you are far cleverer than your husband. But that is obvious."

Which relieved the tension, and everybody laughed and made her compliments and gallant phrases; and I felt a strange pride invading me as though she truly were my wife.

His Excellency asked his aide-de-camp to make careful copies of what I had written out, and despatch them express to Washington by different couriers and routes.

Then he rose and thanked my youngster with a frankness and warmth that sent the colour flying to her cheeks again; and when the other officers came to kiss her hand and praise her, she could not forbear to fling another demurely mischievous glance at me.

Very innocently, then, she requested of His Excellency her promised commission as Brigadier; and, in the renewed laughter which followed, the gallant, handsome Governor of New York promised her anything within his military or political power to grant.

She asked him if he spoke seriously, and he said that he did. They both were laughing.

"Very well," said she, "I ask of Your Excellency that you order Mr. Brooke on immediate active service, and that you permit me to go with him as his aide-de-camp—and maid of all work!"

"Madam," said he, "I had already intended to order

your husband into active service. And you may go with him if you choose."

She flashed a swift, joyous look at me, her whole being a-quiver with triumph.

"Madam," continued His Excellency, "I have with me a rifle officer's commission and captain's brevet for your husband. But it is plain to me that such a man as he should be detailed for some particular and delicate mission. I have in mind such a mission. And, when you learn what is this mission, you may not care to accompany him."

"I ask Your Excellency's permission to go wherever he goes," she said quickly. "I beg Your Excellency to order me to accompany him!"

The Governor laughed; looked at me, hesitated.

"Captain Brooke," said he, "am I carrying this pleasantry a little too far to suit your domestic views? Because, sir, I propose to send you with an interpreter and a few of Colonel McClure's riflemen to talk to Colonel Hawkins, the United States Indian Agent residing among the Creeks and Seminoles at Tukabaka on the Tallapoosa, the ancient capital of the Creek Confederacy."

"Your Excellency," said I, "it is very natural that—a husband—should decline to hazard his wife's life——"

An odd sound, scarcely a sob, scarcely even a swift-drawn sigh, checked me. I looked around at the youngster; there was such utter despair in her hurt eyes that I reddened as though I had struck her. I turned slowly

to the Governor again, thanked him for the permission, and said that I would discuss the matter further with my wife.

Before His Excellency departed I had been given fullest instructions covering my mission to Colonel Hawkins, to whom I was to reveal the British plan for corrupting the Creek Confederacy.

Closeted in the library with His Excellency alone, and while his aide-de-camp was preparing my credentials and other documents necessary, I made detailed notes of my instructions, which, broadly, were to warn Colonel Hawkins; intercept, make prisoner, or destroy any British or Indian agents I encountered; do what I could to counteract British influence among the savages; and, if possible, report ultimately to a certain Andrew Jackson, a militia general, who was out of favour with the Administration at Washington, but who was a born fighter, and in a position to call out the hardy cavalry and mounted infantry of Kentucky and Tennessee.

When I had made memoranda of all this, His Excellency sent his aide-de-camp for blanks, remarking to me with some contempt that the Federal Council of Appointment need have nothing to do with a Democrat's business, and could go to hell, as far as he was concerned.

If Governor Tompkins was an autocrat, nevertheless he knew his business.

He signed my commission; and, brevetting me as

Captain in the Rifles, and detaching me from "The Greens"—or McClure's Regiment—ordered me on special and confidential service with a detachment of Adirondack Leather-legs under Lieutenant Glimming —a Rifle detachment of Volunteers available for operations outside of the State line.

To me, further, was assigned Joe Barse, of Chateaugai, and Black Cat, a Miami, as interpreters and guides.

"This mission," remarked His Excellency, "belongs to you by right, but I would not give it to you if you were not peculiarly fitted for it."

"Do you believe I am, sir?"

"I do. I knew your father. I know your race—cool-headed, intelligent, unhurried, and"—he smiled —"rather deadly. Also, you are a man of the world and accustomed to gentlemen; and know how to estimate British officers and how to deal with them."

And now he admitted to me that his sudden selection of me was an impulse.

"I had already intended to send a mission to Hawkins, warning him against the Spaniards in Florida," said he. "That expedition is ready to leave tomorrow; and I had decided to give it to Ben Glimming. But," said he, "I had misgivings. Glimming is honest and fearless, but he's a noisy, cursing fellow without diplomacy, and the very sight of a British officer enrages him. You are the man, Captain Brooke—there's no particle of doubt remaining in my mind."

I thanked him and told him I was extremely happy.

"When can you start?" he asked abruptly.

"Instantly, sir, if I may go in the only uniform I own."

He said: "Your detachment of riflemen, with arms, equipment, accoutrement, and baggage, is aboard the privateer *Red Bird,* lying off Westport. There is spare clothing aboard. And you had better wear the rifle shirt of these northern leather-legs."

"Very well, sir. I can start for Westport in an hour."

"Good God," said he, laughing, "you must have some skyrocket in you, Mr. Brooke, if you take fire so swiftly."

Then he told me that there was, so far, only one British cruiser in the Sound; that the *Red Bird* could easily outsail her, and that I might hoist anchor as soon as I was aboard and stand for Amelia Island—"for that is your route, sir, and you will be as friendly with those damned Spaniards as prudence suggests."

Well, that was all. His Excellency rose; I shook hands with him and with his aide-de-camp. On the lawn he took leave of Naïa who was playing croquet with the other officers.

And now their spirited horses were fetched to the mounting block. His Excellency and staff made a handsome sight in their showy saddles; their horses pranced and capered and cut up; the brilliantly uniformed riders lifted gold-laced cocked hats to salute us, and away they went with a flourish of plumes and clatter of swords,

followed by an escort of helmeted, red-jacketed dragoons.

"Daniel D. Tompkins and staff," said I aloud. I don't know why, but it sounded funny.

I was in excellent spirits. I looked at my wife who was finishing her game of croquet all alone. What an amazing child! What a memory! And what quick-thinking coolness in emergencies!

Could it have been that same slim, composed figure, calmly knocking croquet balls over the lawn, who had climbed the chimney for me while Death sniffed at us outside our door?

Here was a strange and venturesome youngster, foolhardy to a fault, who seemed to live only for excitement, and who, from the first instant I laid eyes on her, had contrived to tumble from one disastrous adventure into another—and with every symptom of enjoyment.

Was she afraid of anything on earth? Was she really the irresponsible madcap she seemed—recklessly chaste, daring with the audacity of uncorrupted sophistication? Or had she been more than this in Paris and in London before I knew her—and was there, deep within her, the guile and wile and patience of a Circe who tempted men, wearied of them when they became her victims, and left them to grunt and gruffle out their grief in sties?

What did I know about this slim youngster, after all? Nothing except that she had raised the devil out o' bounds and, some way, had come into my hands

as amazingly as the white rabbit which a conjurer discovers in your pocket!

I walked over to where she was listlessly knocking the balls about. After a shot or two she turned around and gave me a straight look out of her grey eyes.

In that instant I knew that she ought to be my wife and mistress of Cock-crow Hall.

We walked together to the library—I already hot with my project, she leaning on my arm as though tired.

There was a love-seat by the sunny window. I was not thinking of its significance when I seated her there—had no thought of love at all in my practical and vastly interested mind.

"I am going away," said I. "It would be senseless and rash for you to go with me."

She stared steadily out of the window at the declining sun.

"Naïa Strayling," said I, "I am not base enough to affront you with flattery or pretense of any mawkish and sudden tenderness. There is no such sickly sentiment in me, ma'am. No woman ever has heard me invoke what is commonly known as love, to palliate or sugar any conduct of mine."

She did not appear to be listening to what I was saying; nevertheless, I went on:

"What I desire to say to you," said I, "is that my sentiments toward you are both respectable and enduring, and are not concerned with petty passions. I wish to say to you that I admire courage more than

anything in this world, and would willingly marry such a woman as you are——"

She turned and looked curiously at me.

I asked her if she had heard what I had been saying; and she said she had.

"Your cool and fearless conduct," said I, "captivates me, as female charms and arts and graces never have permanently stirred me. Because what they arouse is merely love; and love, at best, means no more than the passing passion of an hour——"

She looked up at me again and laughed:

"Is that all you know of love?"

"I know it is merely an art, ma'am——"

"As taught you by many pretty women, sir?"

"And by the sad wisdom of the ages, ma'am——"

She began to laugh again; but I said very earnestly that never before had any woman so engaged me as to inspire me with desire to marry her and make her mistress of Cock-crow Hall.

"Do I inspire you to wish for that, sir? And why?"

"Because," said I, "such a marriage would be both agreeable and convenient——"

"Is that why?"

"I have already told you that I admire you."

"We need not marry to admire each other," said she. "Moreover," said she, "I won't live with any man in so loose a manner!"

"Good heavens, ma'am, I am asking you to be my wife, not my mistress!"

She was at some pains to control her laughter:

"If ever you desire *that* of me," said she, "I might consider your more lawful but less respectable request."

"You utterly misunderstand me," I protested; "what I want is a lawful wife——"

"I heard you, sir—" She could scarce speak for laughter.

"A wife," I explained, "who is in health, who is educated, agreeable to gaze upon, who possesses both courage and wit, and whose antecedents are as respectable as my own——"

She laughed and laughed.

"Doubtless," said she, "I must be a low hussy, for I can only deplore a taste so chaste, and would even prefer a state of lawless love to the passionless economics of so prudent a marriage!"

What she meant God only knew and I could not guess, other than that her pretty impertinence very plainly revealed an incapacity to understand me.

After a long silence—while I was watching the level sun kindling her hair to curling flames—she asked me how soon I meant to start upon my military mission.

"Tonight. And I wish to God you would marry me now, and take the care of Cock-crow Hall. There's a parson at Mamaroneck——"

"And then?"

"I go aboard the *Red Bird.*"

"And no honeymoon?"

"Why—as—as for that," I stammered, "—when I return——"

"When?"

"I should return by spring."

"A long six months, sir. Would you not wish me to be breeding an heir to Cock-crow Hall for you during those long and wintry months?"

There was no effrontery in her clear, grey eyes, nothing but calm inquiry; yet never had I been so utterly upset and silenced.

"Even your cattle," said she, "are more thriftily bred, and no time lost——"

"Good God," said I, "you utterly misunderstand me because I consider love but a fugitive emotion and offer you a more genuine and enduring friendship——"

"Let me go to war with you!"

"Damnation," said I. And asked her angrily whether she chose to share my blanket.

"Yes, sir, I think it would be quite safe," said she, coolly.

"Very well, then," said I, exasperated, "we can stop at the parson's on our way."

"It will not be necessary," said she, her nose in the air.

Then she rose and pulled the bell-rope; and when a servant came:

"Mr. Brooke and I are going on a journey," said she. "Please see to my boxes."

"And you can tell them to harness up and fetch my coach immediately," said I in a passion, "and drive me to Westport!"

Here was a senseless quarrel, and I didn't even quite know what it was about; but everything she said

seemed to sting me with ridicule and I was damned if I'd put up with it, but meant to show her I cared not a tinker's dam whether she married me or not, or went to the war with me, or stopped at Cock-crow Hall.

I interviewed Skerret and made arrangements for the household's maintenance while away. I had only two valises packed for me, which I considered sufficient. I dressed me in my regimentals, red jacket, helmet, boots, sabre, and horseman's cloak.

Then, in a rage, I went clanking down stairs.

Skerret and his servants stood at the open door. Outside I saw my coach piled high with my youngster's luggage.

As I walked out, jingling all over, I saw my youngster's enraptured face at the coach window, and she held out both gloved hands to me.

"Oh, heaven," said she, "how beautiful has God —and your tailor—made you, sir, to the delight of your country and Cock-crow Hall!"

I got into the coach and seated myself beside her, too furious even to utter the single word, "damnation!"

At Mamaroneck I broke my silence for the first time, offering to stop at the parson's.

"No," said she, "I won't submit to a man I do not love. . . . And who does not love me."

"Submit what?"

"My pride and—person."

"Am I to expect no heir to Cock-crow——"

"Not from me, sir! Hang Cock-crow Hall! I'm weary of the very name!"

"Drive on," said I, hoarsely, to my coachman.

At midnight we arrived at Westport. The mosquitos were devilish. A barge finally took us and our baggage aboard the *Red Bird.*

We had a cabin with two bunks. She undressed and went to bed while I was on deck, talking with our master, Captain Breeze, who had decided to weigh and sail at once, as wind and tide favoured and the British cruiser still lay off Mamaroneck.

I lingered while sail was made, watching our bluejackets swarm the deck and rigging. All lights were extinguished aboard us save for the glimmer in the binnacle.

When I went below, my cabin was dark and silent, and I supposed my wild youngster was asleep.

Something—perhaps the thought of that young thing lying all alone there in darkness—softened me. As I leaned over her to listen to her breathing, her low, calm voice startled me:

"I am not asleep. I've been lying here listening to the sails, and wishing I were in love with you. . . . And you with me. What an adventure, sir!—for they told me you were the most dangerous rake in England!"

I was so astonished that I sat down on my bunk without a word.

"Gamester, duellist, rake supreme," she murmured

sleepily; "—and here I lie unafraid. . . . Peril aloft and peril alow. . . . Ships and cannon and waves once more—and you. . . . And *you* again! . . . We shall see Indians together. And parrots. And murder, perhaps. . . . Remember, if ever I lie dying, let me have a last word with you. . . . For I have something I mean to tell you before breath fails me. And it may astonish you."

"What is all this wild talk?" said I.

"Happiness, sir. In my odd, blind, inarticulate way I am thanking God that I am with you."

"You are a wild thing," said I, "and very strange; and I want you for my own but you will not have me."

"Who knows," said she, "how much time on earth we shall have to change our minds?"

"Could you change yours?"

"In the twinkling of an eye—or after many years, perhaps; or, perhaps, after I am dead."

After a silence she called on me softly: "Where are you, sir?"

As I rose in darkness on the unsteady floor, I encountered her groping hand.

"It is like the chops of the English Channel," she whispered; "do you remember?"

"How we used to say good-night?"

"Yes."

I bent over her; she put both bare arms around my neck; I kissed her with all my heart; and she kissed me as ardently as a child.

"Oh, heaven," she sighed, sinking back upon her

pillow, "what a wonderful adventure is war, to be sure! And may God guide us quickly into battle, joyously and together—for I shall never rest till I see one, and really learn what life and death on earth amount to!"

She turned over on her pillow, yawning.

"But as for love," she murmured, "I have already learned from you that it amounts to nothing more than a good-night kiss——"

A heavy rapping on the cabin door brought me to my feet.

"Who's there?" I asked.

"Master of arms, sir. Cap'n Breeze's compliments to Cap'n Brooke, sir, and has the honour to inform him that a British ship is chasing us."

I stepped quickly to the cabin window and looked out astern. Far away in darkness I saw a ruddy flash; and, after a moment, the distant report followed, scarce heard amid the thunder of our sails. Now, from our quarter-deck overhead, there came a thudding scamper of bare feet, clash of lanyard, rope, and pivot; a drawling voice, calm in command; then our cabin floor leaped under us in the deafening outcrash of a Long Tom, and the flame of the after gun turned our wake to a torrent of churning blood!

CHAPTER IV

THE *RED BIRD*

ALL night long, in a heavy wind and sea, our enemy chased us, unseen except for signals and fitful flashes from her long bow gun.

Many, various, and strange were her signals; she burned a blue light on her forecastle; she fired rockets; she said things with lanterns, which we never understood; and if they were meant for an unseen consort we never knew.

Dawn finally disclosed her; sunrise revealed her two miles to windward and carrying so staggering a press of sail that when they awoke me below to go on deck and have a look at her I was astounded.

She turned out to be brig-rigged, as were we. When the sun shone clear over tumbling seas, she showed us a private signal which we did not understand, and fired a gun to leeward.

Our *Red Bird* was a wet ship; the gun-deck boiled with the foamy seas we shipped; spray swept the quarter-deck where I stood with Captain Breeze. He was a lean, green-eyed, weather-battered Amagansett whale-captain. He sat on the breech of the after swivel, balanced like a jay-bird on a windy branch, and opening and eating oysters which his newly married wife,

a good-looking young slattern who did his cooking for him, had fetched in a bucket. This was his breakfast. I never saw a man eat so many oysters, or open them so easily with a case-knife.

He did not seem to be much concerned about the enemy ship. He said, musingly, to me:

"If I got to fight her, I got to fight her, Cap'n Brooke. But them ain't my orders. No, sir. My orders is to take you and them riflemen comfortable into Cumberland Sound, and I aim to do it if God ain't a-fixin' up a fight f'r us."

He flung the last oyster-shell overboard, picked up his battered trumpet:

"Masthead, there!" he roared, "what does she look like now?"

From aloft came the wind-blown hail: "She ain't no privateer, sir; she's a British warship, brig-rigged an' a-flyin' of a private signal."

"No colours!"

"None, sir, not a goddam rag!"

Weary of watching her, wet with salt spray, I clung to the taffrail and looked down at our gun-deck where Lieutenant Glimming's leather-legs, wet and miserable, were huddled amidships, too wretched to care what was going on. There were some score of these sturdy sons of the Northern forests, all in leather hunting-shirts, thigh leggings and moccasins; and all seasick; and it was painfully apparent that they could not be counted upon for any very desperate endeavour in case of a fight at sea.

The *Red Bird* mounted sixteen 32-pound carronades, two long 12's, and a 12-pounder upon the top gallant forecastle, with swivels on the poop and in the tops; and she carried a crew of 126 men not counting two interpreters, Glimming's leather-legs, and myself. The two interpreters were in the sick bay, helpless.

To me, the Englishman looked almost like the *Red Bird's* twin in length, beam, spars, and rigging, except that she seemed able to stand up under a greater spread of sail.

Sunlight gilded the mist along the far Connecticut shore, but the Long Island coast remained shrouded and dark.

I descended to the spray-swept gun-deck to have a close look at my leather-legs and to speak to Lieutenant Glimming whom I had not seen the night before.

He proved to be a free, easy, and profane product of the Mohawk Valley; supple and tough as a hickory stick, with red hair, a large, pleasant mouth, and fighting blue eyes flecked with cat's amber.

The men, sick and wet, and with gray-green faces, looked up at me out of suffering but alert eyes like wild animals caught in traps.

I asked Glimming whether they could help in case of trouble.

"Hell's roarin' beeswax!" he burst out, "did y'ever see a wildcat too sick to fight? Wait till them Brtiish begin to pester 'em, sir!"

"You'd better feed your men," said I, smiling.

"They et, sir, but it don't lay good to their stummicks. I guess they'll feel some better when the fightin' starts."

I liked him. I liked his stringy buckskins and belted knife and war-hatchet, and the scarlet Indian finery that fringed his sinewy, bandy legs to the beaded moccasins.

I asked him if there was any such spare clothing in the hold for me; and he told me there was. So I went below with him and got rid of my too brilliant and soaking cavalry uniform, and dressed me in the leather rifle-dress which, he said, shed water, having been cured and prepared with deers' brains by Oneida squaws.

So light, so comfortable, so dry and warm I found my Indian dress, that, thinking of my youngster, and of the long trail ahead of us, I took from the heap of clothing two of the smallest rifle-dresses for her, and another for myself; and bade a boy carry them to my cabin.

I was hungry. I went to the galley where Slops, our cook, was whistling cheerily, busy with pots and pans.

The skipper's wife was there, too, handsome and careless, and gave me a hardy, intimate smile and passed unnecessarily near me as she moved to and fro getting breakfast for me and for Lieutenant Glimming.

She told me that a boy already had taken breakfast to my wife.

Lieutenant Sebring looked in while we were speaking, and I could not avoid noticing the terms he was on with his captain's wife, who conducted with any man like the bold and sensual slut she looked. And Slops winked at me.

Officers' meals were to be served in the Captain's cabin. So Lieutenant Glimming and I went thither, presently, to eat a mouthful; and made short work of it, being vastly concerned with the impending trouble.

Glimming strolled back to his suffering leather-legs; I to my cabin, where I found my youngster straddling and balancing on the heaving, pitching floor, and striving to inspect herself in a small hand-mirror.

She was dressed like any leather-leg, in rifle frock and leggings, and appeared to be enchanted with her appearance, wriggling and twisting and striving to obtain a glimpse of limbs, body, and head at the same time, which proved impossible, though she almost stood upon her head to accomplish it.

When I appeared she called joyously to me, admired my forest dress, and declared that we now were ready to do battle with The Prophet and with every savage in North America, and hoped the opportunity would soon present itself. Then she demanded side arms for her empty war-belt which was of blue and white wampum and tasseled with brilliant beaded work on buckskin.

I was sorry to quench such ardour and gaiety of spirit—for she expected to accompany me on deck—

but was obliged to tell her that we were preparing to fight a British sloop-of-war before noon, and that she must keep her cabin for safety.

I should have been suspicious of her doleful acquiescence; for, a few moments after I reached the deck, up to the quarter-deck she came a-dancing, as light footed as a fawn to water; and there, in the very instant of beating to arms and clearing for action, I was obliged to present to her our astonished Captain.

With the outburst of harsh, wet, stringy drums in our ears, I drew her back to the after-rail and tried to make her understand that she must go below and remain there while the battle lasted.

I might as well have talked to the wind, or set a net to catch the sunshine, for she paid no heed and was all over the quarter-deck, eluding me—out o' hand already and as wild as a hawk. She stopped the Master of Arms and demanded one of the pistols which were being served out. She got hold of a cutlass and a musket, too—I don't know where—and established herself among the gun crew manning one of the after swivels, to their huge delight.

Amid the buzzing roll of drenched drums; hoarse orders by trumpet; scurry of bare feet, and clash of gun tackle and arms, I strove to persuade her from the taffrail and separate her from her weapons; and she resisted like a cat clinging to a fence, even swearing at me under her breath and bidding me recollect that she was no wife of mine to be bullied into obedience.

So I bade her go to the devil, and went below to arm myself with one of Glimming's spare rifles.

While we still were beating to quarters and clearing for action, the wind slackened some but still was blowing fresh; and we were then going ten knots; but the enemy brig continued to close, having the weather on us, and now no more than a mile away on our starboard quarter.

She showed no colour whatever but began to make signals with flags, followed by various others with rockets and guns, none of which we understood.

Captain Breeze turned to me. His jaws had a chewing motion and he held a splinter of slippery elm between his lips.

"Well, dang him," said he, "if he's got to take a smell of our powder it's God's doin's, not mine; and I call you to witness, sir, I done my best to run; an' I hope you'll say that to a court-martial."

A moment later we hoisted an American jack at the fore and a pennant at the main.

"Give him a gun to windward, Mr. Sebring," he said wrathfully to his lieutenant. A gun to windward is a challenge to fight.

We then set the mainsail and the mizzen and hoisted the American colours at the peak. But the enemy showed no colours.

For a little while the two ships ran free and almost abeam. Then up went the British colours and, heaven knows why, three rockets.

And now a strange thing happened; our crew was

at quarters, our ship cleared, our colours flying. We had backed our main topsail, meaning to see this affair to an end as soon as convenient; the strange sail came down within gun-shot and hauled her wind on the starboard tack in utter silence.

Minutes passed; we continued with our main topsail to the mast; our enemy made no effort to bear down on us.

Mr. Glimming, who had posted his riflemen on the poop, not daring to risk the poor, seasick fellows in the tops, leaned beside me on the after pivot, glaring across the water at the stranger.

"Hell's roarin' beeswax," he growled, "what's she a-doin' of yonder, like she's a-dippin' an' a-bowin' an' a-curtsyin' to us like a Low Dutch dairymaid on the Flatts!"'

"Fire another gun to windward, Mr. Sebring," said Captain Breeze, coldly; "I guess we h'ain't insulted him enough."

Bang! Up whirled the powder cloud and blew wildly through our rigging.

With that, and as though reluctantly, and displaying every caution, the stranger bore for us.

"Call all hands aft, Mr. Sebring," said Captain Breeze. Then, bending low to address his crew: "Look at her, my bullies! See her come sneakin' like a whipped lass from the pantry! She's whipped already, I tell yeh. Birch her again for good measure. Truss up her petticoat and spank her bare!"

A roar of laughter rose from the crowding blue-

jackets; and even my poor leather-legs smiled wanly in their misery.

Well, we wore ship to engage; but, before a gun flashed from either ship, our enemy, strange as it may appear, made sail to the northward and westward, leaving us utterly astounded beside our burning matches and shotted guns.

There burst an exultant roar from our gun-deck: "She's afeard to fight us! She's a-runnin'!"

"Goddamighty!" said Captain Breeze, "look what she's a-doin' of!"

The gun-deck saw it, too, and another roar went up.

From her larboard rail two men sprang into the sea and struck out lustily toward us. Almost instantly came a rattle of small arms aboard her; a swivel was turned on the swimming men and a storm of grape-shot kicked up fountains ahead of them.

It seemed plain to us that either there was mutiny aboard—which explained her behaviour in not attacking us—or that these rash fugitives were impressed American seamen who were taking so desperate a chance.

Now the enemy once more hauled his wind on the starboard tack, and laid his mainsail to the mast again as though intending to lower a boat to chase the swimmers whom the hail of musket balls had not stopped.

At that we swung on her our forward long gun and let drive as we heeled, and the shot passed over her. Whereupon she lost no time in making sail again,

standing toward the northwest as she fired her last shot at the swimmers.

Already we had backed to pick them up, our blue-jackets standing ready to heave them a rope—and up they scrambled over our fore-chains, landing aboard us like a brace of gasping fish amid the wild cheering of our crew.

Already our late pursuer was beyond gun-shot, but we gave her a parting kick from our long stern chaser while she flew on, unheeding, and setting every sail, her colours whipping and a blinding reek of spray burying her forward where a pair of long guns glistened, drowned to the trunnions in the storm of driving foam.

"Goddamighty, Mr. Sebring," drawled our captain, "wha'd'yeh make o' that? An' me a'ready figurin' on my court-martial, an' a-doubtin' would I be disgraced for fightin'!"

"Will I give her another insult to windward, sir?" asked Lieutenant Sebring, grinning.

"It can't be done with no conscience like mine, sir; no, sir; no, it can't be done nohow, Mr. Sebring. . . . Besides, no insults, an' no shots, an' no nothin' don't mean nothin' to that there bitch! Thar she goes—God wallop her! An' whatever the trollop's name may be I dunno."

He walked forward and called down to the gun-deck:

"Break out rum for the crew, Mr. McCue"—to the purser; "and somebody gimme a swaller o' grog: I got a bad taste in my mouth."

The purser fetched grog for us; Captain Breeze drawled out the toast: "Here's dividin' the ocean with Old England; the top o' the sea to us, the bottom to the British!"

We drank it, passed the toast forward, and joined in the laughter and cheering.

"Waal," said Captain Breeze, "we better be on our way, Mr. Sebring; so haul aboard your fore an' main tacks to run into Gardiner's Bay; for I aim to have a roast pig tonight, or my name ain't wot it used t' be, which it wuz Hezekiah J., an' so baptized."

But that night he said to me: "I can't figure it, Cap'n Brooke. We can say what we like, but we know damn well that Englishmen ain't cowards. She wa'n't afeard of us. No-o! But she's a puzzle to me an' I don't guess the right answer; that's the trouble, sir."

"Have you questioned the men we picked up?" I asked.

"I have, sir. They ain't Yankees; they're British deserters. Hobbs and Noakes is their names, foremast men. Want to 'list along o' me. I tuk 'em on."

"What did they say?"

"Why, they say she's the *Avon;* Arbuthnot her captain; and the Halifax crew mutinous. Which is why her captain could not bring her into action, being afeard of his own crew. I guess they tell the truth; it tallies with the naval list and what we know about Halifax Station."

Later in the day I saw these two deserters, Hobbs and Noakes, wearing our uniform—two burly young

men who touched their glazed hats to me and gave me a very frank account of what had happened aboard the *Avon*—from which I judged that the discipline was brutal and the sullen crew turned dangerous and not to be depended upon in action by their officers.

I left them to go below, with a vague sense of having seen one of them before; but they were typical Englishmen of a ruddy, burly type, and could be duplicated endlessly along any water-front.

Late that afternoon, in our cabin, I gave my youngster a piece of my mind, but she seemed penitent and no longer defiant, and would make friends with me so naïvely, and with such disarming sweetness that I let further remonstrance alone, though she had conducted like a jade.

She said to me that she didn't like the captain's blowzy wife; that she was a hussy and fondled men on the sly; and that she had seen the purser, McCue, making free with her in the flag locker.

But I pointed out to Naïa that, as she did our cooking, and never was at table, we were not obliged to be polite to her except in casual and fleeting encounter. I saw she was a bold and common wench, and I was sorry for our captain who seemed to be the only one aboard ignorant of his own dishonour.

Of our voyage to the southward there is little to record. It proved to be a swift trip and without untoward event.

Winter assailed us off Hatteras and the Virginia

Capes, and, for two days, we glistened with ice—every inch of our hull from rabbit to rabbit.

But, off South Carolina, the sun seemed to dissolve the wintry spell; air and water grew mild around us; skies turned innocently blue; a warm and wanton wind caressed our sails; sea-birds swarmed in our wake; and, as we bore westward and stood for Cumberland, little land-birds came confidently aboard us, and, having slept, sang cheerily aloft, flitting from shroud to shroud. And Naïa gave them crumbs and water.

Long ere this, we all had become amiably acquainted.

Naïa Strayling and I, Mr. Sebring and Mr. Glimming dined with Captain Breeze in his cabin every evening. And there listened to most amazing yarns of whales and swordfish and harpoons; and of bloody battles of the deep; weird tales of the Gay Head Indians; of the hardy red men of Montauk; of pirates who had haunted Gardiner's Island; of John Lyon Gardiner, lord of the manor—he who, a few months later, went calmly to bed in the green room while Sir Hugh Pigott swore he would burn the house over his head.

Only twice did anything occur aboard the *Red Bird,* privateer, to cause us any annoyance; on two separate occasions somebody tried to open the bolted door of our cabin; and both times I heard them fiddling with the lock and sprang from my bunk to catch them, but there was nobody to be seen; ghosts could not have vanished with more noiseless despatch.

I said nothing to Naïa; it may have been one of the

big ship's rats—for we had little suppers in our cabin sometimes, and there were crumbs. Probably, however, it was some petty pilferer, I concluded, and was sorry there might be such among our blue-jackets.

Otherwise all was serene and gay aboard us. Not a hostile sail did we encounter; wind and sea became milder and kinder as we bore southward, and we made a holiday of it all as though aboard some fine packet, playing at games and charades, and dancing on deck by moonlight, to the jolly music of fife, drum, and fiddle—one of our leather-legs producing and playing the latter, which was home-made and squalled like an ailing cat.

Our riflemen, now, had gained their sea-legs and their appetites, and were wandering all over the ship, curiously exploring aloft and alow. We set up a target for them out on the bowsprit, and allowed them to practice with their long, brown rifles—the crew gathering to observe them with unfeigned admiration.

It was a pleasant time at sea with a pleasant—if uncouth—company; and I made warm friends of Captain Breeze and of my Lieutenant, Benjamin Glimming, who may have been but a rough fellow full of strange forest oaths, and sometimes noisy; but had the loyal heart of a hound and the simplicity of a child. A valley-dweller, he had not the inbred forest-reticence of his lazy leather-legs whose words were few, and whose lithe yet deliberate movements were almost noiseless.

I came, too, to some acquaintance with our inter-

preters, Joe Barse, of Chateaugai, and the Indian, Black Cat.

At first I had taken these two for enlisted men among the leather-legs, because they dressed like them and messed with them.

There was English, French, and Oneida Indian blood in Joe Barse; he was voluble, gay, clever as a snake, and addicted to cards, and played casino all day on deck with Black Cat—as desperate a gambler as he—who sat like a sphinx, wagered the very moccasins off his feet, and won and lost without apparent emotion—unless one caught the burning flame in his sloe-black eyes.

He spoke a little English; understood the Iroquois and Huron dialects, the Delaware, and Shawanese, and enough of the Creek to make him very valuable.

I did not know whether I liked him or not. He was a sinewy savage, not very dark, of early middle age; and both his visage and chest were scarred by wounds.

He wore on his brow a small blue emblem tattooed between his eyebrows; and a narrow band of vermilion paint which stretched across his countenance from ear to ear, neatly crossing the bridge of his thin, arched nose.

In reply to a question from me, Joe Barse said: "Oui, dam! Yessare! Thees Blackcat ver' fine Injun. Nous sommes tres amis!"

I had had no experience with Indians and I said so.

"Chat noir, he ver' fine man," repeated the interpreter, warmly. "Me, Joe Barse, I say—so—yes—

sare! You goin' see same lak I say. Black Cat! Ah!—" He blew a kiss of approbation toward the zenith and added: "Hah!"

One Indian was like another to me; and I had heard that all were untrustworthy.

I spoke of this man to Naïa Strayling in our cabin one evening, curious to learn her impression, as I had seen her frequently squatting with him on the forecastle roof in interested conversation.

"Oh," said she, "he is like a boy, for all his years—this Black Cat warrior, and everything he thinks and says and does is touchingly naïve and immature."

"You believe him to be faithful?"

"Unless ill-treated. Unlike a dog, he is not demonstrative, but no dog is more grateful for polite treatment; nor quicker to bite if abused."

"What," said I, curiously, "do you and Black Cat find to talk about together?"

"Oh," said she, "I am picking up a word or two of Shawanese and Creek."

And that night, after she had undressed behind her curtain and lay in her bunk; and I, behind my baize, lay in mine, she began to sing in the darkness, an odd, tuneless sort of song in words not to be understood.

"What's that you chant?" said I.

"Black Cat taught me. It's a cradle song. You seem wakeful; I thought it might put you to sleep."

"Sing on," said I.

"It's what a playful Indian mother sings to her

child who refuses to go to sleep—all about a little screech owl that comes and sits on top of the lodge—"

"Ah wa nain,
Who is this,
Ah wa nain,
Who is this,
Wa yan was sa
With big bright eyes
Ko pwasod
Upon my lodge?
Kob kob kob,
It is I the little owl,
Kob kob kob,
It is I the little owl,
Nim lu e zan
Kit chi kit chi,
Swooping down, down, down,
Dodge, baby, dodge!"——

"You seem very happy, Naïa," said I.

"Ne minwa indum! I am very, very happy, sir, and long to be ashore and about this business of war."

"It's a dirty, filthy trail we are to travel, amid swamps and rags of dead moss. I shall leave you at St. Mary's."

"Etho," said she gaily; "the Master of Life made woman out of dirt and rags; so what are dirt and rags to me, sir? Besides, you are no husband of mine and shall not shut me up in St. Mary's Fort!"

"I am not going to take you into forests full of snakes, alligators, panthers, Indians, and ferocious runaway slaves," said I.

But she only laughed in the darkness.

We dropped anchor off a fort made of logs and clay, protected by a ditch, a watch-tower, and four salients armed with carronades.

The fore-shore was set thick with black mangroves, saw-grass, palmetto trees, and water-oaks. Beyond lay the vast and awful solitudes of the pines—a lofty, unbroken barrier of sombre green set with huge pillars of ghostly grey.

Two gunboats saluted us with their flags; the fort gave us a few guns of welcome, and we saw the red glint of sunset on beaten drums and heard their ruffle across the water. There seemed to be many soldiers about the place.

The commandant of the fort came aboard us—a weary, emaciated man full of fevers—and we were informed that we could have accommodations within the fort in the morning as soon as the Georgia cavalry and mounted infantry marched, but that we must sleep aboard the *Red Bird* that night.

But Naïa was wild to go ashore after so many days at sea, and begged that we might have two blankets and sleep by a watchfire under some pretty palm; and so bedeviled me with her childish pleading that I consented; and vexed, too, because the slatternly wife of our captain, and McCue, the purser, took her side; and

from the glances they exchanged I thought they designed to use our cabin for some vulgar rendezvous.

I had a key to it, however, and locked it, hoping there was no master key. And so put off in a small boat with a lantern and blankets.

The swift southern dusk had already fallen before I could gather light-wood and refuse, and start a fire under a clump of beach palmettos.

The air was like balm; mockingbirds were singing where the last faint hue of sunset touched the mangroves and stained the water ashy rose.

Overhead the tall pine-tops still glowed crimson and gold; but colour faded like a breath on a window pane; night softly overwhelmed the world and flashed great, liquid stars above it.

Through the stillness we heard drums in the fort, beating tattoo and retreat; heard the far whinny of some horse; a ship's bell, clear and mellow, aboard the *Red Bird.*

Enchanted to be ashore, fascinated by the blazing campfire and the vast blackness of the wilderness, my youngster ran lightly about, gathering great pine cones to burn, and, with her new war-hatchet, hacked off splinters of fat light-wood and stuck them burning in the sand for candles.

When I had rolled a big back-log into place and raked up the coals, we cooked what food was in the basket that the steward had given us—ham, eggs, coffee, corn-meal, and molasses; and had a bottle of claret, too.

While she was moving about she sang with all her heart; she sang while I cooked; she sang between mouthfuls; she played with the fire, singing all the while; and rolled herself into her blanket, still singing a song of her own improvisation—

War! War is wonderful,
Who dare refute it!
Flaming and thunderful,
Cannon salute it!
If Death effaces us,
Glory embraces us;
Forward our starry flag!
Death on his sorry nag
Dare not pollute it!——

"I never dreamed," said I, "that you are so bloody-minded."

"As for blood," said she, "I do not like it and it makes me feel faint. I shall be careful not to look at any——"

I laughed and laughed, slapping heartily at the mosquitos which had begun to be troublesome.

"Well," said I, "there's gore, you know, even in fighting mosquitos. Look at me!"

"Wipe your face," said she faintly. But she, also, was threshing about in her blanket and slapping heartily at her unguarded features; and presently sat up to fight off the singing pests with a palmetto fan.

"Oh, lord," said she, "if this be war then I have no real taste for it. What shall we do?"

"Go aboard ship. We have had our picnic."

"No, I won't!"

But about midnight she had enough and sat up half suffocated by her blanket in which she had buried her face.

"This," said she, "is my first battle, and I shall run. But in my next battle I shall be a veteran and stand my ground."

I had been sleeping lightly when her cry awoke me.

So I took the blankets and basket under one arm; she gave me her hand, and we walked down to the long, spindling shaky wharf which ran far out across the starlit water.

There was a sentinel there who obligingly hailed the *Red Bird* for us; and very soon a boat came and took us aboard where no mosquitos were to be apprehended.

We went aft, and directly to our cabin; and, as soon as we came to the door, I saw a sheet of paper had been pinned to it with a knife; and that knife, paper, door, and floor were splashed with something that looked like blood.

"What cursed jest is this?" I muttered, examining the paper under my lifted lantern.

And I read:

TAKE NOTICE!

This is the fate of those who steal British despatches. They knew too much. Yankee spies, take warning!

We stared at the printed scrawl, at the befouled knife; at the red, sticky stuff still slow-dripping.

"This is no jest," she whispered.

"Somebody is trying to frighten us," I said. "But who could know about the despatches——"

Even as I spoke I thought of the two deserters from the *Avon*. They could have known. Were they spies? Was their escape a trick to board us and threaten us with this silly warning? Why had they warned us if they had meant to murder us?

Instant instinct bade me get my pistols; I pulled the key from my pocket and placed my hand upon the door. But somebody had unlocked it; it gave inward; and my lantern lighted an empty cabin in perfect order.

I looked about me; Naïa's bunk, revealed by the drawn curtain, lay white and undisturbed; her frail nightdress across it; her sandals beside it.

The baize was still drawn across my bunk; I twitched it aside, glimpsed the horror behind it, drew the curtain.

"Turn your back," said I quietly.

When she had turned around, still holding very tightly to my hand, I looked again within the hanging curtain, letting my lantern light fall across this mess of butchery.

The captain's wife—the handsome slattern—lay there, nearly naked, drenched scarlet with that hot blood which had been at last her terrible undoing.

Across her knees huddled McCue, the purser, his

head nearly severed from his spine by the ferocious slash that slew him in his amorous sleep.

That the murderers had mistaken these guilty wretches for my youngster and me was horribly clear to me. Swift work, a smoky lantern in the dusk of the bed curtain, had not revealed their error. Where were they now—Hobbs and Noakes, the two deserters?

I closed the curtain, lifted my lantern and drew my silent youngster out of the cabin.

In there, but for the grace of God, lay her slender corpse and mine!

"Tell me," she whispered tremulously.

I told her while she gazed at me out of sickened eyes.

"Had you not persuaded me ashore," said I, "you and I had been done with this world."

As we made our way toward the captain's cabin. "You are to know, further," said I, "that this, also, is a part of war; and that war, at best, is a very filthy business."

Aboard the *Red Bird,* privateer, all was bustle and tumult, what with the crew mustering to the drums' wild outburst, lanterns flaring, pikes and pistols glistening in sinewy, searching fists; the whole ship ransacked and swarming from top to keelson with wild-eyed, cursing, barefooted fellows; trumpets ashore; fifes and drums beating to arms on the log fort's parapets; whizz and roar of rockets; red lights changing the

forest to smouldering, infernal beauty; gallop of horses on every road and trail——

But Hobbs and Noakes were gone, leaving their dripping butcher knife in the blood-blotched door.

The captain of the *Red Bird* was inside with his woman. She was not too awful for him, even with McCue huddled across her fat knees.

I said from the quarter-deck that I would give £100 apiece for the taking of these two men.

For, in my mind, remained no doubt concerning them and their ship—that her only mission was to put these men aboard the *Red Bird,* and their only mission was to murder us.

There had been no mutiny; no desertion. The men in military disguise, who had escaped us at Orienta Point, were still determined to destroy us because we knew too much about the British plans of invasion.

The Governor of New York was right; America swarmed with British spies. And what two of them had already accomplished was to be seen where two poor dead people lay below in the lamp-lit shadows of my bed.

Well, they had died together. And together they were buried. Their grave lay on the forest's edge near a huge magnolia tree. It was not in flower. The Captain said it would bloom in May. He pictured with both hands the size of the great, waxen, fragrant flowers.

Chips, our carpenter, made two boxes for their

bodies. More than one man aboard the *Red Bird* looked curiously at McCue's coffin, wondering by what chance he himself did not occupy it.

The Captain wept and wept.

"I'd ha' married her," he said, "if she'd ha' behaved herself. She promised. I guess she tried to; I dunno."

When my youngster's baggage was stored in St. Mary's Fort; our interpreters and Glimming and his leather-legs ashore; and the requisitioned cavalry and batt-horses fetched up to take us into the West, I shook hands with Captain Breeze—a tall, weather-worn, melancholy figure who stooped to see us over the side.

To me he said: "I don't guess I'll get me another woman. They's pizen into most on 'em. 'Tain't often they hitch kindly with a man, same like it is with your pretty wife an' you, sir."

And, to Naïa, his tarnished cocked hat in his gnarled, salt-cracked hand: "Good-bye, ma'am. An'—if you will kindly allow a lonely old fellow—you got a good husband; don't never fool with nobody else, ma'am, even at kitten's play. It all turns into pizen; it does so, ma'am. . . . And so, God bless you with many children, and may the Cap'n take many prisoners and much booty when our folks git into Canada!"

In heavy marching order our leather-legs sat their saddles, their long rifles resting on their thighs, the foxtails drooping from their fox-pelt caps.

I inspected my youngster's mount and mine, our two led-horses, and the batt-horses. All was ready.

I had called upon the commandant at the fort; our personal baggage was stored; I had road maps and full directions; we were ready to mount and depart.

The Black Cat and Joe Barse rode ahead. Both had served Colonel Hawkins, the Government Agent, during early Seminole troubles. They knew this wilderness.

Behind them followed ten mounted leather-legs under Ben Glimming. Led-horses and batt-horses followed.

After these my youngster rode beside me; and eight more mounted leather-legs closed the rear.

At a signal from me their bugler unslung the conch-shell from his body and blew a melancholy blast: "Forward. March!"

We were in motion; riding in silence over the palmetto litter, under deep draperies of ghostly Spanish moss, and straight into the vast, dim empire of the Creeks, to frustrate the designs of British emissaries and Shawanese tempters, and to halt and drive back the Algonquin Prophet, if possible, or destroy him in his hideous scarlet rags and put an end to his magic mummery forever.

At the ford of the St. Mary's, where runs the road to Jill's Hundred and Amelia Island, as I rode into the shallows to frighten a floating alligator, a shot was fired from the opposite bank, and I heard the harsh

whine of a musket ball. It hit a tree overhead, showering me with oak-bark.

Bang! came another explosion, furrowing the fox fur on my youngster's cap; and her horse reared and would have fallen over on her had she not struck him furiously between the ears and buffeted him again flat across his jaw-bone.

Instantly our leather-legs rode into the stream, and the limpid water roared under the rush of horses.

Then, on the farther bank, two horsemen dashed away into the scrub-palmetto, vanishing like quail in silver-grass.

"A hundred guineas apiece!" I shouted, kicking my horse to a gallop; and the ford boiled under the rush of our yelling horsemen.

There was a chase! My youngster seemed to go wild, galloping through the scrub-palmetto and, in the silver-grass, urging her crazed horse to a dead run; and I was at considerable pains to keep up with her as we sighted the sandy road to Jill's Hundred and took it at fearful speed.

A vast, sun-drenched savannah spread before us to the horizon, flanked by bluish forests; far ahead two horsemen, shoulder-deep in scrub and silver-grass, were making for the marshy hammock to the northwest. I shouted to a galloping leather-leg to stop the rear-guard and hold the batt-horses to the road.

Joe Barse, riding on my right, bawled out to me:

"Sare! I tink je vais leur couper le chemin by these black-a-jack wood! Par ici, if you please, sare!"

To the Black Cat, riding like a demon, he yelled: "Ohé! Le Minoose Noir! Au gallop par these sweet-gum slough! One hunner' pown' we shall divide by grace of Marie, mère de Dieu!"

The slough was right ahead—a sheet of sky-blue water ringed by hard sand sparsely set with joint-grass.

From it thousands of water birds rose into whirring flight as we passed; and the great garfish rushed into deep water, furrowing the foamy shallows.

Into the reeds and silver-grass we flew again toward the fringe of palmetto marking the forest's edge.

"You'll kill yourself in the windfalls!" I shouted to my youngster, "—pull in, for God's sake——"

And, as she paid no heed, I headed her, crowding, turning, riding her off into the silver-grass again where, furious, I caught her horse and dragged him to a standstill.

"Will you mind your cursed business!" I cried to her in a passion, "or I'll pull you off your horse and give you a flogging!"

She was clean out of her head with excitement, but her wits were returning, now. I pointed to the tornado wreckage where the great Caribbean pines lay in one vast and endless cheveux-de-frise amid the palmetto scrub—huge trees splintered or prone or bent like giant bows, their tops touching the earth.

"Now, by God," said I, "you stay with me and heed what I tell you, for I don't want a dead girl on my hands in this accursed place!"

She sat silent on her panting, heaving horse, looking

at one of the fleeing horsemen, now but a speck far away across the savannah.

"They're trying to cut out the other," I said. "Don't stir."

I pulled my loaded rifle from the leather bucket, primed afresh, laid it across my saddle-bow in readiness.

Suddenly from the woods ahead came a rifle shot; and, instantly following it, a horrible cry arose—"Yo-ho-ee-hee! Yo-ho-ee-hee!"—the terrific war-cry of the Seminoles.

Utter silence, then a swift trampling sound in the scrub; and a leather-leg rode out of the palmettos:

"Reckon your Injun has got one o' them murdering pests," he called out to me.

I nodded, turned to Naïa: "You stay where you are."

"Why?"

"Because," said I, "we're about to hang a man."

She went white at that, then her head drooped; she dropped the bridle across her horse's sweating neck and covered her eyes with both hands.

"This," said I, "is also a part of war. You wished to see it. You're seeing it."

I struck my horse's flanks with moccasined heels and put him into motion, carefully threading the windfalls and following the silent leather-leg toward a water-oak from the branches of which hung a vast and ghostly canopy of mournful moss.

Near it lay a dead horse. Under it were gathered

half a dozen of my riders. The Black Cat held Noakes by the elbow; Joe Barse had uncoiled the oiled and plaited rope from the horn of his saddle.

" 'Sieur le Capitain, you goin' give him one flying court, sare?" asked Barse.

I rode slowly up to the prisoner and spoke to him by name. He gave me a dull and stubborn look.

After a few moments I saw it was useless to question him further. He absolutely refused any information. He was in a sweating fright, but he seemed to be no coward.

I nodded to the men: "Guilty."

The only words he spoke at all were uttered when the noose settled around his neck; then he burst out hoarsely:

"We thought it was you and your wife—in the cabin there. May God remember that of us! We meant right by our country. . . . And if you Yankees do as well by yours you'll do God-damned well——"

CHAPTER V

THE PROPHET

THE youngster leaned from her saddle and laid a swift hand on my arm.

We drew bridles to listen. A drumming rhythm, jarring the ground, came to us from the flat-woods.

We had ridden out that morning far in advance of our detachment—an unwisdom bred of familiarity with danger which never had developed.

As I jerked my rifle from its bucket I heard Naïa cock one of her saddle pistols; and in the same instant a mounted Indian came cantering out of the forest, singing carelessly as he rode, in a delightful tenor voice.

It was evident he had not yet seen us. He made a beautiful figure of pale bronze, stark naked except for the clout-flap, riding without saddle or stirrups, a plaited rope for his bridle, his black hair in the wind, and a pouch made of scarlet flamingo feathers flying wide from his shoulders.

He seemed intoxicated with the early sunshine and clear, scented air, and was singing at the top of his voice:

Saia khi inan!
Saia khi inan!——

When he saw us he was not ten yards away; and he threw his shaggy horse onto its haunches, jerking it so suddenly and so high that I expected to see them both go over backward.

But now, trembling, snorting, the horse faced us, and over its ears the Indian flung up one arm, the palm of the hand turned outward and toward us.

"A-tia!" he exclaimed.

I lifted my hand, palm outward, making the peace sign.

"Who are you and from where do you come?" said I.

It was plain that he understood no English. Keeping my eyes on him—for he had a bow and a quiver set with white and red feathered arrows at his back—I inquired of Naïa whether she could recollect enough of the savage language taught her by the Black Cat to ask this wild fellow who he was.

She knitted her brow in effort to remember, then spoke to him slowly, and with considerable hesitation:

"Ah wai nain iau wi yun? Who are you?"

He seemed so startled by her question that she laughed:

"What ails you?" she asked, "—aune ende deyun?"

I could make nothing of his answer, nor of her slow, hesitating questions and replies; but both she and the Indian were smiling, now. I did not particularly like his smile.

Presently she said to me: "As far as I can understand, this is a Tallasee Indian of the Clan of the

Wind, called Yiha, or the Wolf, and he tells me that he is going to visit the Seminoles of the Clan of the Wind, to invite them to go hunting."

"He seems friendly."

"Yes," said she, "he addressed you as his uncle."

"Do you suppose that he mistakes us for British agents? Ask him what he thinks we are."

Very slowly she managed to form and put the question. But it transpired that he supposed us to be American messengers on the way to visit Colonel Hawkins; and added that the Tallasees were friendly to Americans and desired peace.

There seemed to be no reason to detain this friendly youth, pending the arrival of our riflemen and interpreters, who might not be up for another hour or two. So we parted with this pretty fellow. He gave us a gay and guileless smile, and, as he rode by us, he took from the scarlet feather-pouch a little stick of wood painted red, and politely laid it in my hand. The next instant he was off with a double flourish of horse's heels and his own, running his nag headlong through the woods, and had vanished utterly from sight long before the drumming of flying hoofs died away in our ears.

What might be the significance of this odd gift neither Naïa nor I could imagine. It seemed to be some particular courtesy offered us on an impulse that made the youth laugh in the act.

That afternoon our detachment of mounted riflemen overtook us where Naïa and I had built a Seminole

fire and were eating broiled venison and koonti ash-cake of our own cooking. But when Lieutenant Glimming, Joe Barse, and the Black Cat heard about our encounter, and saw the little red stick—"Hell's roarin' beeswax!" shouted Glimming, "that's a war-stick, Captain, and your smiling Tallasee seems to be on his way to the Seminoles with a pouch full o' mischief!"

"What does it all mean?" I demanded uneasily.

"It means that the Tallasees invite the Wind-clan of the Seminoles to join in a war with them. That's the kind of hunting they mean to do. But if it's a war in our behalf, or against us, I can't tell you, sir, and neither can Joe Barse or Black Kitty yonder, not having seen this Tallasee."

"He seemed friendly," said I, "and said he liked Americans."

"They are the smilingest liars on earth," retorted Glimming, with an oath, "and laugh heartiest when meditating murder. I wish to God I'd ha' seen him."

Chagrined, I continued my meal, determined never again to let an Indian slip through my fingers until I knew all there was to know about him.

Colonel Hawkins, United States Indian Agent accredited to the Creek Confederacy, was resident among them; and the Creeks respected and trusted him.

We were a long time finding him—more than a month. For the wilderness was vast and already full of rumours and of treachery.

Twice we were misdirected—once by an otter trap-

per, once by a maroon in a dug-out, but whether from intention or ignorance I never knew.

Settlements were small and widely scattered; settlers ignorant of what was going on and afraid of what might be impending in this silent land of swamp and slough; of pine and oak; of forest and savannah.

Far to the south the Spaniards, in their fortress of Pensacola, friendly to our British enemies, watched our frontier settlements with the blank stare of panthers.

In New Orleans was both indifference and treason. Along the Mississippi and Ohio lurked thousands of savages among whom British agents were ever moving and whispering. And in the near North and East the vast Confederacy of the Creeks loomed, darkening the wilderness like the shadow of a thunder cloud.

Through this shadowy wilderness we rode upon our mission—twenty mounted riflemen with batt-horses, two interpreters, the youngster, Naïa Strayling, and myself.

When we followed roads at all, they were either sandy or swampy, crossing prairies and flat-woods or threading forests, dense, silent, festooned with moss and creepers.

There were plenty of wild beasts all about us, but we saw few; many deadly snakes, and we saw too many; but nobody was bitten, though a rifleman named Burke lost two fine hounds.

We found only poor grazing for our horses, ex-

cept where settlers or Indians had fired the silver-grass. And even here the new sprouts had scarcely pricked the soil. At settlements we procured grain for our nags and for ourselves. Meat was plentiful; our leather-legs shot wild hogs, wild turkeys, and deer enough to keep our camp in fresh meat. Sometimes, in creeks, they caught green bass and painted bream for us—sweet but bony food.

As for the painted red men of the woods, those we encountered made no effort to avoid us. They seemed coolly curious concerning us—neither hostile nor friendly—save only one or two turbaned Seminoles who remained contemptuously indifferent, scarcely deigning to notice us at all, and refusing to utter a single word to our interpreters.

Joe Barse shrugged his shoulders. He said that the Seminoles were not on very good terms either with the Creeks or the British, or, in fact, with anybody.

The Black Cat spoke of them as "Lost Men"—a term given them by the Creeks. They were magnificent fellows, light in colour, fine of feature, and very handsome in their turbans, white belted shirts, and beautiful leggings.

Their hunters wore no turbans when hunting, and their long, bronze legs were bare; but one party we met, evidently in ceremonial dress, wore gorgeous turbans, plumes, and beautiful thigh-moccasins. We saw no mounted Seminoles.

All these savages were a source of eager interest and delight to Naïa who seemed to feel no fear of

them, nor of the strange and melancholy land which we traversed.

Everything enchanted her—the wild gallop of frightened deer, the headlong rush of wild turkeys, or their thunderous flight; the grunting, tusk-clattering defiance of some grey and furry hog reverted to the wild-boar type; the startling whirr of quail in the silver-grass; the noisy splash of wild duck rising from creek and slough; the silent, stalking forms of cranes, striding through the forest like tall, grey men with scalped and bloody heads.

Everything delighted this youngster who, day by day, seemed to become more like a sunburnt boy and less like a young girl; and whom I had gradually come to regard as such, and quite stripped of any troubling attribute of her proper sex.

Joe Barse had clipped her curly hair for her; she wore the same clothing as our leather-legs wore; rode with us, ate and slept with us; and now in nowise appeared to be anything but a lithe, vigorous lad, nor seemed to desire any especial privilege or tender treatment from us, other than natural respect due a comrade.

Often, after a hot day's ride, the night turned bitterly cold, and she lay shoulder to shoulder with me for warmth, under both doubled blankets and with mind no more tranquil and innocent, I swear, than was my own.

Yet, though it seems odd for such a rake as I had been to say so, never even in the beginning had her

slender youth and feminine loveliness ever really disturbed me. And though I am less credulous, and therefore less emotional than some, nevertheless I was as casually inflammable as any.

But this youngster never had kindled me, who, in the beginning, had merely amused me, then concerned and annoyed me, then slowly had grown in my affections until my interest and admiration and my vital obligation to her had brusquely revealed to me the suitability and convenience of making her mistress of Cock-crow Hall. And I had been sincerely sorry when she declined to marry me, although, as I say, I never had been in love with her, nor, in any cruder sense, desired her.

Sometimes I entertained a vague suspicion that this physical indifference piqued her, but never really believed she cared any more for me than did I for her beyond the growing friendship and respect which was evident to ourselves and to anybody who observed us.

On this long journey through the Florida and Georgia wilderness she was no trouble to me or to anybody, and chose to care for her own horse, although she had an officer's privileges.

We shared, each evening, a newly built brush-hut, thatched with palmetto; and she often helped the men to construct it. She cooked for us both. She washed her own linen and mine in the clear, swift branches that ran over sand between creeks and sloughs. None of these things she needed to do, for she had a leatherleg to wait on her as did I—a big rifleman named

Burke, who was ever at her heels like a jealous, dangerous, devoted dog.

All owned her charm; everybody felt the spell of her dewy youth and beauty and the gay courage of her.

And all, of course, believed her to be my wife. Which I often wished she was and determined that she should rule Cock-crow Hall one day and give me an heir to the place I cared most about in all the world.

One day in January, 1813, the Black Cat and Joe Barse informed me that we would ride into Tukabaka, the ancient capital of the Creeks, before sunset.

And it proved true.

During the last two days we had been aware that in the woods all around, unseen men were watching us, keeping viewless pace with us, dogging us through slough and hammock to observe our course.

We found their tracks; we did not discover them. Our Indian, the Black Cat, thought they were Cheroki and Chippewa scouts.

This day, across a shallow brook which we were fording, we saw two Creek warriors, in green and purple turbans set with egret plumes, and handsomely mounted.

Barse made them the friendly sign, and they returned it in a hesitating way, but instantly galloped off.

Now, late in the afternoon, and the sun's level rays already tinged with a ruddier light, we rode out into clearings thinly set with pines, where were the strange,

thin cattle of the Creeks, feeding shoulder deep in silver-grass and scrub, but upon what, only God knows.

Beyond the herds we saw the palmetto-covered lodges of Tukabaka; smoke rose high in the still air; the town swarmed with people gathering about a stockade, within which the American flag drooped from a tall pole, its red and white stripes and starry blue field scarce stirring.

Through dense, dark lanes of silent savages we rode, men, women, children pressing forward against our horses and gazing up at us out of black and brilliant eyes.

I raised my hand; Lieutenant Glimming flung up his arm; a melancholy blast from our conch-horn sounded a halt, then the "dismount" was blown, and our tired men set foot to earth amid the crushing crowd.

"Brothers," said I, "be polite enough to make a little room for us!"

But the masses of Indians closed in so that the detachment could scarcely lead their horses into the stockade.

"Back up there," growled our leather-legs, making their horses sidle to right and left, widening the lane of savages before the stockade gate which stood wide open.

Major Hawkins came out of his house to receive us—a gaunt, careworn, fever-stricken man carelessly clothed and moving with a limp.

He retained both my hands in a nervous grip as

he listened to my story and learned who we were—I making known to him Ben Glimming, Naïa, Joe Barse, and the Black Cat; and his worn eyes travelling over each one as named, then reverting earnestly to me.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to see you, Captain Brooke," he said in his strained and weary voice. "Months ago I sent runners to call down the nations to this town. They're all here at last; I've had a big talk with them—Cherokis, Choctaws, Chickasaws—the Seminoles wouldn't come in—but there are Miamis here and a few Northwestern Indians. . . . Come into my house"—he bowed and offered his arm to Naïa—"ma'am, you have made a gallant journey and are a credit to your husband and to your country. These riflemen are 'The Greens,' I believe? Oh, yes, Frank McClure's Regiment——"

With Naïa on his arm he led the way indoors, we following, and stared at in silence by thousands of brilliant, jet-black, devouring eyes.

In a large, roughly built room a log fire burned. Floor, chairs, and couches were covered with beautifully dressed pelts. On the wall hung the round-painted shield, lance, war-bonnet, and beaded finery of some far Western pagan warrior; over the fireplace several sets of antlers supported rifles, fowling pieces, and fishing rods.

Two or three Pani slaves came to the door for orders; and very soon we all were drinking orange and lime bombo, and rum sweetened with black-strap.

From the windows we could see that Colonel Hawkins' residence occupied the centre of a stockaded quadrangle with cabins, kitchen, storerooms, and a log tower to the left, and stables, barracks, and quarters to the right. Our leather-legs were leading their horses and ours into the stables, directed by a few Panis and maroons.

Already the chill that follows sunset was in the still air. I sat by the fire in a wide hickory chair covered with a bear robe; and my youngster curled up in it beside me like a slender young brother—quaint as some lithe sprite in her buckskins, and sipping her bombo and listening intently to what Colonel Hawkins was saying to us.

Joe Barse slumped forward on a splint stool, his clasped hands sagging between his knees, a glass of hot rum on the floor before him. Glimming lounged on a home-made sofa, swallowing deep draughts of black-strap punch. The Black Cat squatted upon a bear robe on the floor before the fire and stared into it as though his flattened ears heard only the hollow rustle of the flames.

Colonel Hawkins said: "I've called the nations down, and have talked to them like a father—firmly, kindly, without fear. We have had the big talk with all its tiresome ceremonies. They know what is going on along the Ohio. They know that Colonel Proctor's British agents are now sneaking in everywhere through this wilderness and are stirring up the nations against us.

"But the most serious news that has come to our Indians—and to me—is this: The Prophet is to arrive here *tomorrow,* and Tecumseh comes with him."

This startling news shocked me. Even the Black Cat's narrow head turned a trifle from the fire toward the speaker, his tense ears flattened back like a listening panther.

"That is the news fetched in today by my Cheroki runners," said Colonel Hawkins, "and there's a world of mischief in it at best."

After a profound silence he went on: "I thought I could hold the Creeks. I still think I can. I had their ears yesterday. The Cherokis are very friendly. The Choctaws and Chickasaws are less friendly but remain reasonable, so far. What this cursed Prophet may do to beguile them—with what clever art Tecumseh may appeal to them—I do not know. I'll hold them if I can. But the British agents have been very active in Georgia, and I can only guess what harm to us they have already accomplished by the ominous restlessness that reigns in these forests."

"Can you prevent The Prophet from addressing the nations?" I asked.

"No, sir, I can not. They would resent it."

"Is there any reason why we may not be present when the Creeks receive this Shawanese embassy?"

"None. We ought to be present, sir. The lives of thousands may depend upon our being present at this council. For my part, I mean to have my say —not infringing upon the freedom of the Creeks to

receive any embassy and message, and to deliberate and return an answer."

The situation had become serious; that was plain enough. The haggard features of Colonel Hawkins confirmed it.

Pani women came trotting noiselessly to set a table for us. Supper was served presently—a butcher's roast, sofka—a Seminole dish—fish, palmetto salad, koonti bread.

Basins and napkins were fetched us for washing off sweat and sand and saddle-reek; and a bath in a hot sulphur spring promised us in the morning.

Colonel Hawkins led Naïa to table and bowed her to her seat. We broke bread in silence, oppressed by the menacing news and gravely concerned for the morrow.

But Naïa's spirits could not be dampened; she ate with appetite unimpaired, and drank chilled orange wine and hot palm wine until her little ears fairly sang; and she said so, and laughed, which made us laugh, too. Such joyous spirits and happy laughter were grateful to us all; we took a lighter and more careless tone, filling quickly each pause in the conversation lest our minds should revert to that dark throng of savages outside this house, already in excited expectation of the coming of The Prophet.

At table the Black Cat always conducted like a gentleman save that he preferred his own hunting knife to carve his meat. Never had food tasted so sweet as that supper tasted to us after our long journey.

After we had risen, Glimming had a word or two aside with me, then said good-night and went away to his men and horses, followed by our two interpreters.

Colonel Hawkins would not permit Naïa to go to barracks, but insisted that we lodge with him in a spare bedroom. So Naïa, with a mischievous glance at me, bade us good-night and went upstairs with a Pani girl who carried a candle.

I said to Hawkins when we stood alone before the fire:

"Sir, if The Prophet inflame these savages tomorrow, what is like to happen?"

"I don't know," he said.

I was thinking of our twenty riflemen and of the five thousand or more Creeks encamped just beyond those timber-palings. Twenty against five thousand!

Colonel Hawkins said. "The Cherokis should stand firm in our cause. I expect them to. The others——" he shrugged and squinted at the fire.

"I am wondering," said I, "about a possible defense of this place."

He lifted a grey and ravaged face and his haunted eyes were answer enough.

"I suppose," said I, "the only thing we can do is to watch this meeting between The Prophet and your Creeks, and, in a crisis, use our judgment."

"That is the only thing, sir."

"If," said I slowly, "The Prophet begins to gain them—shall I shoot him?"

He smiled and shook his head: "A council fire is sanctuary, Captain Brooke. Nevertheless, what ought to be done usually becomes clear in a crisis. But the decision lies with me, sir. I shall do what I think best for my Government."

"I understand, Colonel."

"Much depends upon my Cherokis. If they waver —well, sir, the event is in God's hands; and we must so leave it."

He walked about the room for a while, then said he was going to bed, but, as I bade him good-night, he resumed his seat before the fire again and I saw him staring wanly at the coals.

So I took my haversack and blanket and candle and went upstairs to the spare room. My youngster was abed, her head thrown back and resting on her bare arm; but her eyes were open and full of raillery.

"There's only one bed," she said. "First come, first served!"

I gave her a weary, annoyed look, laid my blanket on the floor, placed my haversack for a pillow, and unlaced and pulled off my rifle shirt—for long since all privacy had become impossible.

"Do you desire to sleep on the floor, sir?" said she.

I shrugged and loosened my war-belt, letting it fall with its war-hatchet and knife.

"Sir," said she, "are you too nice to bundle with me?"

I turned to look at her and saw two devils dancing in her grey eyes.

"Holy men have bundled," said she, "with modest virgins. All the saints in New England bundle."

"Very well," said I coolly; "have the complacency to move over by the wall."

"Are you coming into this bed, sir?"

"I am," said I, unlacing my leggings.

A moment later she leaned over and blew out my candle; and I heard her scurrying to the other side of the great bed.

I think I fell asleep the instant my head touched the pillow; and knew nothing more until our conch-horn, blowing from the stables, awoke me in the pallor of coming sunrise. But the reveille did not awaken my youngster.

In my night-shirt and bare feet, and carrying my clothing, I went out to the stairs and saw a Pani girl lighting the fire below.

She fetched a towel and directed me to the hot sulphur spring which boiled up in an outhouse attached to the main dwelling; and here I had a most marvellous bath and cleansing; and here I dressed, and went out to inspect my detachment, but found them all bathing in another big hot spring near the stables.

Everything smelled faintly of sulphur; the water we drank tasted of it, not unpleasantly.

When I returned to the house a Pani slave told me that my wife had bathed and was eating porridge in her bedroom, and that there was chocolate and koonti bread for us both.

So I went thither and breakfasted with my youngster

who inquired politely how I did and hoped I had slept well.

"If," said I, "you had a grain of common sense you'd marry me."

"What you mean," said she, "is that if I had any sense I'd marry Cock-crow Hall and breed little game-cock heirs for its quarrelsome master."

"There is no woman in the world as suitable," said I, sulkily, "and I wish to God we had a boy."

In a low voice she bade me go to the devil.

So our breakfast ended in sullen silence. I put on my war-belt, took blanket and rifle, and went below, where a Pani informed me that Colonel Hawkins had gone to finish his big talk with the Creeks, and had left word for me to follow at my convenience and bring my interpreters, but on no account to fetch my riflemen from the stockade.

So I sent for Glimming and bade him parade his men and let them look to their priming and stand to horse.

"You may draw them up inside the stockade until further orders," said I. "And, Ben, pray keep an eye on Mrs. Brooke, and say to her that I do not wish her to leave the stockade for the present."

At the stockade gate Joe Barse and the Black Cat, afoot, awaited me. Our Indian was very handsome in his ceremonial dress and paint, but gave me a solemn, alert look like some serious-minded hound aware of possibilities and ready for them.

Barse cautioned us to leave our rifles behind us as this was expected at all council fires. He took our

three weapons into the house, rejoined us; and, piloted by a maroon in cotton shirt and drawers, we walked briskly into the flat-woods, and down an endless vista of tree-trunks supporting a vast green canopy with their thousands of amber-hued and ash-grey columns.

The wood was open, yet one could not see far, so numerous were the great trees though widely spaced.

But already we smelled the aromatic smoke of the fire, and were in sight of the dense, dark throng surrounding it.

As we came up and pushed through the mass of savages, toward the cleared space within, Colonel Hawkins was finishing his speech to the Creek Confederacy, and his Cheroki interpreter was translating it, slowly, distinctly, into the savage tongue that these people understood.

Just as I seated myself upon my blanket at Colonel Hawkins' right, somebody sat down beside me; and I turned and saw my disobedient youngster who gave me a cheerfully defiant smile and crossed her moccasined legs with all the assurance in the world.

I scarcely knew whether we were in any immediate danger, yet had preferred that she remain in the stockade; and now I gave her an angry glance. The next instant I felt her small hand seeking mine, nestling into it very gently.

"It was only for your sake," I said under my breath.

"Let us always continue together," she whispered; "I'm not afraid to be with you."

"We can't always——"

"We *must!*"

"That is both silly and needless——"

"I cannot see myself continuing through the world without you, sir," she said calmly.

But when I turned to look at her she gave me an impudent grimace which was nearer a grin than a smile.

Colonel Hawkins' tired voice had ceased; the interpreter pronounced a few more words; then waited.

From the Cheroki chiefs came a rumble of approbation, dying away as the interpreter's calm voice continued the translation. But the Cheroki sachems remained silent.

Hawkins, who had been limping to and fro beside the council fire while addressing them, halted suddenly, his head turned to the north.

At the same moment every chief and sachem of the Confederacy, seated around the fire, and five thousand savages crowding outside, turned their heads northward, listening.

Joe Barse was already getting up; the Black Cat sprang to his feet; I rose, and Naïa followed me, still clinging to my hand.

"Hollerin' hell!" growled Barse hoarsely, "look what's coming yonder!"

In an instant thousands of savages were on their feet; the swarming throng parted right and left; through the lane they made rode a grotesque figure all fluttering with scarlet scallops and tumbled vermilion feathers—a wizened, yellow visaged, toothless, one-

eyed creature, brandishing a stubby lance from which weasel pelts floated and danced.

A vast, shuddering murmur swept the throng: "Pemquatawa! The Prophet!"

Then, as a kind of respectful terror fell, silencing every voice, the Shawanese Prophet continued to advance, riding his bony horse to the very edge of the fire ring, and drew bridle there, his solitary glowing eye fixed upon Colonel Hawkins.

The latter, very pale, and utterly ignoring the creature, turned to Joe Barse.

"Tell that Shawanese juggler that he carries no credentials I recognize! Tell him to say what he has to say to the Creeks and then get out!"

"Ha!" cried Barse, "you are ver' dam right, my Colonel! Here is one sole jongleur who shall have affair wiz me!"

With that he strode out across the fire space, contemptuous, careless of the intense excitement around him; halted beside The Prophet's nag, put together the thumb and three fingers of his left hand, and, raising that hand, opened it under The Prophet's very nose in the most insulting gesture known to any Indian.

"Hooh!" said he, using the Creek exclamation of contempt, "what have we here, then? Is eet Moowis, then, thee man who was made of dung and rags? Mushka! Here is Meta ze gran' jongleur! Wabuma! Behold him, warriors and sachems of thee gran' Creek nations!"

A roar of astonishment and fear burst like a thunder-

ous groan from the crowd. The Prophet rose in his rope stirrups, lifting his magic lance with its dancing weasel-pelts, and his solitary eye flamed in his painted face.

Glaring across the fire he shouted at Colonel Hawkins in English; but Barse cut him short with a jerk of his rope bridle that nearly unseated him:

"You," he cried, "who in hell are you, then? You t'ink you thee dev' for to scare my Colonel wiz thees foolery an' your red rags an' thees one bead eye?"

He swung around facing the chiefs and sachems of the Confederacy massed before him in all the stately splendour of ceremonial paint and finery:

"You goin' talk to thees ole buzzard-bird, you Creeks? You goin' was'e you time fo' to listen while thees ole one-eye flamingo shall squawk at you? You sachems and chiefs, I say you no lie when I mek know to you how all thee leetle stink-birds of Ohio have sang into thees old fool's ears!

"So it is not for my Colonel but for the army of thee great Farthair in Vashington, D. C., to say to thees ole cockeye paroqueet, 'Go home to Detroit where thee British will listen to you, but don' stay here where there is nobody to listen to you in thees ancien' capital of the Creeks!' "

Utter silence followed. Then, swaying slightly upon his bony horse, The Prophet, his vermilion rags a-flutter, waving his lance, began to intone a colourless, monotonous chant:

Wa go nain,
E win?
A be yun ah,
A be yun ah—
Ye of the Clan of the Wind,
Clan of the Wolf,
Clan of the Bear,
Ye who bear the mark of the Awasees,
Clan of the Heron,
Clan of the Hawk——

"Damnation!" I shouted to Barse, "shut that fool's mouth!"

The witch-doctor fairly screamed at me in English:

"I am a Shawan! I am a witch! No bullets harm me! I have charms against Yankee bullets for all who join with me! I have made medicine on the Ohio. There are a thousand Wyandotte hatchets to confirm it! There are a thousand Miami hatchets brighter than the sun! All the world knows I am a great witch!"

"All the world knows you for a drunken fool," said I. "Squirrels and jays and crows understand you. They talk as you talk—tic-tic-tic, caw-caw-caw—yow-yow-yow! There is your proper audience. Go to them!"

Then I swung around toward the council, sitting motionless and astounded, nation beside nation in absolute silence:

"Sachems and chiefs—is there one among you who

desires to listen to this old bag full of British rum?"

At that The Prophet began his squalling chant again, whining out the invitation to the Algonquin clans, boasting that the Delawares were his already and every warrior had been made magically safe from Yankee bullets.

"May I lay hands on him?" I asked Hawkins.

"No," he said, "it can't be done. And look yonder; here is real trouble coming; here is Tecumseh himself, with his war-chiefs and witch doctors, and God knows what I shall find to say to him! God only knows."

The Prophet was still chanting when Tecumseh rode slowly up, followed by a dozen gorgeously painted Indians, and drew bridle at the fire's edge.

There he and his suite dismounted, but Tecumseh advanced all alone, with all the graceful carriage and calm dignity that was peculiar to him.

He wore a kind of golden turban set with a single yellow feather. And he alone was painted brightly for war, masked in yellow and white, and his head closely shaven except for the braided scalp-lock.

Naked to the waist, oiled, shining with yellow and white paint, he carried in one hand a belt of red wampum and a bundle of little red sticks, and, in the other, a pipe-tomahawk from which fluttered an eagle feather.

He looked at Colonel Hawkins, and Hawkins looked at him. No word passed between them.

Then, with a lithe, light step, he crossed the fire space, stood a moment as though to inhale the aro-

matic smoke drifting about him, lifted his head with an indescribable movement of pride:

"*Listen,* Sachems, Chiefs, wise men of the Creek Confederacy," he began in a voice so beautiful that it startled me—"warriors of the East and South—and you Lost Men who hunt in lands no enemy can penetrate—and you Choctaws and Cherokis and Chickasaws and Chippewas who love your birthlands which belong to you, and from which you have not yet been driven by ruthless Americans——

"*Continue to listen,* brothers of the Creek Confederacy, and you shall learn how these Americans have taken from the Miamis, Delawares, and Eel River Indians their lands upon the Wabash——"

At that, Colonel Hawkins interrupted sharply: "You are a Shawanese chief and you have nothing to do with the Miami country! The President of the United States determines such matters. That is the business of the Great Chief in Washington. Mind your own business; and if you have anything to say to my children the Creeks, say it and begone with your own fool of a brother!"

The Prophet began to yell in fury, but I started toward him and he gave ground, making hideous faces at me.

"This business of yours must be stopped," I said to him. "Do you think Colonel Hawkins has called down the nations to listen to your foolery?"

He hissed at me, displaying black, toothless gums,

and his scarlet rags and feathers quivered all over him like a bristling flamingo.

In the momentary quiet Tecumseh's wonderful voice broke clear and tranquil:

"Has not a Shawanese, born of a Creek mother, fire-right at a Creek council?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Colonel Hawkins.

Then Tecumseh cast aside his blanket and stood revealed in nearly six feet of half naked, painted symmetry:

"Brothers: Colonel Hawkins tells us that the seizure of the Miamis' lands is the concern of the Great Chief in Washington. I hope that the Holder of Heaven will put sense enough into his head to relinquish these lands. But who can tell; he is safe; he will not be injured by any war. He can sit safely in his lodge in Washington and drink his wine while you and I have to fight it out here!

"Continue to listen!

"Brothers: as I rode through your forests to this place, I heard strange and evil birds singing in the trees.

"Brothers: I am sorry that such birds sing in your woods and fields, and hope you will close your ears to them.

"Continue to listen!

"Brothers: I have come a long way to see you. I have come to open a magic path for you, and have cleared all trees from it, all briers and stones and every poisonous serpent, and have made for you pleas-

ant fords through deep rivers, so that you shall neither drown nor stumble over alligators and crocodiles.

"Brothers: I have set a line of heavenly stars to guide you upon this path which stretches smoothly from Okichobi to the Ohio; and have entangled the moon in a high pine to light your feet at night; and have taken away all quicksands, saw-grass, and poison weeds, lest they obstruct and harm you.

"Continue to listen!

"Brothers: a tall tree fell in the Shawanese country, and we Shawanese found in the hollow under it a hatchet!

"Brothers: we have polished this hatchet and have showed it to the English.

"Brothers: we have shown it to the Wyandottes, and to the Miamis. And now we show it to you——"

He drew his war-axe from its beaded sheath and displayed it.

"Continue to listen!

"Brothers: together with this hatchet we bring you a little bundle of sticks painted red.

"Brothers: to show you that we speak the truth we also deliver to you this belt of scarlet wampum!"

Amid terrible silence he strode to the fire and held out the war-belt. The Choctaws stared at it as though fascinated; no Cheroki offered to touch it; but a Chickasaw sachem took it in his hand, held it for a few moments amid increasing excitement, then gravely placed it on the ground.

Instantly the Black Cat sprang into the fire-ring and

kicked the belt toward Tecumseh. A Chickasaw war-chief picked it up. Then the great Shawanese war-chief took the belt from him, and, glaring past the Black Cat directly at Colonel Hawkins, hurled the red belt at his feet amid a stupendous roar of voices. Once more a Chickasaw chief picked it up.

"Tecumseh," said Colonel Hawkins, "I understand you. And this is an evil thing you do. Any Indian in America who follows your example shall never again cast net, bend bow, light fire, or lay him down to rest upon the land where he was born!"

"Squirrels chatter," retorted Tecumseh, scornfully. "Let my white Colonel read these red sticks and set them in a row on the ground at his feet! They mark the course of the Ohio—which shall be the western boundary for all Yankees!"

He hurled the painted sticks at Hawkins. They fell scattering across the fire-circle.

"Sir," said I to him, "shall I take that red belt from the Chickasaws?"

"No."

The Choctaws and Chippewas were handling it, too. Barse whispered to me:

"They have accepted it, sare. Thees is ver' black day for United States!"

"Tecumseh," said Hawkins calmly, "have a care what you do. Your British allies will be defeated in the end, and will certainly desert you as they deserted the Six Nations in the War of the Revolution!

"Your people and any other people who follow you

will be driven across the Mississippi and herded there under American bayonets till the last Indian shall be dead on earth!

"This war is no business of yours. It concerns only Great Britain and the United States. If you meddle in it you perish!

"Even if your dream of uniting all Indians in one vast confederacy and of driving the Americans from the West, came true, the British would rudely awaken you and turn on you and take from you your lands, and drive you still farther westward!

"Think well what you are about in stirring up these Creek nations to make war upon the United States! And if you let loose your warriors against us, and against our helpless settlers, and their women and little children, neither your god nor ours will forgive you, and they and we shall punish the Shawanese nation to its utter extermination!"

"Do you know what my name means in the Shawanese language, my white Colonel?" asked Tecumseh coolly. "It means 'Flying Tiger.' Consider it! And tell your young men to beware the tiger's leap!"

He turned his back, walked swiftly to his horse, leaped upon it.

The Prophet already had scrambled aboard his nag, and sat atop like some hideous scarlet bird. The other Shawanese mounted their horses.

So they rode away, slowly, solemnly, Tecumseh leading; The Prophet bringing up the rear, chanting, twirling his painted lance:

Neen a
Neen a,
Ta wa e ya
Ta wa e ya,
Bai baian,
As shan dan
O Shauwus hko gizhig oong a—
Neen a
Neen a——

"Holowagus," sneered Barse, looking after him, "dam ol' fool! Oui, da! B'en sure! C'est Moowis lui même—thee hell-bebé made by le bon Dieu out of dung and rags!"

Now, amid the stirring and confusion and the rising roar of excited voices, the chiefs and sachems of the Chickasaws arose from their places in the council circle, wrapped their blankets around them and, without a glance at Colonel Hawkins, departed in silence, carrying the red belt.

The chiefs and sachems of the Chippewas followed them, gravely, filing solemnly away toward the encampment of their nation, followed by hundreds of Chippewa warriors, women, and children.

For a little, the Choctaws hesitated; their sachems turned to look across the fire at their old friend and respected agent, but their warriors stood with heads averted and blankets drawn; and presently they, too, filed away, gloomily, without a sound, followed by a thousand men and women of the nation from whose

crowding masses not a murmur nor a whisper was heard.

Other groups of Indians continued the exodus—Miamis in black and scarlet ceremonial paint; a few wild looking Winnebagos and wolfish Wyandottes all attired in the barbaric splendour of otter pelts, beads, and brilliantly dyed deer-skin. With them were some crazy-eyed pagans—Saukies and Mandans—wearing bulls' horns, and painted heavily in red and white and black.

Finally the Cherokis rose—a superb lot, light of skin, tall, shapely, their faces and bodies beautifully painted in circles and triangles of light green, white, lilac, and pale orange, under white plumed turbans.

One after another their war-chiefs and sachems came to take the hand of Colonel Hawkins, press it, and depart in silence. But other Creeks did not look toward him as they left the circle.

All the flat-woods now swarmed with Indians streaming in throngs toward their several and unknown destinations.

I said quietly to Colonel Hawkins: "We appear to be in a somewhat perilous place, sir."

He gave me a heartbroken look; he had aged ten years within the hour.

"Sir," said he, "there is nothing more to be done in the Creek country. I shall leave for Washington."

"But—*can* you leave, sir?"

"I think so. I think that the Cherokis will see to that. I do not expect that the Creeks will begin their

murderous business before they confer together. . . . What further orders are you under, Captain Brooke?"

"To try to intercept all British agents between the Ohio and the Perdido; scout north of Pensacola and in the vicinity of the Tallahassee; make my headquarters at Fort Mims, and establish contact by express with Andrew Jackson."

"Good God," he said under his breath.

As he spoke I looked about for my youngster, but could not see her. She was not with Joe Barse and the Black Cat; nor could I see her slim, leather-clad figure among my savages anywhere. A shock passed through me, but, in the same instant, I caught sight of her, riding her horse and leading mine; and behind her, in double file, rode my leather-legs led by Ben Glimming—a complete column in full marching order, batt-horses, led-horses, forage, the mounts of Barse and Black Cat, and our three rifles in buckets, ready to be slung over shoulder or saddle.

I gazed at her and at Glimming in silent wrath, incensed that she should take such a liberty, and that he should countenance it.

He observed the expression of my face and gave me a bewildered look. I turned on her as she pulled in her horse beside me. But before I could utter a word she put her arm around my neck and bent swiftly to whisper in my ear:

"I ordered them here in your name. I'll tell you why. One of the Shawanese chiefs with Tecumseh had *blue eyes!*"

"Wha-what!" I stammered.

"He was painted and half naked, like the others, but I noticed his blue eyes; and I watched him closely.

"And when Tecumseh and the Prophet got on their horses I ran into the woods and stood among the crowd to see them pass. They rode by so close to me that I could see their smeared eyelashes and smell their paint and bear's grease. And I looked at the blue-eyed Indian and knew him!"

"Who——"

"Hobbs! Noakes' murdering mate. And I heard him say in English, to Tecumseh, that there were five hundred guineas offered for your scalp and mine, and that he had positive orders to do your business for you."

"What did Tecumseh reply to that?" I whispered.

"I scarcely understood; but I think he said that you could not get out of the Creek country alive; and that Hobbs, whom he called McCanty, must continue on to the Seminole country and Pensacola."

Her arm was still clasped around my neck; I moved my face and placed my lips against her sun-tanned cheek and kissed her.

"Thank you, my dearest friend," I whispered. Her cool, smooth skin burned against mine a moment.

"You were in a rage and quite ready to flog me," she whispered; "so flog and be hanged—and if you kiss me again I'll bite like a coral snake!"

For an instant I felt the edge of her white teeth

grazing my cheek bone, then she freed my neck of her arm and regained her saddle, laughing.

I said to Colonel Hawkins: "Will you take our escort into Mims' Fort, sir?"

"No," said he in a dull voice, "I shall not leave for another week or two."

"You dare remain, sir?"

He said that the Creek Confederacy would move cautiously toward a rupture with the United States.

Then he bade good-bye to Naïa and kissed her hand; and we rode past him at salute, and away into the western forest.

Once, turning in my saddle to look back, I saw him standing in the sun, all alone by the dying fire which nobody had covered. The smoke made a mist around him which wavered and floated and rose and fell like cobwebs spun of spider-gold.

"Ride close to me," I said bluntly to my youngster.

"You promise not to flog me, sir?"

"You are dear to me, and you know it damned well!"

"Am I so damned dear to you that you curse the tender circumstance?"

"For God's sake don't plague me," said I, "for I have the care of you and twenty men upon my mind, and conscience——"

"And of some score horses, too, sir——"

"Damnation——"

"There you go again, cursing your tenderness for leather-legs and horses! I begin to believe that you

conceal a vast and secret capacity for every tenderness and love——"

"Barse!" said I harshly, "how does it happen that you and Black Cat noticed no blue-eyed Shawanese among them?"

"Begar," said Barse, scratching his head till the fox cap tilted over his humorous nose, "I was regard thees Tecumseh chief all time lak he goin' make cat-jump. Me, I don' see thees blue-eye Indian, sare. The eyes of madame are like the eyes of children who see where we see nothing."

"And you, Black Cat, where were your Indian eyes?" I demanded.

The Black Cat said something in an embarrassed voice to Barse, who interpreted: "He ver' chagrin', sare. He say eyes of Black Cat mus' be in he tail."

Laughter relieved us all.

After a few miles we turned southward in order to cross any trail toward the Seminole country. A vast bog spread ahead of us—a world of drenched gold in the declining sunlight, set with black-jack gum, saw-grass, and reeds.

Over it ran a muddy way of marl and sand, which seemed to stretch as far as the eye could see. Snakes and alligators basked on it; great, long-legged birds stalked along it, intent upon reptile-haunted pools, or stood motionless upon one leg, like brooding demons in the slime.

Glimming looked at the road, aghast.

"Spanish man mek thees road," remarked Barse,

"—Conquistador Espagñol. Ver' much snake, begar! Regard it, my Captain."

"Hell's howlin' hurricane," growled Glimming, "I'm a fiddler's slut if I travel it."

I looked across the strange trail: "You don't like it, Ben?"

"I'd rather be kissing spiders in hell than travel it, sir."

I struck my horse with leather heels, but he only snorted and refused the road.

Then I got off and led him. A fat, whip-tailed snake rose from his coil and showed me a gaping maw that glistened as though lined with white silk. I killed him with a stick and tossed him into the slime.

Ahead of me a big, lumpy alligator suddenly humped up high on his four crooked legs, then moved toward the water. Another, nearly as big, sprang overboard in a single leap; and the splash startled thousands of water-birds into screaming flight.

Half a mile ahead the road crossed a low island set thick with reeds and gum trees. It commanded the narrow causeway.

"From yonder island," said I to Ben Glimming, "we can stop this trail to all messengers sent to inflame the Seminoles, and hold it against the entire Shawanese nation, if necessary."

He admitted it, profanely.

I called to a rifleman named Wier to dismount and lead his horse alongside of mine, and together we would clear out the snakes.

He came forward, leading his horse, but when he reached me, for some reason or other he turned and looked behind him.

As he did so I heard a whizz and a splitting sound, and Wier fell flat on his back; and I saw that an arrow, feathered with scarlet, had struck him full in the eye and pierced his brain.

Before I could shout an order a shower of arrows whistled around us, striking the reeds, the water, bouncing and slithering over the hard ground.

"Carry your men forward!" I cried to Glimming, "and take cover on the island!"

"Trot out! Gallop!" echoed Glimming's voice.

I pulled my horse aside to let them pass. Poor Wier's horse joined them, galloping with empty saddle. I had lifted the dead leather-leg and meant to save his body from mutilation. It was useless, now, and I laid him down where he had fallen, and turned to mount amid another whispering flight of arrows. And saw my youngster waiting for me. Her saddle bristled with red feathered arrows and one hung from her cap.

"My God," said I in a passion, "will you get along and continue the movement, you little fool!"

"Hurry, sir," she begged of me, "look behind you!"

I got to horse and turned my head. The flat-woods swarmed with naked, painted, running creatures, loosening their arrows as they came on, and now beginning to cast aside bow and quiver to open fire with their trade muskets.

Bang, bang, bang, came their shots as we kicked our horses into a run. Behind me I heard an English voice shouting; and I was trying to pull my rifle from the bucket when down came my horse, flinging me headlong.

I tried to get up, but a half naked savage, blazing with paint, hurled his hatchet at me. The handle hit me, knocking me down again. As I staggered to my knees once more, Burke rode up and fired from his saddle, then drew his war-axe and began to whirl his horse in circles, striking about him in the rifle smoke.

There were others there, too, and I heard Glimming cursing and Barse shouting amid a very hell of horses which surrounded me.

An Indian fired at me, so close that he set the fringe on my rifle shirt afire. Somehow I got hold of his greasy body, but he was so oiled and painted that my grip slipped and I could not hold him or prevent him from reaching his knife.

For an instant, as we swayed there, locked together, panting, I saw his eyes were a blazing blue, and knew I was clutching Hobbs in a death embrace.

Then he wrenched his arm from mine and disengaged his heavy knife; and, as he swung it, I heard Naïa's voice crying, "Help, for God's sake!" and she fired her pistol at him from her saddle, breaking his right arm.

The knife fell at the shot; I snatched it from the sand, but it was Burke's war-hatchet that severed the soul of Hobbs from his mangled body.

"Oh, hurry!" panted Naïa's voice in my ears, "get onto my horse—behind me——"

"Get out of this! You'll be killed!" I gasped.

"Burke!" she cried, "take him up behind you!"

At her cry Burke whirled his frantic nag and, bending, dragged me off my feet so that I scrambled up behind him.

And now our leather-legs disengaged their horses from the yelling whirl around them, and we all turned bridle and rode for our lives.

And I saw my youngster's crazed horse bound forward into a superb stride beside us; saw Naïa, wild with excitement, riding with upflung arm that clutched an empty pistol; and heard her childish treble pierce the galloping tumult:

"Yo-ho-e-lee! Yo-ho-e-lee!" as she lifted her voice in the terrific battle cry of the Nation of the "Lost Men."

CHAPTER VI

MIMS' FORT

ALL that day and night we held the causeway amid a very bedlam of noise. "Yoho-ee—lee! Yoho-ee-lee!" came the terrible Seminole war-cry; "Ya-hio-hio-hio! Ya-hio-hio-hio!" yelped the Tallasees, banging away at us with their trade muskets.

Two or three times their naked Shawmans, hideously painted in red and white, came out on the wood's edge to make medicine with their magic wands and witch-bags full of rags and feathers. But they stamped and postured and rattled their gourds in vain, for no warrior ventured within range of our long brown rifles.

The causeway being too narrow to admit of more than two or three men abreast, we considered ourselves secure on our little island where we lay snug among the reeds and gum trees. Their arrows could not reach us at all, and the bullets that fell among us were already spent when they arrived.

After the sun went down we lighted splinter-wood torches at convenient rifle range. They fired at these, hitting them now and then, but not extinguishing them, and the flaming light-wood burned till sunrise.

Through Ben Glimming's pocket telescope I could see the body of poor Wier lying where he fell, and stripped, but not scalped nor otherwise mutilated.

Joe Barse explained that a scalp taken was always considered an act of war; and that the Southeastern nations had not as yet formally declared war against the United States.

He looked through the telescope, and so did the Black Cat and Ben Glimming who understood these matters. There seemed to be some British officers among the motley company which consisted of Indians of several nations—Shawanese, Creeks, Seminoles, and a Western pagan here and there; but they all were in ceremonial paint and not in war paint—showing that their murderous behaviour had been spontaneous and not premeditated.

Among them we discovered several outcast white men, and a number of maroons and quarter-bloods—roaming marauders from cane field or indigo vat—scum of the wilderness, ever ready for robbery and murder, war or no war.

And just now they were behaving like a parcel of baffled wild-cats, prowling restlessly along the forest's sedgy edge, or gathering on the causeway to observe us as near as they dared venture. And I concluded that we must have stopped some of their forest-loping agents from the Seminole country, and that they realized they must take a longer cut to arrive there, or sneak back to the Ohio and to Colonel Proctor who doubtless sent them.

We had lost by this sudden and wanton onset one rifleman, killed by a Tallasee war-arrow. No bullets

had hit any of our men or horses. Arrows had, however, but they did not seem to be poisoned, and the wounds suffered by our men and horses were so slight that we could break the shafts and pull them through and stop the wounds with moss soaked in brandy.

We were safe and we knew it when the sun rose over the marsh, and the rays fell with agreeable warmth upon our island camp.

Naïa did not wake as I disengaged myself from our doubled blanket. She lay like a flushed child, lips scarcely parted, breathing regularly, one sun-browned hand relaxed across the butt of her empty pistol.

Our leather-legs smiled as they noticed it in passing, and Burke, kneeling beside her, gently disengaged the horse-pistol from her yielding fingers, wiped the powder stain from the palm, and took the weapon away to pick the flint, prime, and reload.

She was still asleep when our videttes called out to me from among the gum trees that a British officer, in full uniform, was advancing over the causeway, followed by another officer of the Indian Department who carried a white flag.

I summoned Burke and asked him if he thought he could hit the flag without injuring the bearers. He said he thought he could, and, lying down, fired on the flag and hit it.

At that the red-coated officer stopped short and began to gesticulate and shout at us, but as we were not at war with the Creek Nations I would not recog-

nize his flag. Burke fired another shot over his head, and he and his comrade turned on their heels and walked back to the mainland.

The firing had awakened my youngster, but when she learned what had happened she merely yawned and lay back in her blanket. Burke mended the fire and fetched her some breakfast; I sat by her while she ate. It was evident that the excitement of yesterday was telling on her; she had little appetite, seemed tired, yet lay regarding me with a glint of humour in her sleepy eyes.

"Lord," she murmured, "what a scrape you did get into, to be sure! It should teach you not to stray too far from me, sir."

I spoke with gratitude of the shot which had broken McCanty's arm; but she averted her face with a shudder, saying that the sight of blood made her ill, and that she desired to forget such things.

I told her I was glad to hear it, and hoped that her senseless passion for adventure was satisfied. She asked:

"Are you seeking an excuse to be rid of me?"

"I merely wish," said I, "that you were safe from harm in New Orleans, or in Mobile, or at Mims' Fort."

"Do I not make you a good leather-leg?" she asked sullenly.

"You are only a child—and so heedless and fearless that my mind is never at ease concerning you—"

"Nor is mine at ease concerning *you!* So you see,

at least we share our fears together, if nothing else—except our blankets."

I was vaguely aware that my solicitude for this wayward youngster was more deeply rooted than I suspected; and that the soft tendrils of her personality had so subtly entangled and embraced my mind that no thought of mine, now, was free of her.

"I wish to God," said I, "that you had remained at Cock-crow Hall. It is where you belong, and where you ought to rule. And I say it with conviction and with every respectful sentiment——"

"At moments," said she, "I entertain for you such violent sentiments that I could box your ears."

"What the devil is it that angers you now?"

"Nothing angers me, sir; I merely desire to give you a beating."

"Why?"

"Your very question gives me added reason for beating you. I could beat you because you don't know why I wish to beat you. So talk no more to me of Cock-crow Hall."

There was no use trying to follow such an argument. I started to get up, in no amiable mood, but her hand detained me, and I knelt there looking at her in discomfort and sulky perplexity.

"Am I quarrelsome and unkind?" said she in that melting voice which I distrusted.

"N-no. But you say things—plague me—find in me much to deride—"

"Do I so?" she asked very gently.

"Well, you jeer at Cock-crow Hall. It hurts."

"What do you know of hurts," said she, "who never have known love?"

"No man," said I, "can honestly deny having loved. I never denied it. I have loved——"

"For how long at a time have you ever been in love?"

"For several—hours," said I, reddening.

She flushed scarlet; "I'm not speaking of your amours, sir; I'm asking you if you ever have been in *love!*"

"No, I haven't."

"Well, then, *I* have been in love. And still am. And it hurts."

I gazed at her, shocked.

"You tell me you are in *love,* ma'am?" said I, incredulously.

"I do."

"With whom?" I blurted out.

"And, moreover," said she, "it was love at first sight—I mean on my part."

"Is it that damned Frenchman!" said I, disgusted. "Are you still thinking of that little swine?"

She shook her head, smilingly:

"No," said she, "but my poor Hector was really in love with me—after his own fashion. And that's something."

"And—the other? Is he also in love?"

"With himself, sir, and smugly enamoured."

"Another swine," said I. "Probably some spindle-

shanked rake you met at Lady Vulper's. . . . Or at Thanes Close. . . . I told you that those pretty fellows never married anybody. Didn't I? . . . They're nothing but hell-rakers. . . . Well, ma'am, I must say I'm astonished and disappointed in you. . . . And it becomes painfully clear to me now why you refused to become my wife, and mistress of Cock-crow Hall——"

"—And breed you a cock-fighting, gambling, duelling, fox-hunting heir," she interrupted. "Yes, sir, it ought to be very clear to you, now, that a young girl desperately in love is not likely to marry *you!*—and your ancestral halls and stables and kennels—and cock-walks, and all the rest of the damned estate!"

Her face had turned stormy; her colour was high; her grey eyes brooded lightning.

"Never," said she, "have I known so complacent a gentleman as are you, Mr. Brooke; and why I retain any warmth at all in my heart for you, I do not understand."

I got up in a stunned kind of way. What the devil it was all about I didn't know, or why I had been flayed so mercilessly. For even if, unknown to me, she had been in love with somebody else all this time, what harm had I committed in asking her to be my wife?

I looked down at her, and she looked brightly at me with an expression strange, vivid, and unnatural.

"One would almost believe that you hated me," said I.

"Sometimes a hair divides my sentiments from hatred, sir."

I turned and walked out among the gum trees toward our videttes, angry, puzzled, depressed, and indignantly resolved to expel her utterly from my mind. . . . And discovered that I could not.

About noon the rifleman, Burke, reported that the enemy had gone off.

I called out a scout to reconnoitre, and went with him—and was vastly annoyed to find my youngster tagging at my heels, but far too mad to remonstrate or even notice her at all.

However, the report was true; and this cheered me. The motley marauders had disappeared, leaving the marks of several horses in the woods, and several filthy campfires.

So we buried poor Wier, saddled our horses, and, led by Joe Barse, started leisurely to patrol the wilderness where feeders of the Black Warrior trail offered to British agents many obscure roads into Pensacola, and eastward to Okichobi and to the entire country of the Seminoles from St. Augustine to the Perdido, and from Georgia to the Gulf.

But what could a score of horsemen do to stop these trails?

During January, February, March, and April my small command kept the field in a vast region where settlements were few and widely scattered, where forage and provisions were uncertain; where news of the outside world was scant and unreliable.

We lived in the saddle, and from hand to mouth.

Who were our enemies and who friends in these settlements we could scarcely make out, for they seemed but poor, dull folk, and often surly from fear, yet clung obstinately to their clearings, their rude homes, their gaunt, tick-infested cattle; and fortified their water-mills and larger dwellings with palisades of timbers eight or nine feet high, pierced for rifle-fire.

Mostly these settlements were to be found along navigable water-courses where was power to turn mills, and a marvellous deep, black bottom soil in which all seeds seemed to grow like magic overnight. And here were truck gardens, fields of cotton, tobacco, and flax; and, in some regions, corn and, in others, sugar cane. There were a number of saw-mills, too; and, in the flat-woods, slaves notched the pines for turpentine.

The settlers themselves seemed to be people of mixed origin and varied races—Anglo Saxons from Georgia and the East coast; Creoles from Louisiana, Northern adventurers drifted down the Ohio and Mississippi, Spaniards, Minorcans, Americans, maroons from Florida.

What these poor folk thought about the war was difficult to tell, but their main concern was their wretched clearings, their cotton fields, and mills. To these they clung, desiring no traffic with either party, and hoped to live unmolested.

It was in vain that I pointed out to them, in every settlement we entered, that this attitude was impossible to maintain, and that the ominous silence brooding over their wilderness was but the precursor of tempests.

We met Indians now and then—Creeks mostly—but no hostile ones; we saw no sign of the British; nor, unhappily, of their agents, Captain Vulper and Mr. Forney, sent to stir up the Cherokis and Seminoles.

Of our own troops we saw not a sign excepting an occasional express rider; and it was from these reckless, hardy scouts and messengers that we had news of what had happened in the outer world on land and sea.

Thus we learned that Governor Harrison, of Tippecanoe fame, now commanded our Army of the Northwest, and was determined to retake Detroit and wipe out the late disgrace to our armies; that Colonel Campbell, with the 19th Regular Infantry, a regiment of United States Dragoons, Colonel Simrall's Dragoons, and a brigade of Pennsylvania Riflemen, with spies and guides, was operating against the Miami Indians who had taken the hatchet under Little Thunder. We had had a pitched battle with them, and had beat them.

Also we were informed that the left wing of the army, under General Winchester, suffering greatly from privation and cold, had been furiously assailed by Wyandotte and other Indians under Round Head, assisted by the 41st British Regulars, the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, and the 10th Veteran; that Winchester and his army had been defeated and made prisoners; and that, after the surrender, Proctor's Indians had murdered and scalped all the American sick

and wounded, and many of the disarmed captives, including their officers.

So, as far as affairs on land were concerned, our three armies—the Army of the Northwest under Harrison, the Army of the Centre under a noisy braggart named Smythe, and General Bloomfield's Army of the North at Plattsburg—had accomplished little and were, now, in winter quarters and standing entirely upon the defensive. A sickening state of affairs!

Thank God we had very different news from the sea; and we learned that Captain Decatur, in the *United States,* 44, had fought the British frigate, *Macedonian,* and had taken her after a terrific battle. We learned that our frigate, *Constitution,* had fought and captured the *Java,* 38; and we heard with mixed emotions that our sloop-of-war, *Wasp,* had taken the British sloop-of-war, *Frolic,* in a very gallant action, but that both ships had been surprised when helpless and grabbed by the huge and powerful *Poictiers,* a British 74 of the line.

Also we heard about the Prince Regent's manifesto, scolding the United States and charging us with "ungenerous" behaviour.

Perhaps Big Ben meant that it was ungenerous of us to capture his pretty warships. I laughed and laughed at Prinney's pious indignation. Nothing in the world is funnier than a virtuously vocal Englishman. . . . And the scalps of Winchester's murdered prisoners not yet quite dry enough for painting.

And one other bit of interesting news we had, which

might indirectly affect our country: Bonaparte's huge and formidable army of invasion had gone to pieces in Russia and was almost utterly destroyed by cold and Cossacks.

Well, that was one blessing for which we had to thank the Lord God—we, in the South, were not subjected to the terrible Northern winter which froze our three armies into immobility and sealed up our new little navy on the Great Lakes.

Early in the year I had sent a friendly Yammassi runner to General Andrew Jackson, at his plantation in Tennessee, but had heard nothing from him.

In March the woods were full of wild-flowers—butterfly-like blossoms of yellow and white, fragrant Florida paw-paw smelling of lilies, jasmine scenting the mild air. In April I saw Cheroki roses in bloom; and in May the purple China-berry and the Asia tree, and gigantic magnolia trees with glistening foliage set with huge, perfumed chalices of ivory white.

But now the weather was growing very hot; our deer-skin clothing became almost unendurable; and in one of the Hillabee towns on the Tallapoosa we had our rifle dress duplicated in linen—fringes, leggings, and all.

It was there that a Yammassi runner from General Jackson found me. He came with news that Andrew Jackson was at Natchez with Hall's and Benton's regiments of Infantry and a corps of cavalry.

He wrote in his letter:

I am now at the head of volunteers who have no silly scruples concerning the Spaniards who are hostile to us and, practically, allies of England; and my men would rejoice at the opportunity of placing the United States flag on the ramparts of Pensacola!

I read this letter to Ben Glimming.

"That's the talk!" he remarked profanely, "and America is going to learn that there's never been a soldier like Andy Jackson since God made Grenadiers!"

General Jackson also wrote me that General Robertson's influence was restraining the Chickasaws and Choctaws from joining the British; that the Creek Chief, Thlucco, stood firm in our cause, although horribly threatened by The Prophet.

He ended by asking me to scout toward Mims' Fort on the Alabama River where hundreds of frightened settlers were gathering near Tensa Lake, adding that Major Hind's Dragoons at St. Stephen's Fort had discovered Creek Indians, in war paint, near Sinquefield.

Here it was at last, then; the Creeks had taken the British belt and hatchet and had painted themselves for war!

I sent a Yammassi with this news to New Orleans, where General Wilkinson commanded. He was that same gossiping, gabbling aide-de-camp of General Gates at Saratoga, who never failed to betray the confidence of every General who ever trusted him; and I was sorry he commanded in this region.

However, when we neared Mims' Fort, we learned

that a general shifting of commands had occurred in the South. General Flournoy superseded Wilkinson; General Claiborne, commanding at Baton Rouge, had taken the field; and General Jackson, snubbed and cruelly treated by little Jimmy Madison and his petty cabinet in Washington, and, as usual, betrayed by Wilkinson, had been obliged to march his fine army back to Tennessee and disband it.

Claiborne sent me a Miami runner, requesting me to make my headquarters at Fort Mims, try to reassure the refugee settlers about Tensa Lake, and keep an eye on Major Beasely who commanded at Mims' Fort, and who had a reputation for carelessness and a kind of fearless stupidity.

Peter, the Tallassee, [wrote Claiborne], with 350 warriors, and forty pack-horses, has gone to Pensacola for supplies, where the Spaniards feed him and make much of him.

There is, also, a British squadron in the Gulf; the officers are in constant and friendly communication with Pensacola, and are supplying Peter's Seminoles and Creek Indians with arms and ammunition.

This has got to be stopped; and I am sending Colonel Caller; Majors Phillips, Wood, and Jourdan; the borderer, Sam Dale; a company of spies; and two hundred mounted riflemen, to destroy Peter and his savages when they leave Pensacola and enter the cane brake and Pine Barrens beyond Burnt Corn Creek.

I prefer that your command should not take part in this expedition; I had rather you made camp near Mims' Fort and Tensa Lake. Major Beasely is a brave man but has a contempt for all Indians, which is not reassuring to me. Negroes and whites alike are

frightened; the entire population is trembling in alarm and is seeking shelter from the impending storm.

We arrived at Mims' Fort on July sixteenth. The weather was fearfully hot and we had marched by night and rested by day.

Fort Mims and the vicinity of Tensa Lake were swarming with refugees, black and white, in terror of the Creeks. In the woods around the lake many wealthy quarter-blood families, fleeing down the Alabama in boats, had established themselves in huts.

But, within the last week or so—though I could not see any reason for it—all these people were beginning to forget their fears. In fact, a new and baseless sense of security possessed them; gay good humour reigned among refugees, regulars, and volunteers of the garrison; and this was due partly to the careless confidence of the Fort's commander, partly to a reaction from terror and from many alarms which had proven to be without foundation.

When we crossed Pine-log Creek, above Fort Pierce, and rode by the boat-house on Lake Tensa, the refugees were making merry in the woods—guitars and fiddles were noisy, quarter-bloods, half-bloods, maroons, were dancing. And I saw some girls with skin as white as mine, among the delicately tinted quadroons.

Naïa, hot, weary, riding in sleeveless shirt, bare legs, and moccasins, brightened at sight of so much gaiety, and waved her slender hand to them.

"I hope the white people will have a dance, too,"

said she to me, wistfully; "it's a long time since there has been any gaiety in my life."

"War is seldom very gay," said I, sarcastically. "I warned you to stay at home."

"What home?" she demanded, reddening.

"You had an offer of a good home."

"I'd rather see a war and live in a hollow tree than count my fingers and toes in Cock-crow Hall—if that's what you mean!"

"Because you have a spoonful of brains and a childish temper which is ever at war with me——"

"War suits my temper," she retorted, "and I've brains enough to lend to others."

"Well, I'm damned glad you're obliged to remain safely in a fort for a while," said I with satisfaction. "And no matter how impertinently you treat me I always shall try to do my duty by you——"

"I wonder if you realize how smug you look when you talk that way!"

"I wonder why I don't take down your breeches and teach you sense with a stirrup-leather! Another word out of you and I'll do it!"

At that she turned white but remained silent. Although months of companionship and the impossibility of any privacy at all had made us intimate to a degree that left nothing to imagination, our friendship had not advanced. We quarreled constantly.

All that was possible to know about this young girl's varying and exasperating moods, I thought I

had now learned; and no doubt she thought she had learned quite as much concerning me.

I'll say this, however, that, except for her impudent girding at me and her jeers at Cock-crow Hall, what I learned of her merely added to my respect and liking. Whereas I was convinced that what she had discovered concerning my character was, by degrees, recommending me less and less to her good graces. And, at times, that hurt and depressed me oddly, and out of all proportion to her wayward impudence and my warm but unsentimental friendship for her.

There remained, however, one consolation; her sauciness and my resentment never lasted; she cherished no malice, nor did I; and a quarrel was forgotten within the hour, and hasty words ignored.

Well, we found no quarters in Fort Mims; the place, terribly over-crowded, was being enlarged by the addition of outer stockades; but there were as yet no added accommodations to be had for us or for our men and horses.

Mims' Fort was one of those so-called "forts" very numerous, now, in that region—like White's Fort and Fort Sinquefield on the upper Bassett; Fort St. Stephen, Fort Claiborne, Fort Pierce, and Curry's Fort—which, usually, were but stockades enclosing some mill or store-house, or the larger residence of some rich planter.

Mims' Fort was the residence of a wealthy old gentleman, Samuel Mims, Esq. It was built of wood, one story in height.

Around it an acre of ground had been enclosed by pickets pierced with five hundred port holes for musketry.

To east and west two ponderous gates represented sallyport and postern.

A partly finished block-house formed the southwest bastion; and, within the stockade, stood other buildings—a kitchen, a Mrs. Dyer's house, a Mr. Steadham's house, a loom house, and cabins and stations used as barracks by officers and troops under Captains Bailey and Middleton, and others. The fort stood on a very slight elevation, about ten miles from the junction of the two rivers, just south of the Alabama, and almost on the eastern shore of Tensa Lake; and the ground seemed to me to have been poorly chosen for a fort.

Every alarming rumour, every backwoods whisper, every sinister bit of gossip in the United States seemed to find its way into Fort Mims. Already my men spoke of it as Fort Calamity.

Yet, when we rode into the eastern gate we heard fiddles playing; saw young folk dancing on the parade; saw children noisily romping; and the sand blown in such heaps against the great gate that it could not have been closed in a crisis.

As Major Beasely ranked me, I reported to him. He was a fat, jolly, jocose officer inclined to pooh-pooh everything.

He welcomed us cordially, was sorry he couldn't accommodate us; sent tents to Lake Tensa for our

encampment, and detailed slaves to build us rough stables and a cabin.

"This garrison is perfectly safe," he said carelessly. "We can hold out against the entire Creek Confederacy. I've men enough for defense, and I really don't need your detachment; so pray feel quite free to continue your scouting whenever it suits you, Captain Brooke."

This sort of talk disturbed me. I told him what I'd seen at Tukabaka and the causeway. It made not the slightest impression. Nor did it seem to worry him that Tallasee Pete and his braves were in Pensacola.

"Oh, hell," he said, "we'll take care of 'em if they come this way. I could whip the Tallasees and take Spanish Pensacola with a hundred riflemen, if I chose."

He was a genial hare-brain, and kind; and when I introduced him to Naïa he offered to give up his own bedroom to her, and seemed really sorry that she refused, saying that all officers' wives ought to be properly accommodated and that he cared not where he slept.

When Naïa smilingly declined, he sent a soldier to a Mrs. Dyer who had a house on the parade; and the lady returned word that we might sleep in the reserved bedroom until the General arrived.

But Naïa wished to lie in a tent by the lakeside; so, afer a few more polite exchanges, we turned our tired horses and rode back to the boat-house where, under

the trees, our tents already had been pitched, and a palmetto thatched hut was being erected.

Ben Glimming reported that provisions were plenty and that he had drawn rations and forage. I told him not to trust to Major Beasely's sentinels and pickets, but to post videttes and maintain all necessary discipline in this rest-camp.

Naïa was too tired to go and watch the dancing. Our hut was done and two camp-beds from the garrison installed; and there we slept—I until reveille, she until noon.

The July weather was so hot that I relieved our men of all except most necessary duties; they bathed in the lake and lay under the trees; the horses drooped under their flimsy shelter; a deathly hush lay over the land—lake, woods, fort were silent under the paralyzing tyranny of the sun.

At sundown the mockingbirds stirred, and sang a little. Big fireflies drifted through the scented dusk; fish rippled and splashed in the lake; great, shadowy, winged birds flapped across the fading sky.

I heard the deep, jarring harmony of a guitar, velvety voices, laughter as musical as a song where already vague shapes flitted under the trees.

Along the lake, beyond the boat-house, distant fiddles squeaked where the free blacks, slaves, and maroons were capering.

But here, where we encamped, the wealthy quarter-blood refugees were gathering among the trees by the water, with their own Pani and negro slaves.

They had built their cabins far back in impenetrable forest recesses where none could discover and attack them; and to these they could flee at the slightest alarm.

Some of our men who were off duty went over to the fort to dance; a few sauntered down to the lake; and, seeing so many pretty girls, and many as white as they were, danced with them.

It was a pretty sight in the forest where, ringed with blazing torches of light-wood, these white-gowned, graceful creatures were dancing, laughing, gliding about from ruddy light to depthless shadow. Their laughter was like music, their voices, wildly charming, seemed to have been born of moonlit forest sounds.

A wing of Holden's Dragoons had come in that afternoon and made camp a mile below; and some of these red-jacketed troopers were coming in and joining in the dancing.

They had a rum bombo in a cask a-cooling at the lake's edge, and other tubs of punch in which peeled fruits floated; and into which all were continually dipping gourds and drinking amid increasing gaiety and more frequent outbursts of laughter.

I saw Joe Barse there, footing it with a dusky belle who giggled as he pressed her supple body.

Glimming came for orders, and I told him to see to it that none of his men got drunk or lay out in the woods all night, moon-gazing with some dusky and acquiescent nymph.

About ten o'clock I mounted and rode away to visit our outposts, leaving Naïa sewing some new fringes on her linen leggings.

When I returned to the cabin she had gone. There was a good deal of an uproar from the lake where the dancing seemed to have become both noisy and wild; and I went down there and discovered her sitting on a fallen tree in the woods, watching the whirling tumult by torchlight.

The din was deafening; the wealthy quarter-bloods were turning their dance to an orgy. They were making their slaves, Pani and black, dance Indian and jungle dances to the noisy rhythms of rattle-gourds and drums; and these young Indians and Africans, only too willing, shouting, excited, and, stripped naked save for Creek flap and jungle gee-string, were dancing, stamping, chanting, streaming with sweat, already half crazed by rum and moonlight, and terribly exciting the quarter-bloods in whose veins the madness of the equator lay always hotly latent.

Boisterous laughter, shouting, singing, drum-thumping, gourd-rattling rose to a confused, melodious roar. Holden's red-jacketed troopers and our leather-legs, hands joined, were whirling quarter-blood girls in a dizzying circle, and the white gowns of some of them were already in shreds, and some bare-foot and dishevelled, and some naked to the waist, dark hair up-tossing, flying through fire glow and shadow—under a waning moon.

A brown girl, flung violently out of the yelling

vortex, reeled into me, caught me around the neck, panting, and began, blindly, to kiss me and to twist her garland of jasmine around me, binding us breast to breast. And before I could stir, Naïa had torn us apart, flinging the flowery rope in the girl's face; and, catching her by the naked shoulder, slung her back toward the human whirlpool into which she went spinning.

It all happened in a flash, leaving Naïa breathless, and me staring stupidly at her.

Before I could stir she had turned on her heel and was walking swiftly toward our cabin. Where I discovered her, presently, making a bundle of her nightgown and necessaries, and stuffing them into her haversack.

But at my first word she flew into a passion, saying that my behaviour was revolting, and that she was going to Mrs. Dyer's to sleep and leave me full liberty to pursue my black amours.

"Damnation," said I, "was it any fault of mine that——"

"You let that shameless, half naked creature kiss you! You kissed *her!*——"

"What folly——"

"No," she flamed, "I'll not remain in this cabin! I'll never sleep with you again! You affront your race! You outrage every instinct in me. Have you the effrontery to suppose I shall endure your depravity——"

"Hang it all!" I burst out, "what are you talking

about? Whatever depravity may be in me, it doesn't tend in that direction!"

"I know what I saw," she retorted breathlessly, seizing her haversack. As she turned I caught a glimpse of her tragic face. Then she ran out of the door.

For an instant I thought to let her go; then I followed; and saw her hurrying on ahead toward the fort.

We reached the gate together, where a slack and sleepy sentry admitted us; and we went on across the parade toward Mrs. Dyer's house, Naïa ignoring me and keeping her face averted.

At the Dyer house she knocked on the door; but when it opened and Mrs. Dyer appeared, I coolly took the initiative before Naïa could open her lips, saying that my wife and I desired shelter for the night.

Mrs. Dyer, a plump widow, had been preparing to retire, but now, learning who we were, welcomed us very kindly and sent a slave with a lighted candle to show us our bed—which stood in a small room reserved for General Claiborne whenever he visited the post.

Naïa's flaming cheeks and restless, stormy glances, showed me very plainly that she meditated escape; but I drew her arm through mine, thanked the slave, and bolted the door after her.

"Now," said I, "I'm tiring of this. You're under my care; I've got you on my mind; I'm responsible

for you; and I mean to keep you within sight and hearing because you're irresponsible and there's no knowing what you might do."

She said nothing but started to draw the bolt.

"If you don't undress and go to bed," said I, "I'll undress you and put you to bed!"

Her hand fell from the bolt; she drew a swift breath which was like a little sob. After a silence she began to unlace her hunting shirt at the throat. Then I extinguished the candle.

When she was abed and under cover, I drew off moccasins and hunting shirt and, lying down on the bed, drew her head against my shoulder. She resisted with a stifled sob, but after a little remained quiet, her cheek hot and wet with tears.

"I didn't kiss that drunken girl," said I.

"I know it——" Her lips scarcely moved.

"What is all this misunderstanding between us, then?"

"None, sir—not on my part—for I understand us both—only too well."

"If you do," said I, "why do you jeer and gird at me?"

"Because I have no sense. I told you so long ago."

I told her she had all the sense in the world if she chose to employ it. I told her that she was stubborn and perverse, and that it was feminine caprice and obstinacy, and a desire for excitement, and an aversion to duty and responsibility, that made her refuse to marry me and become mistress of Cock-crow Hall.

I felt her cheek quiver a little and a tear roll off it onto my naked shoulder.

"I can't marry you," she said in a stifled voice, "I *can't.*"

"Because you are in love?"

"Yes."

"But you tell me you are not loved in return."

"What difference does that make?"

"If it's hopeless why not marry me?"

After a silence: "Here is a strange thing I tell you," said she, "that because it is hopeless I shall not marry you; yet, were there hope, I might venture to be your wife."

Here, again, was another of those perplexities and paradoxes with which it amused her to plague me, and concerning which it was futile to argue or to pursue the subject any further.

She seemed to know what I was thinking, yet, instead of laughing, sighed. And, after a little, drew her cheek from my shoulder and turned her back to me.

I lay awake for a long while, thinking about her, about Cock-crow Hall, but was drowsily planning a scouting trip up the river when sleep overtook me.

The drums at the fort awoke me. Naïa gave me a shy but smiling good morning, then buried her face in her arms while I dressed.

A little later she joined me at breakfast with Mrs. Dyer.

We had thanked the fair widow and were crossing the parade, when we noticed some excitement near the quarters of Major Beasely, and I saw some jaded horses tied there, and near them three mounted volunteers, all over mud.

As we passed, Beasely came from his house, walking toward Captain Bailey's barracks, but, seeing us, came toward us.

"Colonel Caller's command has been cut to pieces by Tallassee Pete's Indians at Burnt Corn Creek," he said bluntly. "Dale's wounded, Caller and Major Wood, and Captain Bailey missing; killed and wounded unknown, but those that could run are still running."

"Do I understand," said I in amazement, "that Tallassee Indians have done this?"

"Is it not sickening, sir? By God, I'd like to see them attempt this post! There must have been bad management somewhere. I can't understand it—yonder volunteers, who have just fetched the news, were in the battle.

"They had already driven the Indians into the creek, and were chasing their pack-horses when, God knows why, a panic seized them, and they fled in shameful confusion with the astonished Indians at their heels."

This seemed to be all he knew—all he could get out of the three exhausted, dejected fugitives.

The news disturbed and angered me, and, when Naïa and I reached our camp, it disgusted Ben Glimming and my leather-legs.

What to do now, I was undecided; and determined

to postpone our scout to Brasier Landing, up river, until I heard more about Colonel Caller's disaster. His route to Burnt Corn had taken him just south of Brasier and Canoe Place, but his fugitives should arrive from south of Little River if any were left to arrive.

That day I doubled our videttes along Pine Creek. About noon General Claiborne arrived from Mobile, amid a tremendous clatter of cavalry.

I mounted immediately and rode to the fort to pay my respects to him, and found him inspecting the defenses.

He was a splendid, energetic, muscular officer, wearing the handsome dress of a Brigadier; and had with him a squadron of Baton Rouge Dragoons and some regular cavalry of Flournoy's command.

"Sir," he said to me, "I begged General Flournoy to let me strike the Creeks in the Coos region, but he won't let me because they have not yet declared war. We ought not to wait for that. But Colonel Hawkins has just sent word to General Flournoy that he had the Creeks in hand again, and that's why Flournoy waits. It's all wrong; Hawkins can't hold them; the time to strike is *now!*"

I respectfully agreed with him, and so did Beasely, noisily.

"I've sent cavalry up the river under Colonel Carson," he went on; "I've sent Captain Scott and his cavalry to St. Stephen's—which is only an old Spanish block-house. Hinds and his dragoons and Captain

Dent I sent to the Choctaw frontier. I don't know what else to do as long as Flournoy and Hawkins believe in those damned Creeks. . . . Are you all safe here, Major?"

"Perfectly," replied Beasely, with a careless laugh.

Claiborne glanced about him:

"Better clear your gates, Major. And you'd better build two more block-houses. I'm detailing Rankin's scouts to this post. Why do you smile, sir? To respect your enemy is to beat him, sir. To regard him with contempt invites disaster."

Beasely took the light admonition gaily. Claiborne shook hands with us. He was on his way to St. Stephen's Fort to see what he could do to win over the Choctaws.

As he got into his saddle he said to me that Caller's disaster had terrified the entire region from the Perdido to the Alabama, and that everywhere the planters and their families and slaves were pouring into the stockades; and he asked me to scout along the grand route to Pensacola and try to learn what the Tallasees were about.

We saddled and rode out of our camp at Lake Tensa on August seventh. For two weeks, in that torrid weather, my small command scouted toward Pensacola. On the twenty-third of August, at the little stockade called Easley Station, which was full of women and children and lay sixty miles south of Mims' Fort, we encountered General Claiborne again, with a

body of dragoons from his headquarters, arriving to reinforce the Easley garrison of ten riflemen.

He told us that all was quiet at Fort Mims, and begged me to leave my leather-legs here to help defend the stockade, saying that Beasely had more men than was necessary to hold Mims' Fort, provided he exercised ordinary caution against surprise.

I very willingly turned over Ben Glimming and our leather-legs to General Claiborne; but I had been expecting to hear from General Jackson, and hoped to find something from him at Fort Mims; so decided to ride thither alone, having no apprehension of any danger between Forts Stoddart and Pierce and Tensa Lake.

I asked Naïa to remain with our command, but, as usual, she would not; so did not dispute the matter; and together we started on our sixty-mile ride to Mims.

On the twenty-ninth of August, about five in the afternoon, at a spring in the woods, we encountered a company of horse from Fort Mims, sent out by the Major to assist the small stockade at Easley Station.

I was surprised that Major Beasely should weaken his garrison; and became further concerned when the ensign in charge told me that early that morning two black slaves belonging to a Mr. Fletcher and a Mr. Randon, who had been out herding beef cattle, came running into the stockade with the startling news that they had seen twenty Indians on the edge of a swamp.

"Sir," continued the ensign, "these poor slaves were

terrified, but gave a very particular account. They declared that these Indians were naked except for their flaps and ornaments; their faces were painted black; their heads buried in eagle feathers; and buffalo tails attached to their war-belts dragged on the ground behind them. They further asserted that these Indians had two witch-doctors with them, painted scarlet and carrying medicine wands, and rattles, and medicine bags.

"Sir—it does not become any officer to criticize a superior officer," said he, "so I merely tell you that Major Beasely charged these Negroes with lying, and ordered Mr. Randon to flog his slave, which he did; but Mr. Fletcher refused to flog his; and Major Beasely was so angry that he has ordered him to take himself, his wife, and a numerous family out of the fort by ten o'clock tomorrow, and never show his face there again."

It was difficult to believe. I gazed blankly at the little cavalry ensign, and he looked seriously back at me.

"When you report to General Claiborne," said I, "tell him what you have told me."

"Very well, sir."

He saluted me, bowed to Naïa, spoke pleasantly to his horsemen, and spurred away southward under the great oaks.

I wished to consider this disgusting business before riding into Mims' Fort. The water, here, was good; so was the grazing.

We off-saddled, but I would not make a fire, and we ate what ration we had, cold.

The spring formed a little sandy branch, and there was a deep pool below, full of little fish and a white sand bottom. Here Naïa had a bath; and, when she had done, I had one.

But I did not believe it prudent to sleep near the spring, so we led our horses through the starlit woods for half a mile, and there wrapped us in our blankets and slept in safety until the sun aroused us to another clear and sultry day.

We rode into Mims' Fort on August thirtieth, at ten o'clock in the morning, and saw Major Beasely sending off an express to Claiborne.

He waved his hand gaily to us, calling out that he had just written to the General assuring him of his ability to maintain the post against any number of Indians.

We sat our saddles, watching the express gallop off.

Beasely said: "A couple of damned niggers rushed into the fort yesterday with a cock-and-bull story about Indians.

"One of 'em has been flogged for his lying story. Fletcher, who owns the other, has concluded he'd better flog him than be expelled from the fort. There's the nigger, yonder, tied up for a flogging. By God, I'll teach 'em they can't terrify folk in my fort!"

I asked him coldly whether there was any word for me from General Jackson, and he said there was not,

and invited us to remain to dinner. Which I declined to do, politely.

I was too disgusted to converse with this military jack-ass, so merely saluted and wheeled my horse, saying to Naïa that I'd have nothing to do with such an officer and such a fort, and preferred to camp at Tensa.

To this she agreed willingly. So we rode down to Tensa. There was not a soul to be seen there, except a Pani Indian herdsman, searching for his bullocks. He told us that the alarm at the fort had so frightened the maroons and quarter-bloods that they had all disappeared, taking refuge in the fort or in the impenetrable fastness of the forest.

This hint was not lost on us; so Naïa and I made camp in the woods well out of sight of the lake and between it and that densely wooded island which lies between the two rivers and the cut-off, and where these quadroon fugitives would remain concealed without fear of discovery.

I had made a little wagon-wheel—or Seminole—fire, and was setting water to boil, when Naïa called to me that the meat had gone bad in our haversacks, and the corn meal and rice were covered with green mould.

So I slipped a halter on my horse and mounted bareback, saying that I'd be back with rations in a few minutes.

"Take your rifle and cartridge sack," she said.

I said it was not necessary, but she dropped the oranges she had been peeling to make a salad with

palm-bud, and ran and fetched my rifle, sack, and flask of priming powder.

"I'd rather you didn't go," she said. "Isn't the palm-salad enough for our dinner?"

"I'm hungry," said I, "and it's but a step to the fort. What troubles you, Naïa?"

"Major Beasely seems such a fool. . . . I don't like to have you anywhere near him—"

I smiled at her, waved my hand gaily, and urged my horse through the woods at a canter.

Outside in the open country the sun's rays fell like blows. I let my poor nag choose his own pace where the heat-devils danced high over the baked earth. There was not a cloud in the sky, not a breath of air. God knows why so many buzzards were soaring overhead, but it was near dinner hour at the fort and they may have smelled the cooking.

As I dismounted I noticed that the eastern gate of the fort still stood wide open with some drifted sand against it.

Soldiers were loitering about, and I spoke to a sergeant, saying that the gate should be kept free of sand in case of an emergency. He saluted listlessly and slouched off to summon a fatigue detail, although everywhere soldiers sprawled, playing cards, or gossiping, or dozing in the shadow of the pickets.

But the parade was noisy enough, where a hundred happy, shrieking children were playing games and tumbling about, after the manner of all children.

Near Mrs. Dyer's house two fiddlers were playing a

waltz, and a score or more of young girls and youths were dancing, weaving gracefully in and out among the tents and cabins.

As I walked toward the kitchen where the women were preparing noon dinner, I noticed the tragic form of Fletcher's negro tied up, his back bared for the lash —because Major Beasely had decided he had lied.

Such a chill of disgust seized me that, had I encountered that officer at the moment, I might have insulted him. . . . I am glad I did not.

At the garrison kitchens I received two rations of butcher's meat, corn meal, rice, sugar, and lettuce; a quadroon girl was packing them into my haversack, when the garrison drum began to beat for noon dinner.

Almost at the first tap of the drum I heard a woman cry out and a child scream. Turning my head to see what had happened, I heard Major Beasely shouting hoarsely to several soldiers to shovel away the sand drifted against the eastern gate. Some soldiers who had been at cards got to their feet in a stupefied way.

"For Christ's sake, fetch your shovels!" bawled the Major, seizing the massive gate and shaking it, but it would not budge.

"Look out!" yelled the soldiers, "here they come!"

A fearful shrieking arose from the scores of little children as they scattered like a flight of terrified birds, bursting in among the tents and cabins, from which piercing cries of mothers mingled with men's hoarse shouting.

I saw nothing.

I dropped my haversack and rations and ran toward the eastern gate, but had not taken two steps before a rush of naked Indians choked it, overwhelming the soldiers and ripping them to pieces with hatchets and knives, beating Major Beasely to his knees with their death-mauls—a yelling, painted avalanche of naked devils pouring into the outer stockade, capering, firing, swinging or hurling their glittering war-axes and death-mauls among the masses of shrieking children.

Major Beasely, streaming with blood, staggered to his feet by the gate, calling to Captain Middleton to help him close it; but they cut him to pieces with their knives and hatchets. Middleton, using his sword, tried to force his way to the gate. The next moment he dropped dead, brained by a casse-tête; and his entire command, engulfed in the frightful mêlée, were surrounded, crowded against the pickets, and hacked to pieces.

Realizing that no guards had been set, and that the place had been utterly surprised, and seeing that there was neither discipline nor order, and not knowing what else to do, I ran to Randon's house and began to fire, as rapidly as I could reload, at the Indians who were slaughtering the children.

Then, across the parade, I caught sight of Captain Jack with his company of riflemen. As I ran toward them I caught a full view, through the east gate, of the outer stockade and the open country beyond. Gateway, stockade, and fields were literally black with fighting, screeching, rushing savages streaming toward the

fort. Through the port-holes of the log pickets, separating the inner fort from the unfinished outer stockade, the remnants of Middleton's soldiers were firing; and the Indians, thrusting their guns into the same port-holes, fired back into their very faces.

As I ran toward Jack's riflemen, Captain Dixon Bailey shouted to me to gather what men I could and drive the Indians out of the south bastion, where they were murdering women and children.

The outer west gate was open, and the west guard house swarming with Indians, but the inner gate was closed, and I discovered in it enough muskets and cartridges to arm a few old men and boys. Three young women, also, volunteered; and these frightened but desperate people I led into the block-house where, from the port-holes, we could fire eastward into the yelling hordes who were killing, scalping, and disembowelling the women and children, leaping about knee-deep in one vast, promiscuous mass of tender, bleeding bodies, and wrenching from quivering corpses bright curls and glossy braids of blood-wet hair.

I saw a painted Indian, riding a superb black horse, ride up in the very blaze of our musket fire and attempt to save a little girl who was crawling away from the reek on hands and knees. But the Indians, utterly crazed with blood lust, threatened him with their streaming knives and tomahawks; and he cast a tragic look up toward our smoking port-holes, turned his horse, and galloped off.

A sergeant, who had joined us, said that he was a half-breed Creek, and son to the beautiful Sehoya.

A sergeant, whose name was Matthews, seemed very cool. He said to me in a low voice that all the children, and nearly all the white women, had been slaughtered, but that the Creeks were sparing the Negroes to make slaves of them.

"There's nothing more to fight for here," said he, "and if we remain we'll all die. I wish, sir, that you could persuade Captain Bailey to cut the pickets and make a dash for Fort Pierce."

I went down the ladder and stepped outside into the smoke, and, making my way cautiously behind the kitchen and along the southern stockade, came in among Bailey's riflemen who, from the barracks, were firing in three directions.

"Yes," said Bailey, "we should try to reach Fort Pierce."

Dr. Holmes, assistant surgeon to the garrison, lowered his smoking rifle and turned to Bailey:

"Lieutenant Chambliss reports that all avenues of escape are held by the enemy, sir."

"We've got to get out or die," repeated Bailey.

Two more of his men fell as he spoke, shot in the back by Indians using the stockade port-holes. It became evident that these barracks were untenable; and Captain Bailey led into Mr. Mims' house, where the poor old gentleman sat in a rocking chair as though dazed.

But we had let loose only two volleys from this shel-

ter when a cloud of fire-arrows came whistling down; and in a few minutes the roof was brightly ablaze; and the fire, leaping like lightning from shed to outbuilding, seized on Mrs. Dyer's house, then lashed out and enveloped Steadham's house and the garrison kitchens.

I saw Mrs. Dyer lying dead and frightfully mutilated, in her doorway; there was nothing to do there; but at the kitchens a horrid butchery began; and we fired and fired into surging masses of savages who were murdering those poor people who ran out of the burning kitchens; but though our bullets tore gaps in the swaying crowds, so maddened and ferocious were these painted, screaming fiends, that they never left the blazing barracks until they had murdered the last wretched inmate.

The entire interior of Mims' Fort was now a raging conflagration; every building was afire except the block-house; and, over our heads, Mims' house had become a roaring furnace.

"Make for Patrick's Loom House," shouted Bailey.

As we rushed from the burning building I caught old Mr. Mims by the arm and dragged him out. An Indian—a dark phantom in the smoke—hurled his war-axe at me, but it crashed into the skull of the poor, tottering old gentleman who fell sprawling. I managed to shove the muzzle of my rifle into the stomach of his murderer and blew out his entrails.

Then, with clubbed rifle, I drove blindly ahead, and presently stumbled against the Loom House, where a

blind fight was raging among cornered riflemen and naked savages.

It ended quite suddenly, the Indians disappearing in the thick smoke, and we backed into the bastion to reload.

"Dr. Holmes," gasped Bailey, "take an axe and cut away two or three palings. We've got to go, and go at once!"

When the drum beat at noon for dinner there had been five hundred and fifty people in Mims' Fort.

There were twelve men and a coloured girl in Patrick's Loom House. All the rest were dead, except such Negroes as the Creeks had saved for slavery. Not one white woman or one child remained alive; every burning house was choked with bodies; corpses covered the parade—murdered children lay in heaps, dead women in windrows.

Sergeant Matthews, who had been helping Dr. Holmes and two soldiers of the Mississippi regiment to cut a way through the logs, remarked in his pleasant, self-possessed manner that he had counted over three hundred dead savages from his post in the block-house, and believed that at least another hundred lay dead outside the east gate.

"Sir," said he, "I do not believe we shall survive to win through to Fort Pierce. But, if you get through alive, might I respectfully request that you notify my wife, Hannah, of Natchez?"

"Yes, I will," said I. "And if I fail, and you gain your freedom, do you search in the Tensa woods for a

young girl wearing rifle dress, and give her this note from me. Her name is Naïa Strayling."

I fumbled in my pouch for a bit of cartridge paper, and, with the end of a charred stick, scratched the message:

All dead except thirteen at Mims' Fort. Remain hidden in Tensa woods until Claiborne sends soldiers. This is my last will and testament, and my desire is that you have Cock-crow Hall and all property belonging to me.

I beg you instantly to seek protection of General Flournoy in New Orleans, and go North as soon as possible.

If you receive this, Fate will have dealt me the death card—that black queen we gamesters dread.

Nevertheless, it was a good game. And so, good-bye!

August 30th, 1813, at Mims' Fort.

JOSHUA BROOKE,
Captⁿ, McClure's Rifles.

In the ominous, deathly lull which had followed the assault on the Loom House, I could hear the long-drawn, melancholy death cries of the savages quavering through the smoke and flames.

Sergeant Matthews witnessed my signature, signed his name below it, and placed the paper in his cartridge sack.

Lieutenant Randon asked me what time it was. I pulled out my watch; it was five o'clock.

Captain Bailey said quietly that we had better start.

So we dressed in a single rank and loaded our pieces.

Those who were in that ragged, bloody, powder-blackened rank were: Lieutenant Randon of the Volunteers; Lieutenant Chambliss; and privates Perry, Hoven, and Jones, of the Mississippi Volunteers; Dr. Tom Holmes; Sergeant Matthews; Martin Rigdon; Josiah Fletcher; Sam Smith, a half-breed; Socca, a friendly Creek Indian; Hester, a coloured girl; and myself.

Dr. Holmes pulled away the severed pickets; Captain Bailey went first; we followed in single file.

The smoke from the burning fort was so heavy that we had nearly reached a shallow ravine full of cedar trees and gums and oaks in thick foliage, when we heard a Tallasee screech his war-cry. Instantly the smoke swarmed with devil-shapes, and a storm of bullets swept us.

Captain Bailey fell across the stump of a cedar; I tried to lift him; he died in my arms; and I dropped him. I had lost all direction in the smoke and stood bewildered.

"Run foh the lake, suh," panted the Negro girl; "I got a canoe down yondah!"

She had been hit in the shoulder by a bullet, but she caught my hand and pulled me with her, streaming with blood, and sobbing drearily as she ran.

CHAPTER VII

INTO THE NORTH

A HORRIBLE yellow fog veiled land and water. Ashes, glowing fragments, shreds of women's dresses afire drifted earthward. A deathly stench spread from the blazing fort and corpse-choked barracks where the women and little children lay butchered in one promiscuous, viscous mass.

From every direction sounded the raucous whooping, hooting, yelping of blood-crazed savages; everywhere in the stinking smoke buzzards were soaring and flapping in our very faces.

The poor, wounded black girl, Hester, blinded and bewildered, lost her way, and led me by mistake into the boat-yard where a drunken Coosa warrior was trying to trim and braid the fresh scalp of a little girl with long, glossy hair. But he was not too drunk to spring instantly upon Hester; and he had already clawed off her turban and torn the red cotton dress from her body before I had a chance to drive a hatchet into his head.

I never have seen a braver woman than that black girl. Frightened, sobbing, her naked, trembling body streaked with blood and sweat, she dragged herself free of the painted beast whose dead fingers still

clutched her. In the woods across Pine-log Creek arose the ghastly falsetto yapping of Spanish Seminoles and the shrieks of their victims.

"Soun' lak dey's killin' a shote," sobbed the girl, covering her shrinking ears with her fingers.

I took her arm to steady her, and drew her away from the shore and into the water, ankle-deep, among the reeds.

Of a sudden there came a scurrying rush of Indians into the boat-yard, and we saw they were chasing a white man who wore a fox-skin cap and buckskins. As they were busy butchering and stripping him, some people unseen fired on them from somewhere in the fog; and up they bounded and off, with their scalp-screech splitting the air—a score or more of spidery shadows, fading, merging into the misty horror which spawned them.

"Where is your canoe, Hester?" I whispered.

"Ah done hide it in de Pine-log cut-off, suh," she panted; "—oh, lawsy me, dee done shot me bad! 'Pears lak I'se all blood——"

"Can you find your canoe?"

"Yaas, suh. Oh, me, how I is a-bleedin'!—"

Creeping, crouching through the reeds, always watching the dark forms rushing to and fro in the smoke, we crawled past the mouth of Pine-log Creek to the cut-off where it flows into the Alabama River. Here billows of smoke and sparks, flowing from the north across Lake Tensa, gushed over everything.

And here the sobbing girl discovered her canoe—a

narrow craft dug out of a solid cypress log, in which lay a pole and a paddle.

She slid into the canoe. "Ain't you-all a-comin'?" she asked tremulously, her face grey from terror and loss of blood.

I shook my head: "Can you get to Fort Stoddart, Hester?"

"Reckon I'se 'bleeged to. Is you comin', suh?"

I told her I'd remain and try to find my wife.

"Dee gwine kill you, suh," she protested. "Ah ain' skeered fo' to wait twill you fin' yoh lady, suh."

But I gave the canoe a shove and it shot away down the outlet of Tensa and was lost in the rolling smoke.

Sick with apprehension, I crawled back through the sucking mud and shrivelled reeds to the shore, and, guided by burning grass and brush along the lake's eastern edge, came presently to the spot where, a few minutes before noon that day, I had left Naïa Strayling.

There was our burnt-out campfire. A few peeled oranges and shreds of palmetto-bud lay near it. Not very far away, among the cypress trees, my eye fell upon a white object—the stripped and scalped body of a woman. But when, dreading the worst, I dragged myself thither, I saw it was the body of a quadroon girl.

Farther away lay a white woman and two pretty children, all scalped and terribly mutilated. The woods reeked with murder; sparks had set fire to the underbrush; the flames crawled southward, burning brightly in the gathering gloom of evening. There was no life

here, nothing stirring except little red flames travelling everywhere close to the ground and licking up last year's leaves. But if Naïa Strayling were dead, she had perished elsewhere, and not here, for I found and counted all the dead on Tensa shore. The only living thing remaining was a snake the colour of burnished gold, which had been scorched and was writhing and twisting on the burned-over ground.

Darkness fell. The glare of flames from the blazing fort cast a shaky red light athwart the woods. From far away to the eastward came the yelling of savages vaunting their victory, and the thudding rhythm of witch-drums where their shamans and sorcerers—acolytes of the Shawanese Prophet—were making magic.

As I lurched hither and thither in the wavering darkness, half suffocated, blinded, a prey to voiceless grief, it came to my fevered mind that, as long as my poor youngster was not lying dead here in these ghastly shades of death there remained a bare chance that she had reached Fort Pierce.

This small stockade lay some three miles up Pine-log Creek; and thither I started on a dreary run, shunning all hog and cattle paths along the creek.

But when at last I staggered into the clearing, and had fearfully reconnoitred the silent, shadowy stockade, I discovered that Fort Pierce had been evacuated. The huge, timber gates of the fortification stood wide open; not one living thing stirred in the stockade except a little owl which sat on the postern pickets, uttering its melodious, trilling ululation.

Stealing into the starlit enclosure to search for food, I ventured, finally, to light a sliver of splinter-wood; and presently discovered a pile of freshly baked bread; many sacks of corn meal; plenty of salt, coffee, and pickled pork in the deserted kitchens. So sudden, evidently, had been the alarm and the panic of the garrison in their haste to flee that they left johnny-cake in the pans which were still warm.

Candles, also, I found, and I lighted one; and in the store-house discovered plenty of both ordinary and priming powder, new flints, sheets of cartridge paper with twine, and, in a corner, corded bales of newly made rifle-frocks, leggings, and full equipment for volunteers evidently expected, but who never had arrived.

So I stripped from me my blackened, filthy rags and dressed me in a new Mississippi rifle dress which was somewhat gaudy, having a fringed cape on the shirt, and long, green fringes from shoulder to wrist, and along the breeches-seams from hip to ankle.

Of thigh-moccasins I discovered a pair to suit me. And when, in darkness, I slunk out of that silent place, I found myself newly accoutred and clothed, and with ammunition and provisions aplenty.

I dared not sleep in the deserted fort, but lay in the woods from whence I could see the northern sky all red and fiery where the conflagration still licked those blood-soaked pickets of Fort Mims. Cat-owls yelped all night in the oaks, but no war-whoop sounded. And,

strange as it may seem, not one Indian came near the abandoned stockade.

Yet, after all, that is the nature of Indians; they bask like blood-gorged panthers after heavy carnage, and make no effort to follow up a successful stroke.

But what constantly and cruelly preoccupied me was the fate of my youngster. She had not died in Tensa woods; that seemed certain. If she had reached Fort Pierce, no doubt she had fled with its garrison. But whither?

To pick up the trail of the frightened fugitives was easy enough next morning; and all that day, which was Tuesday, the last day of August, I followed the plainly marked path of flight from cane brake to hammock.

Then, abruptly, on the edge of a great plain, it ended in ashes and underbrush still burning, which they had fired behind them to cover their trail. Miles and miles of velvety black waste streaked with a rime of white ash, spread away southward where lately had stretched a prairie of palmetto scrub and silver-grass.

No mark, no sign remained to guide me, yet I pushed on through the smoking débris toward a distant bluish line of cypress, believing they would seek such cover in their retreat.

Now, in the vast cypress which lay for three hundred miles ahead, I lost all direction and became miserably involved, making my way between shaking bogs and depthless sink-holes, and saved from a ghastly death only by following the saplings of the pines which, I had

been taught, promised safe footing in most morasses.

Thus, for nearly a week I floundered amid the cypress, searching for some sign of the unhappy fugitives where they had penetrated this dreadful place of shadows. Somewhere they must have entered these slimy and deathly shades; yet I never could discover the slightest trace of them; and every evening was forced to make my way out to the charred grass-land once more, there to lie by my little fire, and eat a crust and think about my youngster till grief and fatigue sealed my heavy lids in sleep.

Now there came a day when, on the edge of evening, and the sun kindling the west to a sombre conflagration, I entered a dark cypress head where all the foliage was full of preening herons, and wild ducks in thousands were settling in the swale.

Something—perhaps a deer—moved out there in the cypress, and startled the water-fowl into flight. Then I saw an Indian traversing the swamp, leaping from one cypress knee to the next with the soft grace of a cat.

It was God's mercy I did not shoot him, for he was oiled and painted for war, his face and body striped black and snake-yellow; and his narrow, deadly head, shaven close except for the scalp-lock, was buried under a tossing mass of deers' tails.

I swung my rifle on him, waiting only to see if there were any more, when a distant splashing broke upon my ears, and I caught a glimpse of horsemen wading a sandy branch and leading their horses; the red sunset

touching their buckles, shoulder-belts and helmets with dazzling fire.

Then the Indian, poised high on a cypress knee, clapped hand to painted cheek and hailed the wading horsemen: "Hiou! Hiou! Hi a mah! Lopko! Ni mijakka! Follow the pine saplings!"

What he had shouted was: "Come this way. Make haste! Here is dry ground!" I knew that much of the Creek tongue. Also I recognized this horribly painted savage, now. He was The Mad Dog's Son, a friendly Talladega, and one of Claiborne's company of native spies.

"Un gah!" I called out to him; "it is Captain Brooke who hails The Mad Dog's Son! Yah maw!"

At my first word the Indian vanished as suddenly as a woodpecker disappears around a tree trunk.

I stepped out of the swale, and showed myself, taking off my fox-skin cap so that the sinking sun fell full across my face. The Indian reappeared from behind a water oak and came toward me, leaping from one "knee" to another, and landing with a cat bound on the hard ground beside me.

"Wah!" said he; "che ho shar o fun et tah—you have been lost a long time, my Captain! At Mims fight you die. All say so! Wah!"

We shook hands gravely. I asked him what dragoons those were crossing the cypress. He said they were a small detachment of Flournoy's; regular United States Cavalry under Lieutenant Buck, carrying despatches to the North.

Flournoy's weary cavalrymen, leading their mud-splashed mounts where pines promised a footing, came slopping and churning to where we stood. They looked feverish and haggard under their heavy helmets and padded blue jackets.

Their officer, Lieutenant Buck, approached me to listen to the story I was telling The Mad Dog's Son in the language he could understand. Slowly, painfully, using what little I knew of the Creek tongue, and sign-speech, I continued the tragic story of Mims' Fort:

"Mims holowagus! Gate no shut. Heap sand. Dinner they cook um. Plenty Creek warrior they watch um fort. Ambush good. Beasely no see um.

"Bimeby drum beat for eat um sofki. Wah! Bimeby war-whoop. Yo ho ee lee! Children they kill um. Women die; soldier die; hal wuk! Me hiepus. Three more than ten escape—ash en ia wen ri!"

The Mad Dog's Son gazed at me in silence. Not a muscle had twitched to betray his excitement.

He said to the lieutenant very quietly: "Captain Brooke hiepus! Injun no kill um. Wah!"

"My God," said Buck, "are you Captain Brooke?"

He took my hand in both of his and held it, close gripped. In his sorrowful eyes I saw that he knew what I dared not ask him, and that he was going to tell me.

"Is my wife dead?" I asked.

"No, Captain Brooke. But she is a prisoner."

"With the Indians?" I asked in a sick voice.

"She was taken by British cavalry and ought to be safe."

"Where are they taking her?"

"To Quebec by way of Detroit and the Lakes."

"Tell me what you know, sir," I said wearily.

"Sir," said he, "when the Creeks surprised Fort Mims, your wife, hearing the yelling, mounted a horse and galloped toward the fort in order to be near you; but was intercepted by the savages and chased westward, finally arriving at General Claiborne's camp on the river.

"Here Mrs. Brooke discovered a Negro girl named Hester, who had just come in with the first news of the massacre, and who said she had left you at Tensa Lake searching for your wife. There came to Vernon Camp, also, a Sergeant Matthews and two Mississippi soldiers, escaped from Mims' Fort, who told your wife that they had seen the savages kill you in Tensa boat-yard——"

He shook his helmeted head. "Yes," said he, "their mistake cost your wife her liberty. . . . By God, you have a gallant and devoted lady, sir. I was standing near when this Sergeant Matthews broke the news to her, and handed her a shred of paper which he said was your last message to her.

"She was so blinded with tears she could scarce read it; and for a moment we feared she would faint away. But she straightened up—I can see her yet in her ragged rifle dress, her proud head held high and steady:

"'They shall not have my husband's body!' she said. 'He shall lie under the trees of Cock-crow Hall! Who will go back with me?'

"We tried to make her understand that we must call in troops from the forts before we dared bury the dead. She would not listen. She said that there were leather-legs at Easley Station who loved her husband, and there she would go for help.

"That night she stole out of Vernon Camp, saddled her horse, and was gone before anybody could stop her. And she made a terrible mistake, because the British warships at Pensacola had landed infantry and cavalry to escort a mission to Sir George Prevost at Quebec, and straight into these she galloped, who made her prisoner so close to Easley Station that the garrison exchanged shots with them and nearly rescued her."

"Is this certain?" I asked, hoarsely.

"Very certain, sir. The report comes from Lieutenant Glimming and an Indian called the Black Cat, who recognized her and who had ridden out to meet her. They were ambushed and shot down and carried back to Easley Station by riflemen; but Mrs. Brooke's horse was hit, and became unmanageable and carried her among the British Dragoons who made her prisoner. . . . And, after all, sir, you could have far worse news of her. The British are gentlemen—excepting such as Proctor. And she might have been dead at Mims' Fort or, worse, a captive among the Creeks."

I nodded. After a silence:

"I am wondering," said I, "if there is any chance of my getting through to Easley Station."

"None, sir. All the Hillabee towns are up. The Creek nations are in revolt and the entire country swarms with savages. All settlers are fleeing toward Mobile, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans. Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana will become but a vast and melancholy desert. If Tecumseh and his Shawanese and Wyandottes come down from the Lakes they will drive us all into the Gulf of Mexico—unless Harrison and his army of the Northwest can hold them. That, sir, is the actual situation at this moment in Alabama!"

I said to him, bitterly, that Andrew Jackson should have been permitted to assault and destroy Pensacola as he had wished to do; and that Claiborne should have been allowed to strike the Creeks before they fell upon Fort Mims.

"Oh, hell," he burst out violently, "we've all been ruined by that fat fool Wilkinson in New Orleans! We're sick of Jimmy Madison in Washington, too, and of old Doc Eustis, and of Armstrong. The Secretary of War doesn't seem to know that this is the most terrible Indian revolt that ever has happened in North America.

"Far be it from me to curse General Flournoy," said he, "but I wish to God that Andy Jackson and Billy Harrison had the management of this Creek war.

Believe me, Captain, there'd be no more Fort Dearborns, no more French Towns, no more Fort Mims. And no more Prophets, and Proctors, and Tecumsehs, and Black Hawks! No! But you'd see the Indian scalp-fur fly, by God!—and a pile of yellow hides to tan that'd cover the country from the Coosa to the Tallapoosa and make saddles, bridles, and boots for the whole army!"

That night Mr. Buck and his dragoons camped on dry ground for the first time since they had entered the cypress. We were in a perilous country; guard was mounted and relieved every three hours; the mosquitos were terrible, but as the embers of palmetto roots were aglow in the darkness all over the plain, we dared light a fire for our cooking and lie in the smoke of it, which helped us to endure the swarm of insects.

Before sunrise we were on the march, I riding one of their led-horses. I could not now hope to reach my command at Easley. There was nothing else for me to do than to ride with these dragoons. And it comforted me to be riding in the same direction that my poor youngster was following, even without the faintest hope of seeing her again until the damned war ended.

It was a thirty-day journey to Harrison's outposts at Sandusky. That was where the dragoons were going. And thither I rode with them.

All that long, hot day we rode, guided through

cane-brake, slough, prairie and cypress head by The Mad Dog's Son.

He did our hunting for us; we had broiled venison for supper and sugar cane from a field where a murdered white man lay beside his dead mule, both already picked to the backbones by buzzards.

The next day it was the same, and the next and the next; and all through the Creek country northward during many days heavy with swamp mist and burning sun, where lonely clearings showed deserted plantations, burned cabins, and sometimes dead people festering in the charred ruins.

In Tennessee and Kentucky it was better weather among the highlands.

Twice, native whites, riding express, passed us—lank, sunburned men with high cheek bones and narrow blue eyes, carrying appeals for help to the President of the United States, thirty-one days distant at Washington—and who, they said, had become so terrified over the treachery of New England that all will power had left him and he sat, day after day, huddled over his desk in the White House, suffering his cabinet to direct the nation in this shameful crisis of defeat and disgrace.

As for me, this northward march was becoming a nightmare. I did not know where I was. I did not know how I ever was to get to the Mississippi and to New Orleans where I might perhaps have news of my leather-legs.

All the Creek country was now in the throes, hor-

rors, and convulsions of insurrection, and from every settler, refugee, and scout we met came an unvarying tale of wholesale murder.

On September twentieth we intercepted a friendly Wyandotte runner, sent by Governor Shelby to General Andrew Jackson. His naked, dusty body was all blotched with red clay, and striped with dry blood where briers had wounded him.

The Mad Dog's Son said to him, calmly: "Wah! Haio thlucco holowagus; the month of August has been bad for everybody. But the Moon of the Falling Leaf must see the end of Pensacola, or the Creek witch drums will be setting our dead bones dancing from the Perdido to the Tennessee."

The Wyandotte said to me: "Tell your General to take his best riflemen and slay Tecumseh. Nothing else can save you white men. Let him pay no attention to Proctor; he is a dog and a coward. Let him take no notice of The Prophet; he is a liar. There is only one way to save the sixteen fires: kill Tecumseh! Say that to Harrison!"

That night the Wyandotte runner departed. We camped on the edge of a corn field, and two of our troopers went across to the planter's house which did not seem to have been molested. Our troopers came back, sickened, saying that people lay freshly butchered in it, and the floor was swimming with their entrails. That night we heard witch drums at a great distance; and The Mad Dog's Son and I crawled through the woods until we could see a circle of quivering, ruddy

light among the trees, where hundreds of goblin shapes were dancing, stamping and yelping around a sapling from which the partly burned body of a white woman sagged.

Now in the early October we found ourselves in that tragic territory south of the Great Lakes where had been the scenes of our early disgrace. Here were a few farms and clearings and roads and stubble fields, mostly deserted, and some burned; but farther on we passed through small settlements where we saw a few people in the fields, but they ran when they caught sight of us.

I remember we were riding along a good road, a little after sunrise of a magnificent October morning, when we came suddenly upon a man plowing near the roadside fence.

He left his plow and started to run, but I put my horse to the fence and chased and caught him.

At first he was too frightened to speak; but when at last he understood that ours were American dragoons he took hold of my stirrup and wept, and showed me scars on his arms and body where he had been flogged by renegades at French Town.

And it was from this poor farmer we learned that, only a few weeks ago, our little fleet under a young officer named Perry had fought a furious battle on Lake Erie with the entire British fleet, and had broken their line of battle and taken every one of their ships.

While we were questioning him we heard a heavy,

distant reverberation from the northward, like thunder, but saw no storm-cloud.

Lieutenant Buck thought it sounded like cannon, but I was not sufficiently accustomed to such sounds to offer opinion.

The poor farmer said that the Moravian town lay in that direction, and that to reach it we could ford the little river below us. The river he spoke of as La Tranche.

Scarcely had we crossed La Tranche, and trotted out a mile or two among the huge oaks on the northern bank, than we suddenly found ourselves among a swarm of dragoons riding everywhere and scouring the open woods. There seemed to be hundreds of these troopers ahead of us, all wearing leather helmets, yellow plumes, brown jackets, and white breeches, and mounted on handsome, nervous horses that trotted through the woods as daintily as so many deer.

Already a dozen or more of these active horsemen had galloped up to surround us. They turned out to be Kentucky Dragoons of Shelby's command, acting as flankers to the army of the Northwest, which, they told us, was in full chase of Colonel Proctor's column of British regulars and Tecumseh's Indians.

That was enough for us, and we clapped spurs to our nags and pushed for the main body; and presently were trotting along the flanks of three thousand Kentucky horsemen—blue dragoons, and mounted riflemen in green and white, all thundering on through the open woodlands.

An officer of mounted rifles, riding out to question us, told us that we were close on Proctor's heels and warned us to beware of the Moravian town which, he said, they had orders to burn.

A few moments later we saw a general officer and his brilliant staff pass at a gallop, and learned that it was Major General Harrison with old Governor Shelby, and the young Commodore Perry who had left his ships to serve on Harrison's staff and help make an end of the infamous Proctor.

Fighting began almost immediately somewhere ahead. Somebody said that Colonel Johnson's Mounted Infantry were already in touch with Colonel Warburton's British Regulars.

As we drew bridle we saw a battalion of the 27th United States Regular Infantry moving forward at the double. Gay flourishes of bugle music rang through the forest; distantly we heard the enemy drums and bugles replying. A major of flying artillery galloped up, followed by his guns and caissons. I saw an officer and eleven privates, belonging to a British Dragoon regiment, being marched toward the rear under guard of Colonel Simrall's Kentucky Dragoons—a magnificent body of men.

Away toward our left rear a terrific racket arose; vast volumes of smoke crowded up and pushed skyward above the trees where our cavalry was setting fire to the large Moravian town.

General Harrison, splendidly uniformed, passed us again, and I saw him take off his gold-laced cocked hat

to grim old Shelby who sat his saddle like a rock, at the head of his superb Kentucky division.

Noticing us, he asked who we were, and then rode over to us and accepted our salutes and Lieutenant Buck's despatches which he glanced through and handed to his adjutant general. He said something to one of his suite—General Cass, I believe—who requested us to act as headquarters troop; and away galloped General, staff, Buck's Dragoons, and myself toward the extreme right of our forming line of battle, and drew up where was a burned bridge over a small river.

Almost immediately our bugles sounded; out among the huge trees and sparse undergrowth moved our mounted infantry and cavalry; and, as our General, staff, and escort spurred forward, I saw the red coats of the British Regulars for the first time—His Majesty's 41st Regiment in magnificent battle array—blocking our advance with a solid scarlet wall.

There was a flash of British musketry, a roar, a huge white powder cloud blotting out their ranks.

For a moment the Kentucky horses were frightened and recoiled, but their riders kicked them forward into the smoke; the charge gathered momentum; mounted rifles and dragoons plunged ahead with a tremendous shout, and the whole column burst headlong upon the British line of battle.

Never had I heard such an uproar; the horsemen plunged on into the second rank, broke it, wheeled right and left and began to fire from their saddles.

Through the infernal tumult we could hear our bugles ringing out on our left.

About sixty of our Indians—friendly Wyandottes and Senecas—came up, and their leader, a Shawanese named Black Hoof, seeing The Mad Dog's Son on horseback among the staff officers, shouted out to him, asking what he was to do.

I asked General Harrison respectfully if I might take these savages over toward the left flank where the British Indians had begun a terrific yelling.

"Very well, sir," said he pleasantly. "Pray make my compliments to Colonel Johnson and remind him that Tecumseh ought to be either taken or killed this time."

The Mad Dog's Son guided us through the trees; Black Hoof's naked devils kept up with our cantering horses; and, before we realized it, we were in the swimming smoke of a hot fight where mounted and dismounted riflemen were floundering among stumps and fallen timber and firing on Indians who fired back at them from every tree and windfall.

Here our Indians went into battle with an ear-splitting screech, hatchets flashing; and the yelling, undaunted Shawanese met them hilt to hilt.

I jerked a rifleman by the arm and shouted at him to show me Colonel Johnson. He pointed to a man in ordinary rifle dress, who stood coolly firing into the woods just ahead of me.

When I reached him and he heard my message: "Very well, sir," said he, "but the only way to get

Tecumseh is to kill every damned Indian in these woods, and God himself couldn't do that!"

My Indians had vanished in the forest, and I didn't know whether they were fighting or fleeing. Now and then I caught glimpses of The Mad Dog's Son in his poisonous yellow paint, and usually he was scalping some dead enemy.

The yelling of the Indians became deafening, yet, save for three or four dozen dead ones, I saw scarce one, so close to cover they skulked and fought, and tore each other to pieces and died, like darting animals in the brush.

None of our wounded or dead lay about because our riflemen instantly carried them to the rear as soon as they fell, fearing the Shawanese scalping knives. I saw dead British soldiers in the woods, mostly of the 41st Regiment, lying scalped in their scarlet coats.

"A dirty business," said I to Colonel Johnson.

"They're your Indians," said he; "stop 'em if you can!"

They were not my Indians; they were merely under my temporary command, but I had no slightest control over them. What Colonel Johnson said, however, angered me, and I ran forward in a passion, to stop the scalping of dead white men, if possible; and came among a group of riflemen and Indians who were trying to check a yelling rush of Shawanese.

Almost instantly I saw and recognized Tecumseh. He was painted white and scarlet from head to foot,

and his head was crowned with a mass of blazing scarlet feathers.

He saw Colonel Johnson, whipped his rifle to his cheek and fired; and the Colonel fell, badly hit. Instantly Tecumseh's hatchet flashed and he leaped forward, shouting his scalp cry; but the fallen officer had disengaged his pistol, and, as the sinewy savage sprang forward, he fired; and Tecumseh dropped dead. Close behind him another Indian swung up his war-axe for a blow; but a dozen bullets and buckshot knocked him down, and The Mad Dog's Son finished him, horribly, with his knife.

From every direction, now, our riflemen came riding or running up; everywhere in front of us the British and Indians were giving way; the shock of the Kentucky rifles was more than they could endure. Everywhere our men were chasing and taking British prisoners and kicking away our Indians who came whining and yelping around in hopes of some sign or hint permitting them to begin a general massacre.

A cavalry officer galloped into the clearing, asking whether we had taken Colonel Proctor. Johnson's men, carrying their wounded Colonel in a blanket, shook their heads.

"But Colonel Johnson killed Tecumseh!" they shouted, "and you can tell the General that much!"

I asked Colonel Johnson whether he was badly hurt, and he said no. He did not seem to realize that he had killed Tecumseh. Perhaps he did not, as there were also buck-shot wounds on his body, as well as a

bullet mark. A trooper of Captain Warfield's squadron cut two strips of skin from Tecumseh's thighs, saying he was going to make razor strops of them. Which disgusted me, but somebody said that the soldier had lost his entire family at French Town by Indian cruelty, and was not to be blamed.

At that moment Majors Payne and Chambers and a body of horse galloped past along the Moravian road, in hot pursuit of Colonel Proctor. A few moments later Colonel Donaldson called out to me by name, saying that the General desired to see me at once.

I found him at the head of the cavalry, and already on the march toward the Moravian town. He gave me an odd look, motioning me to ride beside him.

"Sir," said he quietly, "you are Captain Joshua Brooke, of McClure's Rifles, are you not?"

"I am, General."

"Last week," said he, "Colonel Simrall's Dragoons brought in several British officers as prisoners. Among them is an officer of the 3rd British West India Regiment—a Major Viscount Mordhurst."

"Who, sir!" I exclaimed, astonished.

He answered very slowly and precisely: "Viscount Mordhurst, senior Major in his Majesty's 3rd West India black Regiment; travelling to Sir George Prevost at Quebec, upon a military mission with mounted escort from Pensacola. . . . Do you know the gentleman?"

"Yes, sir—I believe so. . . . I don't know. . . . I thought he had died—of a wound—"

General Harrison bent upon me a searching, yet pleasant look.

"Captain Brooke," said he, "I understand that you are married."

I had the presence of mind to say, "Yes, sir."

He said: "I have heard your story from Captain Buck, and that you are one of the surviving officers from the Fort Mims massacre."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know what was the fate of your wife?"

"I am told," said I in a low voice, "that she was taken near Easley Station by British Dragoons."

"Sir," said he, "a young girl, wearing rifle dress, was captured with Viscount Mordhurst's mission. She declares that she was made a prisoner by the British near Easley Station; that she travels unwillingly and under restraint with the British mission; that she is an American, and the widow of a Captain Joshua Brooke, of McClure's N. Y. Rifle Regiment, who lost his life in the massacre at Fort Mims."

"Where is she?" I managed to ask.

He replied in his calm, precise manner: "She is aboard the *Scorpion,* Captain Champlin, one of the British ships taken by Commodore Perry on Lake Erie on the tenth of this month, and now in our service, and lying at Dolsens, a few miles below here."

"May I go to her, sir?"—I could scarcely speak.

"Sir," said he with his kindly smile, "I have already

sent Captain Todd to your wife to warn her that there is good news of her missing husband, and that he may even wait upon her in person before many hours have passed."

I was trembling and found utterance difficult—was unable properly to express my thanks.

"We should arrive at Dolsens before very long," said he. "Your reunion with your lady should hearten you for anything. And I assume, sir, that you will be afforded an opportunity to rejoin your command as soon as convenient to yourself."

"As soon as I can arrange for my wife's safe journey to New York——" I turned my head sharply, shaken to the very soul; swept to the depths by the first overwhelming rush of real tenderness I ever had known for any woman.

"The *Scorpion* sails for Detroit," said he kindly. "You could travel that way, Captain Brooke. Or you can go with Shelby's Cavalry."

I tried to thank him, but could not command my voice.

The band of a marching infantry regiment behind us was playing "Yankee Doodle"; woods and fields rang with the jolly old tune; the cavalry began to cheer by squadrons, lifting their long, straight sabres and standing up in their stirrups, as all the Generals rode along their ranks followed by their staffs.

But I saw the Moravian Brothers looking on sorrowfully from the smoking wreckage of a hundred houses, where in ruined orchards and gardens lay the

little corpses of Indian children slain by their own mothers lest the Americans do them violence.

And I heard Ghost Snake, a wounded Wyandotte prisoner, say bitterly to an officer of our regular cavalry: "You long-knives of the sixteen fires reproach your British cousins for employing Indians. You are hypocrites! You do the same! Look at your Iroquois!

"But we do not need the call of the British to fight you. We hate you. We would fight you anyway. Look at those dead children, if you want to know why!"

When we came in sight of Dolsen's house of hewn logs, General Harrison said to me: "You will find the ships just below, Captain, and plenty of boats to take you aboard." He added politely and with a kindly smile: "Pray, sir, make my compliments acceptable to Mrs. Brooke, and say that if she is in need of anything she may command me."

He spurred on with his staff officers, taking my salute with a pleasant acknowledgment.

After him galloped Buck who waved gaily at me. I dismounted and turned over my nag to one of his dragoons. Donaldson's horsemen followed them; then Johnson's Rifles, all taking up the pursuit of Proctor and the few hundred British Regulars and militia who had escaped their fury in the swamps and forests of La Tranche. Dolsens swarmed with soldiers and blue-jackets from Perry's ships, which had come up from the lake and now lay in the sluggish

stream below—the *Tigress,* the *Porcupine,* and the *Scorpion.* There were a great many British prisoners there, including sailors, who already seemed to be on good-natured and chaffing terms with our men. And I heard one of our brawny blue-jackets call out to a British boatswain: "Hey, Johnny Bull, how's the poor old Mistress of the Seas feelin' now?"

"When she's done a-smashin' of Bonaparte," retorted the boatswain, "she'll attend to you Yankees!"

I ran down to the dock where scores of ships' boats were plying between the anchored war vessels and the shore. Here a smart-looking aide-de-camp asked me if I were not Captain Brooke; and named himself as Captain Todd of General Harrison's military family.

"Mrs. Brooke," said he, "is considerably wrought up. It was only by employing the greatest delicacy and caution that I dared permit her to understand you are alive."

"Does she know I am here, sir?"

"I did not venture to admit that much to her, but I told Captain Champlin to break this happy news to her at his discretion. So I think you may go aboard at your convenience."

I followed him to the *Scorpion's* longboat which lay awaiting me; we shook hands; I sprang aboard, and the blue-jackets carried me to the *Scorpion,* lying in midstream, where Captain Champlin met me as I came over the side.

"No need to ask your name, sir," said he, smiling,

"who wear so eager and happy a countenance aboard us."

"How is my wife, Captain?"

"Mrs. Brooke is very much excited," said he. "Her rifle frock and moccasins were in rags; she begged me to send ashore for something clean in which to receive you. All I could find in Chatham was a French peasant girl's grey wool dress, stockings, and wooden shoes, but all these are brand new. She has my Lieutenant's cabin——"

He showed me the way to the closed door, turned and walked off quickly.

"Naïa," I called, knocking softly.

A thin, white-faced, grey-eyed girl whom I scarcely knew, clad in drab wool, slowly opened the door and stood staring into my face as though I, too, had altered beyond all recognition.

I went in and closed the door. Her ghastly emaciation shocked me.

"Have you been ill?" I asked, taking her gently into my arms.

"No; I've been frightened. . . . It's fright; there's nothing else the matter with me."

"You are twitching and trembling all over——"

"I am so excited to touch you——"

She lifted her little rough, brier-torn hands, barely brushing my face; then fell a-shivering against me.

"You've been *dead!*" she whispered, "—that's what's the trouble. Look what it's done to me!——"

Still whimpering, she bared her frail arms and

bosom where bones made bluish hollows in her white body.

"Do you see what this matter of death has been doing to me!" she said fiercely. "But what did you care, in death, for *me!*"

"Naïa!——"

"I *wanted* to die!" she said passionately; "I've *been* dying! . . . I couldn't stand it——" She strained away from me, striving to free herself, then of a sudden her whole body sagged nervelessly to her knees, and I lifted her and placed her upon her blanket.

She lay there, as white as her pillow, unstirring for a while; then her grey eyes glimmered up at me, wet with tears.

"I know very well what I'm about," she wailed aloud. "And I wish you to know that it is something more bitter than grief that has done this thing to me. . . . I wanted more of you than Cock-crow Hall. But there was nothing else in your mind when you sent a last word to me from Mims' Fort! That is *all* you wrote to me—to care for your cursed Cock-crow Hall! There was nothing else in your mind, in death—no kindness, no tenderness, nothing for *me!*——"

She flung up her arms in that childish gesture of appeal I knew so well; and I caught her to me in a quick embrace and kissed her hot face and quivering throat strangling with tears.

"O—oh," she wept, "when he was dying he had no other kindness for me than the gift of Cock-crow

Hall! And now, because I name it, he kisses my naked throat and breast——"

Her fingers groped to draw the loosened laces of her bodice:

"Have a care what you do," she sobbed, "—my starved ribs are none of your concern——"

Then I took her dishevelled head and kissed her lips till they parted, inarticulate, like bruised petals faintly fragrant still. I kissed her hair, her eyes, her neck, her roughened hands, her knees, her stockinged feet. And with every kiss I told her that I loved her.

And now, embraced, unstirring, and her grey eyes gazing into mine:

"If you do love me, you must want me, too," she said in a breathless voice. "Do you?"

"Yes."

"Because you love me?"

"Passionately!"

With a little cry she flung both arms around my neck, and her mouth melted to mine in sobbing incoherence.

But the next instant she had twisted free of me and was on her feet at a bound.

"It is not as easy as that!" she panted. "Pay your court and take your chances! For," said she, "there is your damned Cock-crow Hall to reckon with, and a son and heir for it, too; and you will have yet to persuade me that it is for tenderer purposes that you want my soul and body!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE HELL FIRE CLUB

TO find myself so wildly in love with Naïa Strayling astonished me.

When I had offered to marry her she knew that I was not in love. She was perfectly aware that marriage, to me, meant somebody suitable to preside over Cock-crow Hall, and to provide an heir for an estate which my family had loved for five generations.

She had angrily declined my offer and, as she chose to put it, "hatch out another little game-cock to crow atop the roof of Cock-crow Hall."

Now, my tardy avowal of passion instantly awakened her suspicion.

We were seated on the edge of her bunk. Her hands framed her pale face, and she continued to shake her head to all my urging.

"I won't marry you," she said. "You swept me off my feet. It was easy, because my mind already was mourning you as dead——"

"But your lips seemed to promise——"

"Yes, I *did* kiss you. Heavens, was it not natural?"

"But your tenderness and passion——"

"I have lived through too much unhappiness to be

insensible to tenderness. Maybe I did kiss you tenderly.

"As for your new and sudden passion for me—I must unlearn what I know of you before you can make it acceptable to me." She put aside my arm which sought her waist. "Your chiefest concern," said she, "has been yourself and Cock-crow Hall, and I'll be hanged if I become a baby-breeder for the one and a housekeeper for the other!"

"Damnation," I cried, "unless you go there with me I never again shall enter Cock-crow Hall!"

"You behave like a spoiled child," said she. "What I need of you is not your passion and caresses, but the ordinary kindness of a man who thinks himself in love——"

"I don't think it; I know it! Good God, I'm in love with you in every possible way——"

"You'll have to convince me of that," said she.

But when I attempted to convince her she got up hastily, gave me a sidelong glance, and pointed down at the two wooden shoes which stood on the cabin floor. Then, very gingerly, she stepped into them:

"See," said she, "what I've come to, following the drum! Here's a homeless soldier's wench for you, sir."

"You know where your home is, darling. What do you mean to do?"

"Follow the drum," she said, beginning to march up and down, "—follow my man like any other hussy;

wash his shirts; mend his stockings; cook for him; lie with him——"

"What are you saying!"

I was on my feet at a bound, exasperated; but as I took her by her thin shoulders she looked straight at me in flushed and shameless defiance; and the very touch of her melted me.

"Be pleased," said she, "to remove your enterprising arm from my ribs. I am a widow. I wear mourning in my heart for a complacent, self-satisfied, gambling, duelling rake who was far less virtuous and respectable than are you, but whom I delight to mourn——"

"Will you hold that mocking tongue!"

She exhibited the tip of it, making a childish face at me.

"Let me alone," said she. "It was the rake I loved; and I love nobody any more."

I had her by the waist; she bent over backward, nearly double, to avoid my lips; but when I kissed her, her mouth clung to mine.

Then, lithely escaping, she aimed one of her little wooden shoes at me, giving a kick that sent it flying past my head.

"Hang it!" she cried with a furious sob, "I'm not to be carried by storm! You meddle with my passions when I'm not inclined! If you had any politeness you could tell by the expression of my eyes and lips whether your love making would be welcome——"

"I never yet saw any welcome for me in either!" I retorted hotly.

She began to cry. "Oh, heaven," said she, "listen to him!—and my lips all bruised and my whole body aching with what I gave him——"

In the swift repentance of my embrace, again she hid her quivering face on my shoulder, enduring the tender violence; welcoming it with tightening, desperate arms.

Presently, releasing herself, she turned her back to me, wiping her eyes on her woolen sleeve and then on her apron.

"Oh, lord," said she wearily, "I wanted him and he didn't want me. Now he says he wants me, and I don't know whether it is him I want—or the experience of being loved——"

There came a rapping at the door—an officer, all over gold lace, very polite, asking us to sup with Captain Champlin in his cabin.

When the officer went away, she looked at me with a despairing smile and spread her peasant's skirt above her woolen stockings, saying she wished she were wearing one of her French gowns to do us a little honour.

Well, we had to go as we were, she in her grey wool dress and wooden shoes, I in my soiled Kentucky rifle shirt and leggings—a drab and forlorn pair—but Captain Champlin kissed her hand and led her to her place with every utmost ceremony.

From the cabin windows we could see the glare of houses afire along the Detroit road. The Moravian town was still burning. Astern of us lay several vessels of Commodore Perry's fleet, signalling to each other with lights. Toward Sandusky, rockets were rising where our cavalry were in chase of Proctor, his cavalry and mounted Indians.

"A shameful character, ma'am," said Champlin to Naïa, "for he is both cruel and cowardly—which we Americans have not learned to expect in British officers. . . . They've made him a General, too—he's a big, well-built, good-looking fellow, and has a most devoted wife, judging from the beautifully written letters we found in his travelling carriage—all addressed to her 'dear Henry.' I hope to goodness that Payne catches him and hangs him."

Naïa bent her head, touching her wine glass with idle fingers: "That would be very hard on his wife, sir," she murmured.

"War is hard on wives, ma'am," said the Captain, "—as you have discovered, Mrs. Brooke."

She looked up—that lovely trick of her grey eyes, without raising her head: "I wonder if it is as hard on—husbands, sir."

"Ask yours, ma'am," said he, smiling. "I think he had rather have died at Mims' Fort than go through another month of such anxiety on your account."

"There never will be another such month," said

I, "and only the close companionship of a lifetime can pay Fate for the cruel turn she played me."

Naïa's eyes rested on me, and in her silent gaze I read both humour and defiance.

Bells on the warships were striking as Captain Champlin offered a toast to our fortunate reunion and future happiness. His Madeira and port warmed us.

At the Captain's request we recounted for him what had happened to us, and he told Naïa that the British officers and their dragoons who had taken her near Pensacola, and who, in turn, had been taken by Shelby's cavalry while on their way to Detroit, had been sent to Mobile, there to await exchange and ultimately be delivered aboard the British *Admiral* off Pensacola.

"How strange," said I to Naïa, "that you should meet Mordhurst again, and in America and under such circumstances."

She gave me an odd look and her face flushed a little.

"How is he?" I asked, smilingly.

"He is well enough. . . . None the worse for your shot, it seems."

I laughed and remarked to Champlin that Lord Mordhurst and I had exchanged a friendly shot in England the very day I first met my future wife.

"Who else were with Mordhurst," I asked her, "—anybody I knew in England?"

"Yes," said she, "I believe so."

She seemed disinclined to talk about them, but finally named Captain Vulper, Captain Forney, Dr. Grieve, and Lieutenant Welp.

"Why," said I, laughing, "we've made prisoners of all those British agents sent to stir up the blacks and Indians. I knew them all in England; they all were juniors in the Hell Fire Club."

"What in heaven's name is that?" demanded honest Captain Champlin.

But I was ashamed of my connection with it, and gave it a better name than it deserved, merely saying that it was an ancient club composed of thirteen fashionable and rakish gentlemen whose silly antics were ridiculed by everybody of sense.

Naïa had turned away her head and did not seem to be listening.

"Have you fought many duels, sir?" inquired Champlin.

"No, sir, not many," said I.

"General Jackson has fought nearly a hundred," he remarked. "That's what's the matter with him now—his arm and shoulder are shattered, and he can't ride very far as yet."

Which made me grin, as I remembered that Prinney had threatened me with jail if I ventured to fight my tenth duel.

"I have always longed to see General Andrew Jackson," said I.

Champlin smiled, drew from his breast an open letter, and passed it across the table to me.

It was an order for me to report at Mobile and there to establish myself as Commandant with the rank of Major, and Commissary of prisoners.

"Good Lord," said I, "when did this arrive?"

"A week ago, Major. You will have to go by steamboat. And you had better send Mrs. Brooke East aboard the *Commodore,* as it may be impossible for her to travel overland in safety until we control the Lakes."

That evening, in our cabin, Naïa remained moody and aloof, sitting with her pallid face between her hands, on the edge of her bunk, and swinging her wooden shoes as though lost in thought.

It was hard to part with her, yet I thanked God she could sail aboard the *Admiral* and so, under safe escort, reach New York and Cock-crow Hall. And to all my plans and advice she listened in listless silence; and presently asked me to go on deck and return to her when she was disrobed and abed.

And so I did; and found her sitting up in her shift in bed, and so pale and thin of limb and body that I could have wept to see her.

"In God's name, child," said I, "what has happened to so waste you and drain you of your blood! You are ill. You can't make that journey to New York all alone."

"Don't you know what is the matter with me?" she

asked. "And, on your honour, if I tell you, do you promise not to touch me—not to caress me again unless I invite it?"

"If you wish."

"Then I'll tell you. I fell in love. And it's done this to me."

"You told me that. But I thought, perhaps, if I loved you enough you'd forget——"

"No."

"You can't forget him?"

"Oh, lord," said she, "it's with *you* I fell in love. . . . Don't touch me—not even my finger——"

"You loved *me,* Naïa?"

"From the first—there in England"—she shrugged—"at sea, in New York, at Cock-crow Hall—everywhere! Your offer to marry me hurt me. . . . And your death—" she shuddered and covered her face. "I couldn't have endured it long, but I wished to please you by dying at Cock-crow Hall. . . . Well, now you know that much. . . . But you don't know anything else about me."

"I know enough——"

"No! You don't know enough."

"What is it I don't know, dearest——"

She gave me a tragic look: "You don't know what kind of life I led at Lady Vulper's before I ever met you."

I gulped at that, but told her she need not tell me, and that it would make no difference anyway.

"Suppose somebody else should tell you?"

"I'd stop their damned tongues mighty quick, ma'am!"

She drew up her knees and laid her head on them. I could see her frail body quivering with her sobs.

"All I know," said I, "is that I love you and want you for my wife."

"You can have me for your mistress now, if you want me," she said in a stifled voice.

"I want to marry you," said I, sternly. "What the devil are you trying to do to yourself?"

"Very well," said she, "if you still shall want that a year from this day, I'll marry you, Joshua Brooke."

"Why not sooner?"

"No."

"For God's sake, give me a reason!"

"No. You'll learn it."

She staunched her tears on her night dress. "Hang it," said she, "I haven't a handkerchief to my name. Do you suppose I can buy anything in Mobile?"

And, seeing me look so desolately upon her: "Oh, heaven," said she, bending toward me and laughing in her tears, "kiss me, if you want to, and don't regard me so gloomily, because I'm going to be yours in one way or another."

"I'm trying to understand——"

"Well, then, understand this, dearest of men: I am kind who seem cruel. I am passionately loyal who seem cold and capricious—and so devoted to your interest and dignity that I will never marry you until

you are absolutely certain that you want me. And all I ask of you is to wait and see about it."

"Hang it," said I, "a year is terrible!"

"And if you make a mistake by marrying me, the years to follow would be more terrible still."

"They would be dreadful without you."

"You needn't be without *me,* though you may be without a wife. Now I'm tired of tears and talking," she said, "and I want to lie in your arms if you'll let me, and praise God for saving you at Fort Mims."

Once her lips rested on my cheek, and, still touching it, she murmured: "I go with you to Mobile. You understand that, don't you?"

Distressing sounds awoke me again about midnight, and, being partly dressed, I went out to see what was happening. They were bringing the sick and wounded aboard the *Scorpion*—poor, mangled creatures sabred, shot, or scalped, and our blue-jackets were as tender as they could be, but every movement hurt, and a most dismal sound invaded the lamp-lit deck, all smeared and red where the blankets leaked.

One lad had been scalped in the pagan fashion, and his bare, raw skull showed wet and crimson, but he was alive and striving with fevered hands to push back from his eyes the wrinkled and loosened skin of his forehead.

Better death at Fort Mims, I thought with a shiver, as I crept back to our cabin.

"What is it?" whispered Naïa.

"The wounded."

She curled one arm around my neck and lay silent with her cheek close to mine.

"That is war," said I.

"War," said she, "is a part of life—and so is love. But only a fool seeks either, for they come soon enough of themselves. . . . Have you slept?"

"A little."

"I have had such a deep and healing sleep—my first rest since—that day——"

She nestled to me, her face on my shoulder.

When I spoke again in a cautious voice, she was sound asleep.

And I lay there dumb, drowsy, vaguely amazed at what I was learning about love and to discover its tenderness and gentleness and infinite quiet depths, and how that its heat and passions were but a part and not all there was of the lovely miracle which quickens life wherever life exists.

It was snowing when I went on deck—the cold wind was full of fine, powdery particles that blew in gusts out of a hurrying grey sky.

Astern of us, waves ran high where the warships were swinging at their mooring, and swarms of hurrying boats plied dripping oars from ship to shore and from shore to ship.

Naïa breakfasted in her cabin, I with Captain Champlin who informed me that a thousand mounted

men of Colonel Johnson's command were riding to Frankfort, and that there was a travelling carriage for my wife and myself, which we could use the greater part of the way.

We stood by the starboard rail and watched the hurry and bustle ashore where great campfires burned and tents were being struck and loaded on army wagons.

The band of a regiment of regular infantry of the line was playing in front of Dolsen's house where horses stood saddled and brilliantly uniformed officers moved about.

Horse artillery, finely equipped, guns, caissons, forges, and battalion wagons were moving northward at a trot, and the blast of the trumpets came to us very clearly as the snowy wind veered westward.

Captain Champlin told me that his crew had sent a delegation to him with a respectful request that he address them before they weighed and sailed for Detroit.

"I am told," he said, smilingly, "that they would like to be officially informed concerning what is now happening in the United States, and what exactly was the origin of this war in which they find themselves so suddenly and violently engaged."

I begged him to delay his address to the crew until I could bring my wife on deck; and hastened to our cabin where I found Naïa dressed and feeling wonderfully cheerful, and extremely eager to hear what

the Captain of the *Scorpion* had to say to his blue-jackets.

When we reappeared on deck, the Captain had chairs placed for us. The crew already was mustered, wearing glossy hats bearing the ship's name in gold, scarlet vests, and blue jackets and trousers. They were a superb looking lot of youngsters.

"This is a strange war, my lads," began Captain Champlin in his pleasant, easy, unembarrassed way, "—a weird and grotesque war—a terrible and murderous war, a caricature of war; and there never has been another war like it."

His arm, glittering with gold lace, swept the northern horizon from West to East, from North to South. He said:

"There is fighting going on yonder for three thousand miles—fighting on rivers, on these vast inland seas we call the Lakes—fighting amid prairies, mountains, forests, cypress swamps, palm hammocks, canebrakes—a gigantic territory where everything human is in miniature—petty fleets and toy forts, microscopic armies, tiny, furious, ant-like battles fought with busy little bewildered armies of a thousand man—two thousand—perhaps three.

"Think of the gigantic battles going on in Europe—Bonaparte's vast armies, Wellington's—the enormous hordes of Austria and of the Czar! There is your proper scale as contrast—there the field of operations is so crowded with human beings that only part of an army can be brought into action—here,

scarcely a man to a hundred miles! There, navies covering the seas; here a few little, flimsy ships built and in bloody action within a few months from the time we lay their keels!

"I tell you, my lads, that this second war with England may make less noise than the crackle of a bunch of squibs in Hell, but no war ever waged is more vital to the world's well-being, and no nation ever has waged a more just and sacred war than we Anglo-Saxon Americans are waging today against old England's baser self, and in behalf of the honour, dignity, and manly rights of the whole Anglo-Saxon race!"

There was not a sound, not a stir among his crew. He was very eloquent. He was a splendid looking specimen of our race, with the figure and features of a crusader and the friendly, attractive candour of a boy.

"Yesterday," said he, "Tecumseh died bravely in battle. General Harrison has cut off the head of the Shawanese monster which had begun to crawl southward to join the Creeks and drive the last living white man into the Mexican Gulf.

"Today we stand upon the deck of a war-vessel lately taken from the British. But, if you look aloft, you see the flag of the United States flying above you.

"Today our victorious fleet holds Lake Erie; Commodore Chauncey confronts Sir James Yeo; our little armies menace Canada from Detroit to Quebec and Lake Champlain. Eastward we still keep the seas and watch a hostile ocean from our forts. South-

ward, Andrew Jackson is marching straight into that blazing hell we call the Creek country, while New Orleans, Natchez, Baton Rouge, and Mobile crouch hopefully behind their cannon.

"The prows of a thousand British battleships, squadron by squadron, are turning toward us. Fifty thousand soldiers, infantry, cavalry, artillery, regiment after regiment, brigade after brigade, are beginning to embark for America. Admiral Cockburn's fleet threatens us from Savannah to Baltimore; Admiral Warren's fleet menaces us from Philadelphia to Portsmouth; Admiral Cochrane sails for America with his great ships of the line and with troop ships crammed to the bulwarks!

"Why?

"Because we Americans have refused to disgrace our manhood. Because we have declined to submit to outrages from Englishmen which Englishmen admit they themselves would never endure from anybody. Because we have been informed that the seas belong to England and that we sail them only by England's permission. Because, lacking that permission—even in time of peace—our ships are stopped and searched; thousands and thousands of American citizens have been taken out of our ships and forced to serve aboard British ships; our vessels have been confiscated; sometimes our citizens have been murdered aboard their own craft, within sight of their own homes.

"Was ever a juster war declared by an outraged nation, than this, our real and final war for inde-

pendence and liberty to pursue our proper and peaceful occasions unmolested?"

A thunderous roar of "No!" came from the crew.

Captain Champlin smiled.

"Very well, my lads, if you feel that way maybe Commodore Perry will let us take another British fleet or two—in case they build any more——"

Shouts of laughter silenced him, then a tempest of cheering swept the deck from forecastle to quarter-deck, as the men were dismissed.

We took our leave of Captain Champlin and went ashore where the mounted rifles were already moving out of Dolsen's camp, and where a polite officer showed us to our travelling carriage which was a light, comfortable vehicle on springs, with an enclosed body and two seats atop, if we chose.

Four horses drew it, then two drivers riding postillion.

It was a long procession that started, preceded by a cloud of mounted Indians in their blazing paint and feathers and brilliant blankets—Wyandottes under Walk-in-the-water, who had deserted Proctor; renegade Chippewas and Miamis and brutal-faced Ottawas —all very grateful for our army's protection, and very much afraid that the brave Chippewa Oshawana might fall upon them and punish them for their treachery, or that our own Indians might ambush and destroy them as General Harrison had warned them when they came sneaking in.

Winter had set in. The regiments wore winter uniforms—the mounted men their scarlet mantles or blue cloaks—and often the gilded epaulettes and cocked hats of officers and the brass-bound shakos and plumed helmets of infantry and cavalry glittered with frozen mist.

On the tenth of October there was a furious gale of snow, but it was not very cold, and travel continued unobstructed along roads which were not very bad and where settlements and farms were not infrequent.

Naïa and I varied the monotony of the long march by reading or playing picquet, when the jolting coach permitted.

At night we ate by a campfire, served by an orderly of Johnson's Rifles, but we slept warmly in our coach, covered by fur robes and blankets.

There were difficult days and bad weather—no more snow but too much rain—and there were bridges to mend and high creeks to ford—disagreeable incidents common to all travel in such sparsely settled regions—but always we were warm enough and had plenty of food, and as much company as suited us—silent, shy young officers offering politeness—jolly, middle-aged officers delighted to pay their respects to a young and pretty woman—everywhere courtesy and kindness—and perhaps a little bragging about the beauties of life in Kentucky and Tennessee, but mostly a chorus of never ending praise for General Andrew

Jackson. God help the Creeks when he marched. God help the British. For these twain had better never have been born than cross the fiery path of Andy Jackson!

Never have I seen a pale, thin, weary youngster bloom and put on health and beauty as did Naïa Strayling on that long, slow, toilsome journey to Mobile. Where were shadows and hollows in face and throat now had become soft, childish loveliness, smoothly tanned. Her ribs filled in and her slender body and limbs became silky-sleek. Hair, eyes, lips grew gloriously brilliant again; there was gaiety in her voice and in her lithe, free step. And—oh, lord—all the capricious perversity and pretty malice—all the sly girding and happy jeering at me and at my less nimble mind and ways became once more her provoking pastime and her pleasure.

As for any tender sentiment, she seemed to have none, now, for me. All that she had, for an hour, revealed at our first meeting aboard the *Scorpion,* had vanished; and she showed me no kindnesses, suffered no caresses, would listen to nothing of a deeper nature, but turned all to a light jest and carried it high and gaily like a child let loose from school.

I think every officer in Johnson's corps was madly in love with her, and I marvelled rather jealously at her charming skill in the delicate art of pleasing—allowing none to believe he was unappreciated or overlooked, but with clever innocence and candour ad-

mitting a flattering danger to her peace of mind from the attentions of each and every gallant. And with all this, and while never for a moment self-conscious or ungracious, not a single gentleman presumed by word or look or manner. And it rather tardily became apparent to me that in this youngster were the elements that made a great lady—for only such may greatly venture who make no question of their perfect right to do so.

Our long, slow column with its outriding corps of spies and Indians, its mounted riflemen and military wagons, was moving now toward that region where the first signs of war began to be noticeable; and very soon we learned that no steamboats were running on the Mississippi at present and that our swifter route lay along the Alabama.

Such fine mansions and plantations as we were now passing seemed to be occupied, and the slaves busy in the field and woods, but always there was a post of cavalry or mounted infantry stationed near at hand; and we began to see stockaded store-houses and mills fortified by log-work and ditches.

Frequently, now, we came into touch with companies of volunteers from Mississippi, Tennessee, and even from Western Georgia, all wearing their blue, green, or brown winter regimentals, some mounted, others marching afoot and using boats and barges when convenient, and all headed for General Jackson's army which already, we learned, had been victorious

in several pitched and bloody battles with the Creeks and Seminoles south of the Coosa.

And always these marching companies and battalions were singing the same lively song to the tune of "The Girl I Left Behind Me," as they strode southward under heavy knapsacks and muskets; and this is what they sang, and what they set our soldiers a-singing:

Oh, the fox to his burrow
And the buck to his doe!
And the river to the duck she quacks on,
Leave your plow in the furrow,
Let the old mule go,
And j'ine with Andy Jackson!

Quit your kids, quit your wife,
For a soldier's life;
Sling your blanket and your gun and your axe on,
Oh, you know you ought to go
For to fight the foe,
With Gin'ral Andy Jackson!

I'll be getting me a snack
And I'll take one smack
O' the rum there ain't no tax on;
And I'll h'ist my pack
On my pore old back,
And j'ine with Andy Jackson.

Oh, everybody knows
Where the Alabama flows
By the banks we leave our tracks on,
And it's there I'll go,
For to fight the foe
With Gin'ral Andy Jackson!

Johnson's Indians, spies, and Mounted Rifles parted with us below the Coosa where we went aboard a Government sloop bound for Mobile with ammunition and supplies.

There was fighting going on not very far away—burned houses, cabins, and ruined fields in every direction, and mounted scouts galloping and capering about the cypress heads and pine barrens where we could also see painted and be-feathered Indians prowling—friendly scouts hunting for us their hostile fellows with more ferocity than we hunted them.

It terribly resembled the Fort Mims region, and Naïa and I, from the sloop's deck, looked very soberly upon these signs of familiar horrors hidden further inland from our view.

We saw a body of Louisiana volunteer horsemen gorgeously uniformed in red; and Naïa remarked that their dress and headgear resembled her poor Hector's hussar finery—a lavish uniform peculiar to Prince Murat's cavalry. The comparison made us smile a little; but there was that in the chill atmosphere of land and river which awoke sombre memories in us both—and which, for the first time since we left the

Scorpion, seemed to set her fingers groping to find and nestle in mine.

We landed at Mobile early one morning within a few days of the New Year. It was the first time I ever had laid eyes on this partly Spanish, partly French, partly American town—a forlorn looking place of a thousand souls or more, stark and grey in the monotonous light of the Southern winter, and a heavy, rank smell from the river and wharves and banks, where fishing craft lay thick as wild duck in a lagoon.

There was nothing worth mentioning to defend in this military post excepting the semicircular fort at the inlet, thirty miles away down the bay. Otherwise, the town of Mobile lay almost naked to the enemy. There was not even a fort or a block-house of any importance there. Only a fortified prison and barracks for a guard battalion; a prisoners' stockade and huts; and a fenced park where little villas stood which now were occupied by British officers on parole and awaiting exchange; and their liberty limited only by the town's boundaries.

None of these slight defenses were cannon-proof. A regiment could take it by storm in twenty minutes.

It was into this little grey and desolate town, buried amid mournful moss-smothered trees, and under wintry skies, that Naïa and I arrived to take up residence in accordance with my detail for duty.

As we stepped from the sloop's dirty deck to the

dirty wharf, a company of soldiers, drawn up, presented arms; officers saluted with swords; drums gave a ruffle and three taps—which they should not have done, according to regulations.

Naïa, who had purchased a few clothes from a travelling Nashville merchant on his way East, and who was now dressed rather tastefully, slipped her arm through mine; and together we passed along the ranks of this Alabama militia battalion in dignified inspection; and I was astonished to notice that the rear rank was armed with fowling pieces—long, murderous duck-guns loaded with buck and swan shot, and fitted with *bayonets!*

I shook hands solemnly with Captain Sevier, Lieutenants Dubois and Varennes, and Ensign Jones; and introduced them to Naïa. And noticed, by their elaborate Gallic gallantry and lively smirks, that they instantly had become her happy victims.

Our residence had been that of the Spanish Governor—recently ousted from the Mobile district—and it was a very pretty, one-story villa set among magnolia and china trees, in a garden in which—I can't imagine how—a few roses were blooming in that raw, grey weather.

Our servants greeted us at the gate. They were three in number: Aunt Nanon, our ruling empress, white-turbaned, enormous, and black as coal; Widgy, Naïa's half-blood maid and waitress; and my valet and waiter, Jumper, a listless, elegant young man of light colour who knew his duties but whom, I soon

learned, nothing—not even the trump of doom—could hurry.

Until dinner time, which was at noon, we gave ourselves a badly needed scrubbing. Jumper trimmed and shaved me; from the shops, in town—which, being near New Orleans, were amazingly well stocked—a kindly Spanish Jew fetched me an excellent quality of shirts, hose, and underwear; a boot-maker, named Lacoste, took my measure for hessians and dress boots, and top-boots of regulation pattern, proper for a major of Rifles; and an English tailor submitted handsome samples of cloth for civilian and military dress, and took my measure, promising swift delivery.

We dined at our ease—she in a somewhat gaudy French chamber robe, yet amazingly becoming for all its scarlet and silver designs, and I in slippers, Turkish trousers, and morning redingote of flowered silk, which I had for twenty dollars of my Jewish friend.

The sun had come out; and, as we lingered over the marvellous cooking of Aunt Nanon, we could see pale sunshine gilding the Spanish moss hanging from the great oaks, and falling brightly on leafless fig trees where a few withered figs still clung. Under bare-twigged china trees and tall magnolias, buried in glossy foliage, rose bushes were still green; and some buds had unfolded into delicate pink bloom.

There was a certain charm about this wintry Southland which, like a chameleon, remained chill and col-

ourless until the sun brought out its lovely hidden colours.

Naïa, sipping her fragrant wine-cup at her ease, lay back on her chair, gazing about her at the odd, stiff, Spanish colonial furniture upholstered in crimson damask, at the crimson curtains, the snowy table cloth, the pretty glass and china and delicate, thin silver.

"Here," said she, "is still another phase of war, and much to my liking." She lifted her glass to me, with a hint of coquetry: "In case we ever marry, dear friend, let us practice the arts of domesticity in advance——"

She gave me an impudent and charming glance. "For example," said she, "let me perfect myself in the art of wifely duty——" She leaned across the table, re-tied my hastily twisted neckcloth, rearranged my hair and made, with her finger-tip, a love-lock over each ear.

"The town-Major and Commissary of prisoners," said she, "should look elegantly martial even in the bosom of his family. Do you know that I could make you very beautiful, Joshua?"

She suffered me to kiss her hands, which had become pale and smooth again, and let them remain clasped over mine.

In these three months she had become lovely and soft and supple again, the former curve to her cheeks had returned, her frail breasts were as delicately rounded as her neck, and so, now, were her slender

arms and shoulders. Health and peace of mind had exquisitely transfigured the forlorn, thin, sad-faced creature who had faced me three months ago in the cabin of the *Scorpion.*

"Joshua," said she, "if Aunt Nanon is going to feed us like this you had better watch your waistcoat buttons, and I should keep an eye on my stays and garters."

"Darling," said I, "Venus made you and will look out for her own. As for me—well, even Ariadne loved Bacchus."

"I'd love you if you were as fat as the Prince Regent," said she.

I kissed her fingers. "That reminds me," said I, "to look up Mordhurst."

Her smile faded; she gently withdrew her hand. "Yes," said she, "you must be courteous to your prisoners."

There was a little silver bell on the table. She gave it a tinkle. "Tell Aunt Nanon," said she to Widgy, "that I am going to inspect the kitchen and store-house."

I got up and drew her chair for her to rise; she dropped me a curtsey; I opened the pantry door; she dropped me another, hesitated, then placed her finger tips on my shoulders; and we kissed.

"Whatever happens," she said, "I love you and am yours—if you want me."

I would have kissed her again but she gave a whisk to her skirts and vanished through the door, and I

heard her joyous voice in praise of Aunt Nanon's cookery, and the melodious laughter of the flattered black woman in acknowledgment.

That day I was busied with writing letters to General Jackson, to the Governor of New York, to Lieutenant Glimming at Easley Station, to Skerret at Cock-crow Hall, to my bankers in New York.

Captain Sevier waited on me for orders. I told him to relieve the sentries stationed at my garden gate, saying I had no need of them.

He gave me a report on the paroled British officers who had the run of the town, and who seemed to be behaving with propriety.

The soldier-prisoners of the 3rd West India black Regiment, he said, were harmless fellows who were much cherished by the black girls of Mobile, partly on account of their gorgeous uniforms. Some of them already had deserted and had married among our pretty Negro girls.

These I ordered set at liberty.

Candle light came early in the winter months. We supped at six; then Naïa sewed while I continued writing at the table beside her, until drowsiness overcame us and we made an end to our first day in Mobile—she going off like a sleepy and yawning child to her chamber, and I going to mine where, for the first time since I left New York, I lay between fresh sheets upon a bed and mattress.

For a week our programme varied little from that

of our first day and night. The routine was the same—reports from Captain Sevier and from the Commandant at Fort Bowyer, guard-mount, patrols, scouting details, daily courier service between Mobile and the Bay Fort, inspection of stores and munitions.

Shopping in town, Naïa had discovered and purchased a great store of French gowns, hats, cloaks, furs, wraps, and beautiful underwear, stockings, and shoes which for fashion and excellence could more than vie with anything to be bought in New York.

And the reason was this: the Barataria free-lances of Jean Lafitte, snapping their fingers gaily at all revenue officers, landed at New Orleans, almost daily, rich and fashionable stuffs and luxuries fresh from France. And the shops at New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Mobile were overflowing with exquisite silks and laces and sheer stuffs fit for duchesses, and at figures much lower than prevailed anywhere else in the United States.

And Naïa revelled, trotting away to the shops every day, attended by the gay and giggling Widgy, and returning followed by Negroes loaded with her purchases.

She told me that this was nearer to her idea of heaven than anything she ever had experienced; her bed, chairs, sofa, bureau, chaise-longue, were covered with gowns and stockings and lacy things, delicately beribboned and perfumed.

She informed me, also, that ever since she had left New York she had kept account of every penny, and

that as soon as her bankers communicated with her she would reimburse me.

"So if you conclude that you wish to marry me a year from now," said she, "you will at least understand that you are not marrying a penniless adventuress; and I shall bring you a very pretty dowry, Joshua, which no doubt you'll spend in raising the devil at Cock-crow Hall."

"Part of it," said I, "we'll spend on a vast and beautiful nursery."

"For game-cocks—yes!"

"For several pretty heirs to Cock-crow Hall, all a-sitting in a row and eating their porridge with a dozen silver spoons——"

"A *dozen!* Oh, heaven——"

"One dozen, ma'am—all with your grey eyes and ruddy hair and your mouth and heavenly smile——"

"My God, sir, are we to people another Paradise with Cherubim?"

"Certainly," said I, "and you are to reign there, shedding blessings——"

"And babies. That's your idea! Not mine. For I mean to have a deal of pleasure with you, first—if ever we are married——"

Widgy and Jumper came in with the holly wreaths they had gathered and fashioned to make the house gay for the New Year; and Naïa and I placed the garlands and wreaths, and hung a great bunch of mistletoe over every doorway.

Until recently, neither Naïa nor I had had any

proper clothes in which to make or to receive, formally, any visits.

What people of consequence and quality there were in Mobile had waited upon us to pay us their respects; we, in turn, had rendered them their visits, calling formally upon proud and courteous Spaniard, upon polite and charming Creole, upon such Americans as claimed social recognition.

But my lord Mordhurst and the other British officers had awaited some notice from me before offering to present themselves; and I don't know whether they were right or wrong, or if I should have called first upon Mordhurst, now full Colonel of his 3rd West India Regiment.

However, these were gentlemen, and their condition as prisoners altered nothing from a social standpoint.

So one sunny day I had sauntered down town in full uniform, meaning to pay these calls, whatever the etiquette might be; and encountered Mordhurst and his officer friends strolling in the sunshine in their little park by the river.

"Hello, Mordhurst!" I said genially, offering my hand.

"Hello, Brooke," he said, taking it.

He looked extremely well, and I said so.

"Your bullet," said he, "stirred up my liver and helped digestion, I think. I say, you remember Captain Vulper?"

Vulper gave me a large, damp hand.

"And Captain Forney, and Dr. Grieve, and Mr. Welp——"

I shook their hands.

"I had no proper clothing for polite occasion," said I, "which is why I have delayed the pleasure of renewing our pleasant acquaintance. I hope, gentlemen, that you find everything as satisfactory as might be expected under the circumstances."

"Quite," said Mordhurst, drily.

"Anyway," remarked Vulper, "a fellow's an ass to complain of the fortune of war."

I did not care much for his coarse, florid features which might be good-looking in a groom. And Mr. Welp's eyes were too close together.

And I remembered Forney, with his bold, prominent black eyes and coarse black hair which was ever out of curl.

"Damned odd," said Dr. Grieve, "that here we are, all members of the Hell Fire Club, and prisoners to the only Yankee who ever has been a member!"

"Or who ever will be," added Vulper with his nasty laugh—a remark which I supposed he meant as a joke.

"Don't take it to heart," said I, smilingly. "After all, I was only a junior member of the Hell Fire, and never had been admitted to the inner mysteries."

"They don't admit youngsters," remarked Mordhurst, "—too rotten."

We had begun to stroll under the great oaks along the river bank, where it was pleasant walking in the

sunshine. I plucked Mordhurst by the sleeve and we fell a little in the rear.

"I'm devilish sorry I shot you," said I in a low voice. "And I want to say something else; I didn't steal the despatches which Charles Standish fetched to Prinney that night. A servant included them among my effects by mistake. It was only when I was at sea that I discovered them. And then, as we were in a state of war, I thought it perfectly fair to make use of them."

Mordhurst gave me an odd, dark look, then lowered his head and continued walking beside me.

After a little he said: "I'm glad to hear it. I thought you were too decent."

He gave me another strange look from his brooding eyes, then lowered his head again.

Gradually we were dropping behind the others.

"Brooke," said he abruptly, "I want to ask you something without offense."

"You must be the judge of that, Mordhurst."

"Well, then, I'll risk it. Did you hang a man who called himself Noakes?"

"I did."

"Without court-martial?"

"I gave him a flying-court, such as was given me in my own house by British spies sent to murder me. Then I strung him up."

"So I understand. . . . Do you happen to have learned what his real name was?"

"Wasn't it Noakes?"

"No. He was Vulper's brother, and brother-in-law to Lady Vulper."

"The family," said I, "seems to incline to dirty business."

"Brooke," he said, "I'm not your enemy. As long as I believed you had violated the hospitality of Thanes Close, and had stolen the Prince Regent's private papers, I didn't care what happened to you. But now I don't want to see you harmed."

"What is likely to harm me, Mordhurst?" I asked with a smile.

"Very well, then," said he, giving me a straight look, "I'll risk the other question. . . . Are you married?"

My face burned with the leaping blood. I stared steadily into his unflinching eyes.

"Yes," said I, "I am married."

For a little while there was silence between us. Sunshine fell softly among the mossy oaks. A bird twittered. Distantly the scarlet tunics of Captain Vulper and his friends glimmered in the grove.

Then, abruptly, my lord Mordhurst held out his hand to me and took mine in a firm clasp:

"Brooke," said he, "I like you. But you are going to find yourself in trouble. I can't honourably tell you more than that."

"Mordhurst, you know that I married Miss Strayling."

"I have heard so."

"Does this trouble you speak of in any way threaten her?"

"I can't answer you, Brooke, but your—wife—can."

Captain Vulper and the others were slowly returning through the grove. Mordhurst said sharply: "This whole God-damned business is unfair to you! I'm sorry you came here and I hope you'll show us no further courtesy and politeness, but keep us at arm's length until we're exchanged and out of the country!"

I looked at him in astonishment.

"And for God's sake," he said, "take no offense, notice no rudeness, and pursue no quarrels until we're gone. And that's out of my heart to you, Joshua Brooke!"

Captains Vulper, Forney, Welp, and Dr. Grieve sauntered up, and we all turned and walked back to their quarters where I took leave of them with every ceremony and politeness, and very keenly aware of the cool, half sneering countenances they made me, and their exaggerated and overdone salutes and bows.

What the deuce all this portended I had not the slightest idea, unless Captain Vulper meant to pick a quarrel over his ruffianly brother's unceremonious execution.

But in what manner could any possible affair of honour concern my beloved youngster?

I came into the house all gay with holly and mistletoe, and festooned with garlands of smilax and

golden-green pine where clusters of candles stood ready to be lighted in celebration of New Year's Eve.

I did not see Naïa in the pretty sitting room, so knocked blithely at her closed door.

I knocked twice again before she bade me enter.

She was huddled on her bed, her hair in disorder, her face marred with tears, and all colour had gone from it, and even from her lips, and her grey eyes were wells of shadow.

"What on earth is the trouble!" said I; but she pushed aside my hand and pointed to a crumpled letter on the bed.

I sat down beside her to read it:

New York,
October 1st, 1813

Naïa Strayling,

I have been damnably annoyed during the last year by letters from a certain Lady Vulper of London, and from the lawyers of one, Vulper, her brother-in-law, and an officer in the British Army (326th Foot), who, apparently, have heard that your fortune is a considerable one, and are trying to get hold of it.

All your life you've been unruly and uncontrollable, and your escapades both here and in Europe have been disgraceful.

When you boldly presented yourself to me in New York, shamefully accompanied by your lover, Joshua Brooke, I rightly forbade you the house.

I hoped, however, that you would marry him; but these letters from Lady Vulper and the Vulper lawyers make it plain that you can't, because, on May twenty-first, 1812, you were married to this Captain Fox Vulper, in London.

Now his lawyers are after the money he married, and to which English law seems to entitle him.

Your fortune, I believe, amounts to very nearly a million dollars, according to your trustees. I have employed counsel in your behalf, who will look after your interests.

Nothing much can be done in the matter during this war, and until your husband—who I understand is serving in America—can appear.

I do not know exactly what may be the nature of the suit at law which he is likely to bring. But I think these people are a scoundrelly lot and want only your money, and willing to go to any lengths and swallow any dirt to get it.

You had better tell your reputed husband, Major Brooke, how matters stand, and then communicate with me, advising me how soon I may expect you to return to New York.

This is a sorry business, Naïa, and I am trying to prevent any scandalous publicity. Our attorneys believe that we can buy off these people; and that you can get a divorce, later, and marry the man with whom you appear to be infatuated.

I remain, with much shame and affliction,

Your grandfather,

OLIVER STRAYLING

I dropped the letter on the bed. It took only a little time to think it over.

"Well," said I, "I shan't let you go. I'm going to marry you."

Her hand slipped from her tear-stained eyes and she looked at me incredulously.

"You need not tell me how it happened," said I. "You've been reckless. And I'm done with the kind of life I left in England. All I want is a wife and a

home. And that wife must be you or I never shall have either."

She crept across the bed and laid her face on my knees.

"You won't want me when I tell you," she sobbed.

"Yes, I will——"

"No, you won't, darling. It's too frightful. But I've got to tell you——"

"You don't have to!"

"I must. . . . It was when I was at Lady Vulper's, months before I knew you. All that crazy gaiety in London—it whirled me as a hurricane whirls a leaf! I thought it was life. I saw great folk, glittering with orders, and coronets, and tiaras, and jewels, do things and heard them say things which seemed terrible—yet these people were the highest in the Kingdom—great titles, mighty names. Everywhere there were gorgeous balls and dinners and ceremonies and pageants—and the only talk was of the Prince Regent and his set, and their mad capers and gallantries.

"You tell me that Lady Vulper was a notorious procuress for the rich nobility. I didn't know it. I only thought she was as loose as everybody else. My God, how was I to know that!"

I smoothed her tangled hair from her hot cheeks and forehead.

"Then, one evening Fox Vulper—who always had annoyed me—promised his sister-in-law to see that I arrived at the theatre. She was supping at Lady Kympton's and I at Lady Swilton's.

"So Fox Vulper, who for days had been behaving like the devil and swearing he would have me in one way or another, put something in my champagne—he admitted it afterward—and I was dizzy when I got into the coach. . . . I remember I wondered whether I was drunk—never having been in that condition——"

She began to cry, the tears running down on my knees.

"You won't ever wish to marry me," she wailed, "when I tell you the rest. . . . Because he took me to the Hell Fire Club!"

"Good God," I whispered.

"It was horrible. I saw Linda Veining there, and Rosalie Minthorne, and Josephine Millis—and there were other young girls nearly naked—and I saw the Prince there, and Captain Forney and Dr. Grieve and the Duke of Kympton—it was all a hell of lights and singing. . . . They had an altar. There was a skull on it; and a priest making mockery of the holy mass. . . . Fox Vulper was trying to tear my clothes off. . . . Lord Yarmouth said, 'No, by God,' but that Fox Vulper should undress me legally or not at all. . . . So—so he and Yarmouth got me out to the coach and carried me, half fainting, to Lady Vulper's chapel—and there they kept me until Fox Vulper fetched a clergyman—a miserable, filthy worm, but a real one, I learned afterward——

"They tell me I was married to Fox Vulper with a

ring. I don't know whether I was dazed, or drugged, or drunk, or frightened senseless.

"All I know is that before they were done with me entirely—and the clergyman sneaked off—Lady Vulper came in like a wild-cat and fell upon Yarmouth and tore his face with her nails and teeth, and threw the holy vessels and candles at Fox Vulper, and cut his head open. . . . And that is the truth; and that is the reason I did not marry you long ago—love or no love on your part. And that is why I had rather be your mistress than not be anything to you. And now can expect nothing else from you, and shall only thank God if you will take me and love me as long as your heart inclines."

I bent over and kissed her. Then I got up.

"You are not to worry," said I; "everything will be arranged. Nobody is going to annoy you or harm you, or frighten you. There is a legal escape. And—other means. . . . As for me, I love you. What you have told me changes nothing of my purpose—which is to marry you as soon as may be, and live with you as long as ever I shall live on earth."

As I turned to leave the room she got up on her knees on the bed and gave me a frightened look.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

I had a clear idea of what I was going to do. Dr. Carr, our garrison surgeon, had a very handsome pair of pistols in a shark-skin case. I had tried them on a floating alligator, and they suited me.

I looked at Naïa; I looked up at the sun which was already declining.

"I have business," I began, "which should not take very long——"

The bawling of a sentry cut me short: "Officer of the guard, turn out the guard!"

As I stepped to the window and looked across at the guard-house, I heard an outcrash of drums beating two loud, rolling ruffles—a Major General's salute.

The next moment my servant, Jumper, knocked at the door:

"Majah Brooke, suh," he announced with a languidly elegant bow, "Majah Gin'ral Andy Jackson am a-comin' lickety-clip, lak he gwine ride in de front do', suh!"

CHAPTER IX

CODE DUELLO

THE jingle of bit and spur and stamp of horses sounded at our front steps; the door bell rang.

Naïa sprang to her feet, ran to her washstand and bathed her eyes in cold water.

"I'm afraid that you'll have to receive General Jackson, dearest," I said.

"I know it. My eyes are swollen—give me a little time, darling——"

As I passed her I kissed the nape of her neck where the hair curled soft and short, and walked on into the sitting room. And there, for the first time, I laid eyes on Andrew Jackson.

He was tall, spare, with thick, foxy hair turning greyish; his long face had that odd, pinkish tint which a skin pitted with smallpox scars takes; his left arm was in a sling; and he wore the glittering blue uniform of a Major General, with doe-skin breeches and high boots. He had with him an artillery officer and two infantry officers.

His manners were direct, impulsive, and extremely courteous, and he returned my very careful bow with another equally ceremonious, then took my hand in a pleasant, vigorous grasp.

"Sir," said he, "a general officer has no business to come galloping into anybody's garden without leave, and I ask your lady's pardon and yours for the intrusion."

"Sir," said I, "only the enemy could consider General Jackson's sudden arrival in the light of an intrusion."

At that he laughed and made known to me Captains Quarles and Hamilton and Lieutenant Armstrong; and we all took chairs. Jumper fetched whiskey, Madeira, and a great basket full of Aunt Nanon's delicious little Creole cakes.

The General immediately asked me what news I had, and I told him.

"Well, Major," said he, "if the fort below you falls, then this town must fall. And I know only one way to relieve the damnable situation, and that is to give the Creeks their final coup-de-grâce. And I propose to do it, and do it now!"

He seemed to be very happy; he and his young men drank their Madeira and whiskey and ate macaroon and almond cakes, and told me about their furious battles with the Indians at Canoe-Fight, Talladega, and The Holy Ground, where the Autauga Forest was all splashed with blood.

Jackson remarked that the Hillabee Towns were destroyed; that regiments of mounted rifles and of Tennessee Dragoons, and Colonel Williams' 39th United States Regulars were marching to join him; that he already had with him the 3rd Regular In-

fantry under Colonel Russell, and part of the 2nd, Cassell's Dragoons, Carroll's Mounted Rifles, and Chief Fife's friendly Choctaws and Cherokis.

"And, by Almighty and Eternal God, sir," said he, "if we can not make a clean finish to this Creek campaign and reduce the pressure on this town, the fault will be mine and not my men's; for we cleaned out the Hillabee Towns and we slew their sorcerers and witch-doctors on The Holy Ground. . . . I'm sorry about the Hillabee people; I could have won them over, but General White misunderstood my orders. I was very angry, sir, and regarded his onslaught as a massacre, but I think I was wrong and that Generals Cocke and White meant well."

At that moment Naïa came in. Her delicate colour was high, her grey eyes like jewels. She wore a thin, pale green and silver high-waisted gown that clung to her charming figure. Her stockings and sandals were silvery, and so was the narrow wreath which bound her chestnut curls.

General Jackson was on his feet at a bound and kissed her hand with astonishing grace, and led her to a chair where the other officers came to pay their youthful compliments.

All begged the honour of a glass of wine with her; all knew of her escape from Tensa, her capture, and her release.

"Ma'am," said Jackson, "I know what your husband must have felt. I have a wife, lovely and beloved, who never is absent from my thoughts. I think

I'd have gone crazy if she had been at Tensa on that cursed day."

"It was hard for us both, sir," said Naïa, letting her eyes rest a moment on me.

"It's all due to those damnable Spaniards at Pensacola," he said with scarcely controlled rage. "Let our Government exchange bows and compliments and snuff with the Spanish Government; let 'em cut pigeon-wings and kiss each other. I know what I shall do to Pensacola if I'm cashiered for it!"

He got up, strode to the door and back, then came and made his adieux to Naïa, who begged that he and his staff would remain and sup with us.

"Dear lady," he said, "I have a very long way to ride, and shall remember your kindness and your beauty when I'm bumping along on my nag by moonlight."

He kissed her hand, shook mine, adjusted his wounded arm in the sling, bowed again to us both.

Through the open door I saw his green-jacketed dragoons fetching up the horses.

When all adieux and compliments had been said, I went out with them to the mounting block.

"General," I said in a low voice.

He instantly turned and stepped aside with me.

"Sir," I began, "is it proper for an officer in my situation to notice an insult from a British officer who is a prisoner awaiting exchange, and at present on parole with all liberty within town bounds?"

"Yes, sir, eminently proper," replied the veteran of scores of such affairs of honour.

I thanked him.

"I consider it," said the fiery duellist, "not only proper but absolutely necessary for an officer, situated as are you, to proceed in such a matter in conformity with the code of honour. And I'm damned glad that it's not one of your own comrades, sir, for we are losing more officers in such affairs than the enemy kill for us. And that's the trouble with garrison life—idleness, quarrels due to boredom, and then our hot-bloods are at it with pistols and swords. It can't be helped, but, by God Almighty, it's a pity!"

He gave me a glittering look out of his fiery eyes of fighting blue: "A British officer, sir? Very well, sir, I am contented to know that your honour and your country's honour are in such keeping as yours. I wish you every success, sir—from the bottom of my heart!"

He got onto his horse with difficulty, his own arm made useless in a recent duel, and off they rode in the pleasant afternoon light.

Naïa had re-entered the house. I walked around it and went down past the barracks to Dr. Carr's quarters where I discovered him making ready for inspection.

"There'll be none; the General's gone," said I. "Carr, I'll need your pistols and good offices. Pray ask Captain Sevier to act for me. I think the old

duelling grounds lie beyond the oak grove near those magnolias, do they not?"

"Yes, Major," said he gravely.

"Have you any rapiers?"

"Yes, Major."

"Fetch them, also, if you please. He may prefer them, and I don't care much, as long as we finish this matter before sunset."

"Sir," said he, "may I venture to ask you who is to be your opponent?"

"Oh, I forgot. Why, it's Captain Fox Vulper."

"Does he know about this, sir?"

"Not yet, Doctor; I'm on my way to inform him."

"Very well, sir, I shall be on hand with Captain Sevier."

I went on along the street, past leafless gardens and galleried houses, and turned into the lane leading to the fenced park where the British officers were in residence; and there met my lord Mordhurst sauntering along, smoking a cigar and reading an old newspaper. He halted short when he saw me:

"Hello, Brooke," said he, giving me a troubled look —for I think he must have noticed something sombre in my features.

"Mordhurst," said I, "Fox Vulper is a swine and I'm on my way to tell him so. Could you inform me where he may be found?"

Mordhurst gazed hard at me.

"Brooke," said he, "let it alone."

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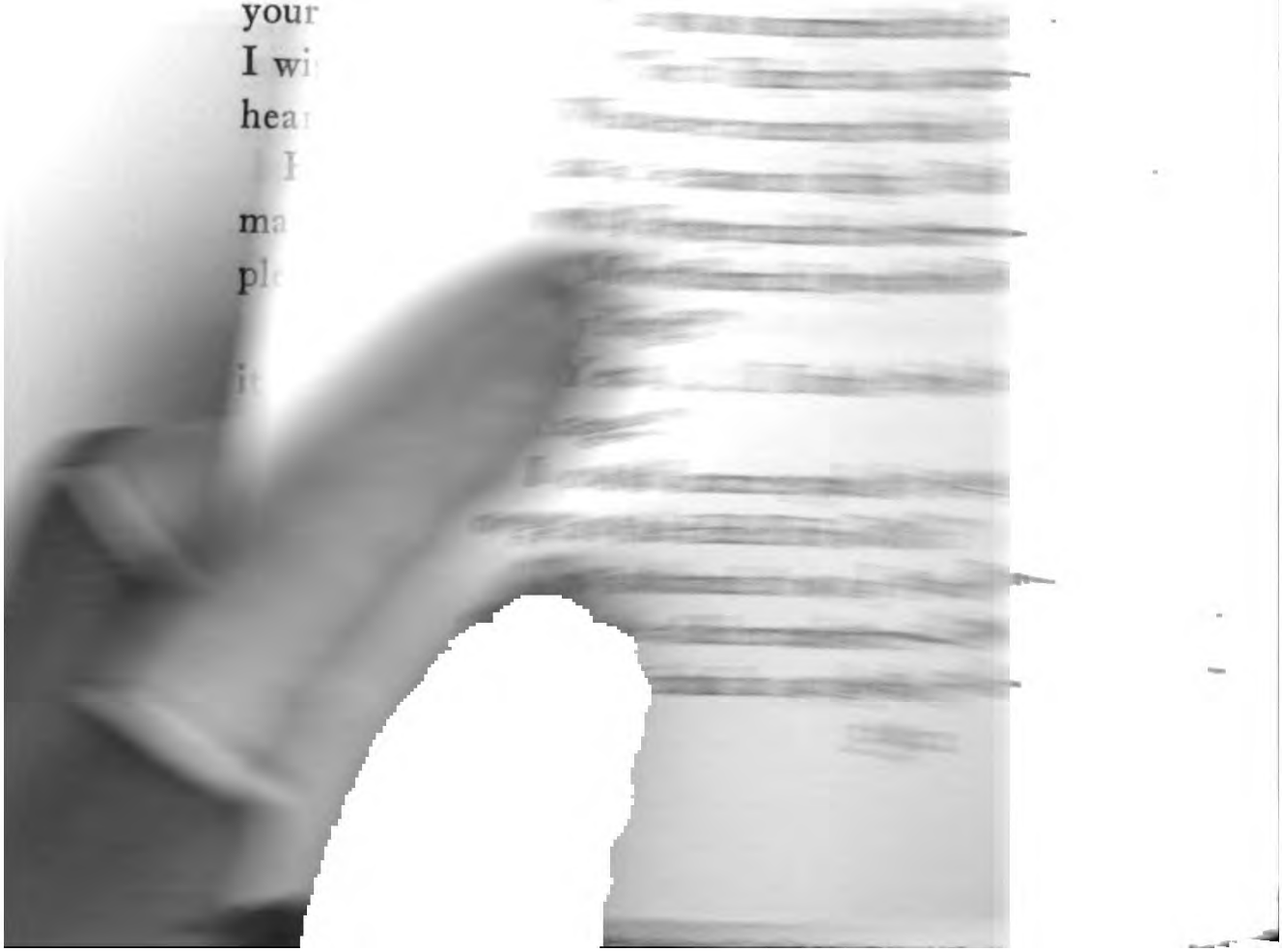

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"Where is he?"

"Probably locked in his rooms."

I started toward the little park with its row of
illas, and Mordhurst caught me by the arm

"You're playing their game," he exclaimed. "Don't
run into their ambush, for God's sake——"

But I was utterly beside myself now. I tore my
arm loose of his friendly clasp, jerked open the park
gate; and walked directly into a little group of men
who pretended to be unaware of me until I was close
with them.

"Take care where you are going, you clumsy

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. Don't meddle with Vulper. You've had too many affairs for anybody to question your courage. Considering what you once did to me I have a right, I think, to advise you."

"That's friendly of you, Mordhurst. But—I don't suppose you know——"

"Yes, I do."

I felt the hot blood burning my face.

He said in a low voice: "I don't propose to remain silent and see you murdered."

"Murdered?"

"Well, it's not my notion of good sportsmanship when four gentlemen make a compact to provoke and challenge you, one after another, until one of them kills you."

I was so surprised that I remained silent.

"Fox Vulper has a quarrel with you, if you like. Whatever one may think of him and his motives, he has a reason to fight. But it's a mercenary matter with Forney and the others——"

"Mordhurst, do you think Fox Vulper married Miss Strayling?"

"Yes. . . . I don't think he did her any other damage."

I could scarce speak for rage: "Were you at that orgy at the Hell Fire Club?"

"I'm ashamed to say I was, Brooke. Prinney was there—the older members—all that vicious silliness—I was as drunk as anybody, and as hardened—but

Vulper had no right to bring anybody who didn't know where they were going——"

"Do you mean to say you stood by and let that beast drug a young girl insensible——"

"There were younger there. Plenty. . . . I don't know how Vulper discovered she was so wealthy——"

"And he knew his sister-in-law was peddling her about—pandering to Prinney and Yarmouth?"

"All he wanted was her money. . . . Then she eloped from England with *you*. . . . That's all he wants of her now, Brooke, her money. That's his compact with Forney and Grieve and Welp—for one of them to get you out of the way—on a contingent fee. God, it's a filthy business—to fight four of them, one after another. . . . The only way is to meet Vulper first. But he'll keep out of your way until the others make their quarrels prior to his. That's the compact."

"Where is he?"

"Probably locked in his rooms."

I started toward the little park with its row of villas, and Mordhurst caught me by the arm.

"You're playing their game," he exclaimed. "Don't run into their ambush, for God's sake——"

But I was utterly beside myself, now; I tore my arm loose of his friendly clasp; jerked open the park gate; and walked directly into a little group of men who pretended to be unaware of me until I collided with them.

"Take care where you are going, you clumsy

Yankee," said Forney, shouldering me aside so suddenly that I nearly lost my balance.

"Forney," said I, "you shall have an answer to that later, but I'm looking for Fox Vulper at present——"

"Then take that to stay you," said he coolly, striking my cheek with the flat of his gloved hand.

"And there's something in the meantime to think over," said Dr. Grieve, slapping a pair of folded gloves across my face.

"And feed on this little morsel, too," added Captain Welp, flicking my ear with forefinger and thumb.

Things turned black, then red, in my swimming brain; then all grew cold and bleak and steady.

Mordhurst came up, pale and composed:

"This is highly irregular, gentlemen," he began; but I said: "It is regular enough to suit me, my lord. Be good enough to represent to these gentlemen that we have sufficient time before sunset to accommodate all questions at issue."

"Major Brooke," said he, "I do not consider that you are obliged, in this matter, before you settle your difference with Vulper."

"Sir," said I in a cold fury, "pray find it convenient to herd these swine and drive them to the Old Ground by the magnolia grove, as soon as may be."

What he said I did not hear as I turned on my heel, and, walking toward the river, traversed the oak wood and came out in a solitary sandy spot where were tall magnolias in dense and darkly glittering foliage.

Dr. Carr was there with Captain Sevier.

"I have three affairs on hand before sunset," said I, "and had expected only one. I don't know how I'm going to come out of this, Sevier. They set a trap, and I walked into it. I meant to fight only Fox Vulper. If anything happens to me, keep that man from bothering my wife until you can notify General Jackson that I leave Mrs. Brooke's welfare in his hands. Will you do this?"

Carr silently handed me his tablets and a pencil; I scratched down this request; he pocketed it.

"There they are now," said Captain Sevier. "They're prompt."

We saw them coming briskly through the oak wood in a carriage. I turned my back and walked toward the river; and there stood and gazed out across the water, fighting with my thoughts, until I heard my name pronounced by Captain Sevier.

"Pistols," he said briefly, as I turned and accompanied him to where Forney stood with Lord Mordhurst, who seemed to be acting for him.

Forney gave me a sullen look, but did not seem entirely at ease, yet he had fought oftener than had I.

I scarcely noticed the usual formalities, scarcely heard what Mordhurst and Dr. Carr were saying to us.

I saw Mordhurst give Forney his pistol; took mine from Sevier. Both seconds then swore to shoot down either principal who offered to fire before the word.

Just as the sun flashed from behind a cloud, dazzling me, I heard the word given, and fired. My

left epaulette was torn away and hung by the golden gimp. Forney's legs crumpled under him, letting him down very gently where he lay without stirring.

I remembered standing with lowered pistol, watching Carr, Sevier, and Mordhurst.

From the carriage came two black West Indian soldiers, with a hand litter, who carried Forney away and laid him down beside the vehicle. At the same time Dr. Grieve stepped nimbly from the carriage and came over to where Mordhurst stood with Sevier in whispered conference, while both pistols were recharged.

Carr came back from the litter, looked at me, winked, and made a spiral motion with his forefinger heavenward.

Sevier, placing me once more and handing me my pistol, whispered that Forney was done for, and he hoped to God I'd continue to rid the world of those swine.

Again he addressed us; so did Mordhurst in cool and almost bantering tones, giving us our warning.

The low-dipping sun was shining redly and fairly between my opponent and me, gilding the fallen leaves and winter-bleached grass. It was a tricky light where bands of shadow slanted athwart the trees.

I looked calmly at Dr. Grieve and he gave me a murderous smirk, as though never doubting the outcome; and I could even see his slitted mouth moving as though in sneering valedictory.

When the word was uttered, his shot came like

lightning, striking the jewelled fob and watch in my breeches pocket, smashing and driving them across my right hip, spinning me halfway around, and tearing a flesh-furrow to the bone, from which blood welled like a living spring.

I had not been conscious of firing; but Grieve was down on his face, moving one arm a little; then he seemed to shrink on the grass as flat as a scarlet cloak spread out there.

After a huddled examination by Carr, Mordhurst, and Sevier, Carr signalled the two black soldiers, and came directly to me. I unbuttoned my breeches and he cleansed and bandaged my hip.

He began: "If it incommodes you to stand——"

"No. Take what's left of my watch. . . . Is Grieve hard hit?"

"You've done for him. Mordhurst tells me he was considered a dead shot. Your watch and fob saved you. Nothing to do for a bowel shot like that. He meant murder."

My hip burned and throbbed devilishly, but there was no slightest fever elsewhere—no pulsing or tremor to meddle with brain and eye and levelled arm.

I looked across at Captain Welp. He was no gentleman in bearing or manner, and, for a moment, I wondered whether I ought not to give him a caning instead of doing him the honour of exchanging shots with him.

But it was a trifle too late; Mordhurst was arming him; I took my pistol from Sevier; the warning was

droned out; the count already had begun, when, an instant before the word, Welp fired at me; and the next second Mordhurst and Sevier fired on him, and down he went like a riddled rabbit, kicking convulsively among the dead leaves.

It all passed in a flash. I had not fired at all, standing stunned by such treachery.

Carr and Mordhurst strode over to where Welp lay; Sevier glared at the prostrate man and spat upon the ground.

Then Mordhurst raised his cold voice in summons to the blacks:

"Take away this carrion," he called, "and be quick about it!"

Then he came toward me.

"What could you expect of a West Indian volunteer sent to stir your niggers to revolt?" he said in disgust.

"Is he dead, Mordhurst?"

"Damned dead. I had no more feeling in shooting him than I would a skunk. Thank God he doesn't wear a red coat. What he did can't touch the honour of the British army. Did you fire at all?"

"No."

"Well, you're devilish well out of this miserable affair. Every army has its scoundrels; but I hope you'll believe there are no more in our army than in yours."

"Excepting Proctor," said I, "there are no finer men in any service than the corps of officers in the British army, Mordhurst."

He gave me a sombre look; then he took leave of me with a formal bow and went away toward the carriage.

Carr made me lie down on the ground and partly undress once more. When again he had washed and bandaged my wound—which seemed to amount to nothing—he helped me to get up, gave me his arm, and Captain Sevier lent me his on the other side.

To my surprise I discovered that it was difficult for me to walk. But I was afraid to say so to Dr. Carr, having it in mind to finish with Fox Vulper before sunset.

There was an ancient cypress log lying on the river bank. Toward this I bent my steps; and there seated myself.

"Gentlemen," said I, "we have an hour before it grows too dark to see clearly, and I desire to finish this matter without delay.

"With your permission, therefore, I will sit here while you wait upon Captain Vulper in my behalf. And I will be vastly obliged to you, Captain Sevier, if you will find it convenient to represent to Captain Vulper that, in my mature opinion and judgment, he is a beast and ought to be destroyed."

"Sir," said Captain Sevier, "are you at pains to specify the kind of beast?"

"Any beast, sir, if sufficiently filthy."

"Shall I say a rat, sir?"

"Yes, sir, a rat should serve. Or you may use your judgment and mention skunks."

Carr said: "You will be too lame for any settlement à l'arme blanche, I fear."

"I don't care a damn," said I, "only get him here while there's daylight."

They hesitated a moment, then went off swiftly together. There was enough chill in the air already to stiffen my throbbing thigh, and I hoped they would lose no time.

I sat and watched the oily current of the river swirling southward like a flood of melted gold between tall reeds and cane-brake. String after string of whimpering waterfowl passed over, or, wheeling, dropped on bowed wings into the marsh. In a magnolia over my head a crimson bird uttered soft, pretty notes and ruffled its brilliant feathers, and a long-billed wren sang loudly on the utmost tip of a tall palm.

I had a cigar but nothing with which to light it, and slowly tore it to pieces between my fingers. My hip hurt me, the pain flowing and ebbing betwixt knee and shoulder in measured waves. If Vulper chose swords I'd have a heavy time of it.

As the westering sun sank, my heart sank with it. If they didn't come quickly, now, there'd be no finishing this affair tonight. Perhaps not for several days, because I began to understand that my right leg was likely to be useless by the next morning.

What the devil was delaying my people I could not understand. The level sun kindled reeds and river to an infernal glow, but already this side of the bank was in chilly shade.

Now the light was failing very fast; scattered trees became welded together into shadowy, unbroken woods; the tips of the cypress glowed crimson; all bird music ceased. Then, in the intense stillness, a mockingbird burst into silvery song, and the first star glittered in the east.

Dusk grew swiftly; impatience darkened into anger. Where were my people? Where in hell was Vulper? I got up, and discovered that I could scarcely stand; and anger turned to rage.

My watch having been smashed, I could only guess at the time. It was too late, anyway; yet so hotly enraged was I that I would have taken any chance—I would have fired in utter darkness until a bullet found one or the other of us—or I would have been glad to feel out my enemy's whereabouts at rapier's point.

The sky glittered with stars before I heard any sound at all in that silent place. Then, at last, came the noise of wheels, and, in the hurrying, shadowy shapes that approached me, I recognized Carr, Sevier, and Mordhurst.

Almost strangled with passion I tried to stand up, and could not, but sat helpless and cursed them—which must have been the fever disordering my mind, for I am not discourteous by nature.

"For God's sake, don't talk that way," said Carr, "but let us help you home."

"Where is Vulper!" I demanded.

"God knows. We haven't found him——"

"Damnation, you should find him! He's on parole,

isn't he? He's bound to be somewhere within town limits——"

Carr was winding an army blanket around me; he and Sevier lifted me, I swearing steadily at them and at the pain which pulsed through me like tides of molten lead.

There must have been fever in me already, for such a wound could scarcely have addled me so soon. I was not quite certain of what I was saying, or of what was being done, except that I was being driven to my house. But when they got me there my mind cleared, and I told Carr to reassure my wife that I had not been badly hurt.

As I lay on my bed they got my boots and breeches off, and Carr began to fuss at my wound again. I could see Sevier and Mordhurst and Jumper in the candle light, and heard somebody sobbing—it sounded like Widgy.

Carr gave me some black medicine in water. It was bitter but refreshing.

"Mordhurst," said I, "this is too bad. It will be days before I can settle with Fox Vulper."

"It will be longer than that," said Mordhurst, gloomily.

I lay still a moment, then struggled upright on my pillows, my right leg stiff in front of me.

"What's that you said?" I demanded.

"I said that it would be a long time before you settled with Fox Vulper," repeated Mordhurst. "He's disgraced his uniform."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"I mean that he's gone."

"Gone? Why, he can't have gone," said I, incredulously; "he is on parole!"

"Well, by God, he has gone," said Mordhurst, bitterly. "You're in no condition to endure such news, but you've got to be told if it kills you: Fox Vulper has gone! *And nobody can find your wife!*"

I began to get out of bed. I didn't know what I was doing—couldn't stand—groped blindly for my breeches and boots—found myself on my back again and choking over a tumbler of black, bitter stuff forced into my throat.

"You gain time by lying still," said Carr. "I tell you I'll let you go as soon as I kill your fever——"

"I can be strapped to a horse," said I. "Mordhurst, in God's name, help me——"

"Everything has been done that can be done," said Sevier in an agonized voice. "That rat sent word to your wife that you'd been shot in a duel with Forney, and lay dying in his quarters. That's how he got hold of her. They've stolen a fisherman's boat—he and three of his black soldiers, and they've got her with them and are standing for Pensacola——"

Carr forced me back against the pillows: "Nearly every boat in Mobile is after them," he said. "You couldn't have done more than has been done, Major."

"We hope to stop them at the fort," pleaded Sevier. "I've sent every mounted man in Mobile to Bowyer——"

"Damnation!" I cried, "they can't fire on them with my wife aboard!"

"They understand that," said Carr. "Pray compose yourself, sir; there should be news by the time your fever breaks!"

Something was happening to me, for the red hell that raged in my brain grew paler and more confused, and I felt as though a dark flood were rocking me, rolling over me, drenching, drowning my senses in a thick, starless night.

Between a body poisoned by my wound, and veins already full of swamp fevers in which the seeds of disease suddenly germinated and upset my mind, I lay ill in my bed month after month, and, when reason returned, sicker in mind and heart than in broken body and exhausted blood.

Everything seemed to attack me at once; a terrible fever of the typhoid type and a congestion of both lungs fairly melted the flesh off my body, so that in a month it was no more than a bony cage imprisoning my vitals which, somehow, pulsed on.

I do not know how I survived the fretting fury which wore me to the bones and left me gasping through winter and early spring.

Carr did not know whether he could save me my leg or not, for the cloth of my breeches and parts of my shattered watch and fob had infected the flesh to a degree that seemed impossible to control with the surgeon's knife.

As for what most terribly concerned me, all had gone wrong; but I was not able to be told about it until early autumn. Then, for the first time, I learned that Fox Vulper had got away to Pensacola where now all pretense had been discarded, and the British flag waved on the ramparts beside the flag of Spain.

He had sent a most damnable, lying, and insolent letter to General Jackson, saying that, as I had plotted to murder all the officers on parole in Mobile, and, in fact, had assassinated three of them under shameful circumstances, he considered that his obligations were voided and his parole annulled; and, in fear of death by treachery and violence, had rejoined his regiment in Pensacola, taking with him the wife of whom I had robbed him in England, and whom I had either bigamously married or was maintaining as my mistress, living with her in adultery.

Without comment, General Jackson—who, for tragic reasons, never could endure that word, adultery—sent this infamous letter to me. God only knows how I ever could have read it, in my exasperated and weakened condition, and lived to recover.

My lord Mordhurst—as honourable a man as Vulper was dishonourable—had been terribly humiliated by the behaviour of Fox Vulper and Captain Welp, and had not hesitated to deal lightning justice to the latter for his cowardly treachery toward me.

What he would have done to Vulper I didn't know; he remained sensitive, gloomy, and darkly morbid, but

never failed to visit me through all those miserable and anguished months.

Twice, without my knowledge of their contents, he had sent letters, under permission, to Vulper at Pensacola, begging him, for the honour of his uniform, to return voluntarily and meet his sacred obligations to our Government, and, when I should be well enough, to me.

He showed me Fox Vulper's reply which went to Fort Bowyer with a flag, and which denied any obligation regarding his parole, and refused to meet "a bigamist and a murderer" under the code duello.

To this he added that he stood upon his marital rights and would continue to protect and restrain his wife until she came to her senses; and that Admiral Cochrane approved his attitude.

"I think that's a lie," said Mordhurst, pallid with anger and disgust. "If you can't get at him, Brooke, I shall, as soon as ever I am exchanged."

But I brooded and brooded on this horrible thing which had happened to Naïa and to me, and my helplessness made me frantic so that convalescence was frightfully retarded by the misery and violence of my emotions.

One day in August a poor Canary Islands fisherman left for me, at my house, two oyster-shells tied together.

How Naïa succeeded in smuggling a message to me I never knew until long afterward; but this is what I

deciphered, minutely scratched with a needle upon the nacre inside the two shells:

He can do nothing with me, darling. I care nothing about any suits at law. The Admiral doesn't know what to think, but, believing me to be his wife, dares not let me go to Mobile under a flag, in defiance of Vulper's wishes.

There are six British warships at Fort Barancas; five hundred Spaniards garrisoning this fortress; thirty guns—twenty 24's—and the 3rd West Indian black Regiment.

The ships and soldiers already here await a vast fleet from England with cannon and troops to take New Orleans. There are a thousand Seminole Indians here in their naked paint.

I think this fort could be stormed, but for God's sake be careful if you make one of such an enterprise.

I pay no heed to what Fox Vulper says, and know you are no murderer. But, oh God, why must you always be fighting duels! It's that that undid us both, darling—you went out on New Year's Eve to shoot and be shot at, without one word or look or touch for me who love you passionately!

I will try to communicate with you again.

Thy
NAIA

August saw me fit to sit a saddle and attend to my duties, but I was thin and moved like an old man; and it was thus that General Jackson found me when, late in August, he arrived suddenly in Mobile amid a whirlwind of cavalry. A few minutes later he came jingling his great sabre and spurs into my sitting room where I rose in consternation to meet this very angry man.

For an hour he strode about that room, fairly roaring defiance at his own Government which forbade him to carry Pensacola by storm where, at that moment, reigned an unholy triple alliance of British, Spaniard, and Indian intent upon our destruction.

"By the Eternal Majesty of Almighty God!" he shouted, "I shall not permit a fool of a President and a rascally Secretary of War to tell me how to conduct my battles and campaigns!

"Unless we beat the enemy here in Alabama and Louisiana, he'll beat us out of the whole United States!

"My God Almighty, worshipped and revered!—look what has been done to us in these months since I dealt the Creeks their death blow at Tallassahatchi and the Horse Shoe!—ship after ship taken at sea; a stalemate on the Canada border where good officers are paralyzed by a bad War Department; all New England a hell of treachery, ready to stab the Government in the back, separate themselves from the United States and invite an English prince to rule them!

"And the President sits mewing in the White House—mewing about embargoes! While beside him Armstrong and Monroe whine over that Puritan scum of the world which Massachusetts hatched to shame all men of heart and action throughout the New World!

"You talk of the treachery of Benedict Arnold—the treason of Vermont during our Revolution! By God, sir, I show you a more disgusting spectacle in

New England—at the Hartford Convention! Look at it and vomit!"

And tramp, tramp went his big, spurred riding boots to and fro across the room, and bang-bang went his huge sabre.

Jumper tremblingly fetched whiskey and Madeira; the General emptied his glass as though unconscious of what he was about.

"My Gracious Lord in Heaven," he said, "what kind of poltroon or what sort of lunatic would I be to let Spaniard and Briton and Seminole sit snug in Pensacola and Barancas and accomplish the ruin of my native land! Come here to the window, Major Brooke——" He took me by the arm and drew me to the embrasure. At the same instant my ears caught the marching music of a regiment; and I saw a splendid column of United States Infantry swinging into Mobile.

"The 2nd Regulars," said the General. "I'm sending them to Fort Bowyer. I want you to go there, too, Major. I have a brevet for Captain Sevier; let him take over Mobile until I garrison it properly. I mean to make it my headquarters. . . . You guess why, of course, sir?"

"Because you mean to storm Pensacola, sir!" I said.

"By the Eternal who ruined the Egyptians!" he cried, "that is exactly what I'm going to do! Listen to me. You've heard of Barataria and the pirates, and of their leader, Jean Lafitte? The British Admiral at Pensacola offered them an alliance and com-

missions in the Royal Navy if they would fall upon New Orleans.

"This so-called pirate sent those bribing documents to Claiborne with a letter saying that, though outlawed, he would not serve against his own country. An honest pirate! Think of that! Claiborne has sent these letters to me. They involve the Spaniards, too.

"I wrote to Manrequez, their damned Governor at Pensacola, and told him I'd add a postscript from the mouths of my cannon.

"I've sent my Adjutant General, Bob Butler, into Tennessee to recruit my army. Your riflemen from Easley Station have marched for Bowyer under Lieutenant Glimming. Major, I want you to go there and help Lawrence hold that little fort until I can dig my teeth and claws into Pensacola.

"Let them mew and whine in Washington. Let them yelp! You and Major Lawrence shall go to Fort Bowyer and show the enemy a gay and confident countenance with your regulars and your riflemen. And I shall muster my men here in Mobile, and, when I'm ready, march on the red coats, and redskins, and Dons, and clean out Pensacola. And then, so help me God Almighty, if New Orleans falls it buries the dead bones of Andrew Jackson under its brick and plaster walls!"

In my mind I was silently thanking God for this mercy to me as I stood watching the 2nd Regulars passing with their long, swinging stride toward the

docks where sloops awaited them to carry them to the fort thirty miles below.

The General, who had a passion for volunteers, and who seemed to be able to handle them where, under others, they and the militia usually turned tail, admitted aloud that these United States troops looked very spick and span and marched well under their heavy shakos, muskets, and loaded knapsacks.

"However," said he, "give me Tennessee and Kentucky Riflemen. I understand them, Major, and they understand me. And God knows," he added whimsically, "I'm sometimes difficult to understand."

He laid his hand on my arm with a kindly gesture:

"I am deeply sorry," said he, "to hear of your illness and of your domestic misfortune."

"I believe under God, sir," said I, "that both are but temporary."

"I am happy to hear you say so," he said warmly. "Sir, I know very well what slander and poison-tongues can do to render a man's life wretched. . . . I know what the divine and mighty power of pure love is, too; and that it must prevail in the end. . . . Be, therefore, of good courage. And whatever on earth I can do in your behalf, I pray you command me, Major Brooke."

I thanked him in an unsteady voice, deeply touched by his gentleness to me.

"Well," he said, "you accounted for two of those scoundrels, they tell me; and the third proved a rascal and was destroyed by his own second and yours."

"Yes, sir."

"Nevertheless, it's a good code, the duello," said he. "It settles matters permanently. I have had—occasions—to employ it."

"Yes, sir," said I, smiling, "that is the general rumour."

"But I am not quarrelsome, sir!" he said loudly, turning quite red and almost glaring at me.

I couldn't help laughing. He did glare, then—for an instant—but burst into a hearty laugh the next.

"Well, sir," said he, "I was only afraid you might have the impudence to call the kettle black. . . . I trust your wound is quite healed, Major."

"I trust yours is, too, General."

He lifted and bent his left arm, flexing it solemnly.

"There are twinges, sir," said he. "I should eliminate the—ah—flowing bowl, they tell me. However—a glass of wine with you, my dear Major——" We filled and touched glasses, and he drank to my future happiness.

"I wish," said he, "that we had a band of music here. I like music. I wish I had a band of it to follow me. You know how little Jimmy Madison drags about with him the wretched band of the *Macedonian,* which we captured when we took that frigate? He makes 'em play at the White House when he gets frightened thinking about New England."

We laughed heartily together over this.

"One more glass to you and to Lawrence, and may

you give hell to the enemy if they meddle with your little fort!" said he.

We drank that toast; and another to the fall of Pensacola. Then we had Jumper fetch us some cold meats and salad and juleps.

After that, the General being very red and his fiery blue eyes dim with sentiment, we drank our respective ladies, not once but innumerable times.

"How many dragoons," he asked gravely, "are holding how many horses at your front door, sir?"

I tried in vain to count them. Sometimes there seemed to be a whole squadron of them; sometimes I could count only a platoon or two.

"I propose," said he, "with God's help, to get into my saddle and stay there. Sir, do you doubt my ability to do it?"

"No, sir, I do not doubt your ability to get into a dozen saddles!" said I loyally.

"That's going to be the trouble, sir. Too many horses and saddles. Can't bestride 'em all. Must find the right one. Major, your arm, if you please."

I lent him my arm; we moved majestically out to the mounting block. He got onto something that seemed to me like a horse. After that I don't remember what became of Andy Jackson.

There was an eastern Alabama Regiment marching on the river road. Its band was playing loudly, and the men sang as they swung along in their padded blue uniforms and heavy, brass-encrusted shakos:

Oh, the nigger to his wench,
And the cock to his hen,
And the hay to the land it stacks on,
Oh, the skunk to his stench,—
But the Alabama men
Must sweat with Andy Jackson!

Oh, everybody knows
That the Mississippi flows
Where the steamboat smokes with the stacks on;
When her wheels turn 'round
We'll all be bound
To j'ine with Gin'ral Jackson!

Mounted rifles were passing, now, Kentuckians; and they were singing the same song timed by the trampling of their horses:

When her big wheels churn
At the English Turn,
She'll stick in the mud she backs on;
If she don't get loose
It's the Calaboose
For the lads too late for Jackson!

The cobbler to his mare,
The tinker to his dam,
The Earth to the Anglo-Saxon!
What the hell do I care
If I drink a dram
Along o' Gin'ral Jackson!

The fiddler's bitch
Has the seven-year itch,
And it's all she cacks and clacks on,
But a louse or a flea
Are the same to me
So I j'ine with Andy Jackson——

But who were these horsemen riding in the rear, with their buckskin rifle shirts and leggings, tossing fringes and fox-skin caps? Who was that painted Indian riding behind their officer with the tumbled plumage of a white-headed eagle falling about his face and shoulders?

He was singing in a piercing nasal voice as he rode, and shaking his lifted hatchet above his crested head:

Ha! wa sah seh,
Ha!
Ha! wah sah seh,
Ha!

And the buck-skinned horsemen answered in rhythmic shout:

That's the way
The Iroquois
Sing all day,
Ha wah sah ha!
Ojibwah and Chipewah
Sing their battle song this way:

The mounted Indian:

Ne ma je e ye,
Ne me kun e yeh,
*Hoh! A be yun ah!**

Far ahead the bugle-horn of the mounted rifles sounded the "halt."

In front of me a wild horseman slung a conch-horn from his beaded baldrick and blew "draw bridle."

Tears filled my eyes; I could scarcely see as I made my way half blindly to the gate where the dusty detachment sat their horses.

"Ben!" I called in a choked voice—"Joe Barse!—Black Cat!—don't you know me!——"

"Hell's roarin' beeswax!" bawled their officer—"it's Cap'n Brooke!"

And the next moment we were hugging each other like wrestling bears.

* I go to the war path—
My war path!
Get out of my way!

CHAPTER X

PENSACOLA

ON September eleventh, early in the morning, a Canary Island fisherman, with a load of crayfish or langouste, came to Fort Bowyer to report to me, personally, that armed British whale-boats had chased him from Sainte Rose, and that he had seen scores of Seminole canoes to the eastward, full of warriors and witch-doctors. He said that Seminoles do not sing much, and he heard no war songs, but in the bow of every canoe stood a sorcerer making magic so that the palm trees swayed where no wind blew, and the silver mullet were jumping into the canoes by thousands.

I told him very gravely that we had stronger magic than that.

Then he gave me two oyster-shells, bound together by a lock of shining chestnut hair, saying that a young lady at Pensacola had paid him to carry this to me; that he feared somebody had noticed the transaction, and that was why the whale-boats had chased him.

He was a poor, ignorant fellow. He could tell me little more except that he had two hundred langouste, and had been selling these and other shell fish to the garrisons of Barancas, St. Michael's Fort, and Pensacola when the young lady whispered to him on the

quay and gave him the two shells and a gold piece.

I asked where she was living and with whom, and how she seemed.

He couldn't tell, except that she was a very pretty young lady and was accompanied by many marine and naval officers.

As for himself, he said that he dared not go back to Pensacola, now, and meant to sail to Mobile and remain there for the present.

So I gave him more money than he ever had earned in ten years and asked him to carry a letter for me to General Jackson.

While he waited, I unwound the tress of Naïa's lovely hair, wrapped it up and placed it in my breast pocket; then opened and read the needle tracings on the nacre of the two oyster-shells.

Marines and Indians on way to attack your fort. Nine warships here. Four sailing to bombard you. Am frightened. For God's sake don't be reckless.

Am well. Manrequez polite. British Admiral and officers kind and attentive. The "beast" dares not annoy me. His black regiment landed to garrison Fort Saint Michael's. Two more black regiments are coming. Can't General Jackson take Pensacola before the fleet arrives? A hundred ships and twenty thousand of Wellington's veteran troops are expected.

Tell General Jackson to beware of Fort Saint Michael's if he storms Pensacola. Fox Vulper commands there.

Fort Barancas, also, is now garrisoned by British troops.

Darling, I love you.

N.

I went into my hut and wrote out this information, addressed the letter to General Jackson, and charged the fisherman with it.

From the ramparts on the demi-lune I watched him run down the sandy beach to his boat, hoist sail, and scuttle away up the bay.

Major Lawrence came up on the ramparts, and, as soon as I had informed him about the message, he told me to order out a patrol of my riflemen toward the southeast; which I did immediately.

It was a hot morning. A stifling land-breeze, blowing across leagues of heated swamps and sand, swept the fort. Our flag blew stiffly, yet the wind was like a blast from a furnace; and the sun rose like a ball of fire over the dunes as our bugles sounded and our drums beat to quarters.

It was not much of a fort that we garrisoned on this sand-spit thrust out between Mobile Bay and the Gulf of Mexico—a demi-lune seaward, a redan landward, mounting eighteen 12-pounders and less, and two 24's.

There were no bomb-proofs; barracks and officers' quarters were crowded and flimsy. The 2nd Regulars, drilled as artillery, manned the guns; my riflemen did our scouting and patrolling under Ben Glimming.

About nine o'clock Ben's riflemen came cantering into the fort to report that they had exchanged shots with British Royal Marines and Seminole Indians who were landing southeast of us, and that they had a

howitzer and a 12-pounder with them, but no horses.

I got on a horse and rode out with Ben Glimming to take a look at them, and saw them very plainly coming on across the sand hills, dragging their howitzer and field gun by hand; and a great swarm of Seminoles in plumed turbans and gaudy paint, swinging out as though to encircle and rush the fort from the rear, or northeast redan.

The Seminoles, brilliant as a garden of massed bloom, were superb fellows. Their sorcerers led them in bands of about a hundred; and there were six of these massed groups trotting toward the northwest.

Ben and I and our patrol took a few long shots at them, then turned our nags and made for the postern at a gallop.

Lawrence said to me, as I ran up to the east battery, that he'd never surrender to any force which had Indians with it, because they were utterly uncontrollable and would murder all prisoners and wounded.

"This is a hell of a fort to defend," he added, "but I think we ought to fight to the bitter end, Brooke; don't you?"

"You needn't caution a man who saw Fort Mims burn," said I. "I'd sooner surrender to a pack of panthers."

We walked together around the parapets with a cheery or joking word for each gun-crew, and for my riflemen lying snugly curled up for any long shot that might present itself.

My riflemen exhibited little concern; some even sneered or jested at the antics of the Seminole sorcerers. But the regulars remained tight-lipped and serious, and did not seem to regard lightly this horde of frightfully painted savages.

"Lads," said Lawrence in his good-natured voice, as we strolled along the ramparts, "there's no use my telling you that we mustn't let them in. Wildcats would be better company than those naked, snaky fellows all over scarlet, black, and yellow paint.

"Look at them and see whether you want to exchange kisses with them. Look yonder at that medicine man on the dune—and the damn fool he's making of himself with his drum and rattle—stepping high like a cat in wet grass, and squalling like one.

"He's telling 'em they're bullet-proof. He's making magic for 'em. . . . Brooke, do you think one of your leather-legged Adirondack riflemen could tickle the painted rump he's showing us in derision?"

I called Joe Barse. He shrugged, remarking that it was a long shot. He lay down on his belly and drew the brown rifle to his shoulder. All the artillerymen on the east parapet were watching him.

After a little while he gently squeezed the trigger, and the shot cracked out like a bull-whip lash.

"Well done, soldier!" exclaimed Lawrence; "you knocked his turban over one eye!"

"You've done more than that, Joe," said I; "he's down and trying to get up! Look at him squirming

and clawing in the sand! He's biting himself like a crippled rattlesnake!"

"Take care, lads!" cried Lawrence, briskly, "they're coming like a swarm of yellow-jackets! Swing your swivels on them!"

For a moment or two the sand hills were brilliant with yelling Indians coming toward us at full speed, but the next instant they had sheered off out of range, making for the dune grass and bushes; and there they vanished before our eyes like a cloud of settling quail.

What the British Marines were about we could not determine. They marched, counter-marched to drum and fife, dragging behind them through the deep sand their two heavy little guns like a pair of reluctant and resisting pups. Our cannoniers were laughing nervously as they watched them. They marched magnificently but didn't seem to know what to do with their dragging artillery.

"I'll not let those fellows dig gun pits," said Lawrence to me. "They're looking for a shelter within gun range. That's what they're up to."

But nothing happened. Far out of range the Royal Marines settled down to rest and scratch red-bugs and fight mosquitoes while their brilliantly uniformed officers sat on the howitzer and looked out to sea.

"What the devil do you suppose they think is out there?" said Lawrence.

"Sheeps, sir," said Joe Barse, "—wan—two—tree—four sheeps—hull down, sir, south-southeast!"

"Sheeps ojus, me see um. Wah!" remarked Black Cat who now elegantly affected the Algonquin dialect patois, as fashionable folk affect French after a week in Paris.

"I'll be hanged if I can make out any ships," said Lawrence to me.

However, after a while we both saw them.

All that long, blazing hot afternoon, we watched these four warships manœuvring, circling, standing on and off. Finally, toward sunset, they stood for the bay in line ahead, made a beautiful, sweeping turn, and came to an anchor about five miles off Dauphin Island to the southward. The flag-ship fired a gun to windward and showed signals for several hours.

And there they lay. And yonder squatted the Royal Marines and Indians—myriad spots of gorgeous colour in the sunset glow which turned land and sea to rose and gold.

The sunset sky now was full of clamouring waterfowl, whirling in vast clouds on their evening flight. Gusts of sanderling, whistling flights of snipe, sad-voiced curlew, plaintive plover pitched into the grass or swept over sand and surf to a sun-dyed resting place on the water's edge.

Overhead pelicans soared majestically or flapped and glided in solemn alignment toward some inland sanctuary.

Above them, very, very high, white-crested eagles wheeled.

Then the sun sank into the sea and the swift southern night rushed upon the world amid a haze of stars.

All night long we slept on our arms; gun-crews snored beside their shotted guns; riflemen lay asleep on the parade with the bridles of their saddled nags around their arms.

The men had eaten supper where they lay; they ate breakfast there, too, before dawn.

I went out before sunrise with a scout of six, and stirred up a hell's nest of Indians, letting them have it from our saddles, and galloping back to the fort before they could cut us off.

But we had gone far enough to discover that the marines had planted their howitzer behind a dune about seven hundred yards from the fort; and, as I gained the ramparts, their first shell came screaming into the parade and burst, throwing up a fountain of sand and several reckless chickens.

Two or three more shells followed, then solid shot, harming nobody. I told Lawrence pretty accurately where their gun was hidden; he let fly the 12-pounders at it, and a very pretty uproar began.

This artillery firing continued noisily, at intervals, nearly all day; and I am ashamed to say we injured nobody, and I gratefully admit that nobody in the fort suffered a scratch, although the racket of exploding shells was terrific and the fort's cat, almost swooning, rushed into the magazine and spat at the am-

munition detail as they went for powder and round shot.

Toward sunset the Royal Marines attempted to dig a trench, but were driven away by our eastern battery. A short, ugly rush of Indians was punished rather severely, and we could see them carrying away dead or injured warriors, and heard their doleful yells and yowls all night.

Then our western battery opened suddenly upon some light-boats which we had mistaken for fishermen, but discovered to be boats from the warships sounding the channel between Dauphin Island and our fort.

We didn't hit them, but they pulled away in a hurry.

Again, in the sunset sky, millions and millions of wild duck circled; vast flights of heron flapped inland toward the cypress; the sands were misty with the flashing, uptossed wings of alighting snipe.

We ate and drank and slept as we lay; and, at dawn, tempering our brackish water with a dash of rum, we drank our morning draught and stood to our unwiped guns.

Toward noon, with a light southeast wind blowing, the four warships stood out to sea; tacked, and bore down on us in order of line ahead. Through our glasses we observed them until they were near enough to make out their names—the *Hermes,* 22 guns—which I had heard was commanded by young Percy, a son of Lord Beverly whom I knew in Eng-

land; the *Sophia,* 18; the *Caron,* 20; and the *Anaconda,* 18 guns.

They came on very slowly under a light breeze, to take position for attack, the *Hermes* leading; and when she arrived within range of our east battery we let her have it; but she fired only her starboard bow gun at us and came to an anchor within musket range between the fort and Dauphin Island.

The *Sophia, Caron,* and *Anaconda* anchored astern of her in the order named.

Suddenly, from their broadsides a terrific cannonade began; our 24's replied; then all our guns crashed together; and we could see splinters flying aboard the *Hermes* from stem to stern, while a vast steam rose upward from her flashing guns and powder clouds crowded out across the water in snowy convolutions, veiling the sea with a turbulent mist.

Lawrence came over from the redan to say to me that the marines had planted their howitzer and a 12-pounder behind the dunes and were shelling and pounding our postern.

So I went out there with my riflemen and very soon drove away the artillerymen and a body of loitering Indians, so that the two guns were silent for a time.

About five o'clock Lawrence sent word to me that he thought the *Hermes* had struck her colours. Being merciful, he ordered our guns to cease firing on her, but it turned out that we had shot away her flag, and very soon her ensign was flying again, and our circular battery began to pound her fearfully between

wind and water. Then our own flagstaff was hit and broken off, and our flag fell; but Joe Barse picked it up, and Lawrence nailed it to a sponge staff and set it up again very coolly, although the four ships redoubled their fire; and I saw his cocked hat fly off his head.

One of our shot severed the cable of the *Hermes,* and she began to drift, headed toward the circular battery which swept her decks of every living soul, and knocked her guns about like ninepins. It was rather dreadful to watch; men running to escape were blown into fragments; spars fell, masts went by the board, fetching down the top hamper—and she drifted, a horrible and gory wreck under a storm of her own splinters, till we saw her ground on a sand-bank and, very slowly, begin to burn.

Gun blasts from the closely anchored *Anaconda* were doing us damage, now. A regular artilleryman, working near me, fell over, headless, his decapitated trunk deluging everything.

Lawrence shouted to me to swing all guns of the circular battery on the *Anaconda;* and I had my own shoulder to a carriage when a round shot tore in among us, cutting one gunner in two and taking off the entire face of another—a ghastly spectacle—but I made the men drag these mangled corpses free of the guns, and we swung them to their target.

Corporal Johns, coming to ask me something, was torn to pieces before my eyes by a round shot which also knocked down two other gunners.

But at length we managed to lay the twenty-fours on the *Anaconda* and *Caron;* and very soon we could see their hulls and spars shivering in the blaze of our heavy guns.

A frightful yelling from the postern indicated that the Indians were attempting to storm us from the rear; we could hear their wild, falsetto war-cry—"Yoho-e-lee! Yoho-e-lee!"—and the "Hiou! Hiou! Yaha-hia!" of the Tallahassees, bounding toward us across the dunes.

"Be good enough to load with grape, Major Brooke!" called out Lawrence.

He was quite right. The grape-shot settled the Indians. We could see them falling thickly in the dreadful storm—see them break, turn, and run howling to cover.

Ben Glimming came over to tell me that his riflemen had so peppered the ships' tops and decks that nobody could show themselves aboard and live; and that three of the ships had hoisted anchor and were heading seaward while the wrecked *Hermes* lay aground, burning by the head, and no sign of life aboard her.

Lawrence said that what remained of her officers and crew had left her in the ship's boats, under cover of the smoke, and that she might blow up at any moment.

She did blow up, after sunset, with a shock that rocked land and sea and filled the sky with spouting fire. And all night long her débris burned betwixt us

and Dauphin Island, turning the flowing tide blood-red where dead bodies rolled in the surf.

It was thus that little Fort Bowyer kept Mobile Bay in the Year of Fear of 1814.

From the middle of September to the first of November we remained a beleaguered garrison.

The marines and the ships had gone, but the dunes, brush, and woods inland crawled alive with savages. They had abandoned the British and remained unruly and entirely out of hand to a degree that British officers no longer dared venture among them.

But, balked of promised plunder and butchery, they hung sullenly about in hopes that something might turn up, permitting them to harvest a few scalps and do a little bloody plundering.

Messenger after messenger came from General Jackson, at Mobile, asking why our scouts were affording him no information.

We couldn't get any. Our mounted leather-legs on patrol were constantly in touch with the Indians who tried by a thousand tricks and wiles to lure them into ambuscade. But Black Cat and Joe Barse had seen ambuscades in the Northland, and thumbed their noses at the Seminoles.

A sword of honour was sent from New Orleans to Major Lawrence for his defense of Mobile Bay, and our garrison had a gay party to celebrate the occasion. General Jackson, also, wrote Lawrence a grateful letter, but he also wrote another to me, in-

quiring what I was doing with my leather-legs and why it was that I could not get a spy into Pensacola.

This hurt me. I had nobody to send on so perilous a mission. The Indians had killed or chased away all fishermen, beach combers and other human driftwood. To send the Black Cat would be to order him to his death. Any Seminole would know what kind of Indian he was.

One day in early November I told Lawrence that I couldn't stand the implied criticism any longer and that I was going to Pensacola myself.

He was very grave about it. We discussed the matter in all its phases; and finally I came to the conclusion that I could do it if I took my chances entirely alone.

No use to try to penetrate the restless, sleepless screen of Indians. I couldn't hope to do that. There was only one way possible.

The sun and wind had burned me as brown as a Seminole or a New Orleans fisherman.

There was a fishing boat lying alongside the wharf, in front of the circular battery, the owner of which had been shot and scalped by Indians.

We had buried him naked in a blanket; and it was into this poor devil's clothes that I got myself that night. With a cockpit full of lobster pots, casting nets, trident fish-spears or grains, koonti bread and pickled pork, splinter-wood for torches, a jug of black-strap, one of rum, and a great calabash full of sweet water, I lighted a torch and put it in the bow,

and made sail by starlight for Dauphin Island—taking that direction in case any watchful Indian lay on the dunes observing me.

The blind, silvery mullet came flippity-flop aboard me, and in a little while the bottom of my boat was a slithering, flopping mess of mullet; and they continued to leap over the gunwales as long as my torch burned.

Now, landing and mooring my battered craft, I lighted another torch, took my grain and waded along the shallow reef.

Every langouste that showed its long, agitated feelers in the clefts I speared and lifted, wriggling and clacking loudly, into the boat. Once a green moray looked at me out of his round, unblinking devil's-eyes. I let the green demon alone, but speared a few grunt which are extremely good to eat.

It was not long before I had enough of a boatload to warrant my appearance at Pensacola market.

My torch burned low; I boarded my leaky craft and hoisted sail; and, as the last embers fell hissing into the water, I tacked seaward and squared away for the Perdido before a steady west wind which sent me scudding like a saw-bill duck across the heaving waters.

About midnight I ate and drank. I noticed no lights ashore until I came abeam the Perdido. Here a Spanish beacon burned on the dunes, and, from it, I laid my course for Point Chevreuil and Pensacola Bay.

It was nearly dawn when I made out Fort Barancas looming gloomily on my port bow; and very soon saw the light on Chevreuil point.

Then lights broke out everywhere around me, at sea and ashore—riding lights of warships off Barancas Fortress, fishermen's lights in the pass, a beacon on Chevreuil, a lighthouse on St. Rose, another beacon on St. Michael's Fort, and the twinkling lights of the town of Pensacola.

Dawn washed them pale, and presently they faded in the glory of the coming sun which painted sky and ocean.

In the dazzling glory of sunrise I headed toward the flimsy fish wharf at Pensacola, and saw other fishing craft like mine in from the painted sea, as the morning gun boomed from Barancas.

On St. Michael's Fort the English drums beat; Spanish drums answered from Pensacola; bugles blew on the Barancas; and I could hear the stirring music break out from the decks of the warships.

As the fishing boats drew in and were made fast below the stairs, the Spanish bailiffs came lounging along; and I didn't know whether permits and identification papers were necessary or not, but they made no inquiries of anybody and presently returned to their seats on a pile of planks and continued to smoke their long, black cigars.

Noticing what the other fishermen were doing, I took a grunt by the gills and a langouste by the back, just behind his whiskered head, and followed the

others into the town where were sheds thatched with palmetto in a sandy plaza surrounded by orange trees in delicious bloom.

The plaza was thronged with soldiers' wives and wenches bargaining for a breakfast fish—Spanish women in gorgeous shawls, English women half clad in tarnished finery, a few French Creoles, neat of hair and shoe, turning everything to gaiety in their thrifty quest, and cracking and eating shrimps as they strolled and gossiped and bargained.

"Ohé, l'Anglais!" called out one of them to me —"à quel prix vot' langouste!"

"C'est à madame pour rien plus q'un sourire," I replied.

She was a stout, pretty wench and she gave me the smile I asked for, and two English pennies to boot; and when I kissed her hand she gave me the scarlet hibiscus from her hair and whispered that she lived in the Impasse Chat Sauvage where the iron lantern hung.

I went to get another langouste. When I came back, a slatternly English girl, carrying a basket, priced it and the grunt. She said she was buying for a whole platoon—and she looked it, being, apparently, about ready to bless the platoon with triplets——

So I took her down to my boat and sold her a basket full of langouste, grunt, and mullet at her own stingy price.

Black girls from Jamaica—wives and mistresses of

the 3rd Black Regiment—came giggling to purchase fish; and they simpered and rolled their handsome eyes at the English and Spanish soldiers who were lounging about.

It seemed to me that trade in Pensacola was extremely brisk; but there was a fleet in, and a considerable garrison in the forts, and also the town to reckon with.

I bought two reed baskets and fetched half my cargo to the market where I squatted down under the thatched roof and awaited customers and noted in my mind the numbers and uniforms of the different regiments.

Without any trouble at all, or exciting any suspicion, I learned the strength and position of every body of troops, Spanish, British, British-colonial.

I learned the number and calibre of guns in Barancas and in the other forts and redoubts; I wrote down, with these, a list of every ship in the bay, and what was her armament and tonnage.

Everybody blabbed and gabbled—soldiers as well as women—and I never heard of so loosely controlled a place as was the fortified town of Pensacola.

About ten o'clock there were a number of officers' ladies in the market, but interested mostly in that section devoted to fruits.

Some were handsome, some looked like bleak-faced grenadiers. The English ladies seemed to have come more as a diversion than for business which they left to their servants; but the French and Spanish

ladies were thrifty souls and trusted their own eyes rather than their maids'.

I had sold nearly all my grunt and langouste, and was just getting up with my baskets to fetch the last of my cargo from the wharf, when I found myself looking into the eyes of Naïa Strayling.

For an instant she lost all her colour; then the rushing rose flooded her beautiful face.

There were two English ladies with her—elderly folk—who were inspecting the various species of sea-spoil through quizzing glasses.

I could see terror in Naïa's dilated grey eyes—for this was a hanging matter, after all—then with a visible effort she controlled herself; and I heard her say to one of the ladies that she was going down to the wharf where the langouste and fish were fresher.

"Madame," said I, touching my battered straw hat, "I have very fresh cray-fish and grunt at the wharf —and extremely cheap."

"Where is your boat?" she managed to say.

I begged her to have the complaisance to follow me; and I walked off, hat in hand.

I descended the stairs and sprang aboard my boat; she stepped daintily down the water-stairs and took hold of the rail for support.

Then our eyes met.

"Joshua," she said unsteadily; "you don't need to tell me what is your peril. For God's sake, hoist your sail and go."

"I am safe enough. Dearest, are you well?"

"Yes. I beg you to go at once——"

"I couldn't go until after dark, darling. The water-bailiffs are likely to stop and question me when I pass the fleet. . . . Darling girl, would you dare chance an escape tonight?"

"I have no liberty at night. There is no excuse I could offer. I am quartered at Saint Rose with Sir John and Lady Clipperton. I couldn't leave the villa without their knowledge. Oh, darling, I've heard about your dreadful duel. All the fleet talks about it yet, and everybody censures Fox Vulper for breaking his parole——"

"Where is that fellow?"

"At St. Michael's Fort. I wrote you on a shell——"

"I have both messages, darling——"

"Joshua! Are you well of your terrible wound?"

"Quite!"

"What a frightful beating you and Major Lawrence gave poor Percy at Mobile Bay! Oh, I was so thankful to God——"

"The Indians are still very troublesome there. But, darling, Andy Jackson is nearly ready to storm Pensacola; and I can't endure the thought of your being aboard a ship and having to sail away, God knows whither——"

"Will the ships be driven away?"

"Yes. We mean to take Barancas, too. Is there no way you can come off with me tonight?"

"No. Wait a moment——" She pressed her

clenched fingers to her bitten lips in an agony of thought. "There must be some way," she whispered, "—oh, heaven—we've only a moment more before those women will be looking here for me——"

I caught sight of them even as she spoke, up by the market, peering about with their quizzing glasses.

"Darling," she said rapidly, "there'll be a dreadful excitement and confusion in Pensacola when your army appears before it. I might hide somewhere in town—oh, darling, I'll try to hide away at the Black Pearl. It's in the street of the Singing Cat—Le Chat qui Chant! Black Yvonne does my laundry. I think she loves me and would give me shelter. Look for me there when our troops storm Pensacola. I promise to get there somehow——"

"I'll try to be in the town as soon as anybody——"

"Yes, try. I'll try to arrange it with Yvonne. She brings my laundry to Saint Rose tomorrow. I'll make it possible, somehow—because I swear I shall not go aboard their damned ships and leave you for God knows how long! . . . Oh, Joshua, do you truly love me? Oh, there comes Lady Clipperton!

"Pretend I've bought the rest of your fish. Throw them into your baskets, darling. . . . Oh, how I love you, Joshua! . . . Hang it, here she comes——"

"Naïa!" called Lady Clipperton in a fluty voice, from the head of the water-stairs, "we're going back, now."

"Oh," cried Naïa, "see what beautiful fresh langouste I have bought—and so cheaply!"

"You'd better be sure they're all alive before you pay the fellow," remarked Lady Clipperton.

"Good-bye, my passionately beloved," murmured Naïa.

I took off my battered straw hat to her and made her a deep bow; and she ran up the water-stairs and disappeared.

In a little while Lady Clipperton's servants came to take away the cray-fish, mullet, and grunt; and I was left alone in the hot sunshine with an empty boat.

Presently I saw Naïa's pink and silver gown in a longboat manned by blue-jackets, and pulling smartly across the sparkling water for Saint Rose. Lady Clipperton and the other elderly dame were in the boat, too; and I could see Naïa's head turned toward me, but she made no slightest signal nor dared I do so either.

When she was gone—fearing inspection by the water-bailiffs—I wandered up into the nearly empty market.

I did not know where the Street of the Singing Cat was to be found, and was cautious about inquiry, but finally discovered it—a sandy, shady alley under china trees in berry, where dirty children toddled and played —Spanish or quadroon—and listless chickens wandered pensively.

Above white plaster walls the fronds of palms and banana trees waved in a slight breeze. A green painted door in the wall stood partly open. Over it hung a sign, "La Perle Noire."

Inside, under foliage and among hibiscus and oleander, was a patio with a coquina-paved verandah giving on three sides, under which tables and chairs stood.

I went in, washed my hands at a stone trough which poured out sulphur-smelling water, dried them on a banana leaf, and walked under the verandah.

"Bon jou'," came a velvety voice from the dusk; and I saw a black woman in white, wearing a scarlet turban, coming toward me with the gait of a goddess.

She was superbly made, very black, with African features which were so symmetrical that they were almost handsome.

"Bon jou'," said I. "Moin à boire qu'que chose, si' plé."

"Du vin, siro', juleep, swiz'—n' porte. Avons t'c'que vous voudrais, 'sieur.

"Un juleep, si' plé."

After a little while she brought it from the shadows of the café, set it before me, thanked me for payment, and stood looking at me so intently that I felt uncomfortable.

"You speak English?" she said.

"Yes."

"Fisherman?"

"Oui, madame."

"I see you where you talk to Mist'ess St'ayling, on market stairs. You sell her fish?"

"Langouste."

"Ver' manny?"

"Beaucoup."

"You talk to Mist'ess ver' long time."

I gave her a straight and smiling look: "You Yvonne?"

"Ah, she tell you. B'en oui, I am Yvonne. For Mist'ess I launder."

"Yvonne," said I in a low voice, "do you love Mistress Strayling?"

She looked at me and looked at me out of her velvet eyes.

"Because," said I, "I love her, too. And some day, very soon, she is coming here to ask you to hide her away until I arrive to take her under my protection."

"Who you, suh?"

"Ask her."

"You won't tell me, suh?"

I made up my mind instantly:

"Yes, I'll tell you, Yvonne. I am an American officer. And very soon I shall come back to Pensacola to find and carry away Mistress Strayling whom I love and who loves me."

She bent over the table in the green dusk of the trees and peered steadily into my eyes.

After a moment she smiled at me, and her face grew almost beautiful.

"You sail back to Mobile Fort tonight, suh?" she asked in a low voice.

"Yes."

"Don' you sail twill it come deep da'k, suh. Too

many bailiffs in de bay. You stay here along, suh. I tell you when you go."

So all day long I sat in the pleasant shadows, thinking of Naïa, while the crimson cardinal birds sang and fluttered from branch to branch overhead, and the pretty little ground doves flashed in and out of the garden.

Toward dusk Yvonne fetched me an omelette and fried fish and a salad of doucette. This with a bottle of sauterne was an exquisite dinner; but I could not induce her to accept a penny for it; and she laughed at me and, looking down still laughing, lightly caressed my hair and cheek.

"When you done ma'y my pretty Missy, suh, be so ve'y kind to con'scend fo' to sen' me one petit morceau cake, suh."

"Wedding cake," I nodded. "And maybe, when the war ends, you'll come and live with us in the North, Yvonne."

She smiled, smoothed my hair as though I had been a child.

"I see my Missy face, suh, when she look at you down by ole ma'ket stair. Pears lak my Missy in love along o' you, suh—pourtant—dat what her big grey eyes was a-tellin' you. Marie, mère de Dieu!—dat-a-way all girl mek love when dey don't say a word."

"Yvonne," said I, "your speech is different from any I ever heard. What are you?"

"Baratarian, suh. I speak Spanish, French, English, Orleans patois, Minorcan, Spanish-Seminole."

She laughed, went in and fetched out a guitar. "I gwine sing you song, suh:

C'est Michié Cayétane
Qui sorti la Havane
Avec so chouals et so macacs!—

She sang in a lovely voice of velvet, her great eyes alight like twin black stars:

Pou di tou' ça mo pas capabe—
Yé pas montré pou' la négrail
Qui ya pou' dochans-dos-brulés
Qui ménein la tous p'tis yé

'Oir Michié Cayétane
Qui vivé la Havane
Avec so chouals et so macacs!

Then she sang:

Pauvre piti' Mamzel Zizi
Li gagnin doulor, doulor, doulor,
Li gagnin doulor dans cœur a li!—

And then the lovely, heart-breaking:

Lizette quitté la plaine
Mon perdi bonheur à moué
Gié à moin semblé fontaine,
Dipi mon pas moué toué—

And she sang the *Chanson Boscoyo,* and *Celeste,* and *San Dominguais,* her guitar throbbing in the gathering dusk and her great, depthless eyes brooding mysteries.

But now there were voices; people began to enter the patio—gaudily dressed soldiers of the black West Indian Regiment, slovenly Spanish soldiers; Canary Islanders, Minorcan fishermen; and Negro girls—quadroons, half-breeds, pure blacks with supple figures and bare feet, wearing gorgeous shawls across their naked waists and breasts.

It was a poor resort for humble folk—fishermen, common soldiers, and Negroes; but there was much decorum in speech and manner—politeness, soft voices, low, musical laughter.

Rum, however, was likely to change all that at any moment to a turbulent whirl of fiery ferocity and knife play. I knew that these were but gracefully moving and softly purring panthers, and that anything might set them snarling at one another's throats.

There was guitar and fiddle music and dancing under the trees—Spanish dancing and some waltzing. A young Negro girl, later, all in white, danced alone to the rhythm of a drum, not moving her naked feet at all, merely her haunches and body. After a little her garments slid from her, leaving her naked in the starlight, writhing like a cobra.

A West Indian soldier sprang from his table and began to dance opposite her in the same manner, not touching her at all but following every undulation of

her sinuous dark body, and mimicking every gesture of her swaying arms.

Everybody was singing, now, in a kind of shouting chant, and I think the words—if not mere meaningless syllables—must have been African.

Yvonne stooped beside me, her lips close to my ear:

"You go now, Michié. Come again when Missy wait fo' you 'long of Yvonne de la Perle Noire."

I slipped out through the noise—drumming, chanting rising excitement, and gained the street of the Singing Cat.

The town was in darkness. There was not a soul to be seen in the market place, nobody on the wharfs.

I untied my painter, cast off, hoisted sail, and stood for the inlet, taking my bearings from the riding lights at sea and the battle lanterns burning on Barancas.

Lord, what a great sprawling war this was! A thousand miles north we were fighting amid the ice and snow of Canada. A thousand miles to the east, British fleets were desolating the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Georgia. West of us New Orleans, Mobile, and Baton Rouge awaited onslaught from a coming fleet and army. And yet, all told, all these armies, fighting over thousands of miles, scarcely equalled a single division of Bonaparte's vast cohorts.

As I sailed I thought of these things. No guard boats, no patrols from the anchored warships discovered me; no gun from Barancas alarmed the utter silence brooding over the great gulf.

Stars blazed, and finally waned. I ate and drank.

Dawn whitened as I passed the sandy capes; and the sun blazed above the sea when I shouted for entrance at the postern.

When I told Lawrence how easy it was to enter Pensacola he was astonished and a trifle mortified.

I laid before him all my information and sent a boat up to Mobile with full despatches for General Jackson.

On November 3rd the boat returned with orders for me to fetch my riflemen to Stone Ruin, ford it, take the east fork of the Perdido and keep out videttes until they came into contact with his dragoons.

He had left Mobile with four thousand infantry and cavalry, on the first of the month; left Fort Montgomery on November 3rd, would pass the Perdido early on the 5th, and be before Pensacola on the evening of the 6th.

At this news my leather-legs filled the fort with their cheering, and there was a scramble for saddles and rations and ammunition—the regulars looking on with envy—and in a little while we rode out of the postern swinging our caps up to the gunners who generously cheered us in return and wished us luck with the Dons.

For a while we galloped along the bay, then struck off to the northeast, riding hard for Stone River. The water was low everywhere and all sloughs unusually dry so that the alligators crawled from some and the gar died, and only snakes were left. Everywhere in the cane-brake and sloughs we saw tracks

of great turtles across the mud, making for other regions, tracks of alligators and crocodiles, but never a moccasin track.

Somehow the Seminoles had got wind of the coming danger. General Jackson, who had cut the Creek Confederacy to ribbons, was coming, and the Seminoles had no intention of awaiting him.

So we did not see a single Indian until we were crossing the headwaters of the east branch of the Perdido; and here a dozen mounted savages rode out of the woods and flung up their arms with the palm of their hands turned toward us.

They were nearly naked, painted white and scarlet, and wore odd-shaped, small turbans of red from which shocks of crimson plumes tumbled to their shoulders.

I rode forward with the Black Cat to parley, and very quickly discovered them to be Choctaws of Jackson's flanking party, sent out to look for us.

And now we came in sight of horsemen, flung far out ahead and on either flank; and by their helmets and jackets I recognized them as Mississippi dragoons of Hinds' regiment.

Joe Barse and the Black Cat rode with the gorgeously painted Choctaws, talking volubly in the sign language. Also they had discovered among these Creeks—or cousins to the Creeks—a Sowriquois. How he got here nobody could explain; and he wouldn't; but he was in his paint, and there he was fraternizing with his Northern confrère, the Black

Cat, and making out to exchange opinions with Barse, also, in a jargon of which I understood not a word.

Hinds' Dragoons—old acquaintances of our leather-legs, waved cordial greetings to us; and I rode over and shook hands with Major Hinds who told me that the column was coming along very swiftly; that four small regiments of regulars, United States Infantry, mounted, formed the centre—the 3rd, 33rd, 39th, and 44th; that the left wing was composed of Tennessee Mounted Militia, and the main body of Choctaw Indians; that the right wing embodied Tennessee Mounted Rifle Volunteers, and more Indians, under Major Kennedy.

"My dear sir," said he, "Andy Jackson is in a boiling rage because he thinks that Spaniard Manrequez has trifled with his dignity, and there's nothing in heaven or earth that can keep him out of Pensacola tomorrow!"

I laughed and asked him for news of the outside world.

"The news," said he, "is as rotten as what made Denmark stink. Ross and Admiral Cockburn beat us at Bladensburg, took Washington, burned the Capitol, White House, and Library of Congress. We drove 'em from Baltimore, but they've harried the whole coast, and are now on their way here to help ruin New Orleans."

The shameful news left me enraged and silent.

"In the North," said he, "we gave the red coats a good fight at Plattsburg and beat 'em on Lake

Champlain. In fact, we gave them several lively beatings along the frontier, I hear. But, oh, lord!—our militia ran like rabbits at Bladensburg, and the British chased Jimmy Madison and his Dolly out of Washington! What disgrace! What an ass is Armstrong! He'll have to resign, of course. What a President! What a cabinet! It's all like a bad dream—and New England turned traitor. And all I say is, God bless old New York that stands back of Government like a rock!—and so does the South and Southwest. I don't ever want to hear the names of Connecticut and Massachusetts again!"

I was horribly chagrined and mortified. I could scarcely bear the idea of our nation's Capitol being taken and burned.

We rode on for a while together, Hinds very voluble about the great men of the past and the little men of today, and how Tom Jefferson had begun it all and was even a worse President than he was a poet. Washington, Hamilton, Franklin were with the gods on Olympus, and the Madisons and Burrs and Armstrongs and Wilkinsons were running about among the ruins of a temple built by giants.

"Well, damn my eyes and gizzard," he said, "we must do what we can to make up for all this infamy, Major. A Pensacola pill to purge poltroonery!"

He roared at his own jest, and, saluting me, galloped off to his dragoons.

I could see the column, now, raising a huge dust as it came on. My leather-legs were riding on the

right flank, not far out; and presently an aide-de-camp found me, and I followed him to the General who was riding with Major Pierre at the head of a very gorgeous staff.

General Jackson acknowledged my salute and gave me a dry look.

"So you got a spy into Pensacola after all, Major," said he.

"Yes, General."

"Who was he?"

"I went myself, sir."

"Well, I'm damned," said he. Then he laughed. "In your report you simply said that you had sent a man in. Most officers who do such things are not backward in mentioning it."

"It was very easy, sir."

"Yes—a hanging affair, too."

I said nothing.

"By the Eternal," said he fretfully, "must you be humbly entreated to accept a brevet, sir? Modesty is virtue; zeal is, too. Both can be senseless—yes, even damnable, sir. Why, I had to reprimand the Kentucky Mounted Rifles for desperate bravery which was unnecessary! I scolded them, sir, and I told their officers what I thought of their senseless behaviour! And so I reprove you, sir, for not reporting to me that you yourself went alone into Pensacola for information."

"Your letters drove me to it, sir."

"Did they?" He laughed. "Well, you're the kind

of officer that suits me, Major Brooke, and I mean that you shall have your brevet."

I thanked him in a low voice, deeply moved.

Behind us the troops seemed to be in a cheerfully sentimental humour. They sang songs about Tennessee, about home, and the war, and Andy Jackson.

The mounted rifles, riding directly behind us, sang a plaintive Spanish-sounding song called *Pensacola:*

Why did I roam
Away from home,
While you were near,
In Pensacola?

Why did I leave
You there to grieve,
Lolita, dear,
In Pensacola!

I long for you, I long for home,
Where Santa Rosa's surges foam,
How for my sin can I atone,
While you're alone
In Pensacola!

We went into line of battle, about sunset, two miles from Pensacola; and the General, losing no time, was pleased to send me into the town with a flag and a written summons to Governor Manrequez.

Enchanted with my mission I galloped off, followed

by a trumpeter of dragoons and a trooper carrying a white flag on a lance. But no sooner were we in range of St. Michael's Fort than, bang! went their cannon and a round shot went wailing over us.

No use waving our flag of truce at them; bang! came another round shot which made our horses rear.

Amazed at such an outrage I sat my saddle, looking stupidly at the fort; and it took another shot at us without delay, hitting a palmetto tree to the right and sending the fans and boot-jacks flying.

"Come on!" said I in a rage, "for they mean to murder us here!"

So we turned tail to annihilation and cantered back.

It was quite dark when we arrived at headquarters. I thought the General would fly into a fury, but he seemed puzzled.

"Spaniards," said he, "are proverbially polite. The dragoons caught a Spanish prisoner a little while ago. I think I'll send him in for explanations."

So we mounted this boyish Spanish lieutenant and sent him in on parole to ask Manrequez the reason of such discourtesy.

He came back toward midnight saying that the Spanish Governor disclaimed all knowledge of the insult to the flag; that the English were garrisoning St. Michael's Fort, and that the commandant there, Captain Fox Vulper, was responsible.

So our General sent Major Pierre in with another flag, about midnight. He returned before dawn. He

had seen Manrequez who refused to give up the forts and politely bade us do our worst.

"By the Eternal and Almighty Jehovah!" thundered Andy Jackson, "I write no more letters to Spaniards!"

And he ordered the drums to beat.

We marched before dawn. At sunrise Major Hinds made a demonstration to deceive Fort St. Michael's and the ships off Barancas, while the column entered the forest to the east and started on a trot toward the sandy beach along the bay.

Before we could haul our light field guns over the deep sand of the eastern beach, Spanish skirmishers appeared along the dunes and fired on us just as the Mississippi Dragoons rode up all in a lather from their clever strategy.

Jackson said to Hinds, and to Captain Laval and to me:

"Take your men forward and chase those Spaniards back into town."

As we rode out among the sand hills, the dragoons and my leather-legs firing from their saddles, we heard the regulars' bugles sounding the charge, and a great cheering on our right.

Then our old conch-horn blew the charge, and the bugles of the dragoons on our left repeated it, and away we went, helter-skelter, cavalry, mounted rifles, infantry, artillery, headed straight for the town.

Into the main street—I forget its name—we

dashed, and were met by a blast from a two-gun battery planted in the middle of the road. Laval's men caught it and we could see them staggering and falling, then rallying and overwhelming guns and gunners; and they bawled very lustily for quarter as we galloped in among them. So there was nothing more to do than to make them prisoners.

A terrible tumult broke out in town where we were galloping up one street and down another, chasing Spaniards and trying to avoid terrified civilians.

As General Jackson, with blue eyes ablaze, galloped up the street with his staff, Governor Manrequez came galloping wildly down it at the head of his staff, and under an enormous white flag which flapped in everybody's faces.

"Ha!" said he, "a conference! I come! I hasten! There shall be spill no more blood! (There hadn't been much spilled.) No! Carramba! Who is so polite to lead me to the noble General Jackson?"

My sweating leather-legs had surrounded the Governor and his glittering staff. I took off my cap to him; he took off his solid gold chapeau to me. I led his Excellency to General Andrew Jackson.

Governor Manrequez took off his solid gold chapeau to General Jackson. General Jackson took off his gold-laced cocked hat to Governor Manrequez.

"General," cried Manrequez, "let there be no more blood spill! For why should we struggle longer? Honour is satisfy. Our blood have consecrate our

Spanish flag!" He flung wide his gold-laced arms: "So," said he, "I surrender on condition that you spare the town!"

"Signor Governor," said Jackson drily, "I had no intention of harming your town. All I asked of you was the forts."

"Take them, sare! They are yours. I can no more. I am exhaust. Permit, sir, how I take my leave now. I prepare to embark my troops. I go."

They took off their hats to each other, then, and for the last time.

Major Hinds galloped up to say that the British had evacuated Fort St. Michael's; and that the Barancas, too, seemed to be evacuated, for the English flag had been hauled down, and boats from the ships were plying between it and the fleet.

Jackson gave us all a sickly and disgusted look.

"Good God, gentlemen," said he, "this is not my notion of storming a fortress."

We dared not laugh. One of our infantry bands began to play at the head of its regiment. The town rang with the "President's March."

Major Hinds said to me: "The apotheosis of Jimmy Madison."

Our foot regiments began to march into the town, now. Hinds went off with his dragoons toward Barancas. There seemed to be no further fighting to do.

So, leaving my leather-legs with Ben Glimming, I spurred across town and through crowds of unresent-

ful Spanish Infantry, and came, presently, into the Street of the Singing Cat.

The green door in the wall was shut. I rapped on it loudly. After a little while it opened and black Yvonne stood calmly gazing at me.

For a moment she did not recognize me in my uniform. Then her dark face grew beautiful with its smile, and she took my hand and drew me into the green dusk of the verandah where a shadowy white shape sprang from a hammock and flung two desperate arms around my neck.

"Oh, darling," she whispered, "I have been so afraid. I heard the cannon firing in the streets, and the rush of horses. Is it over? Were you hurt?——"

"No, no. Scarcely anybody has been hurt. How did you get here?"

"St. Michael's cannon awoke us at dawn in our beds on Saint Rose. While Sir John and Lady Clipperton were dressing by candle light I saw Yvonne's face at my window, and I knew our army had summoned Pensacola. I let her in through the garden. She had fetched a hamper; and we threw everything I had into it and slipped out behind the hibiscus hedge to the water where her canoe was moored. I lay down flat; St. Michael's was firing; the sky reddened with the flash of the discharges. I could hear the drums on the warships beating to quarters, and see rockets rising from Barancas.

"When we landed, artillery were galloping through the town and bugles blew wildly from St. Michael's.

And that's all, darling—until I heard the Spanish cannon firing in St. Philip Street and the galloping roar of the American horses——"

"Yvonne," I said, "is she safe here? We are going to storm the Barancas fortress——"

A tremendous explosion rocked the ground under us. I ran out to the gate. Mississippi Dragoons were galloping wildly in every direction. One of their lieutenants shouted to me that the British had just blown up Fort Barancas, and the fleet was standing out to sea.

As I climbed into my saddle I saw Naïa and Yvonne at the gate.

"It's all over," I called out to Naïa; "they've blown up the fortress and their ships are leaving the bay. We'll be marching to New Orleans, now. Pack up, darling, and wait for me here."

"Oh, Joshua," she cried, "did you think to bring my trunks and boxes and clothes from Mobile?"

"I did. They're safe in Fort Bowyer, and you'll have them by morning."

Naïa ran out to the sidewalk; I bent over, and we kissed.

"What an amazing husband you are going to be," she said breathlessly. "I'm quite mad about you, darling, and crazy to begin our honeymoon at Cock-crow Hall——"

CHAPTER XI

NEW ORLEANS

TO tell you anything about what now is known as the Battle of New Orleans is extremely difficult.

In this sprawling, helter-skelter, vague series of events which our children and their descendants will call the War of 1812, there was—except at sea—scarcely anything definite enough to be called a battle.

Three major combats and many minor ones, and all occurring within the space of two weeks, might perhaps be known as a battle.

The results of the battle had no influence upon the war because it was fought after the peace had been signed at Ghent, though no news of it had yet arrived in America.

All that this series of combats accomplished was to save—perhaps—the city of New Orleans from pillage, outrage, and destruction, and to inflict upon a British army one of the most terrible punishments ever administered by any body of men under arms.

And to publish to a disinterested and cynically weary world the fact that Andy Jackson was a born soldier and, perhaps, a great one.

England, in her majestic might, menaced the pretty Creole city of New Orleans. Three hundred ships of war had sailed to take her. Fourteen thousand vet-

eran regular soldiers, that had defeated Bonaparte, besieged the quaint old city.

These were the 4th and 7th Foot, 14th Light Dragoons, 21st Fusileers, the 40th, 43rd, 44th, and 85th Light Infantry; the magnificent 93rd Highlanders, the 95th Rifles, the 1st and 2nd West India, the 62nd Foot, the Rocket Brigade with artillery; a division of Royal Marines, and two thousand sailors from the warships, all completely equipped and prepared to make a professional end of the damned Yankee.

A gallant, chivalrous, veteran general in the prime of life, commanded the finest army ever assembled in America—Sir Edward Packenham—God rest his soul!

But the position of this splendid army was terrible, for they lay eighty miles away from their supplies, crowded upon a narrow tongue of swampy land below the city, hemmed in by the vast river on their left and by three hundred miles of impenetrable morass and forest on their right.

They could not retreat; there were not enough boats to take them to their ships where three Admirals lay awaiting their cue to batter everything to fragments under their guns.

What this army faced was a line of muddy intrenchments stretching for a mile across the neck of land from the river to the swamp, in front of which was a ditch or canal about fifteen feet wide. A semicircular and two flanking batteries completed our defenses.

The parapets of this trench were reinforced by boards and stakes, and, here and there, into the gun embrasures, a few bags of cotton had been rammed as supports.

Behind this parapet lay a few thousand American regulars, volunteers and militia; but chiefly, behind it, sat General Andy Jackson in his gold-laced saddle, contriving mischief.

On the twenty-eighth of December he fell like a mad panther upon the British lines and destroyed half a thousand veteran troops.

On that foggy New Year's Day of 1815 he smote old England again, and frightfully, blasting away parapets of sugar-hogsheads with the terrific fire of his artillery, and fairly blowing the astonished and wretched regiments into their own rear lines.

I never supposed that so fierce a fire as that which first swept us from the British guns could be so instantly extinguished; for the air blazed with their Congreve rockets; round shot and shell rained on our works; and their musketry tore our parapet.

The splendid band of a Louisiana regiment had been playing at headquarters. I remember they were just beginning to play a beautiful Creole waltz when the first British gun went off.

I had been detailed to our General's staff, and we all were sitting our horses around Macarty's house, expecting no such cannonade, when the British storm burst on us and a hundred shells and round shot tore

that house to splinters, sending General and staff scampering.

Never have I heard the British gunners cheer as they were cheering now, poor devils. But the wild, deafening cheering that burst from our riflemen, and the swelling roar of their rifle-fire drowned all else until extinguished, in turn, by the earth-rocking discharges of our artillery swelling into a single unbroken and awful explosion.

What a New Year's Day!—and death the gift from Anglo-Saxon brother to brother through the unending hell of flame and smoke. The stillness afterward was frightful.

There was no more fighting for a week.

I had been sent into New Orleans to aid our Provost Marshal in keeping order. For there was insubordination among some inhabitants—resentment against martial law—and even treachery; and our police caught Negroes pasting treasonable placards on walls, and proclamations from the British Admiral and the Commander-in-Chief, urging New Orleans to refuse aid to the Yankee and await liberation and the benefits of British occupation, not now to be long delayed.

So I had my hands full in the city where, in the Vieux Carré, Naïa and I lived in a little house near the Cathedral and Place d'Armes, and convenient to the Provost in the Cabilda and to 106 Royal Street, General Jackson's headquarters in the city.

It was a pretty house, and, in spite of the unusually

raw weather, the garden remained delightful with its orange and lemon trees and its tall magnolias in full and glistening foliage where redbirds twittered and chirped and sometimes sang in the pale January sunshine.

I now had my brevet as Lieutenant Colonel; and it was here that I inspected the Louisiana troops in their gay uniforms—Planché's lively Creole regiment, the Carabineers, the Blues, Guibert's Chasseurs, St. Geme's Dragoons, Beale's Rifles, and the St. Domingo Battalion—men of colour—under Major D'Aquin.

And if their uniforms were a trifle gaudy and extravagant, nevertheless here were gallant men, radiant with courage and good humour.

For it was a French city, French in blood, custom, and thought; Nicholas Girod was Mayor; General Labattut commanded; Major General Villèré, General Humbert, and Colonel de la Ronde assisted him, and a gallant Mexican officer, Don Juan de Araya, lent experienced aid.

That was a gay review. Bands played, brilliantly uniformed officers caracoled; crowds surged along the levee; windows were flung open and crowded with ladies waving handkerchiefs; pretty quadroons calling out encouragement to the free troops of colour, and a vast concourse—French, Spaniards, Negroes, mulattoes, pressing through the streets and keeping step to the splendid marching music of the regimental bands.

The flag of truce which came in late New Year's Day, with proposals for burying the British dead, carried with it a letter to me from my lord Mordhurst:

DEAR BROOKE,

Your General is not using us very gently. However, war is not the Capuchin kissing game we played at Thanes Close.

This is merely a line to inform you that I have been exchanged and that I am with a West Indian battalion composed of recruits from Martinique, Domingo, Jamaica, and other islands, which also has been recruited from the fragments left of my 3rd West Indians.

For your private information, Fox Vulper is second in command. He is a miserable specimen of man; not worth a shot from your pistol. The terrific fighting on New Year's Day seems to have demoralized him. He bores me, haunting my tent and telling me that he has led an evil life and is repentant; and that he feels that he will be killed in the next battle. But what is of real interest to you lies in a confession he blurted out to me that there was no marriage—you understand what I mean—and that not only was the lady unconscious and incapable of understanding, but that it was that whelp, Dr. Grieve, who impersonated the clergyman. I hope it's true. But you never can tell. And he may want me to tell you so that your attorneys may be misled and base their defense on pretended facts that can be proven false. Use your wits and judgment. He's a liar.

I shall be glad when this fighting is ended, and you and I—and your charming lady—can shake hands. Alas, she has no reason to admire me, but I wholly admire her, and hope to have an opportunity to redeem myself.

My compliments to you on your fighting men. None more gallant, sir, or more worthy to meet our own.

If there be any civility I may properly perform for you within our lines, pray command me, my dear fellow,

And believe me,

Very faithfully your friend,

MORDHURST

I showed this letter to Naïa where, the day turning close and warm, we were venturing to dine in our garden, and where a mockingbird sang gloriously in a china tree.

"I am not his enemy," she said briefly, handing the letter back to me. She had reddened painfully. She said: "I hope it's true about Fox Vulper and me. But Fox is such a liar one dare not trust him. Anyway, he doesn't concern us, and never did."

"He is what the times and the fashions have made him. So is Mordhurst. And so am I," said I.

"You are very far from being what you were when I first met you," she remarked. "A man like the Prince Regent can poison a whole nation; and a man like Andrew Jackson can purify it."

"He's turned your head by his gallantries and attention," said I, laughing. "Andy Jackson is no saint."

"I'll tell you one thing," said she, "he knows how to love! And that's a saintly thing to know and do."

"Oh, lord, ma'am, and don't I know how to love, who, God knows, am no saint?"

"You're learning, I hope. . . . Do you suppose

that Prinney even suspects what love means—a man with a thousand mistresses!"

She had prepared an orange for me, and now presented it on a plate; and I kissed her fingers that offered it.

"Oh, darling," she said, "I'm sick of war! Are they never going to stop their damned fighting?"

"The real battle has not yet been fought here. . . . I'm tired of it, too, Naïa——"

"I'm craving for a sight of Cock-crow Hall," she said.

That made me laugh, but she rebuked me. "I've loved it ever since I loved you—even before I ever saw it," said she. "I desire to make the acquaintance of every foot of lawn, every tree, every chicken, pig, and cow! Now jeer at me—I don't care!"

But I was very deeply touched by her new tenderness for my childhood home for which she had so long pretended aversion.

Sitting there under the magnolias, I drew with a pencil upon the marble table-top a map of the entire estate, tracing every meadow, pasture, wood, and brook. And, with our heads together over it, we consulted, discussing future improvements and possible acquisitions.

The brief interval of sunshine after so much rain and cold and fog was delightful; birds sang in the warmth; cheerful sounds came from the streets. New Orleans, now, did not at all seem like a beleaguered city on the verge of assault and pillage; cheery voices

called and responded across the streets from neighbours' windows; vendors passing uttered their street cries; blacks shouted light-heartedly to one another; the quadroons' laughter sounded musically.

From our windows we could see the good Ursulines gliding by, two and two, and spectacled priests, moving slowly to read their breviaries.

Only the muffled trample of a passing dragoon patrol, or the nasal challenge of a sentry at the Cabildo reminded one of war, and of how near to us were the vast armaments of England, and of the bloody plain of Gentilly where the English dead lay in windrows, and water stood in a thousand shell-pits dug by our terrible artillery.

The thought sickened me: "I don't want to kill Englishmen," I broke out bitterly. "Why are they always on this side of the water, bedevilling us? Why don't they let us alone? I tell you, Naïa, there'll come a time when old England will need our friendship and our long rifles. If only she knew how we felt toward her in our hearts—in spite of everything! But she never learns, she never learns, but goes on snarling, cuffing, mauling us."

She began: "If we have children, Joshua——"

"We shall have them!"

"Yea, sir, I've heard you express yourself on this subject. I was going to say that, when we have children we should not teach them hatred of England such as General Jackson feels."

"No. . . . His mother and brother died of their

cruelty and brutality, and he nearly died of it. If he hates them he has reason. But, as you say, our children ought not to inherit any ill will toward England. No. Because I believe before God that the day will dawn when all English-speaking peoples must confront a hostile world bent upon their destruction. And with the destruction of the Anglo-Saxon, liberty perishes on earth."

My sweetheart gazed upon me with tender pride. "Darling," she cried, "there is, under your warrior's uniform, an orator whose proper sphere lies in the halls of Congress!"

I thanked her modestly. I had sometimes thought of Washington.

"Suppose," said I, frowning, "that what Fox Vulper said to Mordhurst is true?"

"We could marry instantly," said she. "But if we do, and he's lying, I shall be a bigamist. And that's probably what he hopes for. Darling, you couldn't ever afford to fight him, could you? He's such a scoundrel."

I considered the matter gloomily while a long-billed wren, overhead, burst into the skylark's own melody, showering the garden with heavenly song.

"Oh, damnation," I said, "I fear there's nothing to be known or done until his attorneys drag you into court."

"He'll spatter himself and me for a few dirty dollars," she said. "Think of it, darling! And—" her head was lowered but she looked up at me out

of wistful grey eyes—that lovely way of hers once more!—"would you still feel like marrying a girl who——"

I got up from my chair and she sprang from hers, retreating down the garden, but I caught her at the oleander hedge and she dutifully wound her slender arms around my neck so that she could listen closer to what I had to say about love and marriage.

The military music of a United States Regular Regiment, playing a stirring march, was coming down the street, preceded by a shrilly clamouring rush of negroes and ragged children. Stucco houses and walls resounded to the ear-splitting racket; the graceful wrought-iron balconies were instantly loaded with pretty women cheering and throwing flowers down upon the brass-mounted shakos and glistening bayonets.

"Vive l'armée!" cried a lovely Creole girl across the street, and impulsively tore a jewel from her pale throat and flung it among the troops. Fans, jewels, flowers, scarfs of lace, handkerchiefs followed like confetti at Mardi Gras.

Naïa had nothing to throw, so she leaned over, kicked off her shoes, stripped the sheer stockings from her feet and hurled them at the soldiers. They floated down like a pair of cobwebs, caught on the bayonets and were borne on, trailing mistily in the sunlight.

For which extravagance I picked her up, set her upon a chair and kissed both her lovely little feet to punish her.

When the regiment had passed and the noise of their drums and cymbals rang distantly in the city, I buckled on my sword and went across to the Cabildo where I discussed some matters with the town Mayor.

Jean Lafitte came in, a slender, elegant man with courteous manners, and looked no more like a pirate than did I. Nor was he, as far as I know, and committed no other indiscretions than polite smuggling.

He told me that he had seen General Jackson and had been politely received; and that he and his brother were to take over an artillery section and man it with his Baratarians who were extremely good gunners.

The awful and devastating broadsides that our war-sloop, *Carolina,* had given the credulous British when they first landed amused this Sea Eagle. Also he praised very warmly the resistance made by our five little gun-boats; and we first learned from him what a frightful price had been paid for victory by the overwhelming forces in the British launches.

"Eh, bien," said he, "I go to prepare hell for our fre'ns the enemy, messieurs. And I do not believe it will be long now before they fry in it."

He went away gaily, laughing at his own grim jest. I suppose the British attempt to bribe him had aroused this jocose ferocity.

Captain Jugeaut and his Choctaw scouts—eighteen almost naked, brawny savages painted white and scarlet, and all a-flutter with feathers, came into the

Cabildo where he was to draw blankets and hunting shirts for them. They had a number of Creek and Seminole scalps with them, not very recently taken. They were a snaky, dangerous looking lot; and when they went out a mob of fascinated men and shuddering women trailed along to stare at them.

I left the office of the police late in the afternoon; sentries wearing huge shakos presented muskets. But the guard was not raw enough to turn out or notice a Lieutenant Colonel with drums and colours.

Clatter, clatter, clatter trotted the Mississippi Dragoons down the street, Major Hinds waving a familiar hand to me and calling out from his saddle: "They're very active in the British camp, Colonel! I think they'll be trying it again before very long!"

I wished they would and have done with it. I was devilish tired of war.

A detachment of United States Marines was marching past my house as I came to it. Lieutenant Bellevue, their officer, saluted me and said that two fine new regiments had just arrived in the British camp and were being reviewed by all the bigwigs in their army. Not very agreeable news, considering that these new arrivals alone must number as much as a third of our own little army.

As I was about to enter our gateway I heard drums coming again; and stood and watched a detachment of Kentucky Riflemen and two regiments of Louisiana militia marching toward the river. Colonel

Savary, of the San Domingo corps, riding by, pulled up to tell me that they were joining Morgan's troops across the river where the 6th Louisiana under Arnaud was already scouting in advance of our flanking batteries.

He said, grimly, that he hoped the militia wouldn't run, but they usually did when attacked by rocket-batteries.

"The trouble with militia is not cowardice but insubordination," said I, "and we'll always have trouble with them until they're utterly done away with."

He agreed with me, profanely, and galloped on after his slandered troops.

The evening had turned a little chilly. There was a fireplace in our house, and Naïa and I had our supper beside it.

She was not very gay, seeming to have a premonition of approaching trouble; and, after supper, nestled down beside me on the sofa, clinging to me with odd, inarticulate, moody persistency.

It was Saturday night and the stars were shining, and there was more or less noise and singing in the streets—but by and by I noticed that the hum was growing louder, increasing a confusion of excited voices punctuated by cries and shouts.

Naïa lifted her head from my shoulder to listen. The sounds in the streets had become a roar. As we rose to our feet our door bell rang; Captains Chotard and Butler, of Jackson's staff, stood on the step holding their horses' bridles.

"Colonel," said Chotard, "they're moving to their positions to attack us. The General requires more staff officers and requests your instant attendance."

"Very well, sir; I'll be with him in a few minutes," said I.

They remounted and galloped toward the river. I sent a servant for my horse, strapped on pistol and sabre, threw over me my green-lined riding cloak. Naïa came to me and fastened the gilded, eagle-crested clasps, handed me my helmet, and tightened the scaled cheek-guard under my chin.

"Send me what word you can," she said in a ghost of a voice.

"Yes, I will."

"Oh, God," she whimpered, "to think that I ever wanted to see a war!"

Cavalry trumpets were sounding raucously from the Place d'Armes, and drums rolled from the Cabildo. There came the shock of heavy hoof beats, the clanking, jolting, jingling of a flying battery rushing southward, followed by Louisiana Dragoons at a gallop.

I swept Naïa into my arms; our good-bye was said in silence. Then I went out, mounted, and spurred for headquarters through a crowded, dimly lighted city seething with excitement.

Our men were in position. In a redoubt near the river Beale's Riflemen, St. Geme's Dragoons, and a company of the 44th Regulars were stationed to support Captain Humphrey's battery of regular Artillery.

The next battery was manned by blue-jackets from the *Carolina,* under Lieutenant Norris.

At battery No. 3 I saw the Baratarians—magnificent, brawny, piratical looking fellows, and Captains Dominique and Beluche and the Lafitte brothers.

The fourth battery was full of blue-jackets. At the fifth battery I saw regular artillerymen; and, at the sixth, Louisiana Gunners in their scarlet jackets and fur busbies.

Battery No. 7 was served by regular artillery and United States Marines; and Battery Eight by Carroll's Tennessee militia and a regular or two.

The first three batteries were supported by Major Peire's 7th United States Infantry; the fourth and fifth batteries by the 44th Regulars. Ogden's and Chauvau's Cavalry and a troop of horse from Attacapus were drawn up near headquarters; Hinds' Mississippi Dragoons stood to horse behind them; and my leather-legs and the Louisiana militia prowled on the outskirts of the fringing woods.

When I reported to General Jackson he was sitting on a camp stool in Macarty's shell-wrecked house, eating a little plain boiled rice out of a bowl—his usual dinner.

"Well, Colonel," said he, "how is the city?"

"Excited, sir, but mainly loyal and full of courage."

"Any more treason? Any more placards, handbills—eh?"

"None, sir."

He went on with his rice: "Is your wife comfortable?" he inquired.

I thanked him, saying she was perfectly comfortable and well.

"Be sorry for mine," he said gently. "It will be a long time before she knows whether I'm alive or dead."

He set the bowl aside, looked at his watch by lantern light.

"They are bringing 16,000 of the best troops in Europe against us," he remarked. "I have thirty-two hundred men in line and eight hundred in reserve—mostly all volunteers and militia. How does that strike you, Colonel? Want to run?"

"Sir," said I, smiling, "you have forgotten to mention your most powerful reserve."

He looked up at me.

"I mean the General in Chief and his highly efficient staff," said I.

He grinned like a blue-eyed lion and thanked me for reminding him of so formidable a force.

"Nothing," said he, "really bothers me. I could wish that a discharge of their rockets did not scare our militia. It's the other side of the river that worries me a little. But here I think we'll give 'em a trimming."

He sent me back to Major Hinds with some orders concerning arms and ammunition not yet arrived from Pittsburgh, though long ago ordered. When I returned he sent me to the Louisiana Riflemen in the

woods, with warning to look out for a possible flank attack by British Indians lately observed in their lines, but of what nation we did not know.

About midnight the army slept on its arms. I reported once more at headquarters for orders.

"You'd better get some sleep, Colonel," said Jackson.

"May I respectfully suggest that my General does the same?" said I.

"You may suggest it, sir, but it can't be done," said he grimly. He added in a kind voice that I was to have no concern for him, for, when I knew him better, I'd learn that he had an inward distress that permitted little sleep, and he had become reconciled to insomnia.

The camp was very still under the foggy stars when I lay down on a cot in my riding cloak to catch what sleep I might before reveillé.

Two hours before dawn our little army had breakfasted and was standing to arms.

Not even the wild ducks were moving yet. There was no sound at all excepting the restless snort and movement of horses and the hooting of owls in the forest.

Little by little the world stirred in its slumbers. A plover called; another answered. A wild duck quacked loudly from the marsh, and her drake answered in a softly murmurous gobble as though urging her to go to sleep again.

But the magic of approaching dawn was now making all wild creatures restless. There came a terrific splashing, a windy whirr of wings, and a raft of mallard rose and swept away through obscurity.

Herons began to croak; raft after raft of wild fowl clattered up from unseen waters, and the darkness quivered with whimpering wings.

General Jackson, mounted, sat his horse near to the central battery, peering out into the gloom. It was raw and misty out there where the tentless British lay unsheltered in the mud and shell holes. It was no less muddy where our army lay, but we had tents and shelter.

Also we had plenty of military music to cheer us, where the British army, apparently, did not possess a single regimental band; and we never heard from them anything except drums and bugles and the wild skirling of Highland pipes.

About dawn we expected the attack; and it was just before dawn that Jackson said calmly, to Captain Butler: "This is a chilly business. Tell the regimental bands to play. I don't care a damn whether they storm us or not."

In a little while, in the pallid dusk of approaching dawn, the band of a Louisiana regiment suddenly burst out into the "President's March."

Distantly another regimental band began to play "Yankee Doodle." Farther away still we caught the strains of a waltz played by the music of some unknown regiment near the river.

"I like music," remarked Jackson, "—anything that makes a pleasing noise. I can play a fiddle a little."

It seemed a strange thing to think about in the intense strain we laboured under. The tension became terrific as a rocket mounted from the British lines and went hissing and snaking about overhead.

The General observed it with a mild and contemplative eye.

"Why *will* militia skedaddle?" he drawled. "The rocket reminded me."

I thought to myself: "My God, if the militia run we're all undone." But if the General had any such idea it did not appear to disturb except to make him a trifle peevish.

Now, far away in the pale light of dawn, I heard a long-drawn, melancholy sound; and it thrilled me and flushed my cheeks; for it was the conch-horn of my leather-legs calling them to horse.

"Not much music in that, Colonel," remarked Jackson. "I do not mean disrespect to your State or regiment when I say it sounds something like a cow."

Everybody laughed, and the tension was relaxed.

His blue eyes twinkled. So did the two little gilt tassels on his great cocked hat.

He caught me looking at them:

"Colonel," said he, "a chapeau is not a very comfortable thing to wear on your head. If Bonaparte was responsible for military fashions he made a most uncomfortable job of the uniforms and headgear we poor soldiers wear. And I often envy such men as

your leather-legs who wear no stocks or high collars or padded coats or cocked hats and shakos, but have their throat naked to the wind and a free stride in their rifle shirts and moccasins."

"It is a very comfortable dress, sir."

"Yes," said he, "but fashion decrees that the devil wears hoofs and we wear boots and I don't know which is the more uncomfortable. . . . Captain Butler, I believe they're coming. Lend me your night glasses, if you please——"

What glasses we of the staff had we used. We could see nothing; mist possessed the void beyond; it clung to the damp earth, to bushes, to the sugar-cane stubble. No eye could penetrate it.

Yet we could hear from somewhere within that impenetrable mist sounds ominous and enlightening—the vague stir and movement of thousands and thousands of men.

On our left the sky reddened and the woods became vocal with mockingbirds. On our right, fog hid the river. There was not a sound in that direction.

Now, out of the blankness in front of us whizzed a Congreve rocket, darting backward and forward, higher and higher and spattering the clouds with golden fire.

Then, far ahead, a rifle spoke; another cracked out; another, another. Our outposts were in contact with the enemy's skirmishers.

Crack, crack, crack came the rifle-fire running east and west in waves; but no heavier bang of British

muskets answered, and the spiteful racket awoke no bellowing cannon hidden out there in obscurity.

Jackson said quietly to Captain Butler: "I see nothing yet; do you?"

"Nothing, sir."

The suspense was becoming almost unendurable; Jackson turned his horse and walked him up and down before Macarty's house, we following him slowly. The east had become very red.

Then, suddenly a cannon thundered in the fog, another replied. Crash! a whole battery let loose and an orange-tinted light leaped to the sky.

Now, running from west to east, battery after battery delivered its thunderous salvo—we could count and recognize each numbered redoubt. Long rippling crashes of rifle-fire joined in the din.

"Butler," said Jackson, "I wish you'd go out there and see what's happening."

Captain Butler rode away toward that infernal uproar in the mist.

"Brooke," said the General, "will you find out what the situation is on the left?"

As I spurred eastward the British batteries opened with an earth-shaking detonation, salvo on salvo; and all the air above us swarmed with hissing rockets and screaming flights of shell and shot.

I rode that half mile and back in a few minutes: "Everything is snug, General. We are using grape in the woods where their black troops are skirmishing with our riflemen."

He nodded unconcernedly. Butler came back at a gallop:

"General, the whole British army is coming in three columns. Their 44th Regiment is in the centre and quite near. The men carry bundles of ripe sugar-cane for fascines."

"Ladders?"

"A few, sir."

Jackson said: "Let them fill up the ditch with their sugar-cane. They can't live on our parapets."

Never had I heard such firing as now came from our batteries. An uninterrupted blaze of cannon a mile in length—a hell-rocking thunder which never ceased.

The mist had thinned and the battery smoke now rose in crowding convolutions, revealing the ground beyond our parapet covered with sugar-cane stubble set on fire from the blaze of our guns.

And now we saw the most tragically dramatic sight that man ever gazed upon:

Out of the thinning fog ahead marched a British Regiment of red-coated Infantry in full campaign equipment, their heavy knapsacks slung, their heavy muskets shouldered, some of them lugging heavy bundles of green sugar-cane, others dragging scaling ladders.

At their head rode their Colonel, like a doomed man who had caught sight of Death just ahead but who never swerved to avoid his destiny.

Grape-shot tore them as hail tears corn; rifle-fire

swept them as sleet sweeps autumn leaves, stripping everything to skeletons.

To the right and left of them the heads of other British regiments appeared under torrents of bayonets.

Unhurriedly, methodically, our batteries swept them to and fro, to and fro; and they melted away before our eyes; and still the crowding thousands behind them came toward us in one vast, moving scarlet wall, only to crumble into prostrate and scarlet ruin before our fascinated and staring gaze.

Then, for a while, there were no more red coats in front of us except seventy or eighty dazed, stunned fellows who were wandering along the ditch in the smoke. Our riflemen came out of their redoubt and laid down planks and drove these poor, stupefied creatures inside our works.

Smoke dimmed the field. Into it, now, coming from the river, galloped a British General and his staff; and a vast horde of red-coated soldiers suddenly appeared, running toward us, their bayonets flashing like a loosened deluge engulfing the world.

Then the thunder pealed from our parapets, shaking sky and earth; and, like shapes in a rushing nightmare, the red coats and bayonets and galloping generals faded to phantoms in the smoke, dwindled, dissolved into nothing in the whirling blackness of the cannon smoke.

"Oh, God," shouted Captain Butler to me, "look yonder!"

I saw a noble regiment of Scotch Highlanders halted almost within the blast of our guns, the front rank kneeling and firing, the rear rank firing over their heads. Their magnificent colonel sat his horse in the centre; their pipers were marching up and down, skirling away as though on parade.

A hurricane of grape and rifle-fire tore through them. Their colonel was down under his dead horse; half a thousand kilted giants lay writhing or motionless; only a single piper remained to limp up and down those ghastly ranks, playing his pipes like a galvanized corpse on doomsday.

As far as one could see, east and west for a mile, British troops were fleeing from that field of horrors.

Our guns thundered on; our rifles crashed steadily. From the burning cane-stubble in front, all life, all movement was recoiling, all colour fading, vanishing into the vagueness beyond. And after a little while, before us lay nothing except smouldering stubble and mud and the dead lying in their brilliant dress under a misty sun.

Bugles from the woods sounded the recall for our pursuit parties. From battery after battery bugles blew "Cease firing."

Jackson spoke at last, his grim mouth a dry crack in his rigid face: "Butler, start the dragoons along the river."

I heard their trample as they defiled at a gallop.

A Louisiana officer rode up to report that our rifle-

men were chasing the West Indian black troops through the woods, and had taken many.

Then, from the river, came a white-faced, bedraggled captain of militia to say that our militia across the river had given way and were running from the field.

"Rockets, probably," said Jackson quietly. "Let them run; they can do us no damage now."

He looked at his watch, calmly compared it with mine.

"It has taken a little more than half an hour to settle this business," he remarked.

Officers began to arrive from the redoubts and batteries with news of the terrain in front of them.

The British had assaulted us in three columns and under three generals. Their Commander in Chief, Sir Edward Packenham, had died just outside our ditch; Gibbs was wounded to death; Keane lay terribly mangled among thousands of British dead—three generals, seven colonels, seventy-five commissioned officers—that was the count, so far—all done for within half an hour.

We sat listening to the cannon firing on the other side of the river, and watching battalions of our reserve marching in that direction.

"Brooke," said Jackson, "I can scarcely believe that we have committed such slaughter in half an hour as these reports seem to indicate. Be good enough to ride out and see for yourself."

I rode down to the Crescent Battery garrisoned

by the 7th Regulars and Kentucky and Louisiana Riflemen. It had been assaulted and taken, then retaken by batteries No. 1 and No. 2. Nearly two hundred British soldiers lay dead outside it.

Major Latour met me. He said that the British rush was extremely plucky. They were Highlanders, Fusileers, and Light Infantry; their Colonel named Rennie.

"When they took the battery they hoisted their hats on their bayonets and gave three cheers," he said. "They were gallant men. We left only sixty of them alive."

He said that for two hours a wounded British soldier lay in front of them constantly raising and lowering one arm with a convulsive movement that horrified our men. But there was no way to reach him.

He said, too, that a soldier of the West Indian corps had his face shot away, and, although blind and in agony, was seen kneeling down and trying to scratch a hole in the ground to conceal his money.

He said that their Sussex Regiment had suffered terribly, but was cursed by other regiments for cowardice—which, he said, was not the case.

"As for their West Indians," said he, "look yonder where our cross fire caught them! One volley was all they waited for."

I looked through my glass at the mangled, gaudily uniformed mass of dead men.

"There seems to be a dead white officer out there," said I.

"Yes," said Latour; "he was a brave man. He did all he could to rally them. He seemed to be quite unarmed—carried a riding whip. I hoped we could make him prisoner, but—well, there he lies."

All our batteries on the left had begun to fire again. I asked Latour if he would hold his fire until I could run over and see whether the white officer was alive.

"Yes," he said, "but please hurry."

So I dismounted; a regular artilleryman laid a plank for me, and I crossed the ditch and ran over to the heap of dead men.

I scarcely know why it did not surprise me to see Mordhurst lying dead among them.

He looked peaceful—even pleasantly relaxed—quite dead.

When I returned to the Crescent Battery it opened fire immediately, throwing shells far into the distant orange and lemon groves. The trees were golden with fruit and snowy white with blossoms.

"Save his papers and souvenirs for his family," said I to Major Latour. "He is Colonel Viscount Mordhurst—a friend of mine. Please see that he has decent burial."

Latour noted the instructions in his carnet.

Our cannonade had become tremendous again. We were firing on the British lines among the plantations and orange groves, and also raking the eastern woods on one side and the right bank of the river on the other. There was no venturing beyond our intrench-

ments for the present. However, I did ride over to our left and reconnoitre the woods where our riflemen were still firing at flitting forms of Indians and West Indians still lurking amid the cypress.

Returning at a gallop, I learned that the General had left Macarty's; that Captain Butler was looking for me, and that fresh troops were arriving in New Orleans.

Butler overtook me near the river on the main highway.

"Some of the West Indian prisoners," said he, "have overpowered their guards, seized an armed sloop, and are headed for the Gulf. There's a white officer with them. The General wishes you to find Jean Lafitte, man a sloop with him and some of his Baratarians, and cut her out before she gets away."

"Very well," said I. "Will you take my horse?"

I gave him the bridle, dismounted, and ran down toward the Baratarians' battery which was banging away at the opposite bank of the river.

The battery was thick with cannon smoke which never cleared away, so rapidly were the guns served by Lafitte's free and easy cannoniers who, perhaps, had learned something of artillery aboard those mysterious ships of Barataria which flew whatever flag was most convenient.

Finally I discovered Jean Lafitte and his brother, sitting on barrels and tranquilly playing cribbage. The Lafittes rose courteously when they saw me, and bowed with smiling ceremony.

But when I told them what my errand was they laughed, showing their dazzling teeth.

"Ah, Colonel," said brother Jean, still laughing, "we have atten' to thees sloop already."

"What," said I, "have you stopped her?"

He led me to the slippery parapet and pointed over toward the river where I could see the mast of an anchored sloop:

"You see her, Colonel? Ver' well, sir, I explain. Just before they run—our militia over there—I notice that already our batteries number one and two have stop the black soldiers and have taken some prisoner to a sloop. Then Thornton catch Arnaud's men asleep—ver' disgrace, sir!—and there come up the river three British gun-boat to fire upon us; and Morgan's militia run like hell!"

He made a lively gesture of consternation. "Mon Dieu! What to do! I tell you what I do. I turn my guns on thees gun-boats. Then I see that the West Indians have taken the sloop from their guards and are hoisting sail.

"Ha!" said he scornfully, "what I do? I tell; I say to my lieutenant of guns, 'Dominique! You will be ver' kind to send me one shell aboard thees damn sloop what she is escape!'

"So Captain Dominique—who is ver' fine shot—he lay a gun himself. Boum! Oh, my God, the shell she bust aft, and pouf! thee sloop she has no longer any rudder.

"So there she lie in the mud until we have leisure

to go and take back our prisoner—one dozen still alive—but Dominique he make a ragout of the rest with one little shell!"

Captain Dominique Yon, who had come up to listen, grinned at me politely and went back to his guns.

"Where are the blacks?" said I. "The General wishes them to be placed under strong guard. There's a white officer with them, I understand."

Lafitte turned to the parapet: "Ohé, Dominique!" he called out, "where is thee white officer who has command the blacks?"

"He is here, mon Capitaine. You wish I fetch him?"

"Oui, fetch him to here, if you will be so kind."

I rose and looked around the smoky redoubt but could see nothing of any British officer in the smoke.

While I was searching with my eyes, Jean Lafitte, behind me, said softly: "Here he is, sir."

But when I turned I saw only Captain Dominique carrying a powder bag.

Then, before I understood what he was doing, he had dumped out of it a human head which rolled toward my feet.

"That is all what is lef' of the white officer, sir," said Lafitte. "The shell have take the rest. So Dominique he say we kip thees head so maybe his friends can say us who he is. Yes?"

But I, staring down into the blood-drained features of Fox Vulper, was thinking of other things.

An artilleryman picked up the head, wiped off the face with a kindly impulse, and placed it gently in the powder sack.

Lafitte said, "Hélàs!" Then he shrugged: "Eh, bien! C'est la guerre."

For a few moments we said nothing. The crash of the artillery almost deafened me and my ears pained.

I said—or rather shouted—in Lafitte's ear: "Send this—thing—into the British lines when a burial flag goes out."

"At command, Colonel!"

When, at last, I found Captain Butler and got onto my horse, the cannonade had lasted for five hours.

But now our bugles were blowing the "Cease firing" once more. The last gun roared from the Baratarian battery. A mournful silence fell over the blood-drenched plantations where now had ended the fourth and last battle fought in the Battle of New Orleans.

As we rode along in the rear of the batteries we saw fires lighted and the weary cannoniers already cooking dinner. I had eaten nothing; neither had Butler. The trouble was, our General never ate anything at all—except his eternal boiled rice once a day, if he remembered it.

The Kentuckians across the river had disgraced themselves but the Kentuckians on this side had covered themselves with glory.

A battalion came marching along just behind us on the main highway, singing, as usual, to the air of "The Girl I Left Behind Me":

I'll drink my fill
And I'll tie my will
With the tape I drop my wax on,
And I'll leave my wife
My debts for life
When I march with Andy Jackson!

Oh, everybody knows
Where sugar-cane grows
On the land the Bayou backs on,
And it's there I'll go
For to fight the foe,
Along o' Gin'ral Jackson!

As we approached the levee we caught sight of the General and his staff; and a troop of Hinds' dragoons.

The General was gazing grimly through his telescope at the spot where the militia had fled.

Waiting for him to notice me, I reported when he did so.

"Very well," said he. "Now I want you to take a platoon of these dragoons and ride into the city where I am told there is some disorder. I want order! Do you understand, Colonel? They seem to be afraid that Thornton is going to storm the city. Tell 'em not to worry. Ride about and see what's the trouble. There's artillery at the Cabildo. If

there's a riot, use it. . . . And you stay there until I send for you."

Major Hinds heard him and detailed a platoon of horsemen; and away we pelted, cityward, to find out what the deuce was exciting the Creoles.

I discovered plenty of excitement in the city but no real disorder.

There was a crowd before the Bank of Louisiana at the corner of Conti and Royal Streets, which we dispersed good-naturedly, telling them that their money was quite safe.

At Chartres and St. Louis Streets there was another mild riot—some mischief maker addressing a crowd—but he ran when he saw us and the crowd joined in our laughter.

In the heart of the Vieux Carré, under the beautiful overhanging balconies where Creole beauties looked down at us, pale with anxiety, an excited fellow in the middle of a crowd was declaring that Morgan's troops had fled and that the British would be in the city by evening.

"Come," said I, forcing my horse up to where he stood on a sugar hogshead, "stop that nonsense. It's the British who are on the run. The battle's won. Go home to your wife and be ashamed of yourself!"

A tearful girl on a balcony called out to me to ask what had become of the Blues.

I took off my hat to her, smiling: "The New Orleans troops covered themselves with glory, ladies, and are in no danger."

A chorus of excited and grateful exclamations accompanied us as we rode past the two stone lions at Toulouse and Royal, past the courtyard where is the old fountain among the beds of a formal garden—The Court of the Two Sisters—past St. Peter's Street where people were gathered about a house into which a dead Louisiana soldier was being carried, and came to St. Anthony's Close behind the Cathedral, where Orleans Street begins.

Here some gamins had built a dangerously large bonfire. I was sorry to spoil their sport, but made them extinguish it.

There were crowds in the Place d'Armes, around the old Capuchin monastery and the Cathedral, but I saw a strong guard at the Cabildo and two field guns pointing across the square, which were sufficient to impose respect.

We rode slowly through the rue de l'Amour, rue Madame, rue des Bons Enfants where we were told a mob was rioting. Profound peace reigned there; and in Mystery Street, the Street of the Dryads, the Street of the Naiads, the streets of the muses—Melpomené, Euterpe, Terpsichore—everywhere the anxious throngs were orderly, obedient, and grateful for the cheery news we gave them.

Magazine Street, Perdido, Felicity, Nun, Desire, Rabbit, Julia, Virtue Streets, all were orderly. Fear was making the population restless—driving them into the streets to listen and look into the evening sky. But the frightful cannonade which had shaken the

city all day long had ended. Only a few distant cannon thundered at long intervals, now. The crowds along the levee, straining their eyes across the river, heard no more musketry from the right bank.

Until dusk we patrolled the city. At sunset it had become perfectly calm.

A regimental band had marched into the Place d'Armes, and began to play a programme of those exquisitely alluring waltzes.

I sent the dragoons to the Cabildo barracks, turned my horse, followed by one trooper, dismounted at my own gate and flung him the bridle.

Naïa opened the door and led me to her room where she fell into my arms in a passion of happy tears.

"We've trimmed the British," said I. "God help them, they've been frightfully punished. Their losses sicken me. . . . We've lost scarcely any. . . . Mordhurst is bravely dead. . . . I saw him lying among his men. . . . Smiling faintly."

After a while she dried her eyes and rested her face against my shoulder.

"Naïa?"

"Y-yes, darling."

"Fox Vulper is dead."

After an intense and painful silence she looked up at me.

"That cleans off the slate," said I.

"Do you want to marry me now, Joshua?"

"When I have time. There's a veteran British

army below us, fourteen thousand strong. Nobody can predict what they'll do, now."

"Is—isn't the war ended?"

"No, darling."

"Are you going away again?"

"I must——"

She uttered a strangled cry of revolt: "It's a cursed thing—war!" she burst out. "When this one is ended I never want to hear the word 'war' again!"

She buried her face on my breast, sobbing and clutching me with desperate hands.

Down the darkening street came drums and fifes playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me"; and the rhythmic shuffle and tread of tired infantry echoed from house and wall. Yet the men were singing:

We'll buy us beds
For our pore tired heads,
And a sheet to lay our backs on,
And there we'll snore
Till the war is o'er,
And dream o' Gin'ral Jackson!

Hustle up, hustle up,
You goddam pup!
Quit the mud your laigs relax on,
For it's reveillé
And hell to pay
When you fight with Andy Jackson!

CHAPTER XII

COCK-CROW

ON that day of slaughter, Sunday, January eighth, there was every evidence that the enemy on the right bank of the river were determined to carry the city by assault. They could have done so before nightfall. But by Monday morning, no.

I came into my youngster's bedroom before dawn —there was but one mystery left between us that the promiscuity of our experiences had spared!—and the poor child sat up half dazed, in her chemise, groping blindly for my neck with naked arms.

Drums in the Place d'Armes were beating the reveillé, battering her wearied ears again, which had been so long bruised with the infernal dissonance of war.

Her soft fingers crept up and felt of my strapped cheek-guard and helmet, of pistol strap and sabre-chain.

"I want to marry you today if I can," I whispered —"as soon as I can find a clergyman."

She strained me to her, my silver bell-buttons denting her delicate little breasts.

"Haven't the English gone yet?" she whimpered. "Why are the drums beating——"

The heavy shock of a cannon shook the house.

"Oh, God," she wailed, "I thought it was all over!"

Her nerves were giving way—those wonderful, youthful nerves that had so superbly sustained her since the day we fled together from Thanes Close.

The cannon continued to fire at intervals, the concussion shaking her bed. I begged her to sleep again, but she reached for the bell-rope and pulled it; and when her half-naked black maid came with a candle she ordered chocolate and fruit.

I did not know whether I had time, but she made me wait; and together we breakfasted there in the candle-lit room, vaguely fragrant of her.

She had recovered her poise a little; said she was ashamed to whine in such a situation and begged me to forgive her.

"Hang it," said she, "my dreams scared me, and I slept very badly, conscious of tears. Darling, the British have been frightfully defeated and it would be terrible if anything happened to you now——"

An aide-de-camp, Captain Reid, was announced by the half-dressed maid, and I stepped into the sitting room, shook hands with him, and read the written orders from the Commander-in-Chief:

Headquarters, Montgomery's House,
Jan. 9th, 1815.

Sir:

A burial flag has just come in. Hostilities are to be temporarily suspended with the proviso that the enemy shall not be reinforced on the right bank of the river. This has been accepted.

The General in Chief advises you that this is undoubtedly the end of all major operations in this vicinity.

You are, therefore, ordered immediately and without any delay whatever, to take your mounted riflemen and necessary light transportation, and traverse the Creek country—now pacified and its inhabitants bound under solemn treaty recently executed by Major General Jackson—and report at the Fernandino Forts for scout duty in Eastern Georgia in coöperation with the cavalry division now operating in that military district.

By order of,
Major Gen[l] Jackson

Thomas L. Butler,
Captain and Aide-de-Camp.

"Well, Reid," said I, "this seems to be the wind-up."

"Yes. They're withdrawing Thornton. It's all over for the British, Colonel. . . . The General fears that their fleet and transports will sail for the Atlantic coast. He's very anxious that you lose no time in starting. I've taken it upon me to order your riflemen here with pack-horses and a light wagon. I think they're here in the square now—over by the Cabildo."

I wanted to get married. But there was no time to hunt up a clergyman now.

I went to the door with Captain Reid, and saw in the lantern light Ben Glimming sitting his horse and holding my own; and a very comfortable travelling carriage with two leather-legs en postillion, waiting at our horse-block.

When Andy Jackson wanted anything that was the way he did it.

I hastened back to Naïa's chamber.

"Confound it," said I, "the wedding's off, and we have half an hour to pack up and start for Amelia Island!"

She rose up, astounded, in her bed, and I rang violently for the servants and went into my own room and began to pull my boxes and military chest about and cram everything into them.

I threw open the casement and shouted: "Ben! Are you well provisioned?"

"Damn well, sir, wines and all!"

"All your men mustered?"

"Every single son of a slut, sir."

"You know where we're going?"

"No, sir."

"We're going to Georgia!"

"What the hell do we care, sir?"

I laughed and told him to send two men for our boxes.

When the sun rose nothing but a distant smudge of smoke in the sky located for us where the beautiful city of New Orleans lay between its rivers, bayous, and canals.

We travelled, as we had travelled before, through open forests, level, hard—a winding course to avoid undergrowth, but the going was easier than on many a New York country road; and, as long as we kept

out of trembling prairies, cypress, and sloughs, we had very little trouble—for all waters continued low; and where bridges had been burned during the Creek war, almost all streams were easily forded.

Since we had sailed aboard the *Red Bird* in 1812 we had lost only one man. All were well and hardy.

Joe Barse and the Black Cat rode in advance. There was no need of flankers.

Nine riflemen followed. Then Naïa's travelling carriage, I riding beside it, sometimes in it.

Three pack-horses followed. Eight riflemen rode in the rear.

Never have I heard the birds sing as they sang all about us during that journey through the Creek country.

Wild flowers, too, were in bloom; the heavenly scent of paw-paw filled the woods; and if I picked a stalk for Naïa, as soon as dusk fell it was covered with hovering moths.

We saw some evidences of the Indian war—here and there weed-grown fields and a heap of cinders where a house had stood.

Such Indians as we caught glimpses of fled from us. No wonder. Jackson had torn the Confederacy of Nations to fragments and nearly annihilated the population, so that there were scarcely any left excepting women and children. Only the inaccessible Seminoles survived, sullen amid the Everglades, haughty, dangerous, hating us.

But none came our way; and what ruffianly forest-runners may have been lurking in the woods gave us wide berth.

We were nearly two months on our way. We lived luxuriously with our wines and New Orleans preserves. We had koonti bread, too, and venison and other game when we chose.

The Black Cat caught two young paroquets for Naïa, which became tame almost instantly. She named them Paul and Virginia and taught them to say "Naïa," and "Colonel," and "Cock-crow Hall"; and they sat on the calash hood all day, ruffling their brilliant green feathers, enjoying the world, and eating palmetto fruit and koonti bread and any oranges we could gather.

Early in February the overseer of a turpentine camp told us that, at St. Augustine, a British cruiser was lying in the Matanzas; and that her captain had come ashore with news of an armistice preliminary to a peace between the United States and Great Britain.

This made Naïa joyous and she picked up her guitar for the first time since we had left Mobile, and sang the Creole songs which she had learned in Pensacola, and which she had translated and rhymed into English.

That evening, in camp, we drank quite as much Madeira and claret as was prudent, and had a great

wooden sofki bowl of delicious orange punch made with black-strap, limes, oranges, guavas, and St. Croix sprinkled with chartreuse and fine champagne.

The Black Cat, upon request, danced solemnly, uttering rhythmical yelps.

Following, Joe Barse cut pigeon wings and hopped and kicked up his heels, snapping his fingers to time his agile steps.

Then several leather-legs capered to a Kentucky walk-around played by Naïa.

Then all gathered closer around the fragrant cedar fire to hear Naïa sing to her guitar the translated Creole songs—first the odd, sad little chansonette called "Perdido"—

Once, long ago,
I loved a lady
White as the snow,
With lips of red;
Long, long ago
I lost my lady—
If she hath fled I do not know;
If she be dead I do not know.

Waves of the deep,
Oh, hurry seaward!
Look for my lady
If she's fled.
Waves of the deep
That foam to leeward,

Tell me my lady is not dead!
Oh, surf no whiter than her breast,
I can not rest,
I can not rest.

This usually made Joe Barse weep and rub his eyes with a grimy fist.

He preferred gayer ditties, such as the Pensacola song called "Manola":

I loved you first, Manola,
When first I saw you roll a
Little cigarito
From a leaf of golden corn.
Nor Lilias nor Lola
Compare to you, Manola,
And I love you,
I adore you
With a heart that's all forlorn!

Manola
Of Pensacola,
Where the Red Birds sing
And the gulls are on the wing—
Where the bees hum
In the sweet-gum,
And the china-berry bloom
Sheds a soft perfume—
Where the sea sighs
In the moon rise,

And the tall palm trees
Sway and whisper in the breeze,
Oh, Manola
Of Pensacola,
I'm in love,
I'm in love with you!

That, with the drumming rhythm of the guitar, enchanted our leather-legs, and they would sing it for hours together as they rode through the woods.

It was astonishing how the news of peace made Naïa bloom like a brier rose. But she went white as a Cherokee rose next day when a Jewish fur-trader on the way to St. Augustine, from the Holston Valley, informed us that the United States had just declared war against the Algerian countries.

I pretended to Naïa that I was going, but soon discovered it was no subject for jesting. However, when she learned that it concerned our navy alone she became cheerily interested, and expressed the opinion that it was high time our country ceased paying tribute to barbarians of any description.

Exactly fifty days out from New Orleans we rode into the Fernandino Forts where once the Lone Star flag flew so defiantly.

There they told us that peace was a certainty; that there was no further employment for militia and volunteers, and that orders were to ship home all Northern troops without any delay whatever, upon

their arrival, otherwise they would have to pay for their own maintenance and transportation.

I had certainly expected a breathing moment here —time to find some clergyman and marry Naïa; but within an hour of our arrival we were hustled aboard a dirty-looking brig flying the Spanish flag—men, horses, baggage, bride- and bridegroom-to-be, all mad as hornets but sufficiently disciplined by this time to obey with becoming, though enraged, respect the bustling cocked-hats and gold epaulettes that drove us aboard like truants.

"Hell's roarin' beeswax," muttered Ben Glimming fiercely, "I wanted for to buy some o' them shell-work things and a stuffed bird or two, and b'Gawd A'mighty they boost me aboard a Spaniard like I was a bag o' cotton!"

Nevertheless, aboard we went in an indecorous hurry, to catch the wind and tide they had waited for; up came her dripping mud-hooks with creak of capstan and a Spanish "Yo-ho!" Her patched canvas flapped drearily, Spanish hell broke out aloft and alow; the rigging swarmed like a palm forest with monkeys; and we moved, wabbled, and headed out the Islands with a stench of garlic from the galley, and the sound of shoreward guitars buzzing in our ears.

"The Grace of God" was her name in English; her skipper a kind and swarthy Spanish Creole; Captain Cirilo, who gave us an unclean cabin with two

bunks and had us to dine with him whenever we were inclined, or ordered us to be served in our own quarters.

He was a polite, kind, but melancholy man, inclined to brood upon the fate of Florida, yet not holding against us its Yankee ravishment from the Crown of Spain. No, he had no rancour; and when some of the impudent crew started to sing:

'Mericain coquin
Billé en nanquin,
Voleur di pain
Chez Miché D'Aquin—

he fell upon them with kicks and blows and Spanish curses; and nobody aboard was ever saucy again.

He confided to me that he had wanted to be turned into a troop ship, or transport, or anything remotely resembling a man o' war; and had been very willing to sail in ballast; but that, since Pensacola, Spaniards were not popular with American officers and soldiers, and he had thought it prudent to take aboard him what he was told to take and offer no observations.

He was the mildest man who ever fed on garlic. Every day he patiently explained to Naïa the process of making gombo—another gustatory passion of his:

"Premie chose le prens la viane et mette li dans to chodiere avec un ti bren la graisse—" was the way he always began; and always ended: "Voye li bien qui li pas brule, et to va fai bon gombo!"

We were three days out when, chancing to be on the poop with Naïa to bask in the sun, a violent yell from masthead brought master and mate and supercargo to with a jolt:

"Sail-ho!"

"Where away!"

A description of the top gallants, hull down, followed. The skipper had been a little nervous over the recent piracies in these waters—one never knew when a privateer would change her spots for tiger-strips!—and he had no desire to see, encounter, or, much less, speak, anything swimming larger than a sea-gull.

We were floundering along under a steady breeze; sky and water were an agreeable blue; there was peace and plenty aloft and alow; and nothing except gombo to think about.

Forward lounged my leather-legs, triumphant over the hated sea and, so far, proudly retaining all their meals.

From the forecastle a fiddle scraped; soft Creole voices sang the lively waltz; and the softer and characteristic Spanish sequel:

Lolita,
Lolita,
Of Santa Rosita,
The day is a-dying,
The little owl crying,
And here I lie sighing for you;

The ocean is sleeping,
Oh, why are you keeping
Your lover who's dying for you!
In orange-bloom bowers
The shadows of flowers
Embroider a bed for you,
Lolita,
Lolita,
Of Santa Rosita,
I'm sighing and dying for you!
Lolita!

Then, with a tambourine and castanet:

Dark are the hours,
The night grows cold,
Faded the flowers,
The moon is fled,
Bleak are the bowers,
The world grows old,
My heart is dead,
My heart is dead,
Lolita!

All very pretty, but I began to wonder what breed of ship that schooner yonder might turn out to be, which was flying along under our port bow with the speed of a sheer-water. And apparently hedging in on us as though desiring to speak us.

There was no use altering our course to avoid the

stranger who could sail all around us while we were muddling along a mile.

"Carramba," muttered the skipper, "who the devil is he? I know not why he should desire conversation."

He hurled a hoarse question at masthead who gave a most disquieting description of this armed and flagless cruiser with her long 18's and carronades, bowling blithely along over the blue and silver sea.

We broke out our Spanish flag, presently; she showed us nothing but a row of triced ports.

"Mother of God," said Captain Cirilo thickly, "have we then a corsair to ruin us just as the peace of heaven breathes once more over a chastened world!"

We carried no guns—only a long twelve forward. There were no arms for the crew other than a rusty cutlass, a pike, and a boarding knife or two with the points broken off by the carpenter. There was not even a drum aboard with which to beat to quarters.

I mentioned my riflemen to the skipper.

"Jesus, Marie, and Josef," said he, horrified; "can we combat a cruiser with rifles!"

"Bang!" went a gun from the stranger.

"Dios," said he, "I must back my mainsail, by Christ!"

"Don't stir from my side, Naïa," said I.

She took hold of my sleeve. Ben Glimming, Joe Barse, Black Cat, and our leather-legs came swiftly to the poop, carrying their rifles and war-hatchets.

"I mean to put up with no nonsense when they board us," said I to Cirilo; "and you'd better swing your long twelve inboard and load with grape."

He was no coward; few Spaniards are; but to resist an armed schooner with one long twelve and a few rifles was, to him, an incomprehensible stupidity.

As we lay hove to, pitching and rocking, we saw the boats pulled away from the flagless schooner—seven boats full of armed men!

"You see," said the skipper, bitterly, "—you headlong Americans—it is because they have observe your rifles! Here is a sad affair, by Jesus!"

Ben Glimming glowered across the waves at them: "They look like pirates to me," he growled.

I had been thinking the same thing; these fellows pulling towards us with powerful, practised strokes—the men crowding the thwarts, naked to the waist, crimson sashed and red capped—and their officers in bow and stern, with their long coats and hangers and belts stuffed with glittering pistols.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted our skipper, "who are you and what do you want of us?"

At that, a long boat glided alongside just under us, and her officer sprang to his feet in the bow and looked up at me. In a flash I recognized him.

"Dominique!" I shouted.

He gave me an astonished look.

"Dominique you!" I cried, "what the devil are you doing in that boat? And there's Captain Beluche, too!"

"Sacré nom d'un nom!" he said; and the boat's crew gaped at us.

Then Captain Dominique's dark visage broke into a dazzling smile and he took off his hat to Naïa who was peering fearfully down at him from the taffrail.

"Mon Colonel," said he, his eyes and teeth all agleam, "it is a gran' mistake! How I know it is you, sir? Excuse, if you please. I go back to my ship, mek you one gran' salute!"

"'Ow we know thees Spanish sheep it ees you' sheep, miché le Colonel?" repeated Captain Beluche, grinning from the stern, and his gold earrings swinging as he bowed repeatedly to Naïa. "Oh, mon Dieu," he said, "I 'ope you ain' goin' tell to Jean Lafitte 'ow we bi'ave lak we some dam fool!"

Captain Dominique, smiling, conversational, amused at the fright he'd given our captain and crew, called up to me:

"You recollec', my Colonel, what I have show to you in thee powder bag?"

"Yes, I remember very well."

"Bon! I have sent him to their General Lambert."

"That was proper," said I gravely.

"Oh, yes, we are ver' polite in Barataria. But the British—oh, no, not polite. You know what they call your riflemen? They call them Dirty Shirts. We of Barataria, we call no names. We sometimes hang a gentleman from the yard arm, but we do not call names."

"You'd better leave the Atlantic," said I to Dominique. "You Baratarians are much loved by Government just now, but you know how it will go with you if you begin to stop ships off our coast and hang gentlemen from your yard arm."

"Oui, miché Colonel," said Beluche, "I know ver' dam well. Excuse if you pliz. We goin' mek sail an' we goin' stan' for theez Curaçao. Much oblige. Sank you, sare! Goo'bye!"

He flourished his hat at Naïa, eyes and teeth flashing.

Then he shouted something in Spanish Creole to the other boats; and every boat immediately turned tail and pulled lustily for the schooner.

We could see them plainly when they scrambled aboard and hoisted in their boats.

Then, up went the flag of Cartagena; bang!—the first gun saluting us—bang! bang! bang! And three Baratarian cheers.

"Ohmondieu!" burst out Captain Cirilo, gasping his relief.

"Give them three cheers," I whispered to Cirilo.

"All hands!" he shouted unsteadily, "—all hands to cheer Jean Lafitte! Vive Lafitte! Vive la Barataria!"

"Vive Lafitte!" shouted the crew, gratefully.

"Where did you know those cut-throats?" asked Naïa, astonished.

"You see," said I, "the advantage of keeping villainous company. But I don't think they're that. Any-

way, they have been both courageous and faithful to a country that put a price on their heads; and they fought as bravely as anybody else at the battle of New Orleans."

We encountered no storms; on the contrary, all wind failed us, and we lay becalmed and becalmed off the South Carolina coast; and though we lowered boats and manned our sweep, we made scarcely any progress for days and days; and saw other craft about us likewise in the doldrums, rolling and pitching in the still sunshine of April—among them a British sloop of war which made a snail's progress southward, towed by her boats.

Our men laboured at the oars every day, singing their interminable:

On me flanque dans la Calabozo
Mois de Mai,
C'tait pas gai!

while the flag of Spain stirred sullenly overhead.

Or, sometimes they sang about Marie Aram and the devotion of Tiocou; or about Michel Degout, and the trainer of paroquets, and all the gruesome details of that ancient tragedy; or they chanted a dirge-like chant called *"Mo oulé mourri,"* in which a "gris-gris" and a "zombi" figured horribly.

We were very glad when the flag of Spain straightened out in the May breeze off the Virginia Capes,

and our old tub began to slosh and wallow away northward.

Off the Hook we took a pilot. Naïa and I, resting on the taffrail, gazed out across the waves toward Sandy Hook—just as we had gazed so long ago from the deck of the *Wild-cat,* privateer.

"It is amazing," said I, "that you and I have travelled half around the earth together and are not yet married."

She said it was fortunate that I had not married her before she was grown up.

"Because you would have had to sow those wild oats anyway?"

"There was a devil in me, darling." She tucked her arm under mine and her fingers closed over my hand.

"I was determined to live every moment with all my might."

"Even if it killed you?"

"To be killed means nothing to the young. It's strange to say so, but it doesn't. I've only learned to be afraid since I lost you at Fort Mims. And now everything scares me."

She pressed my hand convulsively and nestled closer, shoulder to shoulder.

When the telegraph came in sight she asked me if I remembered the message we had sent, and the fate of the unhappy messenger; and I felt her body shudder against mine.

A flag flew from the squatty sandstone castle; another from the South Battery; another fluttered above the Red Fort as the city of New York disclosed itself between the two rivers at the head of the upper bay.

Her heart was as full as mine, I think, for she kept touching her eyes with her handkerchief and patting her pretty nose with it.

There rose our city with its towers and spires above the Dutch and English roofs massed from river to river as far as we could see, behind an endless forest of masts.

Already Staten Island and the heights of Weehawken were turning green under the sun of May; green trees glimmered on the Battery, around Government House, and Bowling Green. Brooklyn shores were becoming verdant; the shrubbery on all the islands was full of bursting buds and yellow bell-flower bloom.

As the *Grace of God* moved slowly toward her berth we could see the new steam ferry-boats on the North River, which fascinated us, and we could not take our eyes off them.

Trinity's mellow bells sounded pleasantly across the water. Other bells answered distantly in the city. A few lingering gulls soared over the East River, reluctant to leave for their northern solitudes.

We were moored not far from where the *Wild-cat*, privateer, was moored on that evening when first Naïa and I arrived together in New York.

Ben Glimming and his leather-legs, awaiting transportation to a schooner for their sail up the river to Albany, came to bid us adieu.

We shook hands with him, with Joe Barse, with the Black Cat—now adorned with a beaver hat and pantaloons—and with every separate rifleman.

Barse, having Latin blood in him, wept; the Black Cat gazed upon us solemnly. He had said good-bye. If he lived a thousand years he would have nothing to add to that final statement.

Captain Cirilo, breathing garlic, embraced us. His was a kind and Spanish heart; and we respected him and were resigned.

A sailor had gone to the City Hotel to fetch us a travelling coach.

Now, once more, Naïa Strayling and I stood beside our baggage upon a dirty wharf, just as we had stood that evening so long ago.

A military band was playing in the kiosque on the Battery.

"Oh, darling," she exclaimed, "do you remember?"

Except that no fireworks were rising from Vauxhall, and no Tammany parade was drumming and fifing through the city, and no stars twinkled overhead, the scene very tenderly recalled that other scene.

"Do you remember," said I, "that you refused to go home?"

"Oh, Joshua, what could you have thought!"

"All you thought about," said I, "was a junket to Vauxhall."

"I've waited three years to go to Vauxhall," said she. "Will you take me now? But I suppose we'd better go home first——"

Home! The word from her eager lips thrilled me.

"We can spend the evening at Vauxhall, first—" I began.

"Oh, Joshua, I want to go home!"

"Hadn't we better marry each other first?"

"Oh, lord, I forgot!"

When the travelling coach arrived, and our luggage was aboard, I told the coachman to stop first at a jewelry shop and then at the abode of some clergyman.

"Any sort will do," said I.

So first we got out in Hanover Square and bought a wedding ring and another set with diamonds and sapphires, chosen by my excited affianced.

Then, in Nassau Street, we invaded the abode of a holy old duck named Lovejoy—some kind of nonconformist—who waddled out of his study on large, flat feet; and presently married us in his parlour—his suspiciously pretty housekeeper and the charwoman serving as witnesses.

So long had we lived happily together, and without ceremony, that this seemed but a post-marital climax. We regarded it merely as a matter to be rid of; and were much relieved when this old cock pocketed his

fee; and his flat, duck-feet flapped away over the carpet toward inner recesses of poultrydom.

"I think," said I, "that civility requires us to wait upon your grandfather. Don't you?"

"Darling," said she happily, "I'm hanged if I care what you do with me, but shall love whatever you do!"

So, Chatham Street being on our way, we pulled up before the handsome mansion from which, once, we had been ignominiously ejected; and rang the door bell without a shudder.

The ancient Negro, in his scarlet livery and white scratch-wig, stood staring stupidly at Naïa; then his aged eyes filled and tears trickled over his wrinkled cheeks.

Silently he led us into the dimly gorgeous drawing-room with its glimmering mirrors. Beyond, the library was full of sunshine, where an old man, in his dressing gown, sat reading the morning newspaper.

Naïa went in all alone and closed the door behind her.

I had been seated for a long while by the shrouded window, where the bellying damask curtains framed a gilded pier-glass, when Naïa opened the door and called to me in a happy, tremulous voice.

So I went in and solemnly bowed to this ancient officer of General Washington's army; and we exchanged formal civilities, expressing polite pleasure in the union of the two families; and then, with painful

decorum, we exchanged opinions concerning politics and the war just ended—which he remarked was rather a pitiable affair compared to the Revolution.

That being politely admitted by me—though I could see the indignant colour burning Naïa's cheeks—we solemnly shook hands; Naïa embraced him; and so, with every ceremony and politeness, took our departure, the old butler staring after us and smiling through his tears.

Now we were ready for Cock-crow Hall!

Everywhere this side Harlem were evidences of military preparation—earthworks, redoubts, stone towers, forts, crescent batteries—and at McGowan's, a great overhead portcullis under which our horses galloped.

Three times we changed horses; once near Mount St. Vincent; once at Yonkers where Naïa and I had a plate of ice cream, as once we had before; and our last change was at Dobbs Ferry—we being obliged to go that far along the river, as the Mamaroneck Road was impassable.

And now, at the golden edge of evening, we crossed the brook which flows through our estate, and turned in the great avenue of trees.

A young girl opened the gates. Her grandfather was dead two years, she said, looking wonderingly up at Naïa.

So on we went under maples in tender leaf, and between green fields set with millions of dandelions,

until the great chimneys of Cock-crow Hall rose against the flaming west, and we saw the gilded cock-erel atop his perch, crowing for victory.

Then Naïa turned to me, her great eyes wet with tears; but could not utter any word. Only the inarticulate eloquence of her breathless lips told all her love for me and Cock-crow Hall.

Moonlight, and a million hylas peeping in sweet, unbroken, endless chorus; damp fragrance from new grass and newly spaded gardens; some restless bird distantly vocal in the woods; the far song of the brook where ferns unfolded like bishops' croziers and there was a scent of Daphne in the dusk.

She wore sheer silk of rose colour—one of her old gowns, she said, made after the fashion set by the Empress Louise—and her sheer stockings were of rose colour, and her slippers, and the paste brilliants on her insteps. Only her scarf was silvery.

My wedding suit was of old style, too—now three years obsolete—but never had been worn, and had been made in London for me after kind advice from Mr. Brummell, poor devil.

My waistcoat was of pale mauve silk, embroidered with rose-acacia and nasturtium buds. My coat, rolled monstrous high in the collar, was dark blue; and framed a laundered neckcloth of fine cambric pierced with a black pearl.

My trousers should have been tighter and moulded

closer to my legs and body—for I had lost some weight campaigning with Andy Jackson. Over them I wore hessians fashioned flimsily for the ball room.

You have our pictures. As for our portraits—she was too beautiful for any words of mine to fit, from her chestnut hair clustering to frame the snowy oval of a face tinged with rose, and the lips carnation. . . . And the two grey eyes of her——

Lingering at table in the candle light over our wine—and even that harmoniously became her in rose or topaz tints—she leaned a little toward me across the cloth:

"I'll do anything you wish, darling. But don't you think that a few children will be sufficient for the first few years?"

"Yes," said I; "we must have other pleasures while we're young."

"Yes. We'll have a few; and then we'll be very young and gay for quite a long time. And when we tire of so much gaiety—or if you tire first, darling—you have only to tell me, and we'll have more babies."

"Do you think you can?" I asked as we rose, walked out to the front steps, and stood together in the moonlight.

"Oh, darling, I know I can," she said, flinging her slender arms around my neck; "and you wouldn't doubt it if you knew how much I am in love with you."

We kissed passionately. A heavenly thrill possessed

me as I thought of the future heir to Cock-crow Hall.

We walked, our waists enlaced, slowly along the paved terrace. Lights burned in all the windows of the old-time house. Even in that room which so nearly had been fatal to me, the high bull's-eye dormer was illuminated.

We looked up at it in silence for a while, then sauntered on to the little summer-house where wistaria in heavy bud hung wet with dew.

She had been humming a Creole dance under her breath; now, enchanted by the moonlight, releasing herself from me, she took a graceful step or two in rhythm to her singing, whirling with floating skirt and click of heel, gay, young as the young year of new-born leaves:

Ti baiser,
Pas gran' chose
Li aimé
Queq'chose,
Moin donne li amou',
Li m'fait enfan' toujou'—
Dansez, Rose!
Dansez, Celedon!
Moin fiche d'enfan's!

In the brilliant moonlight a cock crowed.

Silver and rose the slender shape glided, pirouetted in lovely mockery of its own shadow:

COCK-CROW

Dansez, Rose!
Dansez, Celedon!
Moin fiche d'enfan's——

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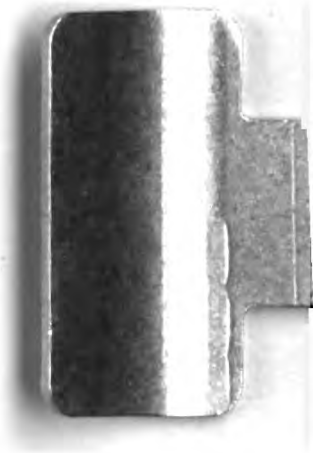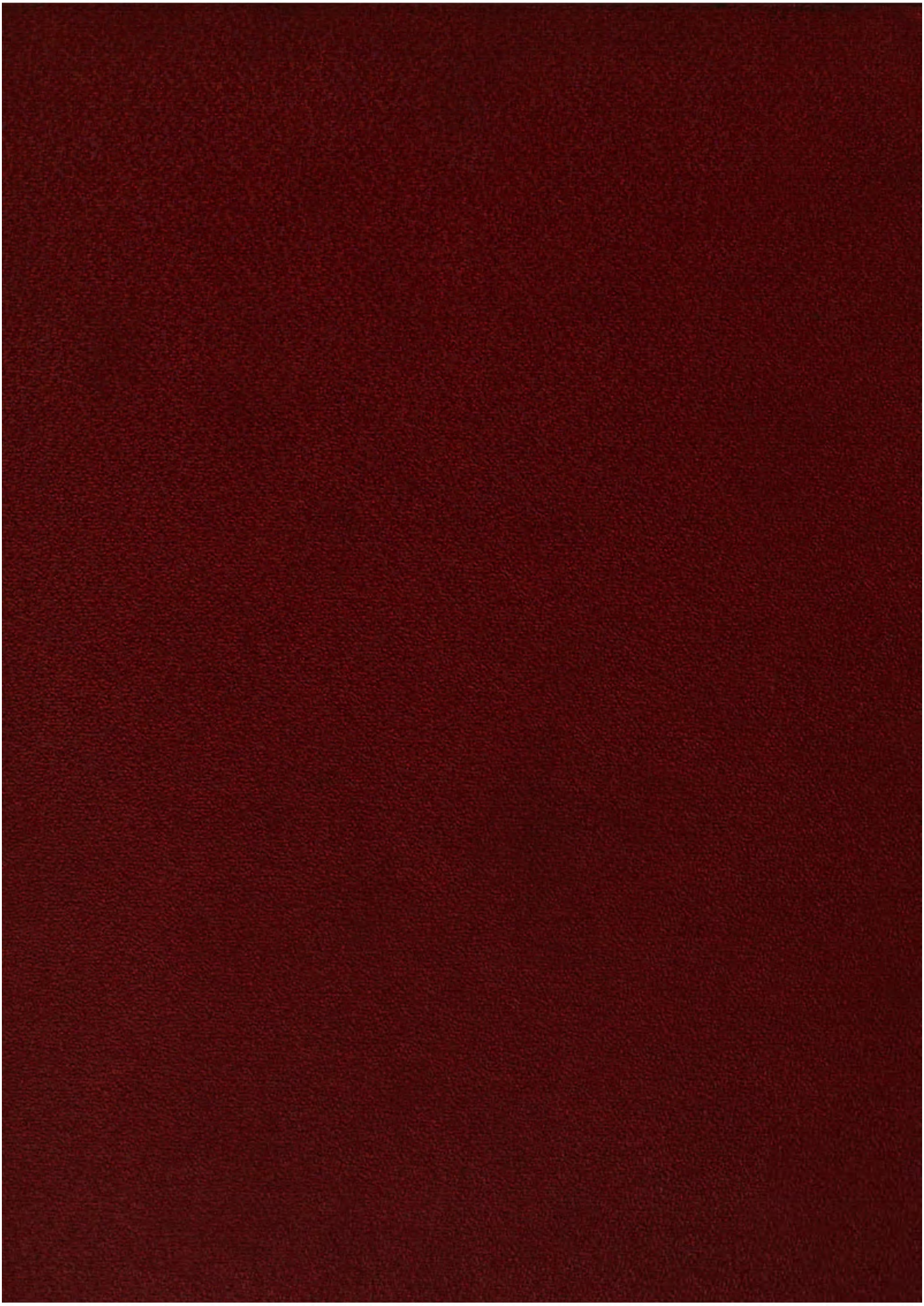
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