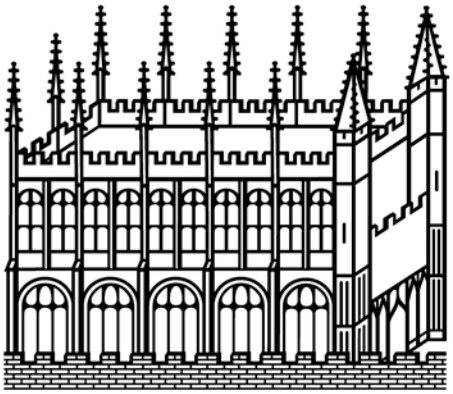

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THE HAPPY PARROT

THE HAPPY PARROT

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ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

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THE HAPPY PARROT

By

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS

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FOREWORD

IF the President of the United States were not a poltroon, he behaved like one.

Because the English stopped American ships and refused us permission to trade on the high seas, and because the French did likewise, Mr. Jefferson and a cowardly Congress forbade our ships to stir outside our own ports lest the English or French seize them and drive us into war. This was called an embargo.

Commerce instantly sickened and died; a seafaring nation lay strangled by its own anchor chains.

"If you trade with France or her allies without our permission, we seize you!" growled old England.

"If you trade with England or her allies we seize you," warned France.

"Very well," replied Mr. Jefferson, "just for that we won't trade with either of you and that is going to mortify and annoy you."

England, intent on murdering our commerce, grinned her lion's grin. France, bent on England's ruin, snarled at us, watching our ships rot at their docks.

We had no war vessels fit to protect our commerce on the high seas. Mr. Jefferson and his Congress thought we could not afford a fleet. Besides, it was dangerous, because warships might bring on war.

But Mr. Jefferson built hundreds of gun-boats—sloops and ketches carrying one gun—to " protect our harbours "—whatever that meant.

Also, in that year, Congress put an end to the slave trade. No more blacks could be fetched from Africa. Except for the death penalty, all slavers were now to be considered pirates, and all gun-boats and armed craft were ordered to stop and take them.

The Southern States put through this law—not because they had concluded that human slavery was wrong, but because the value of niggers was falling in a glutted market; and the Southerners desired to maintain prices. A natural increase of their slaves, they decided, would be sufficient to maintain a proper balance between demand and supply. Niggers, like rabbits, could become pests.

So there was to be no more trading even in Black Ivory—which is what the slave-trade was called—no more exporting or importing to England or India or the West Indies; no trade with Europe; none with China or the Grand Turk. And if we dared even attempt a coast-trade between our own ports, some British man-o'-war was likely to stop our ships, and take what sailors they chose for their own fleet, on pretence of recovering " deserters."

So the misery grew in America—in New England, in New York. Everywhere throughout the land seafaring folk were ruined and starving.

I, among the rest.

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THE HAPPY PARROT

CHAPTER I

OH, WHAT IS LOVE?

I

THE first morning I ever saw her she wore a shell-pink organdie gown, a white flowered scarf across her breast, cross-strapped slippers of a rose colour, and a gauze cap; and she carried a market basket tied with rosy ribbons.

She was seated on a bench on the Battery under the double row of basswood trees, now in tender foliage. I had been standing near the water-stairs looking for customers. There were only a few loafers on the Battery at that hour.

So I went toward her and asked her if she desired to take a boat-trip to Staten Island to view the two British frigates off Sandy Hook.

"They are *The Melampus* and *The Guerriere*, both thirty-eights—"

"What are they doing there?" she inquired pertly. Never had I seen so impudent a nose and chin.

"They are standing on and off to catch any ship of ours that dares come out," I replied. "All people of consequence and fashion should take the trip. I will row you there for two and six—"

"Why are the British ships there?" she repeated.

"To press our sailors, ma'am, and to stop our trade. Free trade and sailors' rights are what we need."

"What," says she, "has war with England been declared then?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. That's only old England's way with us," said I. "It is always a kick or a blow, you know."

"How much did you say it would cost for the trip?" she asked.

"Two shillings and sixpence, my lady. And I have a pretty rowboat and a good spyglass—"

"No," said she; and got up, nose in the air, and marched off across the parade with her market basket.

The next time I saw her she was sitting on the same bench. She wore the same pink gown and a Lavinia straw hat, but no scarf. And her bosom and arms were very bare—which seemed to be the new fashion. However, a large bunch of pink tulips somewhat screened her bosom.

When I came up and took off my shabby hat—"Devil-devil-devil!—" says she, "are *you* here again?"

"It's a fine May morning, ma'am," said I, "for a trip to Staten Island—"

"You are a masquerader," said she, "and no waterman. You are a young rogue out for a frolic. I can see that. You have no rowboat!"

"Madam," said I, "my boat lies at the stairs. It is a fine May morning and—"

"The weather does not interest me," said she.

"It interests me, ma'am. My business depends on fair weather. Would you be pleased to take a trip to see the ships—"

"Oh, la! Why don't you make a rhyme about it? Well, then, I'll make you one—

Lady, prithee take a trip!
You shall see a British ship;
Let me add, to be prolix,
It will cost you two and six!"

She gave me a most saucy look. The slim, smooth, flat-bosomed youth of her might make her no more than sixteen, but I knew she was considerably older.

"Madam," said I, "it amuses you to be witty—"

"Oh," says she, "nothing amuses me; not even your impudent masquerading. I am bored with the world and with pretended watermen. I wish I were an actress. I can act better than you can. I know how to pretend better than you do. I can be vulgar if I choose."

I looked at her in perplexity.

"I can do a *pas seul*," said she, "and hornpipes, jigs, and pigeon-wings. And nigger pit-a-pats, too."

"I don't doubt it, ma'am."

"Why should you," said she, arching her eyebrows insolently. "And, moreover, I can mimic anybody. I could mimic *you!* You'd think to hear my uncle and Debby conversing in the next room when I imitate them. Or my friend, Miss Osborn; or her Aunt Betsy,—I do them to the very life. And when I dress like a boy nobody can tell I'm not one. . . . If I had any sense I'd run away from all this boredom."

"Where?" I asked.

"Not to Staten Island for two and six," she said disdainfully. "I ought to join a troop of actors. Or ship as cabin boy. Or do something except to take the air with Eliza Osborn, or go to market or to church. . . . If I had a spark of spirit I'd not sit at home by candle-light and sew; I'd dress me in next to nothing and go to Vauxhall! And dine and wine and dance," she added fiercely. Then she got up and went away, taking determined strides.

The next time I saw her it was in the afternoon and she wore orange blossom shoes, a Leghorn hat and pale yellow feather, and carried a yellow parasol and a beaded bag all over yellow roses.

"How do you do," said she. "Don't you ever have any customers?"

"Not many, ma'am. Would you care to see the British ships this afternoon?"

She seated herself under the trees but made no reply. I offered to knock off sixpence and row her

to Staten Island for two shillings and show her both British frigates cruising outside in company with a brig-o'-war.

She gave me a disdainful look: "I care nothing for your British brigs and frigates," said she.

"I will row you there for one and six," said I. "Pray be so obliging as to look at my new row-boat which lies yonder by the stairs—"

She said she did not desire to look upon my boat. Besides, she added, she had no intention of trusting her life to a strange young man who pretended to be a waterman. New York, she added, was full of adventurers.

"Pray, ma'am, what else do I look like than a waterman?" said I, smiling.

"Your speech and bearing," said she primly, "are not of the water-front."

"Do you wish to see my license?" said I, amused but vexed.

She shook her head and drew from her beaded bag a sugar bun which I would willingly have eaten. She crumbled it and cast the crumbs about her to attract some of the wild birds. Then there came a sudden whimpering of wings and a flock of strutting, bobbing, coo-cooing pigeons alighted all around her. These she tempted with fragments so that they flew up and snatched the morsels from her fingers.

"So your trade is to carry customers to Staten Island," she said carelessly, "and you really are a waterman?"

"Yes, ma'am. Business is poor since the port closed."

"Why not seek another trade? A *gentleman's* trade?"

"I had one once," said I bitterly.

She glanced at me in triumphant malice, still scattering her crumbs about her.

"I was mate on a tall ship in the China trade," I added. "Now all sailors beg their bread; captains are idle; owners ruined."

"My uncle," said she, "is in the shipping business."

"You mean that he *was* in that business."

"No, he is. And he is neither idle nor ruined. He is wealthy and busy. Also he's a devil."

"I'd like to know how he contrives to trade," said I wistfully.

"He has ships. He trades; that is all I know because he won't tell me anything. I'm wild to sail with him, but if I speak of it he curses."

"I wish he would employ me," said I. "I know the sea. Do you think he might permit me to wait upon him?"

"I know nothing about such matters," said she shortly, crumbling the bun for the birds. "Besides, my uncle is absent: on a voyage." She cast the last morsels to the pigeons, rose, bade me good morning, and went lightly away across the parade, swinging her beaded bag.

The fourth time I saw her was nearly a week

later. She came blithely along under the lime trees from Whitehall way and around by Government House. I recognized her flimsy pink print gown which showed every curve and dimple of her body, a long way off, and I thought she meant to avoid the Battery and enter the city by the Bowling Green. But presently she came through Market Street my way, a-sauntering, her be-ribboned basket a-swing on her arm; and when she noticed me she gave me a mischievous smile.

"What," says she, "so fine a morning and no customers yet? I fear you are no business man."

But I was in a foul humour with the world that morning, and, though neither blind to beauty nor averse to attempt adventure, had no stomach for it now.

She stood still for a moment, looking not at me but at the sparkling water beyond; then she gazed into her market basket as though to be sure she had forgotten nothing; then, pulling a set of tablets from her chintz pocket, seated herself to check over the items with a pencil which she wetted with the pink tip of her saucy tongue.

Out of a surly sort of civility I had risen; now I also seated myself in silence, deadly weary and half sick of privation.

Still studying her lists she said: "You appear to be out of humour, sir. Does the waterman's career pall on you?"

"Any sailor has sufficient to sour him these days."

"No reason to pull so sulky a face," said she. "I venture to say you don't know what real misery is like."

"Perhaps *you* do," said I, with a sneer.

"I do. I know what it is to starve, to freeze, to be hunted like a wild creature, to flee on bleeding feet in terror of my life."

"And where did all these adventures happen to you?" said I incredulously.

"In France."

"When?"

"In 1793—when I was seven years old. . . . But I haven't time to tell you about it; I'm late, now—" However, she did not move.

"Besides," said she, playing with the long strings on her pocket, "I know nothing whatever about you, so why should I converse with you about myself? I never should have spoken to you at all. . . . And that is why I did."

Had I not felt really ill for lack of food I would never have neglected such an opportunity for an adventure with this girl; but mind and body had become listless, discouraged, weary, beaten down; promise of adventure did not tempt me; the effort was too much, despite the pretty conjunction of opportunity and beauty.

And it might have been a real temptation because the girl was twenty-three and neither a baby nor a fool; only spirited and perverse and spoiled.

" I suppose," said she, " it's because I'm lonely and bored to distraction that I condescend to converse with you. However, there's much evil in me," she added gaily.

" I had hoped," said I, " it was because of my elegant manners, fine clothes, and good looks that you condescended."

She laughed, then frowned.

" You are good-looking in a rascally sort of way," said she. " You've a hard young face, sir; but of course I could see you are a gentleman."

I smiled without mirth. I was hungry enough to gnaw the barnacles off a ship's bottom.

Sitting up on the park bench I looked desperately around me for some possible customer. Seeing nobody I slouched back again and drew my belt tighter.

" So," said I with a disagreeable smile, " you say you are an Irish refugee from France? When did you leave France? "

" When they began to chop off heads. . . . And you are very observing, sir; I am Irish."

" Who did you say your father was? "

" I did not say. But I'll tell you. He was Colonel Quinn of the Irish Regiment in the French King's service."

" But they sent no Irish to the guillotine. Why did your father flee? "

" He didn't. He died. They massacred all the foreign soldiers—Swiss, German, Irish. They

did so. I was seven years old. I remember the poor Swiss running from the mob, and I heard the firing and saw Lambesq gallop off with his horse. My uncle de Giroflay came up from Dieppe and got me out of my boarding school. When we left Paris he was disguised as a drover, and I wore wooden shoes which tortured my feet. You sneer at my story, but I'm explaining to you that the Irish had to run or lose their heads like the poor King and Queen. And they ran—the O'Haras, the Dillons, the McDonalds and McMahons—all the Macs—every Irishman. It's God's mercy, I'm wearing my head this May day in New York City!"

"Oh, come!" said I, "you draw too long a bow. They didn't send children to the scaffold!"

"They did so! After we escaped they guillotined the whole girls' boarding school where I had been. And the children's ages were from six to sixteen! I'll tell you the kind of thing they did: they stripped my grandfather naked and tied him to a naked Carmelite nun and threw them both into the river and drowned them. My grandmother, who was a French aristocrat, was so crippled with rheumatism that she couldn't be strapped to the plank, so they tied her on her back and let her lie there half an hour looking up at the knife before it fell! And now, sir, pray tell me if you think that your own petty vexations are enough to pull so ugly a face over?"

In every boarding house in New York were

French emigrants who told hair-raising tales, and needed little encouragement to become voluble. I always considered their stories exaggerations. I so considered this girl's. I looked sideways at her, irritated, and beginning to feel very ill of starvation.

She returned my glance with that lovely yet hardy look out of dark blue eyes which, somehow, made me think of dark blue water off Trinidad.

"Well, my pretty lass," said I rudely, "will you spend two shillings to look at the British ships? I'll take you for one and six. No? For a shilling then! Well, for sixpence!"

"It's a long way to Staten Island," said she, "and all I know about you is that you can be very ill-mannered."

"Do you mistrust my ragged clothes or my hang-dog features?" said I, "—or do you fear I'll make love to you in an open boat?"

"As for your features," says she maliciously, "you've the kind of battered good looks that attract but engage little confidence. And as for making love to me, you're impertinent to think it!"

"I didn't think it; I merely said it! But I'm thinking of something that would give me far more pleasure, and that's a bit of beef and bread —if you wish to know the truth. I'm no Vauxhall rake when I'm starving, ma'am."

"What may be your name?" said she, looking curiously at me, her cheeks still flushed with resentment, and her uptilted nose in the air.

"Strake."

"It rhymes with rake."

"Is that what puts your Irish nose out o' joint, my lass?"

"Do you also insult my nose?"

"It's too pious to suit me—always pointing up to God."

"And why not? God made it, and it's thanking Him."

After a silence: "Is it true, sir, that you are hungry?" she asked, plainly not believing me.

"No," said I absently, "I've dined and wined too freely at the Tontine, and that's what really ails me." And I yawned gauntly and fell to smoothing out my shabby wristbands and pulled up my collar and cravat.

Then I gazed out over the breezy bay where shipping lay moored and not a sail stirring. They who had laid that villainous embargo were slowly doing me to death. Five hundred ships lay idle in New York at that hour; and if you walked on Front Street and Water Street their bowsprits made a vast and tangled roof of spar and rope above your head.

Whitecaps came hurrying in out of the west before as fair a sailing wind as ever I saw for a good ship to weigh in.

The disgraced American flag flew jauntily from the Battery tower, and from the military works on Governor's Island. Along rows of trees on

the Parade, windy foliage showed a silvery underside of breezy leaves. There was a tang of salt and a fresh scent of house-lilacs in the air.

"I must go to my housework," remarked the girl. "If you had not been so bad tempered—and more polite—" She hesitated, fell silent.

As I said nothing, she touched my arm very lightly.

"Yonder, behind us, is where I reside," said she. "You see that house on Market Street where the lace window curtains are blowing and flowing out into the sunshine? Well, I've to go and see that those parlour windows are closed. And then there's dinner to get—"

Her voice grew still. I said nothing. She stood up. I shambled to my feet out of surly politeness—for the instinct still persisted in me spite o' the life I had led.

I gave her a dull look, and she gave me a gay one:

"Some day," said she, "maybe I'll go to see the British ships in your new rowboat. And maybe I won't."

"Some fine day after I'm dead, ma'am."

She laughed. Under the saucy hat her bright hair was clipped short and dressed in a thousand tight curls after the wanton French fashion. She looked frail and French in her limp pink slip-gown. A cluster of white daffodils scarce concealed her unformed breasts,—and the thin stockings

of her, and her rosy paper-soled slippers, cross-strapped over thin, childish feet.

The bell of Trinity struck the hour. St. Paul's echoed it. Then the Garden Street bells pealed and St. John's sweet bell, far and faint, repeated the hour.

"Well, sir," said she under her breath, "are you coming?"

I did not understand her.

"Come, sir," she repeated. "I would not abandon a dog if he looked as hungry as you do."

The thin, starved blood reddened my face and heated it a little.

"Do you think I take alms?" said I.

"Did you suppose I meant to have our cook feed you at the area gate?" said she. "Oh, sir, I'm fully sensible of my hideous indiscretion, but I am inviting you to sit at my own table with me. And do your worst!"

"You are vastly obliging," said I gravely, "and for your politeness you shall see the British ships for nothing."

"Lend me your arm," said she, "and let us endeavour to seem as though we were respectably acquainted. For goodness only knows what the neighbours may think—all the Hunts and Osborns, and Darkes and Reeds—"

I offered her my arm; her narrow hand rested lightly within it. And so, as though politely acquainted, we crossed the Battery underneath the

trees and approached the neat and handsome mansion where she dwelt.

2

Now, at twenty-eight, I had sailed on many seas and had known many ports. Many, diverse, and strange had been my adventures afloat and ashore; but, it seemed to me on that sunny afternoon in May, that this was the prettiest adventure that ever had befallen me.

Her name was Cintra Quinn; she sat me down in a dusky parlour, and there fetched me a book about ships to occupy me whilst she and her maid-servant prepared one o'clock dinner.

Bellying purple curtains of damask framed the lace ones at the windows, falling in vast and stately folds from gilded cornices which, in turn, framed a gilded pier glass, ceiling high.

The furniture was exquisitely designed after the manner of that delicate and popular French style invented by the fashionable designer, Mr. Phyfe. There were flowery Chinese vases of rose and green on the mantel; Turkey carpets on the floor; a harp and a piano in one corner; a cabinet of gold lacquer and a tall, inlaid clock in another. The cabinet was full of little gilded pagan gods, some holding up two fingers, some one, some merely a fat thumb.

A picture of our great and valiant Washington, painted on glass, adorned the walls.

Once my piquant little hostess came to the door, in apron and bare arms which were powdered dusty white with waffle-flour, to see how I fared. Her face was flushed from the oven's heat, and she seemed excited to a frightened sort of gaiety by our adventure; and she admitted it with a nervous, hardy laugh.

Then, in a little while, she came again and bade me lend her my arm to table, and say nothing indiscreet before the servant, but pretend to old acquaintance.

I was so famished that the rich odour of roast almost made me feel faint.

The servant-maid, whose name was Debby, fetched claret and Madeira. Her niece, a very pretty wench, assisted her.

I ate and drank slowly, scarce able to control a crazed desire to seize and devour at a gulp everything before me.

When the servant was absent in the kitchen, I apologized for my busy silence to my hostess who seemed always on the verge of laughter.

"I ate nothing yesterday," said I, "nor the day before, and have felt somewhat savage for my fasting. Madame, for the last three months I have eaten no more than once a day—when I ate at all. I hope, ma'am, that you will forgive my rudeness of this morning."

"Yes. . . . Are affairs in New York then so desperate that a ship's officer must turn waterman and starve at it, too?"

"I don't know what to do or where to turn," said I, "who am bred to the sea; and the sea now closed against me."

"You shall wait upon my uncle when he returns," said she. She added that she had been expecting him every day during the last month; that he had written a letter from Florida saying he was sailing, and should be home early in May.

She played with her wine glass, now and then dipping a strawberry into the Madeira and letting it melt in her mouth, but otherwise had taken no wine.

"Captain Quinn is a strange man," said she. . . . "I have a proper temper, too. . . . We quarrel. I detest him. I hope he may take a fancy to you and employ you."

"What is his line of trade, ma'am?"

"I told you that I don't know. All I know is that he seems to be always very busy with his affairs and his ships."

"What build of ship carries his trade, ma'am?"

"I never saw any of his ships. I don't know their names or the names of his captains. He never talks to me about them. I know only that his ships used to sail from New York, Boston, and Providence. They don't any more, I believe. I know not where they lie, nor at what wharfs; or in what ports they enter, or from whence they sail; nor whither; nor what they carry or fetch. I never ask him anything."

"That seems odd," said I.

"No, it is not. He knows I am dying to take a voyage and he swears I never shall stir on any ship of his. My uncle and I are not friendly. I have to share his roof or starve. Otherwise I would not endure his habits and manners and behaviour—and the dreadful men he fetches home with him when he is in New York—that creature Brindle—and Maltby—"

"Yet," said I, "you tell me he bravely came from Dieppe at peril of his life and saved you from the guillotine."

"*He?* Not he! That was my mother's brother—Monsieur de Giroflay. My mother was French. All her family perished. Captain Quinn is my father's brother. . . . Black Irish. . . . But my father, Colonel Quinn, was red-headed and gay."

For a little while we sat silent looking out of the windows at the crocuses, daffodils and tulips in the park. Then she asked me politely to go to the parlour and be seated there, while she returned to the pantry and washed the beautiful china and crystal—a task, she explained, which she never trusted to a servant.

So I went and sat down by the parlour windows, under which, now, after dinner, people both respectable and genteel were promenading. For this was a very fashionable quarter of the city, and one of the most beautiful parades that ever I saw in any town in the world.

Folk were richly dressed, yet a little more soberly in these days than a few years before. For since that exasperating ass, President Jefferson, took to French styles and gave up shoe-buckles for shoe-laces, the stately, handsome fashions of the last decade began to disappear. Wig-makers, hair-powder and perfumery dealers were in despair, for the new styles bid fair to ruin them.

Knee-breeches were on the wane and pantaloons coming into style with black-top, yellow-top, or fancy top boots from which dangled gilt tassels.

I myself wore skin-tight pantaloons—or the remains of them—and boots with tarnished tassels —having always been a spendthrift in prosperous days.

In my days of prosperity, too, I had been something of a philanderer in every port, and liked to see women prettily dressed. And I was glad that, though powder and patch were done away with, women's garb still remained delicate, transparent, flimsy, with paper-soled shoes and sandals, and thin silk hose, winter or summer. My experience had been that they wore no undergarments when dressed in the French fashions.

Save for those who still arranged their hair *à la Titus*, as did Miss Quinn, in close-clipped curls—or in a wig to imitate that style—or in the lopsided, frizzed fashion—every woman's hair carried the plain straight comb stuck in a head combed Greek fashion, the hair loosely waved and rippling back;

and sometimes a few tendrils or curls over the right ear. But Miss Quinn's clipped and curly head was prettier to me.

Now, with my starved stomach at ease, my mind and spirits were inclined to a gay tranquillity I had not known for months as I complacently surveyed the fashionables from the parlour window.

I ought to have been thinking of them as customers, but a sense of relief, of well-being, so invaded my tired and battered carcass that I had no heart for business. So I bade the morrow take care of itself and lounged in luxury by the purple curtains and gazed on green grass and flowers and a sparkling sea,—on windy foliage, and flags, and breezy gowns whipped this way and that around the waists and legs of fashionable and feminine New York.

When Miss Quinn came into the parlour I hopped up in my former sprightly and debonnaire manner and handed her to a chair with an elegance I had nigh forgotten.

" I'm sorry I kept you waiting," said she, " but I had to care for the china and crystal, and then Anne, Debby's niece, was finishing the laundry and I had to count it. . . . What have you been thinking about up here alone? "

"I have been thinking," said I—though I had not been—" of your beauty and of your charming name, Cintra—being the first time ever I heard the name—except in Portugal."

"It's the name of a little town. I was born there. . . . In a château belonging to a branch of my mother's family. All are dead by the guillotine."

The wench, Anne, came in with fruit cake, seed-cakes, port and spirits. She gave me a lively glance. I thought her both plump and attractive. When she went out she smiled at me.

"Lord," said I to Cintra, "it has been a long time since I have known so civilized an hour as this, madame."

"Were you always a ship's officer, sir?"

"No, madame. I was born in Cherry Street. Twenty-eight years ago. Yellow fever slew all my family and left me penniless, with nothing but indifferent schooling and a year at Columbia College to carry me on. . . . So I shipped before the mast. . . . And, at twenty, was mate to the ship *Wanderer*, Captain Carew, in the China trade. And might have had my ship—was like to—when this cowardly blight of embargo fell upon us. . . . And, having been improvident—and—well, I would not pain you by a picture of my life, career, and habits—I now am come to carrying folk to Staten Island in a rowboat. . . . For two and six."

She fell silent. I asked the honour of a glass of wine with her; and we drank some of the soundest port I ever tasted.

"I am sorry," said she, "that a gentleman born should become so unfortunate."

"I should have laid by something. Alas, madame, you were right; my name is Strake, and it does rhyme with rake."

At that she ventured to laugh. "Had I been born a man," said she, "I also would have made some noise in the world, I think. . . . You know, sir, that Quinn makes a sonorous rhyme with 'din.'"

"Let us," said I, "drink a small toast to your beauty, and your undeniable spirit!"

Whereupon she laughed outright and drank it, but said that she was not accustomed to other wine than a thimbleful of currant with a seed-cake. "However," said she, "it is very good port, and heats one's cheeks delightfully."

She nibbled a cake and watched the procession of fashionables passing to and fro along the foot-walk below.

"There," says she, "is Mrs. Betsy Hunt and her pretty little niece, Eliza Osborn—my neighbours. And yonder is Mr. Reed, the Quaker—a very rich man." And she continued to name folk who passed the window, nibbling her seed-cake the while and touching, now and again, her flushed cheek with the back of a narrow white hand.

"La," said she, laughing a little, "I know I am culpable of a blazing indiscretion; and if my uncle should suddenly surprise us I should be in a sorry plight! . . . You'd be obliged to marry

me, you know—" Our laughter rang out at that.

I did not wish to go; but for her sake I rose presently to thank her and take my leave.

"I understand," said she, pouting; "—you think you are wasting your time and missing customers on so lovely a day in May."

"To prove the contrary," said I, "I shall remain to sup with you."

At that we both fell a-laughing again like two light-heads.

"More than that," said I, "if you will grant me half an hour, I'll go sell my rowboat and take you to Vauxhall this evening!"

"What," says she excitedly, "would you do that! And starve to-morrow?"

"Willingly, for an evening spent with you—"

"I must not go to Vauxhall. I wish I might. There'd be a horrid scandal. . . . Not that I am destitute of spirit—" She gave me a reckless look, and her eyes made me think of blue water off Trinidad when a purple flaw darkens it.

Of a sudden she bit her lip and folded her hands in her lap and gazed out of the window as sweetly as a cream-fed kitten.

"You had better take leave of me," said she. "The wine sings in my head and I have a desire to behave very rashly."

Neither she nor I stirred.

"I will play for you on my harp before you take your leave," said she, springing lightly to her feet.

She seated herself on a slim sofa in the further dusk of the parlour, pulled the gilded harp into her embrace, and played without prelude; and presently sang as innocently as a little bird:

"*Ah, what is Love? It is a pretty thing*
As sweet unto a shepherd as a King;
And sweeter, too,
For Kings have cares; and cares cause Love to frown;
A shepherd hath no cares to weigh him down.
Ah, then—ah, then,
Let every pretty lass a shepherd choose
And turn her back when any monarch woos!"

And ripple-tinkle-ripple went her harp in the golden gloom, then, slowly, failing, slackened to a scarce heard tremor of gilt strings.

She came out of the dusk, walking sedately.

"Adieu," she said.

But when I took her hand and bent to kiss it —after the old and gallant fashion which now again was becoming easy for me—"Are you going?" says she in a kind of gentle and hurt surprise.

Then we both laughed, and she consented to drink a parting cup—a brimming thimbleful of wine; no more, she vowed—no more upon her soul!—

"I think," said she, "that you are something vain-glorious and a perjured boaster, Mr. Strake."

"Now, madame?"

"Did you not brag that you meant to sup with me?"

"Are you not afraid to entertain me further? Remember your approaching uncle. He may be at the very door."

"Yes," said she, "it would be a blazing indiscretion"—she seemed to like the phrase—"nevertheless—*shall* we venture upon a swift and very simple supper?"

"Dare you?"

"*Dare?* Dear sir, you choose a word which always sets me afire with itching. *Dare* we venture? Why, my gallant sir, Venture breeds *Ad*venture. Adventure seasons existence,—which, unseasoned, is a very flat dish for my taste. And yours, too, I fancy."

"In that case," said I, "a thimbleful of port may help us."

That made us very gay and our spirits mounted rapidly with every separate thimbleful.

"Listen," said she, "and I will make my face look like my uncle's, and imitate the way he talks and walks!"

She screwed up her lovely features until her face seemed square and dour and hard, and her blue eyes fairly blazed.

"Dammy," she growled, "am I to be flouted

and plagued by a jade like you, you impudent baggage! Hell's cinders, you little slut, am I master here or am I not!"

I shouted with laughter. And with that she pulled a simpering, kind and homely face, and I thought to hear her servant-maid's very voice a-chittering and gossiping as she toddled about bearing dishes.

"Did I not tell you I should join a troupe of actors?" she said breathlessly. "Wait! Sit patiently. I have a suit of boy's clothes which Eliza and I made—a sailor's suit. Wait, and I'll wear them, and show you how I can dance a hornpipe—"

And away she flew, running up the stairs; and I had not swallowed a second glass of port ere she came flying down again in blue jerkin, sash, and wide white drawers—pants—and on her clipped and curly head a shiny sailor's hat strapped smartly under the chin.

"Whistle a hornpipe; I can't whistle," she cried.

So I whistled Davy Jones' Hornpipe, and kept time by clapping my hands; and she danced it as cleverly and sweetly as ever I had seen any actress on the stage.

She was never out o' breath; she jigged to a whistled tune; she cut pigeon-wings; she stood on her toes and twirled her body and danced a pretty *pas seul* without any music o' mine.

"Come," said she excitedly, "will you take a ship and carry me to sea for your cabin boy, or will you buy a theatre and bill me for a benefit!"

Then she caught my hand and made me walk a quadrille with her, and I got her in my arms and strove to kiss her, but she was off and away and up the stairs again like a swallow. And back again in her own clothing before I had killed the port.

"Shall we sup?" she asked with that daring little laugh of hers.

I sprang forward to take her in my arms but she was off again. As she flew she called back: "I must help Debby with the waffles—"

But I chased her and caught her on the back stairs where she defended herself, then, suddenly limp and serious, her narrow hands closed on my two arms and she looked at me in an intent, breathless way.

"Why do you kiss me?" she faltered.

"Because I'm in love with you—"

"Don't!" she breathed, arresting me. "My gaiety carries me so far. Pride lies beyond—"

"You are so adorable—"

"Are you truthful? For, if you only cheapen my lips there is that in me which neither forgets nor forgives."

But I had heard such tremulous words before in my career, and took her close and held her so, tasting her hot lips deep.

Then she got free again and the struggle excited us to nervous laughter. Down the back stairs she flew, and I, groping in the semi-darkness of the corridor, saw Debby's niece with the laundry.

So, as she was very pretty, and smiled at me, I kissed her, too, and again as we knelt to pick up the spilled laundry in the passage. At that same instant I saw Cintra looking at us through the kitchen door, and I felt chagrined that she saw me kiss Debby's niece—and why I did it I know not except being well fed and exhilarated and light-hearted for the first time in many days.

3

Cintra and I were singing rather loudly after supper, and she was playing upon her piano when, through the melodious noise we made, we heard the front door slam.

Instantly a square, dark man in a blue coat, gold buttons and yellow top boots appeared—nay, he was in the parlour and no more than a foot away from us before we comprehended what misfortune had befallen us.

Behind him were visible three other men—bulky shadows in the candlelight.

"Uncle Murtagh," said Cintra in the still, flat tone of one asleep and dreaming.

"Damn your eyes!" he shouted at me, "who the devil are you?"

"Uncle!" repeated Cintra Quinn in a ghastly voice. She got up but her knees failed her and she sat down upon the piano bench again.

"Uncle Murtagh," she whispered, "I have the honour of making you acquainted with my friend, Mr. Strake—"

"Strake!" he bellowed. "I'll Strake him! Strake, strike, stroke—here goes and be damned to him!—"

He hurled his burly person upon me, and I hit his square, hard features such a clout that it made his head twist on his bull's neck, but no more stopped him than it would have stopped a thundering bull.

Down we went with a tremendous crash upon a dainty sofa which splintered to kindling under us. Bang! came his iron fist on my ear, and no blacksmith ever beat out such a dazzling burst of sparks as instantly blinded me.

I realized, however, that I also was beating upon something—something so hard and rubbery and bony, too, that it scarcely seemed to be a human countenance.

There ensued a kind of dizzy nightmare amid an avalanche of blows. The deafening singing in my ear grew less, I could hear his porpoise-like grunts when I slogged him till my fist was slippery with blood.

Once, while we thrashed and sprawled, clenched and panting, over the Turkey carpet, I heard a man's shrill voice cry out:

"Do you need help, Murtagh? Shall I bash him?"

"No!" roared Captain Quinn, "I rule my own deck and can take care of it! I'll go after my own meat and butcher it, too—"

Bang! came his terrible fist again; and all sense seemed dashed out of my rocking brain, yet my fists kept on battering him mechanically; and when, finally, I could make out where I was, I heard him panting and blowing and choking like a lanced walrus.

"You nigger-pirate!" he gasped, "I'll slam you into hell for this—"

I couldn't hold him as he heaved up and staggered to his feet, clutching me close in an embrace I could not break.

"Where's the window?" he coughed, "—he's doused both my lights—I can't see!— Where's the parlour window?—"

I heard Cintra say, very calmly: "That is murder! Stop him, Mr. Maltby!"

Somehow I contrived to twist partly free of his terrific grip, and instantly hit him with all my might where his blood-wet neckcloth met his jaw.

That time he went down with a resounding smash of furniture and china, carrying me with him. I got up; but he lay there squirming—if such an iron mass of flesh and muscle could squirm.

I was in rags and all over blood; blinded partly, and my roaring heart splitting my ribs.

I saw Cintra Quinn, and some men, vaguely. I looked at my enemy. His heavy legs shuddered and became still. I had to sit down. After I opened my eyes again I saw Cintra holding tightly to a man's arm and struggling with him. The man had a pistol which he was striving to cock.

I got up, then, and walked unsteadily over to where they were. The man jerked his pistol free, but Cintra knocked the flint out of it, so I paid him no attention.

"I am sorry and ashamed, ma'am," said I to Cintra Quinn, "and I hope I haven't seriously inconvenienced your uncle."

We looked down upon him. He made no movement.

"Do you think he is dead?" she asked in a ghost of a voice.

We bent over him where he lay. One of his friends had lifted his head and was loosening his blood-soaked pudding-cravat. The other had dis covered a decanter of brandy, and was preparing to dose the prone man.

Cintra turned to the gentleman with the pistol:

"Will you be good enough to put away your artillery, sir?" said she. "Is there not sufficient trouble under this roof already, Captain Cabasso?"

As she spoke, her uncle grunted, coughed, and presently spat a sanguinary bubble or two.

"All's well," said she calmly. And, to me, "Will you be kind enough, now, to take your leave, sir?"

I bowed to her in silence, turned, and walked toward the door. A roar from Captain Quinn halted me. Turning I saw he was sitting up and clawing the air.

"What are you doing?" he bawled, striving blindly to scramble to his feet. "Where's that hell-born bully who knocked my brains into apple-sauce? Damnation! Do you suppose I mean to let go of a man like that?"

"Murtagh," said Mr. Maltby, "you'd better let him go peaceably—"

"Let him go!" bellowed Captain Quinn. "Well, then, I'll not let him go! No, dammy, I mean to buy him or crimp him or shanghai him! I want him aboard me! Let go a man like that? Great God, gentlemen, look what he's done to me!"

He reeled to his feet, supporting himself on the piano:

"Cintra! Do you hear me? Call that young man back! I hear him at the front door. Dammy, what's his name? Strake? Oh, hell, I remember!" And he shouted out to me: "Mr. Strake! Come here to me, if you please; I can't well see out o' these two boiled eggs you've made of my blinkers. . . . Are you there, Mr. Strake? Is that you, then?"

"Yes," said I.

"That's well. Strake's a good name. It's a good name at sea. It smells the sailor a league away! Did you ever follow the sea, Mr. Strake?"

"Yes."

"Glory to God! Have you any berth, and where?"

"None, sir."

"Glory, glory! Will you take a cabin aboard me, then? I can't let go a man who has so near been the death o' me. Oh, Lord, what a beating! Oh, my God! Answer me, will you take service and a pretty ship o' me, Mr. Strake? I give you *The Happy Parrot.* Will you take her?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, my God, I'm that content! Get me to bed, Cintra. All I want is a little vinegar and brown paper. And two strips o' beef for my blinkers. Tell Mr. Maltby and Captain Brindle to lend me their shoulders till I get upstairs. . . . Mr. Strake!"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you badly hurt?"

I began to laugh: "I'm worse than a wreck on a lee shore, sir—all stove in and breaking up fast."

"Cintra!" he gasped as Mr. Maltby and Captain Brindle, supporting him, started for the stairs.

Cintra went leisurely to her uncle.

"I want that young man—I want Mr. Strake—to be looked after. . . . Tenderly, by God! You tell Debby to give him the blue bedroom.

I won't let him go. He's got to stop here till I can talk business to him—"

"I couldn't remain—" I began.

"Yes, you can! Give him my best madras nightshirt, Cintra. Give him the best '64 brandy and all the grog and green cheroots he wants. Give him vinegar and beef. Give him anything he damn well asks for, but don't let him leave this house!"

Groaning, grunting profanely, he mounted the stairs to his chamber.

I looked at the gentleman with the pistol. He looked solemnly at me, then walked to the window, parted the curtains, and stared out at the May stars, humming a tune.

I turned stiffly, painfully, but sentimentally to Cintra.

"Am I to stay?" I murmured.

She began to laugh, but stifled her mirth with a hasty palm across her lips.

"Mr. Strake, when you see yourself in the glass!—Forgive me for laughing—oh, *are* you offended? Oh, Lord, what a day in my life has this day been—what a day!"

I said, with reproachful tenderness: "It has been the most beautiful adventure of my life to me."

"Beautiful—" She gave me one look, then buried her face in both hands, sobbing with choked mirth.

After a moment she controlled her annoying levity and said, in a partly stifled voice between her fingers:

"The first chamber to the left of the second landing. Debby will light you and fetch you vinegar, beef, and a night-shirt—" She reached for the silk bell-rope; pulled it:

"Oh, Debby," she called, "fetch a candle!'

It was perfectly plain that this girl had no heart. None whatever. No tenderness. The sight of blood provoked no pity. In olden times, ladies were tender and pitiful. They bathed and bound up wounds. But it seems the modern maiden merely giggles.

Debby came, was instructed, lighted me to my chamber.

As I limped stiffly upstairs, battered, aching, angry, wildly in love, I thought I caught a sound in the wrecked parlour below, resembling smothered laughter. The next moment I heard the piano, and her voice, innocent and birdlike :

"*Ah, what is Love? It is a pretty thing*
As sweet unto a shepherd as a King—"

CHAPTER II

EMBARGO

I

IN the morning Debby fetched me a tub of hot water, and in it I bathed my bruised and battered body.

I had a black eye, but Captain Quinn had two. He'd have had more if he'd had more eyes.

One look at my clothing, and I knew I never could wear those blood-soaked rags again. So I pulled the beaded bell-rope and sent Debby to Captain Quinn for an " advance draft "—a marine custom entirely proper.

" Tell him," said I, " I need new clothes. Tell him that I'll talk no business with him stark naked, and it's his fault I've no shirt and breeches left."

She came back with a bowl of chocolate, eggs and buns, and a buckskin bag full of dollars and several pieces of Spanish gold.

" Mr. Strake, sir, Captain Quinn says you're to go aboard *The Happy Parrot* as soon as may be," said she, " and you'll find Captain Quinn aboard and other gentlemen, in a business conference."

"Very well. Where does the ship lie, Debby?"

"In Burling Slip, sir. And the Captain says you'll dine aboard along o' him and the other gentlemen; and that you'll sup here."

So I got me into my damaged garments and left the house, vastly ashamed of my rags.

No need to go to Lombard Street or Cheapside; I had money enough for Hanover or Wall. And there I bought me a handsome blue coat with gilt buttons, doe-skin pantaloons as tight as my own skin, yellow top boots but no tassels, some fine underwear and frilled shirts, silk and thread hose, neckcloths, and an imitation pearl pin, very genteel to look at but worth only a dollar.

I bought a plain beaver hat, too, and a cocked one also, lest the style revert to the latter.

Then I went through Pearl Street, and, by Maiden Lane, to Liberty where I found a barber to trim me and curl my hair with elegant negligence —and was in half a mind for a queue, but there were not many gentlemen who wore them—only elderly folk and sailors—I mean foremast men—and a few others. I had the barber paint my damaged eye, also, which he did to a marvel.

So I came to the Battery and to Captain Quinn's mansion again, and had a lad to carry my parcels to *The Happy Parrot* in a new valise, and, further, ordered a sea-chest to be delivered aboard.

Now when I came to Captain Quinn's mansion, very genteel and elegant in my new clothing, and

scented like a garden, I beheld Cintra Quinn coming down the stoop.

You should have seen my new hat come off, and the sweep of it, and how I bent, left hand laid upon my heart.

She curtsied on the stoop with much grace—a difficult proceeding—and, opening her parasol, down the steps she tripped.

"My uncle has gone aboard *The Happy Parrot*," says she, "and I have a mind to see her, too. Will you carry me to Burling Slip, sir?"

So I lent her my arm and we walked on.

New York was lovely that May morning; trees were in leaf, birds sang in Bowling Green, and there was no wind, only an ever-freshening fragrance from the bay and the smell of woodlands far away.

"How is your eye, sir?" she inquired demurely.

That vexed me,—and to remember her mirth and impudent derision when I looked for tenderness and that pity natural to a young and impressionable female.

I said briefly that my eye did well enough.

"You should see my uncle," said she; and laughed without shame.

"You seem singularly insensible to compassion," said I coldly.

"Oh," said she, "I saw too many real horrors and too much blood spilled in France to become agitated over a harmless black eye or two."

"Nevertheless," said I, "if you pretend to any tenderness for me—"

"I don't," said she, laughing; "you confuse me with my wench, Anne."

"Why," I protested, "that was nothing—"

"Nothing but habit, I suppose. What a gay rake you are, Mr. Strake!"

Her levity annoyed and humiliated me, and I said nothing further.

We marched along State Street to Pearl, then through Whitehall, past Delafield's Wharf, Coenties Slip, and by Front Street past Old Slip and Lows Wharf,—always passing under a giant trellis made by bowsprits and rigging where a hundred ships lay poking their great bows into the city.

Sometimes I was thinking of the girl whose narrow hand lay so lightly upon my arm; sometimes I wondered why her uncle so suddenly had desired to employ me; and what was the nature of his trade, and how did he find it possible to trade at all with his craft when five hundred tall ships lay idle and rotting at New York wharfs, forbidden to sail by order of Mr. Jefferson and Congress, for fear that England—with whom we were at peace—might capture them on the high seas!

So, in silence, and with much dignity, we crossed muddy Governor's Alley, passed Fly-Market Slip and Jackson and Lupton's Wharves, and so came to Burling Slip at the foot of John Street.

And there, close warped, I saw, among other craft, a topsail schooner, and her name under her bows—*The Happy Parrot.*

She was a crazy-looking craft, and I know not what wild designer's wild brain hatched out her wild lines—for she was as long as a cable and had no beam, and how on earth she could carry such towering spars I could not guess.

And a figure-head! Yes—a great red and gold parrot with beak open as though squawking. And she had a kind of poop, or quarter-deck or after-house, like a brig, and her after parts and taffrail were all gilded and painted like a Dutch sleigh.

"Your uncle expects you, I suppose," said I.

"He expects *you*."

As she spoke I saw Captain Quinn, his head tied up in a bandage, come to the side and look over.

"What the devil are you doing here, Cintra?" he bawled.

"Coming aboard you, sir," says she with all the impudence in the world.

"No, you're not! How many times have I told you I never wanted you aboard any of my ships!"

But she stepped daintily across the gangway and sprang upon the deck, noticing her uncle not at all.

"My goodness," said she, "what a pretty ship and what a quantity of ropes!" And she dropped my arm and tilted her pink parasol and began to saunter about, peeping at coiled cables, at wheel,

capstan, and cotted anchor, with all the curiosity of a saucy kitten in a strange garret.

Her uncle went up to her and said something fiercely under his breath and made a vigorous gesture with clenched fist. I heard him employ the words "chit," "parcel," and "slut."

"No," said she, "I choose to look about and discover what kind of ships you sail. There is no point in being noisy," she added, as her uncle's voice rose to a bellow.

He didn't know what to do with her who defied him on his own quarter-deck. One doesn't throw one's niece overboard.

He came stamping and rumbling up to me, fuming, profane:

"You're on your own deck," he roared; "if you've got the guts of a grasshopper you'll clear it!"

I went over to Cintra: "I'll lose my berth if you don't go," said I. "But probably you don't care."

"What may be your berth aboard, sir? A foremast man?"

"I'm master of *The Happy Parrot*, I suppose," said I angrily. "I'd know how to deal with an interloping man, but I don't know how to deal with you."

"So I perceive. . . . Very well," she added, "if I'm unwelcome here I can go to market, I suppose. Anyway, your ship smells horridly of vinegar."

She waved her hand to her uncle in derisive adieu, disdainfully refused my arm, and strolled

ashore with all the self-possession and insolence in the world, twirling the parasol on her shoulder.

On the wharf she halted and tilted her pretty nose up at us:

"As long as my family and friends have no kindness for me," said she, "I shall do as I please. . . . And, maybe, stroll into Vauxhall this evening——"

"Try it once, you saucy package," retorted her uncle in a choking voice.

"Then see that you're home to supper," said she, coolly, "for I'm tired of my dust-cloth and knitting and my own company by candle-light. And I'm weary of stray and penniless young men who bite the hand that fed them."

And off she marched; and Captain Quinn said to me:

"There's a promising baggage for you! She's turned impudent and mutinous over night, and, by God, I don't know what to do with the little jade! . . . Here, Mr. Strake—this way, sir—they're gathered in my cabin—*your* cabin, sir. You're on your own deck—or I hope to God you are. Come, sir; I waste neither time nor words. If I did my ships would be lying a-rotting here in New York like half a thousand others. But here she lies in her berth, fresh from blue weather,—and the *stink o' vinegar between decks fit to tell you what I trade in*—if your nose can converse with your brain."

I stopped short and stared at him.

"Well," said he, "are you too squeamish to sail The Middle Passage?"

"No," said I. "I've starved long enough to please a rogue of a President and a rascally Congress. I care not a tinker's dam," said I, "where and how I earn a living as long as I earn it—Gold Coast, Barbary Coast, or China—it's all the same to me, now!"

"And a little more," said he, with a hoarse laugh, "and you'd hoist the bones on a black rag!"

"Or a bloody one," said I.

"And a little more and you'll fly the blackbird, too," he cried with a laugh like the explosion of a swivel.

"By God and little niggers," said he, "you're my man or I'm a Port Mahon sojer!"

My heart was beating fast, but I turned coolly and looked around at the deck and up at the lofty spars.

"So," said I, "*The Happy Parrot* is a *blackbird?*"

"What says your nose, Mr. Strake?"

"It says that you are in the Black Ivory trade, Mr. Quinn."

Captain Quinn's battered face grinned at me:

"It's either that—or rot at a New York wharf and starve, Mr. Strake."

"I guess so."

"Well?"

"I care not any longer what I do," said I. . . . "I take your shilling."

We went to his cabin; and there I saw and was introduced to Mr. Maltby, a large, red-faced, fat-shouldered gentleman with no neck and a high tenor voice; to Captain Cabasso, master of the schooner *Black Joke*, in Captain Quinn's employment; to Captain Brindle, of the sloop *Scaur*, also employed by Quinn in the Black Ivory trade.

There was grog, brandy, a bottle of Canary, Madeira, cheroots, and a bowl of Congo brew.

Mr. Quinn wasted no time. Moreover, he told no lies, glossed over nothing. He said, bluntly, that the slave trade was now outlawed and that slavers were to be treated as pirates except that they did not suffer death—unless taken in piracy, too.

All Government ships, he explained, were now instructed to take or sink any slaver—English, American, or French; all nations were on the watch for us,—men-o'-war, revenue cutters, Mr. Jefferson's fancy gunboats, armed pilot-boats, and guard ships.

"But don't think these are all the enemies you'll have," growled Quinn. "Any dirty privateer with a letter of marque, or without one, will try to take you. Then there are real pirates; plenty of them;—they'll take you if they can. Look out for them off Carolina and in the West Indies, and off the Barbary Coast and Cape Florida."

"Yes," said Captain Cabasso, "my schooner, *The Black Joke*, was chased by the pirate Buke Gooly in *The Lazy Lass* last March."

"And there's a worse pirate hanging around Florida," added Quinn, "—in *The Love Dove*, schooner, Captain Nanfan. You look out for him —he's a fashionable devil, as smooth and smiling as a simpering French dancing master, but he's the heart of a leopard under his silks and ruffles and gilt-top boots, and he'll take your niggers and sell them ashore. But *you'll* stay under hatches while he fires your ship!"

I finished my glass of Madeira: "What further?" I asked.

"Well, there's the Barbary Coast," said Quinn, grinning under his bandage. "It's said that our gallant Navy put an end to those doings. All the same, when you're out for Guinea on the Black Ivory tack, have a care they don't make White Ivory out o' *you!* . . . To sell to the Bashaw or the Grand Turk or the Great Mogul—or to some other high and mighty nigger."

"Where are your guns?" I inquired.

"In the hold. A long tom, six carronades and two swivels," replied Quinn cordially. "Ah, damn my deadlights, didn't I tell you gentlemen that any gentleman who made such a ruin out o' me would carry *The Happy Parrot* anywhere there's a drop o' dew to float her? Dash my sidelights, didn't I tell you that, Tom Brindle? And you, Leon"—turning to Captain Cabasso—"and you, Warren Maltby? Tell me, now, do I judge a man

or misjudge him who battered my noddle till I look like a dead tunnyfish at low tide?"

"I'm to run when I can; fight if I must. Is that it?" I asked.

"That's it," replied Quinn exultingly. "See how you understand me!—only I'm not telling you to resist a United States ship—"

"If, for example, I fight a gun-boat?" I inquired.

"You'll hang, sir, 'twixt high and low."

"And suppose I strike my flag?"

"Then it's merely prison; I'll not lie to you;—a long term, Mr. Strake."

"Well," said I, "I'll not cross that bridge now. . . . You'll tell me how to ship a crew and sign them, and how and where to get my papers, I suppose."

"Certainly," said Quinn.

"And—my pay?"

"We're all getting rich," said Quinn; "I am; Maltby is—all my captains, too, are getting rich. So shall you."

He pulled a sheet of paper toward him and, with the stump of a pencil, wrote some memoranda and figures, and showed them to me:

"How does that suit you?"

I studied the memorandum. In addition to my salary as captain, my commission was 4 in 104, and ten niggers to sell on my private account.

Further, I was to trade in raw Dahomey gold, palm oil, Grains of Paradise and ivory; and my commission was 10 per cent.

Maltby sipped his grog and pulled at his long clay pipe.

"—And have a care," he squealed in his high-pitched falsetto voice, "that you waste no time buying worthless niggers, but stick to Coromantine blacks and the Gold Coast."

"They make the best body-servants," growled Brindle.

Quinn added with an oath that no man deserved a Coromanti who would not treat him like a friend rather than a slave.

"Treat 'em all tenderly," he said. "Feed 'em, keep 'em happy and healthy. They're valuable. And don't forget some of the kaffles come overland a thousand miles."

"Get Gold Coast niggers," repeated Maltby. "Or Slave Coast Whydahs and Popos. Don't bother with the yellow ones like Calabar Eboes and Mocoes, nor those sickly Gaboons. Why, the dirty ingrates will die on you if they can!"

"Gambia niggers are good," grunted Brindle. "South Carolina wants Gambia niggers. Angolas and Mandingoes bring big prices. In the Gulf of Guinea you'll have Sierra Leone, the Grain Coast, Ivory Coast, Gold Coast to draw from."

"Your business," said Quinn, leaning heavily across the table on folded arms and fixing me with his brilliant eyes of fighting blue, "is to get the niggers aboard you and get them to Amelia Island if you have to fight your way back.

"Your first mate, Tom Wild, will do the buying and dickering. He knows a healthy nigger; the dealers can't fool him. He knows how far a cask of rum, a bar of iron, a looking-glass, and a dollar ought to go. He's a Connecticut Yankee, and no nigger king in Africa, and no Arab can swindle him with a sick kaffle.

"What I want of you, Mr. Strake, is to sail *The Happy Parrot*, and fight her if necessary. Any man bred to the sea who gave me such a beating can do the work I need to have done."

He looked at his watch, laid aside his pipe: "Tom," said he to Captain Brindle, "take a sniff in the galley and see how dinner's coming on."

Then, to me, he offered his iron fist, and I took it in pledge of the bargain.

"The firm," said he, "is Quinn & Maltby. Once we dealt in niggers, gold, ivory, spices, mahogany, and West Indian molasses. Our factors were in Charleston, and they took 10 per cent. But now we don't deal in niggers any more"—he winked at me—"so we don't have any factors to bleed us.

"But we have a kind friend on Amelia Island. . . . In case some misguided nigger slips aboard you as a stowaway." He winked again. "And, in that event," said he, "you'll hand him over to José Segrada at Amelia Island, and he'll dispose of him."

"In a forty tonner," cried Maltby shrilly, "or overland as the prospect promises."

Quinn grinned and explained that a coastwise trade in domestic slaves was permitted by law, in vessels of that tonnage and under. However, it was safer to smuggle slaves across the border into Georgia.

I said: "As I take it, gentlemen, you want me to smuggle niggers. Fight or sink if necessary. Is that it?"

"That's it," said Quinn.

"When do I weigh and sail?"

"To-night," said he, grimly. "Here are your papers. Your crew comes aboard after dark. Your rum, iron, kegs of dollars, and dry goods are all stowed below. You're provisioned, watered; your ammunition is aboard. You'll hoist out your guns and mount them when you reach blue water. Maybe Wild will do that in the stream by starlight."

Brindle opened the door to announce that dinner was on the way aft, piping hot.

"The two British frigates off the Hook are what worry me," said Quinn, sombrely.

"Well," said I, "I've conned them through a glass till I'm sick of the sight of them, and I'll be glad to have a chance to be rid o' them."

Maltby lifted his ill-fitting brown wig and scratched his head:

"You come to the office and I'll have your papers," he said in his high, thin voice. "And have a care of revenue spies. They hang around the alley sometimes."

2

I had a small room in Dover Street which runs south, from the junction of Pearl and Cherry, into Water Street.

Thither I went, paid the few dollars board I owed, filled a battered valise with the scanty property I owned, and paid a muffin boy sixpence to carry it aboard *The Happy Parrot.*

I was in an agitated and confused state of mind, what with the unaccustomed weight of money in my pocket and sudden rise from poverty to well-fed ease and affluence; and what with excitement at prospect of adventure and a kind of uneasiness, too—deep, somewhere within my calloused and reckless conscience—a sense of meanness and degradation. For I never had thought to enter into this blackbird traffic. And behold me, of a sudden, Master of a blackbird, and bent on smuggling; perhaps piracy and murder.

But it is not difficult for one who has led a careless life, godless and irresponsible, to justify himself through resentment and bitterness. So, for whatever apprehension and misgivings were stirring deep buried within me, I blamed the embargo and the cowardice of Government which had tied up my ship to rot at a New York dock, and had snatched from me my daily bread.

Fair Street runs south-east out of Broadway between Ann Street and John. Where it crosses

Gold Street north of Cliff, there is a kind of dirty court, and a crooked lane bounding it called Rider Street.

In this dark lane, lined with malt houses, old buildings full of ironmongery, tinkers' shops, and coopers, stood a tall, gloomy stone house. Over the door was the sign, " Quinn & Maltby: Spices."

Now, when I entered the sunless alley and had avoided sundry pigs and piles of filth, I noticed a man lounging on the corner of Gold Street, who had a hang-dog look like a crimp or bailiff. His secret and mean face made me remember what Mr. Maltby had said about revenue spies, so I turned my head once or twice and saw that he was slouching after me.

He had black and greasy hair, small squarish features pitted with smallpox, and he wore a dirty neckcloth, snuff coat and smalls, and rusty top boots.

As he came shuffling along he stopped and looked up at me where I stood on the low stoop of the warehouse, ready to ring the door-bell.

As he had come to a stop, keeping his impudent, small eyes fixed on me, I wheeled to face him:

" Well," said I, " will you know me again when you see me? "

" Excuse me, sir," said he, " but I thought I saw you go aboard *The Happy Parrot* at noon to-day. She's for the Guinea coast, ain't she? "

" What's that to you? " I retorted sharply.

"I'm out of a berth, sir," he whined. "I can show you my papers—letters, certificates—I was bo'sun aboard *The Merry Lass*, blackbird, Cap'n Grood—"

"What the devil have I to do with your Groods and your blackbirds!" said I, "or your Guinea coast, or your impudence? Don't you know there's an embargo laid, and the only coast for our ships is our own? What do you think I am —a slaver?"

He merely leered up at me, his features but a bluish, livid smear in the gloom of the alley; and he gave me a wink. Which so vexed me that I started down the steps to send him on his way with a couple of kicks. He did not wait for me but went on rather hastily.

As I rang and entered the warehouse, I saw his small, pasty face slyly observing me from the corner of the alley.

Quinn welcomed me in company with Maltby and Captain Brindle. They all smelled of pine-apple gin and snuff, and seemed already partly pickled. They had a dish of raisins, citron, and lichee nuts, and were a-picking at them and guzzling grog.

I told them about the fellow who had accosted me. It disturbed them; and Brindle got up, cursing, and went to the window; but could not discover him. He went to a dusty corner and fell to uncorking several bottles of Madeira.

So we drank Madeira, and had also a noggin or two with lemon and cinnamon, iced; but when I had my papers of Captain Quinn I was troubled to examine them.

Because here was trickery; and I knew not whether it was accomplished through bribery and connivance of dishonest port officials—as it had been in Colonial days—or by forgery. Yet all seemed in order—commission, contract, bill of lading, manifest, and I saw that I was bound for Charleston with dry goods and New England rum. I hated to set my name to so fraudulent a set of papers. But I did.

Sitting there in the dim and shabby office, the air reeking of cloves and spirits and tobacco, I presently grew uneasily aware of my condition, and that I was about to embark in a kind of villainy so akin to piracy that the dividing line between it and smuggling had become invisible to me. Here was real crime. I had not, heretofore, done criminal things.

Captain Quinn, with his head in a bandage, and stinking of vinegar, sat at a battered desk near the window, writing out my credentials to his factor on Amelia Island—José Segrada.

"In five years," squealed Maltby, squirting out a stream of smoke, "you ought to make your fortune, Mr. Strake, and live like a lord with your bottle, pipe, and mistress. Yes, sir, you should be well-to-do within three years and a rich man in five!"

"You think I'll survive that long?" I asked drily.

"If you use your brain and the long tom," growled Brindle, "you ought to. I have." He wore an old, grizzled wig and pig-tail, and he had taken it off to cool his mottled and hairless head, though the flies bothered him.

"When I sail," said he, "I take no chances. I shoot first and beg pardon afterward—I do. I'm no French dancing master to bob and bow and scrape when hailed with niggers between decks. No," he growled, "I run or I fire. Then I kiss my hand."

He slapped at a fly, swallowed the dregs of his spiced grog; squinted at Quinn and me. "Yes," said he, "I've sent more than one ship to join the underseas fleet—I have. Ask Davy Jones if I lie."

Quinn handed me my credentials. I buttoned all these papers inside my new blue coat; then we all rose and went out into the dusk of the alley. Nobody seemed to be watching us. So Quinn and I took leave of Maltby and Brindle, and walked through Pearl, State Lane, and Beaver Streets to his mansion on the Battery—he wavering on his legs and holding heavily to my arm.

Debby's niece let us in and gave me a scared look. Quinn went blundering upstairs to his chamber. Presently Cintra came down into the parlour.

"You again?" she exclaimed in languid pretence of surprise. "Are you planning to make your sojourn in this house a permanent occupation, Mr.

Strake? I ask because I think you ought to know that my wench, Anne, is leaving."

"I sail to-night if wind and tide favour," said I coldly.

"Goodness! Have you found a ship then?"

"*The Happy Parrot.*"

"Really," said she. "And who is to be your master?"

"I am, I told you," said I, vastly annoyed; "did you really suppose I had shipped as foremast man?"

"Why not, sir? Yesterday you paddled folk to Staten Island for two and six. And had it not been for an indiscreet girl who was sorry for you—but ingratitude is the badge of all your sex!"

"Cintra," said I, ashamed, "pray, forgive me. I am very sensible of degradation, and, further, that I owe everything to you—"

"Very well," said she with malicious animation, "then tell me where you are sailing, for my uncle will not."

"To Charleston."

That seemed to excite her, and, as Quinn came tramping downstairs and entered the parlour, she cried:

"I want to go to Charleston on *The Happy Parrot!* I never have made a voyage in my life. Am I to pass all my days here in New York and never to see the world? Not even the Vauxhall—"

"A woman's place is in her home," grunted Quinn; "and if I hear any more gabble of voyages

and Vauxhall I'll stop your market-trotting, too—for it must be there you get your improper notions, my lass. You've too much freedom; and you've damned too bold an eye and too saucy a tongue. And if I hear any more folly from you," he growled, "I'll lock the house and take you to Amelia Island where I can have an eye on you—"

"Very well," said she, "take me to Amelia Island—or anywhere. For, if you don't, I promise you I'll spend all my evenings at Vauxhall—"

"Stop your silly talking!" he roared. "Is supper ready? Well, then, what are we sitting here for? Give her your arm, Mr. Strake." And he stamped on ahead of us.

We had a simple supper washed down with claret and porter.

Quinn, surly and unwilling to talk of our business before his niece, ate in silence. I evaded her natural questions. So, between us, we succeeded in really arousing the girl's suspicions.

"One would think," said she, "that Mr. Strake is going a-privateering in *The Happy Parrot*—or smuggling."

That exasperated Quinn, and he left his syllabub and went tramping away upstairs. Cintra and I followed slowly to the parlour, where now she was all smiles and gaiety and melting confidence; and by a thousand arts and wiles she tried to beguile me to tell her what all the mystery was about.

But I swore that my papers revealed Charleston

as my destination, and, taking her soft hand, asked her if she thought me capable of deceiving her.

"Yes, I do!" said she coldly, "and I draw the very worst conclusions from your behaviour, and I am not surprised to find you a rogue—what with all these villainous looking men my uncle brings here—this Captain Brindle, and this Cabasso,—and that squealing hypocrite Maltby—who has a pew at Trinity, too—"

"When you go to market," said I sharply, "I advise you to do no gossiping concerning your uncle's affairs."

"Why not? My tongue is my own. I'll talk to Eliza Osborn if I choose—"

"If you gossip," said I angrily, "it may cost your uncle dear—"

"Let it! I don't care! Let it cost *you* dear, too!"

"It might do me a very grave disservice. . . . You feel kindly toward me, do you not, Cintra?"

"Not very," said she, pulling her slim fingers from mine.

"Now come you here into a corner with me," said she, "where I can whisper to you. Come nearer—" She took hold of my sleeve with no gentle grasp and gave me a vixenish jerk. "You listen to me," she whispered; "my dearest friend is Eliza Osborn who lives next door," said she, "and last Sunday after church we walked home from St. Paul's together. And she told me that she had heard her Aunt Betsy Hunt say that my

uncle is in the Black Ivory trade, and the Government is watching him! . . . *What* is the Black Ivory trade?"

I remained silent and troubled.

"I didn't believe it," added the girl, "but I do now. Is my uncle a pirate? And are you turning into one? You might as well; you're a libertine already! Are you a smuggler?"

"Nonsense—"

"Well, what *are* you and he about then? And that Maltby? And old Brindle? They *do* look like pirates!" she added; "and *you're* beginning to look mean in the eyes."

I laughed,—not very heartily.

"Cintra," said I, "the Government lays an embargo and bids us sailor-men grin and starve. No man of spirit will long endure such injustice. So your uncle and I are doing the best we can—"

"Honestly or dishonestly?"

"Hush," said I, hot and embarrassed; "when laws are unjust they ought not to be obeyed—"

"*What* is Black Ivory?"

I laughed, took her by the waist and tried to kiss her, but her eyes flamed angrily and she freed herself.

"I ask you for the last time to tell me," said she, "where you are sailing and on what dirty business—"

She stopped short; Quinn stood in the doorway in his stockinged feet, and a blaze of rage in his eyes.

"What's all this?" said he, hoarsely.

"I'll tell you then," she cried; "Eliza Osborn's Aunt Betsy told Mrs. Morris that the United States Government is watching your ships! I didn't believe it, but I do now. And if you're a pirate I'd like to know it!"

The flare of rage in Quinn's eyes altered to blank amazement and consternation. He looked at Cintra, then at me.

"By God," says he, "here's a dish o' gossip piping hot! Somebody ought to wring that old lady's neck!" Then fury seized him again and he turned on Cintra, roaring.

"Hell and hot cinders! Will you go to bed, you shameless baggage!"

"Mittens and patterns!" she retorted, "I'll go when it suits me. And I tell you it's downright wicked of you to take this poor boy and set him to trading in Black Ivory—whatever it may be—"

"Who told you that!" he bawled.

"Eliza!"

At that instant came a ring at the front door-bell, and Debby, hastening, admitted Mr. Maltby who entered the parlour in his waddling way, and short o' breath. He did not see Cintra in the dusky corner behind the piano.

"Murtagh," he said in his high, squealing voice, "your cook aboard *The Happy Parrot* had a fight in Front Street and is all cut up."

"Where is he?"

"In the hospital. You write me a line and I'll send a cook aboard. Where's *The Happy Parrot* moored now?"

"In the stream, foot of Vesey Street off Corporation Dock. Wait a moment—" But Maltby interrupted:

"I'll be back, Murtagh. Tom Wild's at the Tontine and I've got some money for him—"

He lumbered out and waddled off up the street.

Quinn went into the back parlour which was the library, and I saw him scratching with a quill at the table.

"Here," said he, presently, to Cintra, "give this to Mr. Maltby when he comes back." He laid the letter on the piano, strode to the bell-rope and jerked it:

"Debby," he cried, "did they take my sea-chest aboard?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are *you* going, too?" I asked in surprise.

"As far as Amelia Island. I've been thinking about the Florida end of the business and I want to see that José Segrada's 'factory' is all shipshape to handle a lively business—"

"I desire to go to Florida," said Cintra sullenly from her piano stool.

Quinn paid her no attention but took me over to a corner by the front windows:

"That damned pirate, Buke Gooly, has been hanging around off Florida," he said. "I've just

had news of him at the Tontine. And here's the point," he added in a hoarse whisper, " I'm not too sure of Segrada. No, dammy. He might take it into his greasy head to make dirty money with Buke Gooly. So I made up my mind in just five minutes, and I'll sail with you as far as Amelia. Now, I'm going to my room for a few moments before we leave—"

" Listen to me! " cried Cintra from her piano. " If you don't take me with you I'll go to the bad! "

" What's that! " cried Quinn, halting.

" Yes, I will; I'll rake it! I can't endure this loneliness—nothing to do but sew and cook and dust! I need a little pleasure in life. I'm twenty-three years old and have seen nothing! I need diversion as much as any man does—a chance to see the world—"

" If you don't stop that crazy tongue I'll stop it! " shouted Quinn.

He strode over to her, caught her by the arm and dragged her out and upstairs, she striking at him in silence all the time—and I heard a door slam and a key turn; and a wild hammering of small fists.

For half an hour I sat there by the parlour windows. Then I heard a key turn and a door open above, and Quinn's voice:

" I'll be back in August. You give that letter to Mr. Maltby after I've left. And if you mis-behave while I'm away I'll throw you out of the house! "

He came downstairs grinding his teeth: "Get your hat and cloak," said he, "and we'll be off to the Tontine first, and then to *The Happy Parrot*. She lies in the stream now, off Corporation Dock."

I took hat and cloak; he jammed on his beaver, let me out, and we went down the stoop and started for the Tontine Coffee House.

"Have you known," said I, "that the firm of Quinn & Maltby has been under suspicion?"

"Yes."

"You did not mention it before I signed up with you."

"'Twas only a rumour. Jealousy. A few owners, whose ships lay rotting, gossiped."

"You should have told me."

"Well," says he, bluntly, "do you wish to quit?"

We walked on for nearly ten minutes before I answered.

"No."

The Tontine was brilliant with candle-light and full of gentlemen of the polite world, gossiping, supping, or indulging in the social glass.

Maltby, we learned upon inquiry, had left, and so had Mr. Wild, first mate of *The Happy Parrot*.

But we espied Captains Brindle and Cabasso, and joined them at a corner table well withdrawn.

Here the whispered conversation concerned the rumoured activity of Buke Gooly the pirate; and

the loyalty of their factor, José Segrada at Amelia Island, was discussed.

Two hours later, Quinn got up heavily.

"Well," said he, "I'm going there anyway, because I don't trust in José or in God or in anybody else, only in my own eyes and ears and common sense. . . . I guess Maltby has sent us a cook aboard by this time." He looked around at me: "Well, Mr. Strake, shall we go aboard?"

We returned to the Battery. All the lights in Mr. Quinn's house were extinguished.

"Maltby's been there and Cintra's abed," he growled.

We entered Greenwich Street, crossed Beaver Lane, Rector Street, Thames, Cedar; then turned west on Liberty Street to Washington, then north again crossing Courtlandt, Dey, Partition; then west to Corporation Dock.

Here a ship's long-boat lay, and her boatswain called to us cautiously, saying there had been a revenue spy there.

"To hell with him," grunted Quinn; and we boarded the long-boat at the stairs and were off over the starlit stream.

Very soon a fine wind struck us and the full tide began to carry us with it; but in a little while we were under the shadowy lee of a ship, and were scrambling aboard even before I made her out as *The Happy Parrot.*

3

We passed out the Hook showing no lights. I had the wheel.

Save for a lantern-lit face here and there before we weighed, I had not seen my crew, nor did I even know their names. My ship, too, was as yet but a shadowy and unfamiliar phantom, for, except in Burling Slip, I never had trodden her unknown deck.

What sail her needle-built hull could stagger under I knew not. The kick of the wheel was my first hand-shake with this crazy jade; and I felt her quiver and start like a skittish thoroughbred at the barrier.

Swish came the great sea-combers as we passed out Sandy Hook; and my ears echoed with the splendid thunder of her canvas and thrilled to the shrilling of the wind in her rigging.

A shape loomed up beside me and I heard a voice naming itself,—" Tom Wild, first mate, sir."

" Good heavens," said I, " how much sail can this toothpick carry, Mr. Wild? "

" Short of a hurricane," remarked Quinn, " all we can clap on her. Do you fancy her helm? She'll flirt with you at first."

" It's blowing half a gale now," said I. " Yes, her helm suits me and I like her playfulness. I thought I'd shorten sail—"

" We can carry all the sail you wish, sir," said Mr. Wild, laughing. " No need to shorten. She'll

carry her square-sails, won't she, Mr. Quinn? You'll see, sir."

"I'll make her acquaintance by daylight," said I with an excited laugh. "I think you'd better hoist out the swivels."

"All out, sir—I took the liberty while we lay in the stream to-night."

"That's the kind of sailor-men I ship with," grunted Quinn.

"*All* her guns?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"All, sir—long toms, carronades, swivels. The men are well drilled. It's the old crew, sir—except the cook—"

"So Maltby sent us a cook," nodded Quinn. "Where did he get him?"

"I don't know, sir. He had your letter to Mr. Maltby to show us. Came aboard after sunset, sir."

Captain Quinn said: "Does he understand he's to keep the galley fires smothered?"

"I warned him, sir."

"As soon as you get through the blockade," said I, "I want you to muster the crew, Mr. Wild. I don't even know how many men I have aboard."

"Thirty," said Quinn, "and all complete, all old hands—except Maltby's new cook. What's his name, Mr. Wild?"

"He calls himself Cinders, sir."

"Ever see him before?"

"No, sir. He's more like a boy than a man."

" Anybody ever know him? "

" I think not, sir."

" I suppose Maltby was careful," said Quinn, "—what with the business we're in and all these crimps and revenue men and spies watching *The Happy Parrot.*"

Wild was silent. I said nothing more.

We rushed on through the night without lights—not a gleam aboard us save only on the binnacle—not even a pipe's glow, and no fire in the forecastle for fear of sparks.

" Where are those British frigates, Mr. Wild? " I asked, presently.

" God knows, sir—standing on and off day and night."

" What are their names? "

" The *Melampus*, 38, and the *Guerriere*, 38, sir."

" Have the masthead keep a good look-out. This running without lights is strange and anxious work, and entirely new to me."

" You'll soon be used to it," grunted Quinn. " We do a deal of it in our trade."

I wanted to pass swiftly through the unseen blockade ahead of us, and be rid of the cursed frigates as soon as possible.

" Clap on more sail if she'll stand it, Mr. Wild," said I. " What is she carrying? "

" Stay-sails and jibs, sir; gaff-foresail, boom-mainsail and gaff-topsail. She'll carry square top-sails, sir."

I told him to try it. He strode forward shouting the order into darkness; and I caught a glimpse of phantoms swarming aloft against the flying stars.

And it was while the men were aloft that a most sudden and alarming misfortune overtook us, for there came a kind of clattering explosion forward; a torrent of sparks, and then a great sheet of flame burst upward from the forecastle.

"What in God's name is that?" I shouted through my trumpet.

But sparks and flame vanished, and in a momen Mr. Wild came running aft, reporting that the galley stove had exploded, but the fire was extinguished.

Scarcely had the mate gasped out this intelligence when, our square topsail having been bent, and the men on deck again, our lookout reported a ship's lights close athwart our starboard bow, and another ship's lights breaking out just abaft our larboard beam.

Almost instantly I saw them myself, for they began to signal each other with flares and rockets in a most startling and astonishing manner, lighting the whole sea with fancy fireworks.

"Where's that damned cook!" roared Quinn; "I'm going to kill him anyway—" But he stood staring at the flares and did not stir.

I called Mr. Wild to the poop to take the wheel, and climbed into the shrouds. It was almost as light as a foggy sunset around us, what with the flares and rockets, and the two ships already so

close upon us that clouds of smoke blew over us from signal fires aboard the ship which had the weather gage of us.

"What ship is that?" I shouted through my trumpet. "Avast there, or you'll run us down!"

Back came derisive hails from His Majesty's frigates *Melampus* and *Guerriere*, ordering us to drop astern, break out our lights, muster our men, and await a boat and an officer to look us over.

Mr. Wild called the second mate to the wheel and ran forward to me:

"Let go everything, fall astern, come to, and break out your lights, sir," he said. "I know how to get clear of them. Take your sails aback, if you please, sir."

I nodded; he gave the order; then ran aft and took the wheel.

Almost at the same instant came a flash and crack of a gun from the *Melampus*, and a shell burst under our bows.

In the stunning silence that ensued I heard Quinn yell:

"That's too much! We'll fight 'em, by God!"

Suddenly such a fury overwhelmed me that I lost my voice. But the next moment I was on deck, raging, shouting the long-gun crew to their quarters.

"Give it to them!" I cried. "I'll not stomach such treatment though they blow us to hell! Swing the long 'un on them! Is it shotted? Out with your tomkin there! Fetch me a porte-fire—"

As I laid the long tom and trained her on the *Melampus*, the *Guerriere* sent a round shot over our bows and hailed us savagely with trumpet, cursing us for pirates and slavers and ordering us to take our sails aback and fall astern—which already we were doing.

Mr. Wild, at the wheel, shouted to me: "I'll run under her stern and give you a chance to rake her, sir! One moment's patience, if you please, sir—"

The gun crew, hauling at lanyard and truck, swung the great gun to larboard; I snatched a porte-fire from a lad beside me, as *The Happy Parrot* sheered eastward on a larboard tack, hoisted sail, filled, sprang forward like a greyhound loosed.

With a crash that shook our planking, our long gun spoke, burying us all in smoke.

"Rake her, lads!" I cried; and the thunder of our starboard carronades answered me.

All our shots had lulled her, I think, for the splintering came distinctly to my ears. The *Guerriere* dared not fire on us for fear of hitting her consort. The *Melampus* let go a futile broadside to larboard, and her stern guns, from quarter-deck and cabin windows, sent a tempest of grapeshot over us, yet damaging our rigging only a very little.

As suddenly as the fight began it had ended. No frigate that ever swam could have caught us now, and the cannon shots from both baffled ships only added wings to our sails.

"Now," said Quinn with an oath, "fetch that cook out o' the fo'cas'le, Mr. Strake. If he's a fool he'll take hundred lashes. If he's a spy he'll swing!"

I told Mr. Wild to go forward and fetch the cook; and I took the wheel from him.

Our lanterns were lit now, as we were outside the blockade, and I looked curiously at the woe-begone youngster with flapping pants and flying jacket who, grasped by the arm, hastened unwillingly along beside the striding mate.

"Damnation!" burst out Quinn; "it's my niece, Cintra!"

"I—w-was only cooking a w-waffle," she sobbed, "and I got a can of gunpowder instead of—of sugar—"

Quinn, glaring at her, fairly sobbed with fury.

CHAPTER III

THE LAZY LASS

I

NOW when we realized that the owner's niece, wantonly disguised as a boy, had come so impudently aboard *The Happy Parrot*, slaver, smuggler, and half-pirate, our consternation and anxiety knew no bounds.

The girl already was on most unfriendly terms with her uncle, Captain Quinn. And as soon as she discovered what business we were on she would hate him, and every man aboard.

What might be the consequences if she voiced that dislike and gossiped when she returned to New York, we could easily surmise. It would end the Gold Coast trade of Quinn & Maltby, Spice Merchants.

Little did Cintra Quinn guess what this thoughtless prank of hers might entail. Her stubborn, restless, unruly spirit had incited her to this mischievous masquerade. She had been heedless of consequences.

She had supposed, of course, that she was sailing for pleasure on an honest coastwise trading-ship to

Florida, and entirely within the law. She would learn, now, that she was aboard an outlawed and execrated vessel bound to the Gold Coast upon lawless business.

She would learn that to be taken meant imprisonment and perhaps death. She would learn that every law-abiding man's hand was against *The Happy Parrot* and her crew; that we must either run from, or fight, both the British and United States flag; that France, also, would take or sink us; that we were even regarded as prey by any other lawless slaver, by privateers of any nation, and, of course, by all sea-wolves and pirates.

The immediate consequence of the girl's mad escapade had already turned out both humiliating and painful for her. For as soon as Mr. Wild had discovered her and dragged her out of the galley to the quarter-deck, Captain Quinn, with a roar of ungovernable fury, hustled her back there again; and there in the fo'cas'le he laid her across his knees in her boy's clothes, and he spanked her with all his might and main until he could spank no longer.

She had made no outcry; I heard the spanks. I was sorry for her, but I hoped she'd howl. However, that was not the way of Cintra Quinn. She was of the kind that endures in silence until cut to pieces.

What further was going to happen to that rash, unhappy girl I had no idea.

At sunrise we were running under reefed topsails; more than a topsail gale blowing, and everything clewed up and tight as a fiddle string.

Mr. Wild had the wheel. I was leaning on the long gun, scanning the rose and gold sun-burst on the horizon through my sea glass, when Captain Quinn came tramping toward me from the galley.

"She's a stubborn hell-cat," said he, "and defies me to break her spirit."

"Where will you stow her?" I asked. And offered to bunk in with Mr. Wild.

"Captain Strake," said he grimly, "I'll have every soul aboard *The Happy Parrot* to know that I'm nobody's uncle aboard this schooner. I'm merely owner of *The Happy Parrot. You* are captain; Mr. Wild is mate. And Cintra is *cook!* Not my niece. No damned relation. *Cook!* by God! Slops the Cook! She abused my confidence; used my credentials; she deceived Warren Maltby; she thought she was playing me a smart monkey trick when she smuggled aboard with her tongue in her cheek. Now she can bite it and reflect."

"But—"

"She shipped as cook!" he shouted. "By God, she *is* cook! And she'll cook for us all aboard *The Happy Parrot!* And she'll cook for us like any other ship's cook until we anchor off Amelia Island!

"I'm going to break her spirit, and it's now or never! She's so sore that it hurts her to sit down.

But she won't admit it. She says it's worth it. She's busy with her pots and pans and she's getting breakfast for us now."

I am not vindictive. I had, at first acquaintance, been inclined to become very sentimental over Cintra Quinn. But now, somehow, I took a secret satisfaction in what was happening to her.

I hoped that the heavy, corrective hand of Captain Quinn, chastising the seat of her tight breeches, had knocked out of her some of that mockery, heartless impudence, and unfeeling levity.

Let her be thoroughly punished for her effrontery. And for her insensibility to tenderer emotions. I was glad of it.

So when Captain Quinn and I sat down to a piping hot breakfast in my cabin, I almost grinned as I drank my coffee.

Quinn and I conversed about the brief action of the night before, with the British frigates. We had not been hulled; a grapeshot had carried away some of our bulwarks and splintered part of the taffrail; and our shrouds had suffered a little. But Chips was cheerily busy with the shattered poop, and our men were knotting our fore and main shrouds in a dozen places, and setting them up.

Quinn told me that the shell which had exploded under our bows had damaged our parrot-figure-head. Which seemed to cause him much grief.

" And to think," said he with a string of oaths, " that that graceless wench of mine was the cursed

cause of it—because she was hungry and wanted a waffle! Oh, my God, did you ever hear the like? A *waffle!* And we trying to run a most dangerous blockade and get free of British frigates! And strict orders from the quarter-deck that no fires were to be started in the galley! But *she* wanted a WAFFLE!! And mistook a powder flask for a cinnamon-sugar shaker and nigh blew us all to glory!"

"Was she scorched?" I asked.

"Do fools ever suffer any damage? No; she was a trifle scared when the stove blew up. That's all."

"What do you mean to do with Cintra?"

"Take her ashore with me at Amelia Island. What else? I ought to lock her up in the barracoon while she's there. She's a pest. She's suddenly turned unruly, wild, mutinous, crazy. She ought to get married. There's good blood in her—as blood goes in France. . . . And my brother was a gentleman. . . . I'm not," he sneered; "I've been too busy. . . . What do you think of my niece, Mr. Strake?"

"She's beautiful. And—spirited."

"You think she's inclined to light conduct?"

"No, I don't. . . . She's animated, but—seems to lack feminine instincts—sensibility—"

"And modesty," he grunted.

"She seems to lack heart more than anything," I said.

"She's a heartless package, Mr. Strake. I've done all I could to get her married and off my

hands—there was young De Lancy wanted her, and the Livingston lad; others, too—the Bleecher lad and young Osgood. All she does is to pull monkey faces at them and play monkey tricks! . . . What can I do? . . . I'm never home; I can't keep an eye on her. Mrs. Hunt—a capable and determined lady who was Betsy Lockwood—you know—has looked after Cintra—taken her about with her little niece, the Osborn child. That's the only way Cintra sees polite society—" He added with a shrug that polite society and he were on cool terms.

"I never could sit around and simper," he sneered. "Besides, I'm too well hated because I don't tie up my ships and let 'em rot legally. And I guess I'm suspected, too. So society rolls pious eyes."

'I think you may have known my father," said I, "Aylward Strake, of Cherry Street."

"I did. Major Strake, First Continental Dragoons; Moylan's. Died of fever, I believe."

I nodded.

"Yes," said he carelessly, "when I learned your name I cared nothing about Cintra's indiscretion. She could have done worse even if she had misbehaved with you."

I felt myself getting red.

"Why don't *you* marry her?" he demanded, "—I don't mean on that score. But maybe she'd have you."

"I am poor," said I.

"Take her all the same, if she'll have you, Mr. Strake."

"I'm rather afraid of such a wife," said I seriously.

"Knock her about," he returned, scowling, "unless you're too squeamish."

"I would scarcely care to pay my addresses to any woman with that design in view," said I.

"She'll have £100,000 when I die."

That astounded me. But when I thought of that handful, Cintra Quinn;—of her insensible heart; her lovely, soulless face and body; and her lively, mocking mind, I had no inclination to tempt her to further raillery at my expense; for I did not entertain the slightest hope that she ever would care a farthing for me.

I did not see Cintra that day, nor the next, nor the next. Her uncle would not hear of her coming aft—would not suffer her on quarter-deck or in cabin:

"Dammy," said he, savagely, "she's only Slops, the Cook, I tell you, and no niece of mine! I mean to break her spirit this time."

Meanwhile she cooked for us and for the crew; and I do not believe any ship ever sailed that served such savoury food. She made pork taste like partridge and horse-beans like asparagus. It softened my heart; but Quinn never did care what he ate, and it didn't soften him. However, the crew

idolized her—and they were a hard, godless crowd of old-timers in the Black Ivory trade, but beaten and tempered to iron discipline under Captain Quinn's inflexible determination.

"Kindness and justice first," he used to say, "and then hell!"

On the third morning, about three, it being Mr. Wild's watch, he came to report to me that our mast-head had lifted a strange ship with lights to leeward.

So I came on deck and saw the lights; and so ordered hammocks up, tomkins out, and men to quarters.

About nine o'clock the stranger, a brig-o'-war, stood toward us, being then about three-quarters of a mile off our lee bow.

It had been clear, but now the wind was blowing very hard, and it was thick, dirty weather, and making fast.

The brig showed no colours; and when near enough for hailing I saw a man with a trumpet climb up her main shrouds and set it to his lips.

I hailed him, also, with my trumpet, but the wind blew so hard we could not hear each other—at least I could not hear him.

We then showed our colours; and he hoisted a French flag and got off his half-ports just as I reached my quarter-deck.

"I'm not afraid of that fellow," shouted Quinn in my ear, "but his business is fighting and ours

is trading. So each to his own affairs. Show him our heels, Mr. Strake."

Bang! went the Frenchman's bow gun. Quinn snatched the trumpet and swore at him most horridly.

"If I had leisure," he yelled, "I'd teach you to fire at my figure-head, you little shrimp!"

I clapped the helm a-weather and we sheered off east-north-east and then north-east, flying like a frightened tern under stay-sails and jib, gaff-fore-sail, and boom-main.

Came the dulled crash of the Frenchman's broad-side, and faint rattle of musketry; and Quinn thumbed his nose at them in fury:

"Tell Bonaparte he can kiss my foot!" he bawled.

Presently he strode forward to inspect his beloved figure-head which, he seemed to believe, all flags had conspired to damage.

By noon it was blowing a wild storm, and it was filthy thick with monstrous seas. We had long lost sight of the brig. Now all grew too thick to see anything forward.

About an hour later I shortened sail, and by two o'clock, fearing the coast, brought to. We were then running under bare poles about five miles an hour, but later hoisted the boom-mainsail and stay-sails to keep the ship to, and her head to the seas, she labouring very wildly, and almost out o' hand like a wild thoroughbred in a panic.

I furled everything except the fore stay-sail, to keep her to; and later set the main-boom, and lay

under them till dawn, which righted us. And so spent that day and night; and no damage to amount to anything to be discovered when daylight came, only that we had to knot and set up our main shrouds again, which had loosened very slack; and mend our running rigging here and there—not that the damned Frenchman hit us, either.

Chips was busy putting up bulkheads in the hold—I mean those ominous partitions which characterise vessels in the Black Ivory trade, and I was standing just abaft the fore hatch peering down, when I saw Cintra come out and stand by the galley door—not the forlorn, dishevelled little figure I had been picturing, but she looked like a neatly dressed and indolent lad a-taking of his ease there, nose in the air, and nothing on his mind.

"Well, Cintra," said I in a guarded voice, "have your feelings been sufficiently hurt to teach you a wholesome lesson?"

She gave me an insolent look: "Probably you mean my posterior," she said with a little swagger like an unrepentant school-lad.

"You have learned," said I, "what stubbornness and levity cost, and that life is not a monkey-shine."

"I have learned what brutality can do to the weak and helpless," said she.

"If you take your punishment in that spirit," said I, "there is trouble ahead for you."

"A fine thing for *you* to stand there preaching at *me!*"

"Through you," said I, "I became known to your uncle who gave me this berth; and I am very grateful to you—"

"And you stood and let my uncle beat me to death!"

"Not quite to death—" I turned my head to conceal a grin.

She had a biscuit; she bit into it; but, over it, her dark blue eyes were intent on me, level, dangerous, beautiful as the sea off Trinidad.

"One day," said she tranquilly, "I shall find it convenient to do my uncle a filthy turn. . . . And you, also. . . . And I serve notice on you both that I am done with you, and mean to go my own way when opportunity permits."

"You will rue it, Cintra."

"Nevertheless," said she, calmly finishing her biscuit.

Then she sauntered into the forecastle without a glance at me.

2

We sighted a few sail nearly every day, but were careful to speak to none of them; and from anything resembling a man-o'-war we fled.

Skies were fair and sunshine attended us. We ran fast before a topsail-gale which sometimes became gentler, yet remained persistent and never grew pettish and fitful or spitting; nor sulked to sullen calms.

All went peacefully aboard *The Happy Parrot.* When Chips had finished his bulkheads he patched the beak of our red and gold figure-head, and the solicitude of Captain Quinn was allayed.

Every day in the warm sunshine of windy but cloudless skies, sitting with me on the quarter-deck or abaft our long tom, he imparted information based on personal experience; and thus I came to know his views concerning the Black Ivory trade.

The slave trade and slavery, he loudly maintained, was natural, necessary, good for the blacks, and good for the world.

"You must know," said he, "that since time began there have been bondsmen and masters; and there always will be masters and slaves.

"As for Africa, from time immemorial nigger kings have waged war with one another, and have either made slaves of their captives or knocked 'em in the head. Usually the latter, and by thousands.

"Now we white folk come along and buy from some victorious nigger king all those captives otherwise destined for death. So we save useful lives. That's one point to our credit, Mr. Strake," said he, charging his long clay pipe.

"Here's another; wild niggers live better on our plantations than ever they lived in their African jungle-swamps. We treat 'em kindly. They're valuable property, so their masters take good care of them. Let Quakers and abolitionists yell. The benefits of slavery excel all its alleged mischiefs and

inconveniences. Through it incredible advantages have accrued to the nation. Without slaves we'd have neither sugar, cotton, indigo, nor tobacco. Do you agree with me?"

"As we are speaking candidly," said I, "I am free to say that I think there are evils in slavery, too."

"Everything on earth is a mixture of good and evil," said he. "The slave trade is the result of the law of economics. The pious may shriek in their frenzy; they can't alter that. No slaves, no cotton, no sugar.

"Those damned abolitionists sicken me with their lies. Slaves are not badly treated aboard a slaver. They're valuable and they are well cared for, well fed, humoured and made happy. Yes, and those very bigots who roll up their eyes when Black Ivory is mentioned are often those same ship owners whose abominable treatment of poor passengers on emigrant ships results in the death of half the wretches entrusted to their mercies. Yes, sometimes three out of four poor Irish and Scotch and Palatine emigrants die of foul air and food and water—or of sheer starvation! Did you know that?"

I had heard as much, and I nodded.

"We don't treat niggers that way," he said with an oath. "Slavers, usually, are the cleanest craft that swim. We've *got* to be clean. If the niggers develop ophthalmia or smallpox, or fever, or flux, *we* take these pretty maladies from them. If they die,

we die. Outside o' that, every slave is so much money. Are we likely to throw money out of the window? Cruelty doesn't pay; it beggars us. The average nigger is sensitive, easily depressed, sickens swiftly, and can die in a few hours, leaving you looking at his corpse like a fool! With kindness, good food and plenty of it, exercise, and opportunities to make music and do a little caterwauling, you save 80 per cent up to 95 per cent—and even more, of your cargo. And that's how you make money.

"So burn tar and don't spare vinegar, and give 'em slop buckets on deck and a banjer to strum on, and a prize for dancing. That makes a healthy cargo; and a healthy cargo makes money.

"But if you're a drunken brute, and if you don't care whether you lose money, just pack your niggers between three-foot decks, spoon fashion, or sitting between knees. Just economize on your vinegar and tar. Just turn a yellow overseer among 'em to keep order. Just feed 'em on horse-beans and no palm-oil, no saffron, no fish-and-ham scraps in their rice. And the first you know they'll begin to go blind on you, and die on you and rot and stink.

"I tell you, you can't conceive such terrible misery—stench, fumes, vapours, vomitings, fever, scurvy, mouth rot, yaws—and them packed like decayed herrings—

"And the first you know *you'll* go blind, too; or die and turn green and rot and stink! I'm telling

you that Christian kindness pays. You better do unto niggers as you'd have 'em do unto you if you were a nigger and they were white! I don't mean you should ever let any niggers think you're soft or pious. No; for then they'll get together—the Senegalese especially—and some day they'll knock your brains out with their shackles and take your ship!

" Or, if they're Eboes or Mocoes, they'll jump overboard and drown just to spite you!

" Well, you've got to learn about Africans and how Coromantines rebel against ill usage while the Ebo commits suicide, and the Paw Paw takes what comes with patience. And how Mandiges steal, and easily tire of work; how there are no cowards among Coromantis; and that all Gaboons are sickly; and that one Whydah or one Nago is worth fifty of 'em. So you'll learn to steer clear o' Calabar, and look sideways at Angola, and hang about the Slave Coast, and the Gold Coast.

" Every dirty trick will be played on you by white factor and black king to make you buy old niggers, sick niggers, worthless niggers. There's only one sure test for age—that's teeth. And a nigger must be gone over patiently inch by inch or you'll find you've a case of yaws or worse."

" How do you expect me to know all that? " I demanded.

" I don't. Your second mate, Gene Weems, knows every nigger language; and can tell where

any black comes from; and discover his age and what ails him if anything. And after you've inspected a few kaffles—or coffles, as some call 'em —you'll begin to learn about good niggers and bad ones."

He called a cabin lad to fetch a coal from the forecastle; and when he had lighted his pipe he sprawled at ease, whipping and scanning sky and sea with narrow eyes that glittered like aquamarines.

About an hour before our look-out had sighted a topsail schooner to windward, hull down; and from time to time Quinn and I looked at her through our glasses, but she did not come over the horizon.

Now, however, her hull stood clear on the world's rim; but we could make nothing of her, and she did not seem to notice us, although sailing our course and holding it always just abeam of us.

"Do you think," growled Quinn, "that yonder fellow is hedging in on us?"

After a long inspection through my glass I answered that it was beginning to look that way.

So I went aloft to observe the stranger; and pretty soon I became satisfied that he really was hedging in.

"What do you make of her?" demanded Quinn when I returned to the deck beside him.

"Nothing, except she's Yankee built. She has the weather of us and seems inclined to use it. What do you make her out to be?"

After a silence: "We're not so far from Cumberland Sound," remarked Quinn, grimly.

"You think she might be a United States revenue cutter? Or cruiser?" I asked.

"She might. And then, again, she might be a dirty privateer. . . . Or worse."

"You mean Captain Nanfan in *The Love Dove?*"

"No; *The Love Dove* is a brig. But Buke Gooly's *Lazy Lass* resembles yonder craft."

"You think she might be the pirate Buke Gooly?"

"Why not? He's been reported off Florida. And we're not far out from Cumberland Sound."

He paced the deck for a few moments, growling to himself, then came and stood beside me again.

"I chartered a vessel called *Les Deux Amis*," he said. "She was burned to the water's edge. I always have believed Buke Gooly did it."

It was Gene Weems' trick at the wheel. I took another look at the distant schooner, then I called to Mr. Wild.

"Send the men to quarters," I said quietly; "up hammocks, break out ammunition, clear for action, Mr. Wild." And, turning to Quinn, "—Does that meet your views, sir?"

"It does," said he with an oath; "I'm not going to run from Buke Gooly, or from any slinking letter of marque, either. But if she proves to be a Government cruiser it's safer to run."

I called up to masthead: "What do you make her out to be?"

"I can't make her out, sir."

"Can you see her guns?"

"Not yet, sir. But she's always hedging in on us."

We were carrying what sail was convenient, but I hoisted the main gaff-topsail and, on the sprit and jibboom, I bent stay-sails.

"If we're going to fight I want the weather of him," said I to Quinn. "The same holds true if I want to run."

"We can run all round her and cut pigeon wings," remarked Quinn. "You can see what sail she carries; and it's all clapped on. All the same, we'll not change our course. Let that fellow hedge in and overhaul us and speak to us, and get rid of what's on his mind."

When we were cleared for action, all trim and snug, and the men at quarters, I sent Mr. Wild forward to fetch Cintra aft to the captain's cabin.

"What are you about?" growled Quinn.

"If we fight," said I, "she's no cook but a woman, and your niece."

Cintra came sullenly sauntering from the galley, perfectly ignorant of what was taking place on deck. Her wide duck pants flapped like skirts about her shapely legs.

"We may exchange shots with another schooner," said I. "Go into my cabin until this affair is over."

"Shots?" says she, with sudden animation. "Is there to be another sea-fight? Well, then, I shall not sit in a dark corner and miss this one—"

"Go to the cabin," roared Quinn, "and obey orders!" And he picked up a rope's end and glared at her: which troubled her.

A cabin lad who had finished serving out muskets and cutlasses politely showed her the way. At the door she appealed again to me, asking permission to remain on deck; but Quinn twirled the rope's end and strode toward her; and she hastily vanished. Quinn turned and joined me on the poop; Wild went forward; Weems stood the wheel.

"Show her your flag," grunted Quinn.

So I showed her the United States flag and fired a gun to leeward; and presently the stranger hoisted the same flag and jack.

Now, as she closed in, some of her forward guns became visible—a long chaser abaft her main and swivels on the forecastle roof.

When she was running along within pistol range she hailed us.

"*The Happy Parrot*, Captain Strake, from New York to St. Augustine with rum!" I answered. "What ship are you?"

"*The Lazy Lass*, Captain Gooly, with a cargo of Bibles and hymn books for old Calabar!" came the derisive reply.

So it was Buke Gooly, after all. I looked at Quinn who stood on the poop with grim jaws set and eyes ablaze. Then, again I hailed *The Lazy Lass:*

"What do you want with us, Captain Gooly?"

"Can you spare us a little tobacco?"

It was a mild request and made me laugh.

"Tell the misbegotten son of a slut to come aboard," said Quinn; "I'd like to have a close look at him."

So I invited Captain Gooly aboard us, cautioning him presently concerning the number and armament of his boat's crew; and, as the two schooners fell astern, we saw a boat leave *The Lazy Lass* and pull for us.

Our armed crew, lining the bulwarks, looked down curiously as the boat carrying this notorious ruffian neared us. When she came aboard us I was astonished to see a little, skinny old man in snuff-coloured small-clothes and a red wig.

He wore a flimsy, gilded, dress sword and a pistol was hung around his neck by a cord. It had no flint in it, and, in the butt, was set a gold watch which ticked very loudly.

One of his humpy shoulders seemed to be higher than the other; and he was hollow-chested and had a weak, husky voice.

Into my cabin he followed Quinn and me in a kind of scrabbling, crab-like shuffle; and when he caught sight of Cintra he opened an enormous and toothless mouth admirably.

"Rum, women, and tobacco," he wheezed, "—that's what sea-rovers and slavers need to keep 'em hearty! How are you, my pretty duck?"

"You go forward!" I said sharply to Cintra;

she paid me no attention, but stared at Gooly and kept the table between herself and me, defiantly.

Lord above! I never saw rum swallowed as this little wretch Buke Gooly swallowed it when the boy fetched two bottles; for he opened that vast, toothless, toad-like slit which served him as a mouth, and the raw New England rum fairly rushed down his gullet.

"Hah! That's what heartens!" he squeaked, wiping his wet face on a snuffy sleeve. "That's good because it's bad! Bad, new, raw Yankee rum! Plenty of cayenne, too. That's what niggers like. They want it to bite, they do. Oh, yuss; I know. I was in the Calabar trade myself—till I took to religion—and a-peddling of hymn books—"

He laughed a toothless, windy laugh and, taking hold—not of his glass but of the rum bottle—thrust it into his maw and held it tipped up until emptied.

"Just so," he said huskily, "just so. Yuss. That's how they learned me to swaller when I was young and pious. Allus look up to Heaven when you drink and try to swaller all God sends you. Yuss."

He gave me a sly look out of watery old eyes: "I guess you thought I wanted to fight you, Captain Strake. You did, now, didn't you? And if you'd been on The Middle Passage with niggers between decks mebbe I would. Yuss."

"What's all that about niggers?" broke in Captain Quinn. "Rum's our cargo."

"Yuss. Wortered rum. That's what the Yankee deacons do to it in New England. Worter it and splice it with cayenne."

"Maybe," snarled Quinn, "but what was that you said about niggers and The Middle Passage?"

"D'yeh think I don't know a slaver when I see her?" retorted Gooly huskily. "Yuss; and I know *The Happy Parrot*, too; and I know you, Captain Quinn. And I know the smell o' vinegar."

"If you call us slavers you're a liar," said Quinn, white with passion, but not even glancing at Cintra. "And now I'll tell you what *you* are," he added, "you're a goddam pirate! And if you ever stick the snoot of your rotten old scow athwart my bows I'll kick her planks out with my sea-boots! And for the price of a rat-tail file, I'll do it now!"

"Hoity-toity, here's an angry sailor-man!" wheezed Gooly. "If you ain't a slaver, tell it to the Government and they'll believe you. Yuss. You tell it to the revenue cutters and gun-boats and United States cruisers. Yuss. When you see the *President*, 44, or the *Essex*, 32, or the *Hornet*, 18, or the like o' them on the high seas, just you bear down on 'em and hail 'em and tell 'em you ain't no slaver nor fancy blackbird. Yuss. And maybe they'll believe you, Captain Quinn!"

"Throw a tierce of tobacco into his yawl, and throw him after it," said Quinn, scarcely able to speak for rising passion.

Another bottle of rum had been opened; Gooly emptied half of it down his throat, and paused to wheeze, still keeping hold of the bottle:

"Cap'n Quinn," he gasped, "you're acting very high and mighty with an old mate. Yuss. Ain't a gentleman who sails On The Account twin brother to a Middle Passage nigger-smuggler? What's the difference between The Red Sea Trade and the Black Ivory? Hey?"

Quinn got to his feet, and drew a pistol, but I shoved him back into his chair—twice, before he remained there, panting.

"You'd better take your leave of us, Captain Gooly," I began; but Quinn interrupted in a strangled voice:

"Yes, damn you, take your leave before we take your ship! And if it were my deck I'd take you anyway, Buke Gooly! Not that your dirty scow is worth taking either!" he shouted. "And I tell you this: I hear you're loafing on and off Cumberland Sound; and if you try to tamper with my factor or any of my affairs I'll take the sea myself and I'll run you into hell!"

"He's been an' drank too much wortered rum," said Gooly; "his head can't stand it."

"No, nor it can't stand what you did to *Les Deux Amis!*" roared Quinn, struggling to rise. But I restrained him.

A slow, toothless snarl began to twitch at Gooly's features.

"Has some one told you I took *Les Deux Amis?*" he demanded in a lungless whisper.

"And so you did!" roared Quinn. "Those were my niggers! You took them and you ran them over the border and mixed 'em with Georgia tame ones, and sold 'em in Charleston! Yes, you did! And you clapped the captain and crew of *Les Deux Amis* under hatches and set her afire!"

"That was Captain Nanfan in *The Love Dove*," barked Gooly. "As God listens to me I was cruising off Rio—"

"With Bibles! Yes, like hell!" yelled Quinn. "And you're a liar! That villainy smells of your work a thousand miles! That's the way you do! And when they found that burned hulk beached, full of charred skulls, I'd stake my head to a penny that it was Buke Gooly's trade mark! And, oh, my God, if I was sure of it at this minute, I'd settle accounts with you and your crew and your Lazy Slut—"

"Lass," wheezed Gooly, getting up from his chair, "—Lass, not Slut. *Lazy Lass* is her name, Captain Quinn. . . . And I'm much obliged for the tobacco. . . . And the wortered rum. . . . And so, will bid you a very kind farewell—"

He took off his wide hat, and his red wig came with it, being sewed to the lining.

So, bowing, scraping, with his wide, toothless smirk, he backed out and on deck.

I attended him to the side; Quinn followed, blue eyes flaming.

" Captain Gooly," said he, " the seas number seven and the seas are wide. Cruise where you choose except off Cumberland Island. For, as God hears me in this instant, if ever I run across you there, either you or I will be sinking when t'other sails for his destination."

Gooly was in his yawl, now. His toad's mouth split into an abysmal laugh

" Hoity-toity," said he, " the nigger-smuggler is angry. Yuss. Well, when you're back from the Gold Coast we'll talk it over, Captain Quinn. Yuss, we'll look over your niggers and talk about it. So fare you well, my passionate friend. I'm not offended. No. And I'm going to give you a gun and a flag at parting—I am. Yuss! "

We had already made sail, the crew at quarters and Mr. Wild at the helm.

Quinn, white as a sheet, stood beside me all a-quiver.

" The filthy pirate," he choked; " it was he and no other who burned my brigantine and stole my niggers. Only nobody aboard *Les Deux Amis* lived to say so. . . . But it's nigger talk in the markets. . . . And it's like Gooly's work—that slapping the crew under hatches and roasting them to death."

Our long tom and larboard battery of carronades were trained on *The Lazy Lass*. We saw her yawl

hoisted in: we saw Gooly on deck among a swarm of half-naked fellows in their striped drawers.

One of them, an impudent mulatto with a cast in one eye, leered at us, indicating us with a jerk of his black thumb.

"Give him the bowels of our broadside," whispered Quinn. "I can't stand this—"

"Very well, sir," said I, "but if we fire on him, let us finish the job and take him by the board."

Quinn's eyes glittered; then with a mighty sigh of self-denial he controlled his fury:

"No," said he, "I'm crazy. Our business is trading. I can wait."

We were drawing very swiftly ahead, now, and I could have easily laid *The Happy Parrot* across the bows of *The Lazy Lass* and raked her, and gained the weather gage of her and so fought her as I pleased.

Quinn understood what was passing through my mind, and I felt him shivering beside me like a fierce but restrained hound.

Suddenly, bang! went a gun aboard *The Lazy Lass*, to salute us. And then, with an effrontery passing all bounds, she broke out a vast black flag at her main, which blew wide and wildly, revealing on the dark field a skull and two thigh bones crossed.

And as though this jeering insult were not enough, bang! went another gun, and up went a bloody flag to confirm it, followed by a spitting swivel from the poop and a jack which was black

and on which we could see a bleeding human heart pierced by a sword.

A yelling, mocking cheer came to us across the water as *The Lazy Lass* made sail and stood toward us again.

" Pay no attention," said I to the frantic Quinn; and I went aft to stand the wheel, sending Mr. Wild forward. Then, under a weather helm, I stood straight in for Cumberland Sound.

The Lazy Lass followed us.

3

Late in the afternoon, *The Lazy Lass* still following us, we raised the Florida Coast; and, in the red eye of the sinking sun, saw a brigantine, hove to, as though awaiting us.

After a little while Quinn told me that the brigantine and *The Lazy Lass* were exchanging signals by flag and jack. Our look-out so reported; and Mr. Wild and I also observed it.

" Well," said I, " there seem to be two of them. Shall we run or fight? "

" I'm going to Amelia Island," replied Quinn, doggedly.

" Then we fight, sir? "

" We stand in for Amelia Island; I don't know what else is going to happen."

After a brief silence, studying the brigantine through his glass:

"Skunk smells skunk," said he; "yonder's *The Love Dove*, Captain Nanfan. I'd know that fat hag-boat a thousand leagues."

"Sir," said I, "will you stand a trick for me?"

He took the helm; I ran forward, ignoring Mr. Wild, and discovered Cintra in the galley.

"Go to my cabin," I said sharply.

"What!" she exclaimed excitedly, "is there to be a real fight? Then I wish to see it on deck—"

But I wasted no words and, taking her by the arm, jerked her along with me, she protesting at every step.

When I got her into my cabin she was furious:

"Why do you do me violence?" she cried. "Why do you spoil all? What if I come to a harm on deck? My uncle cares nothing for me. Nor do you!—"

"I could have loved you, Cintra—"

"Do you think I'd love a slaver?" she retorted, "—pirate, slaver, nigger-smuggler! I'm done with you! And with my uncle, too! I'll do as I please; go where I choose! And now I choose to watch this fighting from the deck of *The Happy Parrot*—"

"Do you want to be dashed to fragments by a round shot, or torn by bullets and splinters?"

"What about *you?* If you're not afraid, *I'm* not—"

"You mind your business," said I, "and if you leave this cabin I'll carry you back and lash you fast to the table!"

While I threatened and scolded her I was buckling on a hanger and a pair of loaded pistols. From the deck and poop came the thud and scurry of bare feet as the crew ran to quarters; and I heard the rattle of gun-truck, lanyard, and squeak of swivels through the mellow thunder of our sails.

Out o' the cabin window, two miles astern, I could see *The Lazy Lass* manœuvring to get us between her and the brigantine, her deck glittering where the setting sun sparkled on cutlass, and musket, and carronade.

As I turned to leave the cabin I saw Cintra; and suddenly the lovely youth and innocence of her smote me and aroused me to an alarm and concern that I had not felt before.

For the first moment I began to realize what must happen to her if matters went amiss with us—and the thought of Buke Gooly and his toothless leer, and of that mulatto with a cast in one eye, sickened and scared me.

A kind of senseless anger born of fear seized me:

"What you have done to come aboard this vessel," I said, "is the most damnable thing ever done by woman!"

"One might suppose," said she calmly, "that your heart is involved in my safety."

"You have done a wicked thing," said I, "and, as for hearts, being heartless yourself you had best keep a decent silence concerning them. And the

least you can do is to remain below and await what happens."

From the after cabin port I could see *The Lazy Lass* crowding on all sail. I looked at her a moment, wishing we had destroyed her.

Then I wheeled on Cintra and threw a loaded pistol upon the table between us.

"If matters go wrong," said I hastily, "and if I am not alive to stand between you and Buke Gooly, use that on yourself and thank God for His mercy to you!"

The girl went dead white. Then she nodded.

So I ran on deck and saw *The Love Dove* now within cannon shot on our starboard bow, and her crew at quarters, but she showed us no flag.

However, as I sprang upon the quarter-deck, her after-chaser went off with a prodigious noise, and a round shot skipped the waves across our bows.

"She's after my figure-head again!" roared Quinn, fairly dancing with apprehension.

"Hail her, Mr. Wild!" I said, and Wild hailed her; but her only reply was to show us a black ensign with a white dove on it, and to let go another gun at us.

"Let her have it, lads!" I cried; and the planking fairly leaped under us as our starboard carronades crashed out, shrouding *The Love Dove* in their smoke. Through it bellowed our long tom, lancing the powder-gloom with a streak of fire;

and every swivel and musket aboard us banged and rattled out an iron hail.

We had the weather of her and, running in alongside, we gave her the very entrails of our starboard battery again, and our long gun vomited flame at pistol range, and every firelock and swivel stormed iron upon her. I heard our shot hull her; and heard the crash of bulwark and spar aboard her.

Then, in the awful glare of her answering broadside, I saw her mainmast bending aft and to starboard, leaning like a giant pine, falling, falling, till over it crashed in a chaos of stays and sails and running rigging.

Like a giant helm jammed to weather the wreckage swept her after deck abeam of us as though she were hove to; and our guns raked her as we ran past, and swept on under every inch of sail we could set.

Captain Quinn went into the main rigging with his trumpet; and I saw a young man in top boots and a blue coat in the fore rigging of the brigantine.

"Is that you, Captain Nanfan?" bawled Quinn.

"It is. Come aboard, Captain Quinn," replied the young man in a calm, affected voice.

"You dirty macaroni," yelled Quinn, "look what a pickle you're in now. I guess that'll teach you not to meddle with me. Fare you well, Captain Nanfan, and a merry Christmas to you!"

"When Christmas comes," replied Nanfan, in a mincing voice, "I see to it that yours shall be a very merry Christmas!"

Crash! came *The Love Dove's* larboard broadside. Something hit me and knocked me into the scuppers. I got hold of the bulwarks, dizzy, blinded with blood, and pulled myself erect.

"Are you bad hurt, sir?" said Mr. Wild in my deafened ear.

"No. Train the long gun on her. Let her have every scrap of iron in our after guns, Mr. Wild."

The concussion of the discharge sickened me, and I thought my skull had been split open.

"Keep on firing, Mr. Wild."

The shock o' the guns seemed to sway me into a kind of swoon.

I heard Quinn order Wild to cease firing as *The Love Dove* was drifted out o' range.

"Is Captain Strake badly hurt?" he added, looking down from the rigging at me.

"A splinter, sir. His scalp is part torn loose."

"Bind it on," said I, deafly. "Where's Buke Gooly?"

"Three miles astern and making for his waddling consort," said Quinn with infinite contempt. "Mr. Wild, we'll stand in for Cumberland Sound. Hold her so. . . . By God, I guess those two cheap sea-wolves have learned not to meddle with me and my affairs. . . . I guess so. . . ." He sprang to the deck: "Captain Strake, you'd better go to your cabin. We've no pill-roller aboard us, yet; we'll ship one at Amelia Island; but I know

how to sew you up and I'll get what's necessary from your locker—"

"Take the wheel, Mr. Wild," said I—scarcely able to hear my own voice, what with the blood deluging me and the deafening roaring inside my battered skull.

A cabin lad helped me to find my way aft. When I entered the cabin I was streaming with blood; and when I got inside all went dark around me.

I remember dreaming of young leaves and of lilac bloom and tulips; and that a woman in a pink gown and thin, rosy shoes kept a-kissing me.

But that it was a dream became sufficiently apparent when I recovered my tortured senses; for somebody was sewing my scalp onto my skull which seemed to be on fire.

In my violent anguish I swore, striving to rise; and I heard Cintra tell her uncle and Mr. Wild to hold my head so I could not stir a muscle, else her needle might slip.

"Stop your wriggling and your cursing," said she calmly, "or somebody else can sew up your silly head!"

And even in all my agony I wondered how any woman could be so wickedly heartless and insensible to tenderness and pity.

Later—I know not how long afterward—I awoke with a clearing mind; and tasted laudanum in my mouth; and spat out bitter brown stuff. Then a narrow, capable hand wiped my lips with

a napkin. I did not open my eyes, feeling dull, weary, yet free of pain.

Later still, drowsily awaking, I heard our anchor go; and smelled shore-mud.

Lying there in my bunk, scarce conscious, through the watery glimmer of partly closed eyelids I saw Cintra reading by the cabin lamp.

Once or twice she laid aside her book, yawning. Finally she closed it, leaned back in her chair, crossed her arms behind her head and gazed at me.

And if she caught the glimmer of my eyes between scarce parted lids I know not, but a faint, slow smile touched her own. And after a little while she began to hum to herself, her lazy, level gaze on me:

"*Oh, what is Love?*
It is a cruel thing,
As cruel for a shepherd as a King—
And crueller, too!
For Kings forget and revel, drinking deep,
But shepherds sigh and suck their thumbs and weep!"

And the last I remember was the deep sea-blue of her lazy, level eyes on mine.

CHAPTER IV

THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

I

I SAW little of Amelia Island for we remained there but three days; and I was still languid of my wound which I had got of a flying splinter aboard *The Happy Parrot* when the pirate, Captain Nanfan, in *The Love Cove*, brigantine, let go his broadside at us off Cumberland Sound.

However, I could see that Amelia Island was well suited for our affairs, being inside the Florida border, and therefore Spanish territory, yet but a cable's length from the Georgia boundary line, over which we could smuggle such slaves as we might gather on our voyage.

The " factory," owned by the firm of Quinn & Maltby, consisted of a palm-log fort armed with brass three-pounders and swivels; Segrada's house, several log storehouses; Quinn's villa; and, close to the store, a barracoon where the kaffles, or consignment of wild negroes fresh out of Africa, were housed.

There were, also, storehouses; ramshackle wharves, badly worm-eaten; skiffs, yawls, and canoes; and a forge under a palm-thatched shed.

Also there was Quinn's sloop, *The Mischief*, which he used for pleasure or for business along the coast waters, bays, and inland sounds.

All else seemed to be palm forests, live-oaks, and swampy jungle.

José Segrada was the factor, a handsome half-breed Spaniard of forty with silver hair, whose teeth flashed when he laughed—which he did continually.

He lived outside the fort and had a house and a lively harem to care for him—quadroons mostly, half naked, superb of figure, and some quite handsome.

There was one of his slaves, a Pani girl, who really was very pretty. But I do not think that any of our Indians ever were meant to be slaves.

Well, we patched our rigging and bulwarks at Amelia Island—where Nanfan and Buke Gooly had harmed us; and we did a little cleaning and much painting. Also we took on sweet water, farina, rice, hard-tack, salt beef, pork, vinegar, some cases of trade muskets, tar, knives, and bolts of coarse scarlet cloth.

Chips, our carpenter, and Bungs, our cooper, were very busy between decks fitting us with extra flooring forward.

We took on a doctor from the fort—a hang-dog fellow named Lister—known generally as Clyster, Blister, or just plain Squills.

We took on a linguist, too,—a coal-black, cruel-faced Krooman who spoke English well, and Spanish and Portuguese; and could gabble qua-qua in all the nigger dialects of the African coast.

Also three coal-black Krooman cooks came aboard us—enough to damn any ship if boarded by a man-o'-war.

Quinn entertained liberal ideas concerning the Black Ivory traffic. It had been dangerous and difficult enough before England and the United States outlawed it and proclaimed all slavers to be pirates.* Now it was a forbidden and a perilous business indeed to purchase slaves on coasts watched by British cruisers, carry them to Cuba or to Florida, risking capture by cruisers on The Middle Passage, land them in a healthy condition, smuggle them out of Spanish into United States territory, mix them with tame blacks, and sell them as such in Georgia, Carolina, or Virginia markets.

Yet, when accomplished, profits were large where every ten dollars invested yielded five hundred in a few months—that is, providing the goods were delivered alive and in prime condition.

And that was Quinn's policy—fewer niggers but live ones; kind treatment, good food and plenty, ample and clean quarters, and a healthy cargo instead of a dead, dying, or diseased one.

And he bragged to me that the sharks which always followed all slavers on The Middle Passage, from Africa to the Caribbean, gave up following his ships in disgust or perished of sheer starvation.

*The last slaver to be tried, condemned, and executed as a pirate was Capt. Gordon, of the slave ship *Erie*. He was hanged Feb. 21, 1862, in New York.

"What's the advantage," he used to say, "in paying for and packing fifteen hundred prime niggers between decks, and then breaking out only two or three hundred sick survivors when you reach your home port? Every time you heave a dead nigger to the sharks you're feeding 'em hundreds of dollars' worth of expensive meat. Even if the insurance company bears it I waste my time all the same. If the home company stands it, why *I* am the company, too.

"No, sir. Pick a healthy black and land him grinning. That's my motto; and that's how I've made my money! And you bet I'm not going to risk my neck and squander my money fetching a load of rotting shark food across the ocean!"

As I say, we remained only two or three days at the factory.

It was hot weather, but evenings were cool, and I enjoyed them on deck or in the Spanish orange grove back of the barracoon where Quinn had a small house. Here he placed his niece in durance.

I had not seen Cintra since she had gone ashore. Quinn's plan was to await the next ship and take her back to New York; though what on earth he was to do with her there he had no idea. I could see that the responsibility was preying on his mind.

He said to me one evening on deck: "If she's wild enough to dress like a boy and smuggle herself aboard my own ship under my very nose, what'll

she do if I leave her in New York alone? Go to the bad? What's the matter with her anyway? She's gone crazy like this all of a sudden,—and over the fences and her heels flying wild—"

"Was she not always somewhat—*spirited?*" I asked soothingly.

"She? Cool as a pail o' milk in the well! Put butter in her mouth and 'twould freeze! And now, when I arrive in New York, there she is in my own parlour a-dining and wining a strange young man she picked up on the Battery!"

I flushed hotly: "It was all my fault—"

"'Twas her own! She has a roving eye. And lucky 'twas the son of your dead father or I'd have sampled his liver. And if I should take her home now,and leave her, I've no doubt she'll run wild again. What devil's in the girl? What's possessing her? She was ever a laughing lass but never bold nor venturesome. Look at her now—with her hardy look and hardy ways! Is it her age? Is it a man she needs, then?"

I felt myself reddening again, and was conscious of sudden anger at what he said so rawly.

"Hell's cinders," he growled, "if I only could marry her off and be rid of her—"

Silence fell between us for a while; he puffed hard at his long clay; then he looked up and fixed his brilliant blue eyes on me:

"If you'll marry her," said he, "you'll do me a favour. I've asked you once before. Will you?"

"I told you I was afraid of her," I replied. "I

don't want her to make a hell of my life—with her sarcasms and her tempers—"

"Make a hell of hers if she's saucy. Take a rope's end to her. A rope's end makes a happy wife, Mr. Strake."

"What do you know about a wife? You never married one," I retorted.

"Well, then, the wisest say to beat 'em! That's all I know. They'll laugh at you if you don't; they'll love you if you do. That's what wise folk say, anyway; and I believe it."

Another silence ensued. He smoked his pipe out, hurled it overboard, and went ashore.

When the night watch had gone on deck, Quinn came aboard again and sat in the Florida starlight, his long cheroot aglow, and a glass of rum and lime juice in his iron fist. For a while we sat there listening to Segrada's concubines singing with a banjo in the orange grove ashore.

Then, abruptly: "I've give you fifty thousand dollars if you'll marry Cintra Quinn," he said.

After a long while: "She wouldn't have me," I replied.

"She will. I've talked to her."

Astonishment held me dumb.

"I'll be honest," he said. "I don't think she cares for you very much. But she doesn't want to go back to New York. What she said was this: 'If he'll take me with him and let me see the world, I'll marry him.'"

A rather sickly hope died in me. I might have loved Cintra. I had begun to. I had come very near to love in the beginning.

"Fifty thousand dollars," repeated Quinn. "I'll give you a draft on the Bank of New York. Or The United States Bank. Or on The Manhattan Company. And I'll give it to you *now!*"

I was thinking, What a revenge for her insolence! Take this girl if paid to take her! Marry her for cash—whom I would not marry otherwise—unless she ever showed some trace of human sensibility and tenderness— But that was hopeless. She wanted none of me. She wanted to see the world. She had no stomach for tenderer things,—no heart.

"Very well, Captain Quinn," I said.

"You'll marry her?"

"For fifty thousand dollars. And to oblige you."

He reached out and wrung my hand.

"God!" said he, "that's off my mind. I've sweated nights with the worry of her. Whatever I am, my brother was a gentleman and his wife a lady,—God rest her body which wears no head at all. And it sickened me to see Cintra starting the road to ruin. . . . To disgrace the dead. . . . It did so. . . . And if you'll take a rope's end to her I'll lay you a shilling to a jack-straw she'll make you a good wife, Mr. Strake!"

"I care not," said I, sullenly, my triumph already ashes in my mouth.

He wished to write my draft for me at once; but I bade him wait till I demanded it.

After a few minutes I went below and laid down. What kind of woman was this to marry a man she ridiculed and flouted, and whom she cared nothing about, so that she might indulge her gipsy cravings? So she might roam when he roamed and "see the world!" Even aboard a slaver. Very well; she'd see something she scarcely bargained for. And maybe die of smallpox, or fever; or maybe have her pretty head knocked off by a round shot; or her slim body ripped by grapeshot; or sit in irons aboard a cruiser; or lie in a felon's cell ashore.

After a while I got up to trim the lamp; and at that moment Quinn came in with Cintra. The latter wore the garments of her own sex again—a peach-coloured slip-gown without sleeves or neck, and thin stockings and shoes of the same tint—and carried a great, fashionable beaded pocket.

"Some boxes came from New York for Segrada's women," remarked Quinn; "I bought a chest full for Cintra."

The girl looked at me coolly, unabashed, almost smiling.

"I'm on my own deck," said Quinn, "and I'm going to marry you now."

Astounded, dumb fear in my heart, I stared at him and at Cintra.

Quinn took a Bible from the shelf behind me.

"Here's a ring, too," he said; "Segrada has a boxful; I don't know where he got 'em."

Then, without further preliminary, he began to read the marriage service. I don't know what I said; I scarcely heard Cintra's calm responses.

"Now ring her," grunted Quinn. Cintra's fingers were icy, and my hot hand shrank from their chill.

"All done," said Quinn, closing the Bible with a hearty clap. "You'd better kiss her, Mr. Strake. It's usual."

My chilled lips touched a burning mouth, and recoiled as though stung.

"That's off my mind!" growled Quinn with a resounding oath. "She's sound and firm in wind and limb and you're getting prime goods, young man! You can make her or spoil her. But that's your affair, now; and so I'll bid you both a hearty good-night—"

When he had gone I placed a chair for Cintra and then seated myself.

"What did he really pay you?" she asked, with smiling effrontery.

"Fifty thousand dollars," I replied, hoping to hurt her.

"Oh," said she; "I went cheap for cash, it appears. How mortifying!"

"Are you worth more than that?" I asked, striving to speak as brutally as she spoke.

"Not to you," said she. "You've been deceived, Mr. Strake; I'll never be worth a penny to *you*."

After a silence: "So I'm to see the world at last, after all," said she.

"That was your end of the bargain," said I. "And you may see it on Amelia Island playing the banjo on your uncle's veranda, or playing cards with José Segrada's lady-loves. Or, from the cabin windows of a slaver," I added, "—if you can endure the smell."

"Yes," said she, "that would be more entertaining. And—" She smiled, lifting her beaded pocket to the table, and drew from it a long packet wrapped in blue sugar-paper: "Here," said she, "is your pistol. I did not have to use it on myself. But thank you, nevertheless."

I thought of Buke Gooly, and of the mulatto with a cast in one eye.

"Keep the pistol," said I, "if you mean to sail aboard me. But you had better remain here."

"Very well," said she gaily, and placed it in her beaded pocket.

She looked around the cabin; rose and went to the little door which opened into another tiny cabin forward.

"Where do you expect me to sleep?" she inquired.

"Where you like. Here, if you choose. I can bunk forward—"

She opened the door, looked in, entered.

"I'll sleep here," she announced calmly. "Be kind enough to send my chest and boxes aboard."

I ordered a boy ashore. In an hour he had stowed her baggage.

We were sailing about midnight. Quinn came aboard at ten to bid us a last good-bye and to give me parting advice and instructions. He was returning to New York on his next ship in, but would be back here to see us when we anchored after The Middle Passage.

" About Christmas," he calculated.

He drew me aside: " You use a rope's end on that jade and you'll find you've bought a jewel dirt cheap."

" I don't beat women," I retorted.

" Very well; spoil her then. And she'll make a fool of you."

" I think not," said I.

" Anyway," said he, " draw on me when you're ready. I pay my bills."

Then he went to Cintra and drew her aside. But whatever he said to her merely made her smile disdainfully.

She was standing with one arm resting on the table, her slender feet restless in their peach-coloured shoes.

" By God," I heard him say, " if I'd married you I know what I'd do to you. And I'd do it thoroughly and often! "

Whereupon she laughed outright, and he turned his back on her, growled a farewell to me, and went out, striding.

2

We had a miserable passage, what with one hot squall following another and nasty, stifling, thick

weather, greasy as soup; and for weeks I had all I could do to sail *The Happy Parrot* through gale and hurricane; and I saw little of Cintra.

Not that she kept her cabin. She was all over the driving, tossing ship, aloft, on deck, below. A sou'wester covered her clipped curls, a tarpaulin swathed her, and she went barefoot, for the smallest sea-boots could have swallowed her body and legs.

We saw several sail labouring under bare poles, but never made them out.

A month out the winds and murk left us, and a hot blue sky broke overhead where we were riding the tremendous swells—waves mountain high which threatened to hurl us on our beam ends.

Even then I had to forbid her the deck by force, and locked her below, and kept her there until the seas were somewhat subdued.

There came, then, a week of lovely weather—and of incessant care and rising anxiety for me. For the sea was whitening and we were approaching Africa; and in these waters were British cruisers patrolling, which were nearly certain to overhaul and board us for inspection; and might even press any of our men, as was their insolent habit with American ships.

So I seldom left the quarter-deck, and kept always a sharp look-out aloft.

Several times we sighted sails, but as soon as we could make out their course we avoided them so they could not speak us; and being one of the

very fastest craft a-swim, *The Happy Parrot* soon lost them, whatever might have been their intentions.

Cintra was on deck while we were running away from a distant brig that looked to me like a man-o'-war.

When, at sundown, we had lost sight of her, Cintra turned to me, smiling.

"Speed," said she, "has kept many a rogue from the gibbet."

"What do you mean?" said I, flushing hotly.

"Why," said she, "since we are on filthy business, I am glad we ride a speedy deck. It would be a sorry bargain for me," says she, "to be overhauled and sent to jail upon my wedding trip."

I bit my lip and fixed my gaze on the sinking sun.

"A sorry bargain," she repeated, "to be jailed and never see the world, after all. . . . And on my honeymoon, too."

Her raillery hurt me, always; yet I knew well enough she despised me.

It was strange how suddenly she had come to detest me because, in the beginning, she seemed to care for me. But from the silly moment when she surprised me a-toying with Debby's niece—whatever the wench's name was—Anne, I believe—every atom of real regard for me fled, and her friendship became altered, changed to a kind of careless, gay indifference—and she exhibited a personal distaste, too, taking care that I touched her not nor came very near to her person.

I had been near falling in love with her, but not yet so near that I thought harm in taking a passing kiss or two from provocative lips that laughed their challenge.

But she had it in her head in the beginning that I was a rake and likely to play loose with any woman. And my carelessness with Debby's niece, when we spilled the laundry between us, seemed to upset Cintra, too.

But lord, was that a reason to flout me, and show me no human tenderness when her own uncle battered me? And, knowing me to be in pain, to sit and sing at her piano; and when I approached her with loving repentance and submission, to mock me and reveal her utter heartlessness!

And, finally, heartlessly to marry me in order to escape from ennui at home and " see the world," as she called it!

One hot evening when we were off the African coast, and I felt worn out with anxiety concerning cruisers, I went to my cabin to lie down for an hour.

Cintra was reading by the table. She glanced up with that indifference which was becoming irksome, and even maddening; then, without smile or word, resumed her reading.

I was weary, worried, lonely; and the absent glance she cast on me made me feel the loneliest man on earth.

I sat down on the bed's edge, staring at her back. Presently I said:

" Can't you be a little friendly? "

She finished the page and turned it before she looked at me over her shoulder.

" I'm not your enemy," she said, coolly.

" You're not my friend, either."

" As for that," said she, " a woman of my race makes no friends among rogues."

" Do you think me a rogue? "

"What are you, then, who run from honest men? "

" Because I choose to disregard laws made by cowards, fools, fanatics, am I a rogue? " I asked, hotly.

" I could understand you," said she, " if you broke the embargo to sail honestly on forbidden seas and trade honestly in forbidden ports. But—a *slaver !*—"

" Until the Congress stopped it, for two hundred years God-fearing and respectable gentlemen have been in the slave trade. The nobility and gentry of England have owned slave ships and made fortunes in the traffic. And to-day, in Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Italy, gentlemen are engaged in that business.

" And now, because England and the United States have a notion to forbid the African trade to honest men,—and because France is like to follow their caprice, you call me a rogue because I do not choose to observe so senseless and hypocritical a law."

" Senseless? " she asked, smiling.

" Certainly. If slavery is wrong, why does not the United States free its millions of slaves? If

the African trade is wrong on the high seas, why does not the United States forbid coastwise traffic of slave ships under forty tons?"

"I don't know," said Cintra.

"I don't, either," I said bitterly. "All I know is that my country cut off what you call honest trade, and my ship rotted at the wharf, and I starved. . . . And that's why I'm driven to the Black Ivory trade. And if they stop me at that, it's in me to sail On The Account. And you might as well know it, and how much of a rogue I am capable of becoming."

"On The Account," she repeated. "What does that mean?"

"The Red Sea Trade—as some call it."

"And what is that?"

"Piracy."

"Oh. . . . In that case you'd hang if taken, wouldn't you?"

"No doubt at all. And what kind of rogue do you think me now?"

"I don't know," said she.

"A fine husband, am I not?"

"As men go, I suppose."

"A bad bargain for you, Cintra."

"Well," said she, "in the meantime I shall make the best of it and see all of the world I can see."

After a little while she opened her book.

I lay down on my bed, the loneliest man on earth.

3

At daybreak, latitude 6° 10′ N., as agreed upon with Captain Quinn, the wind being light, we stood in for the coast. An hour later our masthead hailed the land. Here was our destination. The crisis was at hand!

Immediately I sent Mr. Wild aloft and ordered the second mate, Weems, to see that all men were on deck for sharp work.

I was exceedingly nervous, dreading interference; but Mr. Wild, aloft, saw no sails. However, a British cruiser might appear in the offing at any moment; we had to do our work in a very few hours.

As we stood in toward the land the shore opened out, disclosing what seemed to be an uninhabited wilderness of bush, thicket, forest, and swamp.

Presently, however, Mr. Wild reported a long, thatched shed under the trees, which looked like a barracoon.

However, I was not certain I had found the right place until, in the glare of sunrise, I made out some ruins on a small hill, which seemed to be what remained of Sir John Wilburne's factory. There was a mud wall, a ruined gate to the south-east, ruined storehouses, and fragments of flanking redoubts. No doubt I had come to the right place. But where was the schooner we expected?

"Sail-ho!" cried Mr. Wild from masthead.

"Where away?" I shouted.

"Dead ahead inshore, sir."

"Can you make her out?"

"Schooner-rigged, sir. At anchor. A yellow jack and two pennants flying at her main."

I told Weems to call all hands and have both anchors ready with thirty fathoms' range. I bent a red pennant to the signal halyards and ran it up.

"Boat pulling for us, sir!" reported Mr. Wild.

So I ordered Weems to come to an anchor and lower sail.

The man who boarded us from the boat was a fat, excited Frenchman,—a medico named Sauveur,—and acting secret agent for Quinn & Maltby, spice merchants.

He was delighted to see us; he attempted to kiss me but I found it convenient to avoid that demonstration.

He told me that a patrolling British cruiser had passed the day before, standing toward Agra. He informed me further that he had two hundred prime negroes for me,—a hundred and sixty young men and boys and forty girls; that they had cost an average of $10 a head and should fetch $400 a head in Havana, or $500 in Carolina,—a net profit of $88,000, allowing for all commissions and expenses of the round trip.

He explained to me that the black sand-captains who had charge of them were expert Kroomen. All the niggers' heads had been shaved and scrubbed,

their bodies washed and minutely inspected. He himself had examined every tooth in the entire kaffle; none was over twenty-two years of age; all as sound and plump as partridges, and not a yellow-mug or a Gaboon among them.

Dr. Sauveur's excitability increased as the surf-boats put off; he ran about the deck incessantly, a glass of spiced rum and lime in one hand, a cigar I offered him in the other, while the surf-boats followed one another out from the shore loaded deep with blacks.

It was a lively scene; long lines of slaves continued to file out of the barracoon, ready to embark when the surf-boats returned; our own boats were carrying trade muskets, iron bars, anchors of brandy, bolts of red cloth, and kegs of rum ashore —a perilous landing through the surf—but the crews were old hands and knew their business.

I tried to keep my eye on everything, aloft, ashore, at sea, on deck, hailing our look-out every little while for seaward information, watching the boats coming and going, keeping an eye on the two Kroomen stationed to receive and stow our negroes as they arrived upon our deck, and checking up accounts with Dr. Sauveur who chattered incessantly —the burden of his gabble being brag and self-praise.

Mr. Wild collected and fettered the gangs as they were herded on deck by our Kroomen, stowing men aft between hold and deck and women forward, using main and fore hatches.

The blacks were a wild lot, stark naked except for an inch or two of woven clout amidships.

They were neither frightened nor sullen; some of their faces expressed lively curiosity; some perplexity; a few jabbered, and here and there a youngster laughed.

They were a bronze colour, not black, and their hair was curly rather than kinked. Few exhibited blubber lips and broad, flat noses; all had superb teeth.

As I went to the side to look over, a handsome girl sprang on deck, as finely proportioned as a bronze statue, with delicate ears and small hands and feet. There was fearlessness in her bearing as she cast a glance around her; and she disappeared forward with singular grace in every movement of limb and body.

By noon I had settled accounts with Dr. Sauveur. I was aware that Cintra had come on deck and was sitting on the taffrail watching everything; but I did not speak to her.

When the last gang of blacks had been received aboard us, counted, and stowed, surf-boats continued to come with cargo for the hold—elephant teeth, great tusks of finest ivory, gold dust in bags, which already had been tested and weighed and found free from the usual brass dust; bales of Grains of Paradise; extra sacks of allspice, corn meal and rice; palm oil in kegs; yams and bananas.

Then we hastened to take on sweet water, calling on the surf-boats also.

Our Krooman cooks, since dawn, had been busy boiling rice and corn with allspice, pimento, and fish-scraps, to be dressed with palm oil.

Two hundred pewter bowls, water pannikins, and spoons were now distributed among our slaves; and very soon every African, male and female, was busy feeding; and a confused tumult of gabbling, dish clatter, and the jingling of fetters came up from below. With the odour of wild food arose the powerful smell of wild, black, naked bodies, pungent, acrid as hartshorn in the tropic heat of an African noonday.

Every instant, now, my apprehension increased. Several times I went aloft to be certain that the look-out had missed nothing at sea.

Dr. Sauveur swilled limed rum, gesticulated, bragged of his medical skill, his unfailing judgment of blacks, his untold value as agent for Quinn & Maltby, and his own personal courage.

Also he bragged of his harem ashore, assuring me it contained even Spanish and Portuguese houris, and offered me dissolute hospitality if I would come ashore with him.

Cintra heard him. Passing her on deck on my way to the cabin, she asked me whether I was going to accept the Frenchman's invitation.

"If I do," said I, "what is it to you?"

"Nothing. . . . Only the fat little beast said that there is smallpox and fever ashore. I heard him tell you that."

" There always is," said I, coldly; and continued on to my cabin.

Cintra came in while I was filing my accounts and watching the watering from the cabin window.

" The French beast didn't know you had a wife aboard," she said carelessly. " I told him."

I laughed rather bitterly: " Did you explain to him what kind of wife you are, Cintra? "

" What kind am I? "

I shrugged and went toward the door.

" Are you going ashore? " she asked.

" Perhaps." I went on deck, but had to stuff my vouchers into Dr. Sauveur's pockets as he was now too drunk to do so.

Mr. Wild got him over the side and into his own boat which pulled away for his schooner, anchored dangerously close inshore on the very edge of the surf.

He was singing when they rowed him away, something concerning *l'amour* and *les beaux yeux*, and *belle nêgresse* and *déesse*.

The sand-captains came alongside; their " presents " were lowered to them.

Our last water-butt was now full; our look-out reported all clear seaward. I told Mr. Wild to weigh and make sail, and I gave him his course.

Until we had cleared the low headlands and had lost the land and were standing N. W. by W. toward blue water, I never left the poop except to go aloft.

The westering sun was a red monster wallowing in fire and spitting flaming, feathery spume to the zenith. Clots of vermilion cloud brightened to drifting flame overhead; around us the sea rocked blood-red.

"Like a voyage through hell," came Cintra's calm voice at my elbow.

I turned, and she leaned back against the rail, smiling.

"So you didn't go ashore to see Dr. Sauveur's harem," she remarked.

"He was too drunk," said I shortly.

"Oh, well," said she, "another time, then. When seeing the world one ought not to miss any experience."

"Oh," said I, "is that your view?"

"Certainly. For my part, I mean to accept any invitation offered."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I wish to learn what goes on in the world. And learn gaily."

"You'll learn modestly if you learn at all," I said sharply. "And whatever knowledge you acquire will be with my permission."

"Oh, la," said she, "do you take me for a slave like those poor girls below deck?"

"If you turn wild on my hands I'll have something to say about it."

"You have your $50,000; you have no further concern with me," said she, with all the impudence in the world.

The long strain had shaken me and my nerves were raw, what with her behaviour to me, the incessant anxiety and care during the long voyage, the tension and apprehension of the day.

"Cintra," said I, "you have no kindness for me. That I know. I pretend to no claim on you as my wife. But if you attempt any waywardness to shame or confound me, I'll treat you as my property."

"How?" she demanded, flushing.

"If you drag my name through the gutter you'll find out."

"You're dragging it through your own slaver's scuppers," said she. "A gutter could foul it no further."

That was too much and my taut nerves shattered. I should not have laid a finger on her, but I took her by the arm above her slender elbow and jerked her about to face me:

"You listen to me," said I; "if ever you turn wanton I'll take a rope's end to you."

Her blue eyes darkened and I saw black flames in them:

"You'll dare to flog me?" she whispered, in such a passion that her mouth could scarce utter the words.

"Yes," said I, "if you ever degrade yourself I'll flog hell out of you."

She was white enough now, but her eyes had become two pits of darkness in the lamplight.

She said: " If it ever suits me to take a lover I'll do so. If you mean to flog me you might as well do it now."

In my fury and exasperation I looked about the cabin for something to beat her with; and she saw in my face the black intent, for suddenly she twisted her arm around to break my clutch. But I held her, writhing and struggling and, when she ceased with a dry sob in her throat, I picked her up, carried her to her cabin and tossed her upon her bunk.

" Lie there," said I. " I've had enough of you and your raillery and impudence and beggarly treatment. I can't find fault with you," said I, " because you have no kindness for me, but I'm damned if I stand any more ill-treatment. If you hate me," said I, " let me alone. I'll keep out of your way; I'll understand your indifference. But I won't tolerate any more abuse and insult from you. Control your tongue or I'll give you something to wag it for! "

" I hadn't understood that you were this kind of brute also," said she in a stifled voice.

" Then you've learned something new—seeing the world—on your honeymoon," said I. And I went out laughing and slamming the cabin door.

4

We had a prime cargo of slaves aboard; we fed them well, watered them plentifully, had them on

deck for a daily wash-down with the hose, which they liked.

Within twenty-four hours they were laughing, jesting, cutting monkeyshines, singing. The whole ship echoed with their qua-qua gabble.

One of our Kroomen had a banjo on deck when the gangs took their exercise; and very soon we had them singing and dancing and cutting all kinds of capers.

We watched them for suicides, but saw nothing in their demeanour to worry us. Nothing indicating plotting or mutiny either—which, of course, pre-occupied our minds, they being two hundred against thirty-three, including our Kroomen.

The second week out on The Middle Passage, Mr. Wild had several likely blacks helping about the deck and learning to reave rigging and make or take in sail.

As for the women, many of them were handsome and all had fine figures, but the girls were a heedless lot—like young animals—playful, wanton-wild, naked-shameless in person, habits, behaviour.

All fear had left our negroes—and such a condition required watching—and they responded to kind treatment like children, frisking when fetched on deck to bathe and exercise, and making friends wherever their childish advances were entertained.

Some of the foremast men were having sentimental affairs with these dusky nymphs; Weems had a pretty Sultana; and I think Mr. Wild had another, but am not certain.

I made up my mind to take the whip away from the brutal-faced Krooman intendant who seemed only too eager to use it.

And all those days of blue skies, sunshine, and gentle, pretty winds, with no more than a topsail gale to speed us, I scarcely spoke to Cintra at all, though she was on deck often.

As for me, the strain of responsibility was telling on me physically; I became thin, sun-brown as one of my own cargo, for I almost never left the poop except to go aloft, haunted always by dread of cruisers.

Such sail as we saw we avoided, never giving any a chance to speak us.

One ship chased us all day, but we lost her at night. Mr. Wild made her out a United States sloop of war. We never knew.

There came a day when we entered the Spanish Main. Here was peril enough, what with the British flag patrolling every island, and no hope for us if chased, unless we could find refuge in a Spanish port.

But I did not wish to run for Havana; I wanted to land my cargo at its proper destination. So far it had been the luckiest voyage I ever heard of, and Mr. Wild agreed with me; for, up till now, we had lost only three blacks—one developing a white flux and nothing could save him; and two boys who fell overboard in a playful scuffle—sharks taking both before we could lower a boat. For

sharks follow the smell of a slaver; and whether it be the wild odour of their black skins, or the stench of vinegar and burning tar to clean their quarters, or the slops overboard, I know not, only that sharks always follow a slaver.

When Weems had the tar-pots out and the red-hot belaying pins stuck in them to make a purifying smoke, I always feared some ship would see the smoke and, thinking us afire, make for us. Or that a cruiser, knowing a slaver's tricks, turn bloodhound and follow our trailing scent.

On Christmas Day, being just off the Florida coast, and standing in for it N.N.W., Weems, sporting with his dusky inamorata of whom he seemed very fond, came aft with her, hand in hand, and asked me respectfully if he might have an opportunity to buy her and turn in his wages on account.

I told him he was foolish, but he said he liked her better than his wife, and she could live ashore on Amelia Island.

The girl, who was pretty, looked anxiously at me. She couldn't understand English very much.

I'd noticed some of the foremast men with their black belles; and how that when the men made them understand that they must soon be parted, the girls dissolved into tears.

I told Weems that I had nothing to do with that kind of thing and he must see Mr. Quinn about it.

He seemed quite downcast, and went forward with his naked lady padding along beside him. He disgusted me; but what can one expect of a second mate!

Toward sunset, always standing in, I saw, far to the westward, a strange vast cloud rise over the sea, drift upward, then spread north and south like smoke.

"Birds," said Mr. Wild.

There were millions and millions of them. They swept across the setting sun and darkened it. In one vast arc they drove, then, lower, lower, and vanished in the coast haze beyond the far horizon.

But out of that same haze Mr. Wild and I saw a sail emerge; and our look-out hailed the deck at the same instant.

"That's Amelia Island, sir," said Mr. Wild, "and that craft is blocking the channel."

"Can you make her out?"

"She looks like our factory sloop, Captain Quinn's yacht, *The Mischief*."

To her we must have been plainly visible, the sun striking us on a clear sea. But she made us no signal. To us she seemed a ruddy phantom in the shore haze.

After a while it became apparent that she meant to speak us,—she altering her course as we altered ours,—or seeming to,—

Suddenly Mr. Wild said sharply: "That's not land-haze and sunset blaze, sir. That craft is on fire!"

As we beat up toward her I saw it was true. Her hull was burning aft, but neither her masts, sails, nor rigging had caught the blaze.

Our men gathered along the rail to look at her; she had now grounded and was lodged across a sand bar, and was veering, swinging in the wind as though set on a pivot.

The smell of burning came to us very strongly, now; a red furnace glow kindled in her stern.

Cintra came on deck. "Is there anybody aboard her?" she asked anxiously.

We could not see a soul, and we were very near her now. I threw over the helm and we ran by her.

"That's *The Mischief*," said Wild. "What on earth—"

"Good God," said I, "what is that?"

To her topmast, where a half-topsail was set, was nailed a pine board painted white, and, on it, was pictured a skull in black paint. Under the skull was printed in black letters: "MERRY CHRISTMAS!" Beneath this placard a man hung by his neck, swinging gently as the vessel veered.

From our quarter-deck we looked right into the hanged man's swollen face.

Then Cintra made a faint moaning sound and took hold of my arm, swaying toward me as though swooning.

For the dead man's face was the face of her uncle, Captain Quinn.

As I drew her to me to support her, I saw the sloop's mainsail catch fire; a vast upward rush of flame wrapped spars and rigging; and we ran for it, tacking to windward, sheering wide, then tacked again and stood in for the smoke-choked channel.

To starboard and astern the sloop had become a raging pillar of fire. The smoke blanketed the shore.

Weems stood the wheel; I bent my arm closely around Cintra who had hidden her face in both hands and cowered against me.

Wild whispered to me: " Either Buke Gooly or Nanfan caught him and settled old scores with him. . . . It looks like Nanfan's work. Let us get in as soon as we may and come to an anchor under the fort."

" Signal the factory," I said.

" Nanfan must be somewhere in the sound near at hand, sir."

" Yes, and he may have taken the factory and cut Segrada's windpipe. You must give the factory three guns and take all chances."

Mr. Wild called a gun crew and he himself pulled the lanyards of three of our forward carronades in quick succession.

As though in reply a frightful explosion astern answered us. *The Mischief* had blown up.

Then, from somewhere ashore, came the distant bang of a three-pounder, another, a third, *a fourth.*

It was the agreed signal. So José Segrada was alive, at any rate.

CHAPTER V

HONEYMOON

I

THE sky was still afire with the afterglow when *The Happy Parrot* came to an anchor in Amelia River, the factory bearing nearly abeam and Cumberland due north.

Another of the company's vessels, *The Black Joke*, Captain Cabasso, lay in the stream astern of us, very near to the beach, and riding high as though cargo, ballast, and guns had been carried ashore for the purpose of careening her.

She had been chased by the U.S. revenue cutters *Madison*, Captain Brooks, *Gallatin*, Captain Herberts, and *Surveyor*; and by a British armed snow, but escaped very handily and no damage. This I learned later from Captain Cabasso.

On the wharf I saw José Segrada with many of his people, whites, blacks, tans, quadroons, all carrying guns or spears, and all greatly agitated.

When the factor came aboard us I took him into my cabin and locked the door.

"Now," said I, "do you know what has happened to Captain Quinn?"

"I'm goin' tell you these, sare, ver' dam quick," he burst out, gesticulating and displaying his magnificent teeth. "It is two weeks come Monday Captain Cabasso has arrive on The Middle Passage in these *Black Joke*. He has one hundred seventy prime niggers.

"Captain Quinn he arrive also in these sloop *Mischief*, three days out from Savannah. Mr. Maltby he is also aboard these *Mischief*, ver' drunk. Me, I take in charge them niggers; I break out stores for them—blue and white striped goods for skirts, pants and shirts, osnaburg for jackets. All is ver' dam snug in these barracoon—plenty palm oil, plenty food, every nigger feel ver' well and happy,—banjo play all time, dance, laugh, make monkey tricks,—all like you know, sare. Also, Captain Cabasso he wish to careen ship. So I call all hands to careen ship.

"Las' night Captain Quinn say he goin' run them niggers up to Savannah in these *Mischief*. Mr. Maltby say no; he say more safe run them blacks overland route by these Cat-an'-Kittens Tavern. Captain Quinn say it more quick sail by sloop. He say to Mr. Maltby, 'Hell cinders, ain't forty ton inside law for coast trade?' Maltby he say, 'You look out, sare, if Sidney Nanfan catch you. Nanfan ver' sly pirate.' Quinn laugh and he say, 'José,' to me, 'you stow them blacks aboard

these *Mischief* and I run them up coast to-morrow, even if all hell say no!'

"Maltby he don't like; but Quinn say he expec' *Happy Parrot*, and you come ver' soon, so he want quick market and quick money for them *Black Joke* niggers. Maltby he say dam. Me I say nothing. Who am I, José Segrada, to tell business to Captain Quinn?"

"You stowed the blacks aboard *The Mischief?*" I asked.

"Yes, sare. Captain Quinn he make ready for to weigh and sail after early breakfast. Mr. Maltby he won't go. No! He say, 'No, by dam!' He say to Quinn, 'Don't forget how you made mock of Nanfan when these *Happy Parrot* shoot ver' many holes in these *Love Dove*. Don' forget how you tol' Nanfan Merry Christmas. An' don' you forget to-day it is Christmas Day, by dam! Maybe Nanfan he hide for chase you in Cumberland Sound!'

"All same, sare, Captain Quinn he weigh and sail with these hundred and seventy prime Coromantis, 360 ounces gol' dust, 200 ounces in bar gold, 2,700 pounds ivory—all big teeth—seventy bale Grains of Paradise, and a crew of five—if you count Jokko, Krooman, two sand-captain, one linguister.

"Ver' well, by gar, Mr. Maltby he moan and groan and squeal to hisself, an' bymby he get more drunk. Me, I have plenty work to break

out boot-tops for Captain Cabasso who loaf around my house an' make winks at my ladies.

"Ver' soon we hear guns at sea. North by West, sare. 'O dam,' Maltby say, 'Quinn he is fall in with Nanfan.' Sare, it is true! We run to thee factory an' up in look-out tower. Jesus-Maria! Yonder is Nanfan in these fat *Love Dove*, brigantine. Quinn he fire two swivel—all he had. Nanfan chase him like big heavy sea-eagle chase teal-duck. Ver' soon he close with Quinn off Cumberland —quick—lay alongside, take him by the board.

"Sare, what can we do? We see through thee glass how all happen. Nanfan he take every dam nigger out of these *Mischief* and send them aboard these *Love Dove*. Then, ver' plain, we can see how he cut thee windpipes of our Krooman and all thee crew. We see them splash overboard. All die only excepting thee sailing master, Antone Rumpf, who is ashore to help careen Cabasso.

"Then, Maria-and-Joseph! We can see how he goin' hang Captain Quinn—"

"You *saw* it?" I demanded.

"All—with sea-glasses saw what happen ver' plain, sare. Also you shall hear how Nanfan set a fire to these *Mischief* sloop—an' Quinn aloft and hanging low by thee neck—Jesus—Maria—Joseph! —he swing an' he swing an' he spin 'round and round. An' Maltby he squeal an' squeak an' he say, 'O, dam my eyes, he's gone!' What was I to do, me, José Segrada! I asked Maltby what am I to do.

He ver' drunk, an' he weep an' squeal. 'O, hell,' he say, 'these Merry Christmas I don' like!'

"I say to Captain Cabasso, 'Me, I goin' fight them pirates if Sidney Nanfan come ashore!' So Cabasso he tell us fight 'em like the dev'; an' he serve out arms to his crew, an' I command them drum shall beat, an' I fire one gun for alarm all blacks in woods who hunt koonti.

"Sare, Captain Nanfan he sail up an' down outside, an' he fire three broadsides at these island; but he too dam sly to come inside thee inlet. So ver' soon he clap on more sail an' he stand for blue water, S.S.E. An' I expec' he goin' sell them niggers in thee Havana."

"Señor," said I, wearily, "set your sentries and double your seaward patrols. For if he lands and catches us asleep he'll cut every throat on Amelia Island."

I turned our excited blacks over to José Segrada.

Dust, teeth, spices, I took his receipt for also.

"You tell Mr. Maltby," said I, "to move out of Captain Quinn's house and be lively about it. I waste no ceremony with him."

Segrada looked doubtful.

I said: "My wife needs her uncle's villa to herself. She saw her uncle's corpse; and you may imagine the shock it caused her. She wishes to be alone. You tell Maltby to clear out."

I discovered Cintra, pale and silent, sitting in her cabin. She went ashore with me willingly enough.

It had grown pitch dark. Fireflies drifted among the palmettos and marsh-reeds; stars sparkled overhead; some blacks with lightwood ablaze met us at the wharf and illuminated our sandy path to the residence of the late Captain Quinn. Segrada was just leaving. He said that Maltby refused to vacate the premises.

There, in the sitting-room, we discovered Maltby, weeping-drunk; and when he beheld us he began to slobber and squeal with grief, and began to condole with Cintra, and was inclined to paw her.

But I put an end to that, and had a negro servant support him to the fort, who finally loaded him on his back like a sack o' guts.

A dozen or more of Quinn's half-naked black servants had been shambling about us, rolling agitated and enormous eyes. I selected a couple of young quadroon girls to wait upon Cintra; ordered others to fetch us something to eat; sent for Cintra's boxes; and then seated myself for a moment's rest.

Cintra was lying back in a great cane arm-chair, her eyes closed.

"To-morrow," said I, "we had better talk over matters. To-night you are too weary. Send word to me when you are ready to receive me—"

"Where are you going?" she asked, opening her eyes in the still candle-light.

"To the fort. Probably Captain Cabasso has room for me—or Segrada can arrange—"

"There are two bedrooms here."

"Do you wish me to remain?"

"Unless you prefer Segrada—and the vicinity of his harem. He might very easily improvise another for you."

"No," said I, "I don't think that several wives are better than none at all. Moreover, I forgot that we are on our honeymoon. So I'll stay here."

2

By dawn I had left my bed in Quinn's villa, had bathed in the tidal river, breakfasted with Segrada; and, at sunrise, was on the seaward dunes with my glass.

No sign of Nanfan; no sail to be seen; nothing between sky and sea except gulls afloat—the glimmer of a lazy wing here and yonder—a snowy crested eagle high overhead, turning, turning in the golden glare.

When I returned to the factory they were careening *The Black Joke*.

From the barracoon arose a confusion of many voices where the blacks were being fed—laughter, qua-qua gabble, clatter of pewter, dusky hands patting juba, the rattle of a banjo to the clink-clank and tinkle of many fetters.

Half-naked blacks and quadroons wearing white or scarlet head-cloths and another breadth between belly and knees, moved hither and thither with

lazy grace of bearing, or loitered to watch the careening; where, already, Cabasso's sailor-men, naked to the clout, swarmed over *The Black Joke* amid a stinking smoke of boiling kettles.

Segrada, mounted on a small jackass, sat his saddle with a green umbrella over him, and two cruel-faced Kroomen in attendance.

He told me that Maltby was still abed and suffering audibly from his excesses.

"When he's in a fit condition to discuss the situation," said I, "let me know."

"Sare," said he, "shall you careen?"

"I suppose so. But I'll wait until Captain Cabasso is afloat again." As I moved on I saw a German named Rumpf, Quinn's sailing master who had been left ashore and so escaped the bloody fate of his shipmates aboard *The Mischief*.

I asked him if there was any news from Savannah, and whether the President of the United States had taken any measures to halt British aggression on the high seas and stand up for free trade and sailors' rights.

He said no; which did not surprise me, for I expected no more sagacity and courage from James Madison than from his predecessor, that demagogue Thomas Jefferson.

So I took the sandy path to Quinn's villa, which stood a few rods west of the fort amid palmetto and orange trees, and which was built of coquina and Spanish tiles, and covered with bougainvillea

in purple bloom. And I thought to myself, sullenly yet a little wistfully, that, if Cintra and I had been friends, here was the prettiest nest for a honeymoon that ever I had seen on earth.

But on Cintra's part was only indifference and contempt for me—and nothing animated her save only her wayward and unquenched desire to "see the world" and learn its nature, habits, and its ways.

She had breakfasted. Her saddle-coloured maids had done the chamber work in her bedroom and mine, and were nearly finished unpacking her boxes when I came in.

Cintra came leisurely from her chamber, but I bade her continue the unpacking and said that I could wait.

So I walked about the parlour or central room to observe it, and how there appeared no traces of any woman's hands in the softening of its equipment or disposal of the furnishings, but only a sailor's taste. For all about were sea-shells, stuffed birds, and bestial heathen gods—some carved and painted, some but a ju-ju made of a stick and a bunch of gaudy rags and feathers.

There were some old wheel-lock guns and pistols, and several spears with serrated wooden heads; and I saw rusty swords in scabbards made of the entire skin, head, and claws of huge lizards, hard as flint.

Under a glass dome upon a mahogany table was set a cluster of stuffed birds of every brilliant colour, which glittered like a bouquet of dusty jewels.

Presently Cintra sent away her dusky maidens to the outside kitchen, closed the doors, and calmly seated herself to hear what I had to say to her.

First I asked her if her uncle had left a will; and she replied that he had, and that it was in possession of The Manhattan Company.

I asked her if she knew its contents; and she replied that she did, and that everything was left to her.

"I suppose," said she, "you are troubled about your $50,000 which my uncle promised you as reward for marrying me."

I waited until my anger cooled: "No," said I, "that money gives me no concern. Nor does the fortune which you say you have inherited."

"Nevertheless," said she, "I assume my uncle's debts. Yours is one."

"My agreement was with your uncle, not with you. The debt is cancelled."

"No, it is not. You carried out your bargain—"

"And am sick of it," said I. "So be pleased to keep your fortune, madam, and free yourself of matrimonial bonds at your convenience."

"You desire to divorce me?"

"I suggest that you divorce me, Cintra."

"So you cheat at bargains, too?"

"I offer you freedom," I retorted angrily.

"And would pay me $50,000 to be rid o' me," said she, laughing, I suppose, at my heat. "Well, then, no!"

"What do you want of me then?" said I, exasperated.

"I told you. I desire to see life and learn what happens in the world. I can do so as your wife. It would be inconvenient for an unmarried woman to voyage alone."

I was silent.

"Already," she remarked, "it has almost repaid me for marrying you, for I have made a most amazing voyage and have seen such things as I venture to declare have never before been witnessed by any honest woman."

"With a rogue for a husband," I sneered, "you hope to witness other and curious sights, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, madam," said I maliciously, "you now own half of your late uncle's villainous business, and your rogue of a husband is in your employment."

But when she sent for Maltby he arrived flabby, soggy, whining and mean-eyed, and fell to sobbing when she demanded a dissolution of partnership.

No; the agreement had three years more to run. The withdrawal of Captain Quinn's capital would ruin all. Would beggar him. Nor could he buy her out. And knew nobody who dared venture a penny in so unlawful a business as had been carried on by Quinn & Maltby, importers of spices.

"Very well, sir," said Cintra coldly, "I shall consult a lawyer."

Mr. Maltby squeaked in horror at the idea of consulting anybody concerning the outlawed business of Quinn & Maltby. Any such betrayal of confidence, he protested shrilly, would send him to a Federal jail and then to the county poorhouse.

"Do you mean to tell me," said she angrily, "that I am forced for three more years to share in your profits from the slave trade?"

"There's $100,000 in the barracoon yonder, ma'am," he sobbed, "but if you don't want your share—"

"I wish to buy your share and free those unhappy people!"

"Unhappy, ma'am? If you have ears you can't say *that!*"

To us, from the barracoon, came a medley of gay and joyous songs and babble—banjo, drum, and qua-qua gabble.

"Would you abandon them, ma'am, to starve alive in a strange land?" whined Maltby.

"Wait a minute," I said; "I understand what my wife wishes. How it is to be accomplished I don't yet know; but I'll assume responsibility for the disentangling of all this confusion—"

"I don't ask you to," said Cintra insolently.

"I don't care whether you do or not, madam, or what may be your opinion," I retorted. "I shall do what may be necessary without interference from you or from Mr. Maltby, and at the same

time carry out my agreement with the importing firm of Quinn & Maltby."

She flushed at being so harshly silenced, and sat motionless, her eyes upon the carpet—a strange Chinese fabric, tawny gold like a lion skin, upon which a dragon figured, snapping at what seemed to be a plum-pudding on fire.

3

I waited three weeks for Cabasso to careen and carry his guns and stores aboard again, before I careened *The Happy Parrot.*

The weather remained clear and sunny, though somewhat cooler than I had expected. I had extra osnaburgs for the kaffle when José Segrada and his Kroomen smuggled them across the Georgian border by way of The Cat-and-Kittens Tavern.

Before I had done with *The Happy Parrot*, Segrada and his Kroomen were back with the profits. My share was near ten thousand dollars—the first money I had made since the embargo was laid.

Segrada had mixed our blacks with tame and home hatched negroes, and had sold them with a wink in Savannah, where all fetched fancy prices, vastly exceeding our calculations.

Government agents were about, he said, watching the proceedings, but seemed unwilling or unable to interfere.

I had a draft on New York for Cintra. She took it, looked at it, said nothing, but I saw the flash of bitter tears in her eyes as she turned to the window and stared out at the February sunshine where gold globes of ripening oranges hung like little lighted Chinese lanterns amid green shadow.

After a while, not turning her head, "What are you going to do now?" she asked quietly.

"Carry out my agreement with your late uncle."

"Continue slave smuggling?"

"I engaged for four voyages. Three remain to be accomplished."

"I wish we were at war with England!" she exclaimed, "which would put a stop to it all!"

"Meanwhile," said I, "*The Happy Parrot* is ready to sail for New York with our gold, ivory, pepper and ebony. Do you choose to sail aboard me, Cintra?"

"Certainly."

"I am thinking," said I, "of Captain Nanfan."

After a silence: "His hatred for this ship concerns me on your account," I added.

"Would he hang me, too?"

"You may guess what fate would be reserved for you if he took *The Happy Parrot*."

"Yes. . . . But you can lend me your pistol again," she said coolly.

Our bargain forbade my interfering if she chose to sail with me. However, I took the occasion to reason with her. To no purpose. And never, I

concluded, had God fashioned so stubborn a woman as Cintra Strake.

"After all," she said, "*you* sail; and if Captain Nanfan carry you by the board he is likely to hang you also from your own yard."

"If he do that, and you ashore," I urged, "you are decently rid o' me and a rich and young widow; and can afford to marry for love and purchase a pretty craft, and sail with an agreeable husband to see this same world which so stirs your curiosity."

She gave me an odd look. A half smile grew upon her features, and faded.

"I could do that now," said she, "with you alive."

"Well, then," said I, "rogue that I may be, I am not rascal enough to live on my wife's dole. And I tell you again that you had better divorce me and take a husband for love and sail with him all over the world if it suits you."

"I am wondering," said she, "why you harp so fervently and generously upon divorce?"

"To have you rid of me—and be rid of you!" I replied bluntly.

"Are you, by chance, in love? Were you in love with some other when you married me?" she inquired, smilingly. "And do you desire to marry a wife? Or, perhaps, several? . . . Like José Segrada and Dr. Sauveur?"

I told her, drily, that I had no taste for blacks of any tint, or for harems, or for a wife, either.

"Are you candid?" she asked, laughing. "You can scarce suspect me of jealousy, you know."

I told her I was candid, and that I knew she did not care a cowrie what I might do.

"Well," said she, laughing, "in that case I do not wish a divorce. Because," said she, "who knows but some day we may find it convenient to consult each other concerning the responsibilities and—duties of the—married state."

That this was an impudent pleasantry I could not doubt. I gave her an ironic look for her sarcasm:

"On what," I asked, "does so desirable a consultation depend, madam?"

"Upon *one* thing alone."

"And what may that be?"

"I shall never tell you," said she. She laughed again, considered me a moment, then her gaiety left her—suddenly—and she walked to the door and out along the path under the orange trees.

Thus passed our honeymoon. And the time of ending it drew nearer.

4

The Black Joke sailed in March. It was near the first of April before I was ready to weigh and sail for New York with my gold in dust and bar to the amount of $60,000, and near three ton of prime teeth, and Paradise Grains in twenty bales.

For ballast I had reckoned on West Indian molasses to keep the pious, whining New Englanders busy distilling their filthy four-proof rum.

But there came into the river the brig *Goldfish*, of Providence, John Windless, master, a week out of Havana, with a cargo of molasses, who gave an account that he had been chased by Buke Gooly and another pirate called Charlie Chatto, or Chatty.

So, for ballast, I took on live-oak planks, not wishing to fight these skulking sea-wolves with my wife aboard, and nearly ninety thousand dollars cargo, including my own profits from Black Ivory.

I had caused the blue peter to be hoisted at the fore; I was ready to take my leave of Segrada, and of Maltby, who remained here awaiting *The Scaur*, Captain Raunt, another of the company's craft, to take passage to New York.

All was ready; Cintra's boxes and my chest aboard, when I left *The Happy Parrot* and came ashore to fetch Cintra. Passing through the palmettos I could hear the distant axes of the blacks in the live-oak growth along the creek where they were cutting timber for *The Scaur's* ballast.

I soon came into view of the villa among its orange and lemon trees, and saw all the black servants gathered in an agitated group by the gateway, and Segrada and Maltby there, and others.

When they saw me they seemed astonished.

"Sare," cried Segrada, "are you ver' bad hurt when these live-oak fall?"

I did not understand him, but instantly perceived that something was wrong.

"Where is my wife?" I asked Segrada, looking all around for her, and then toward the house.

He rolled frightened eyes at me and his jaw fell, baring the dazzling teeth.

"Mr. Maltby," I said in alarm, "where is my wife?"

"D-dam-my eyes!" he stammered in his scared falsetto voice, "I don't know where she is if you don't! Didn't you send a nigger to her to tell her you'd been hurt by a falling tree?"

"When?"

"I don't know," he squealed, "twenty minutes ago—wasn't it, José?"

"*What* nigger?"

"I have not see him," said Segrada excitedly.

I went through the gates and came to the group of blacks,—her wenches, mostly.

"*What* nigger came to tell your Mistress that I had been hurt by a tree?" I demanded.

They were so frightened they could scarcely speak. Her maid Coquellette managed to explain that none of them knew the nigger who was yellow and had a cast in one eye.

Into my alarmed brain flashed the swift scene aboard Buke Gooly's yawl—the leering visage of that yellow negro, one of whose snaky eyes had a cast in it.

Poor little Coquellette pointed a dusky, trembling finger to the forest: "Yonder to where they chop, she follow black boy ver' quick," wailed the girl.

"Twenty minutes ago?"

But negroes understand nothing of time.

On my way out of the gate I said to Segrada: "Don't fire an alarm gun. Get what armed men you can and take the trail to the live-oak woods. I think Buke Gooly has got my wife!"

I started to run, but halted again: "If Buke Gooly or Captain Nanfan have got her, their vessels will be lying near Cumberland Inlet. If she's a prisoner with a shore party, they have to cross St. Mary's River to get to Crooked River where their long-boat must be waiting. Follow me as fast as you can!"

A sickening fear seemed to weaken my legs and clog my speed as I ran down the dry, brown trail toward where I could hear the sound of axes in the live-oak woods.

I had two loaded pistols in my belt, by mere chance, and a sea-dirk swinging in shark-skin on my left hip. No gun.

A great live-oak went crashing to earth as I came to the new clearing, and saw, scattered far and wide, naked negroes waist-deep in palmetto scrub, hewing, splitting, sawing out planks.

The Krooman overseer shook his head at my breathless question. He had seen a white missy and her black servant passing far to the left toward

St. Mary's crossing, but they had made no stop here.

"Tell that to Señor Segrada when he comes," I said; and I turned to the left, running through palmetto scrub until I came to the wide kaffle-trail leading across St. Mary's River, thence to Crooked River, and ultimately to the smugglers' border tavern called The Cat-and-Kittens—from which place all negro slave-runners ventured into the United States by way of Georgia.

It was a wide, deep-trodden trail, this smugglers' road to Georgia. It was seldom travelled by honest folk, only by outlaws with their human booty, and usually by night.

It ran nearly straight to St. Mary's Crossing; and there was not a soul to be seen upon it. As for footprints, the baked marl left no impressions except ancient traces,—imprints made after the last rain weeks before.

My sensations were of rage and fright—fury, that any man dared lay hand on what was mine; deadly fear for what might be in store for Cintra.

For it was becoming plainer every instant to me, as I considered this outrage, that the carronades and long gun, and the jeering tongue of the late Captain Quinn, had aroused in Buke Gooly and in Captain Nanfan an unquenchable hatred for the man they hanged, for his ship, his officers and crew, and for everybody and everything in any manner related to the business firm of Quinn & Maltby.

They had stopped *The Mischief* near Cumberland Island, taken off the slaves, robbed and plundered the hold, hanged Captain Quinn to his own top-mast, and burned his sloop till the magazine blew up.

Now they had tracked the Captain's wife and made her prisoner under the very cannon of the factory.

At St. Mary's Crossing I saw the flat-boat on the other side, and the old, grey-headed negro ferryman sitting in it, his head bowed in slumber.

In vain I shouted to him; his slumber was the sleep of death. For whoever he had taken across had paid him with a dirk, still sticking deep between neck and spine. All the bottom of the boat was afloat in blood, and a very hell of flies whined and whirled about him.

I had crossed, swimming, both pistols held high in my left hand.

Somewhere between where this poor negro sat murdered in his boat, and The Cat-and-Kittens Tavern, I must overtake Cintra and those who held her captive.

God knows how I found wind and heart to run as I ran, clearing limpid, sandy brooks at a leap, springing from one cypress to the next to shorten the trail, traversing great fallen trunks like a squirrel, then, shoulder deep in silver-grass amid pine flat-woods, weaving across arid land to intercept the smugglers' trail again.

Like a terrible pulse hammering in my brain the thought persisted that their long-boat lay waiting at the river's mouth, and that I must overtake them before they embarked.

My heart seemed like to burst my chest; the whipping grass cut my hands and face and scourged my eyes till they were near blinded.

Overhead followed me two birds shaped like giant swallows, ink-black with snow-white heads and forked tails—diving, floating, darting till they near bewildered and drove me mad.

Twice that fish-stinking Death lifted a swollen and lustreless body to show me fangs set in a white maw. One I stumbled over, and saw the venom squirt out like two jets of watered milk as the death-stroke missed me.

Now, blinded by sweat and sword-grass, my lungs bursting my ribs, reeling on, I know not how, in my roaring ears I heard a crash and a loud drumming sound; and saw, ahead of me, five deer galloping westward in noisy flight as though terrified by something ahead which suddenly had surprised and startled them.

How I mastered my shattered senses and recovered them and my breath, I know not.

There were people just ahead; I heard them; I saw movement among the oaks where a branch flowed out of jungle growth.

As I ran forward, crouching, I saw and picked up a sodden stick of cypress, heavy as iron,

and felt its clubbed weight no more than a feather.

Now, close to me, from the silver-grass, I saw a man sprawling on his belly to drink from the branch. He wore a strip of scarlet strand around his temples, a wide leather belt, heavy with pistols, and a musket lay across a cypress root beside him.

Creeping close to him in the silver-grass I found it convenient to fetch him a hearty clout with my cypress stick; and his skull caved softly like an addled egg, and he never even quivered.

Crouching close I got hold of his musket, and squatted there to peer ahead, listening.

There were people on the other side of the thicket. I made a rustling in the palmetto scrub, and could not avoid it, but they must have supposed the noise was made by their dead comrade, for I heard them call out to him to finish his quaffing-cup and hasten.

When I crawled to the thicket's edge where was hammock and palmetto and pine, I could see men seated, and one fellow standing up.

He it was who, hand to cheek, yelled to his dead comrade. I found it convenient to shoot him in the lower belly with one of my pistols. As the weapon exploded he doubled up, his head dropping nearly between his knees, and he made a somersault and lay squirming.

Up jumped four men among the palmettos. One I shot with my other pistol, breaking his jaw,

which set him a-roaring. Then I let another, who was running toward me, have the guts of my musket; and you would have thought he had run into a stone wall the way he stopped and rebounded, falling with a heavy flop, stark on his back.

And even as he fell I saw the yellow nigger with a cast in one eye. He was aiming a pistol at me, and I fell flat at his fire, then dragged my dirk clear o' the shark-hide sheath and made for him.

He waited only long enough to hurl his pistol at me, turn, and run; and the other fellow was running also, gun a-trail, and never pausing to employ it.

As I came leaping through the palmetto scrub, there, almost under my feet, lay Cintra staring up at me out of starting eyes grown almost velvet-black with fear.

They had stripped her naked to the waist and tied her hands; and her white, virgin body was all striped with dry blood where palmetto blade and edged grass had whipped her. I say they had tied her wrists; but it was worse, for they had fastened them in front of her with slave's manacles, from which fell a leash of hide, which is the manner of fettering required by every dealer in the slave trade.

I stared down at her, cast a swift look after the distant fugitives, dropped on my knees beside her.

She was fastened very brutally to a snake-like fold of palmetto root; and only that the key to the

manacles was left sticking in the lock I never had been able to get her loose and on her feet.

"Have they otherwise harmed you?" I demanded.

She strove to speak; shook her head. Her lips were still white from fear; in her eyes' depths I saw horror unutterable.

I took her arm in mine to support her: "You must walk," said I. "We dare not linger here."

She was so stiff that she staggered and dragged her limbs. I was too spent to lift and carry her, but I held her up; and, God knows how, got her moving along.

Near where the man lay whose brains I had knocked out, I saw his sack lying, and, finding it full of cartridges, and a priming flask, slung it over my shoulder.

As I urged Cintra on, holding her up as best I might, I heard a sudden floundering in the branch reeds, and saw the man whose jaw I shattered, crawling off into the morass.

So I led Cintra a little farther on; then I sped back and shot him dead with my musket. And hoped I might live to do the like to every wretch aboard *The Lazy Lass* and *The Love Dove*.

It was a long way to St. Mary's River. Part of the way I made out to lift and carry Cintra, who lay lightly enough in my grasp, God knows, her eyes closed and her face like death's own mask.

At St. Mary's Crossing I had to set her on the ground and go and drag the poor old murdered negro ferryman from his boat.

I dared not linger to turn it over and rid it of the blood, but lifted Cintra to the stern seat and made her crouch there whilst I poled across.

We were across, and I had lifted her once more into my arms, when, bang! went a musket behind us.

I carried her to an oak and set her down behind it; then, lying flat, peered across the river.

That Buke Gooly's people were following, and had come up with us, was certain. Or it might have been Captain Nanfan's rogues.

I did not wish to hold the ferry; I wanted to get my wife aboard *The Happy Parrot*. But I had no choice; for already three agile fellows, stripped to their belts, were in the water and wading across.

"Lie still!" I said to my wife; then, taking a long aim with my elbow as a rest, I fired on the foremost man, and heard the bullet smack into him. It knocked him halfway to shore where he fell backward in shallow water, yet settled under it upon the sand and lay adrift there.

The other two men were swimming with their guns held up dry. One of them dropped his gun, dived, and swam for safety. The other, braver, or more blood-thirsty, swam on, still managing to keep his musket dry by holding it balanced across his head,—I reloading all the while as fast as I could.

I found it convenient to let him land; and he was rising, all dripping and looking eagerly around to get a glimpse of me, when I let him have it straight through the head,—the big ball hitting him full on the nose and tearing his features to fragments.

I could catch glimpses of other men across the river, running here and there among the river reeds and brush. If they swam over above or below the ferry I was a dead man. And Cintra worse than dead.

I spoke her name; and found her on her knees behind me, trying to see across the river.

"Can you walk? Even run a little?" I asked in a low voice.

"I think so. I'll try."

"Try," said I. "Segrada and his men can not be very far away."

Even as I reloaded my musket I heard the trample of men in the woods, coming from the direction of the factory.

"Here they are," said I, getting up to aid her; but she was already on her feet, her face no longer pale but suddenly burning hot, and the crimson flush invading even arms and body in one common glow.

"I—I wish," she stammered, "that you would lend me your coat to cover me."

I now became as red as she as I stripped off my coat and, averting my gaze, offered it.

In silence we listened to the approaching men, very noisy in the brush. Across the river Gooly's rascals also heard it; and I could hear them leaving the reeds—see the sparkle-berries and mangroves shake and quiver where they were splashing shoreward and moving off.

"José!" I shouted.

"Hiou! I approach!" came his near, excited cry! "Have plenty courage, sare! I am here—me—José Segrada!"

Cintra, resting wearily against the great oak, closed her eyes, opened them, looked straight at me without expression.

"I have to say," she said with difficulty, "that you have used me this day with great kindness."

"Any man," said I, astonished, "would have done the like."

She said in a low voice:

"You could have let me go—a surer riddance than divorce."

"You thought me rogue enough?" I asked sharply.

"Worse. When they sprang upon me I thought you might have planned it so. . . . To be sure rid of me who would not divorce you. . . . I am ashamed to say it. And ask your pardon. I begin to understand men. What they might freely give away they will not permit themselves to be robbed of."

But I was so thunderstruck at her black opinion of me that I remained silent, my gaze bent upon

the ground, now reddening in the level rays of the setting sun.

"Hiou! Hiou!" yelled Segrada, bursting into view through the underbrush, a musket over his shoulder.

So ended our honeymoon—a full six months at sunset since the day and hour I married her. And never once from her even the touch of her finger tip in kindness. And yet, on this day, I had striven to save her body as I would not strive to save my own soul alive from hell. I was bewildered to understand myself. For I could not believe that love, brooded by indifference and aversion, could hatch out devotion so overwhelming and headlong as had been mine. And I asked myself in dazed amazement why such a very delirium of rage and anguish had possessed me, and how I was conscious of a desire to die if evil befell this woman who entertained for me no slightest shadow of consideration.

"Jesu-Marie!" gasped Segrada, panting up to where we stood, "—is it that any harm have arrive to thee, Señora? My wives have beg me to inquire."

"Many thanks, Señor," said Cintra with a pallid smile, "but Captain Strake's—harem—has survived—intact. . . . Virgo intacta." She looked deliberately at me out of deep blue eyes; and I saw two tiny cat's-paws sweep them and darken them to stormy purple for an instant.

Then Cintra flushed and turned gravely to Segrada:

"Señor," said she, "Captain Strake is a very brave and gallant gentleman. And I pray God may give him a son, some day, to inherit such gallantry and courage, lest the world lose it and be the worse off."

Too often wounded by her irony, I did not dare to understand her.

"Can you not comprehend what is due you?" said she, looking oddly at me.

Then, taking me by the hand, which she had not done in the six months: "Carry me aboard your ship, if you please, sir," said she, laughing in a strange and nervous way, "for I seem to have turned into a kind of devil, too, and dream only of a fatal reckoning with *The Love Dove* and *The Lazy Lass*."

"I promise you," said I, "that if I fall in with *The Lazy Lass* I will hang Buke Gooly at his own masthead."

But the feverish stain of colour had left her face shadowy and wan with pain. I supported her by the arm as she limped along beside me, and I heard her whimpering under her breath, "Oh, Lord—oh, God of Mercy, is this, then, Thy world I am seeing, after all!"

CHAPTER VI

THE LOVE DOVE

I

FOR the first time since I married her, my wife and I seemed to be becoming friends. I do not mean in the sentimental manner. In her there never had been any tenderness for me that I was able to perceive. And as for me, I still feared her irony and ridicule.

If, perhaps, the slight personal courage I had displayed was a little redeeming me in her opinion, I was not to forget her contempt of any man who was engaged in a lawless trade—both lawlessness and the trade itself being repugnant to her.

Moreover, I could scarcely doubt her real opinion of a man who had married her for money.

Once, after *The Happy Parrot* sailed from Amelia Island, she made a veiled allusion to it—something in a humorous manner—light yet mirthless—concerning the money paid me for marrying her.

"If I were bribed," said I, "so were you bribed to marry me."

There was some slight heat in my retort, smelling a little of quarrel.

"We both seem to be something depraved," said she, "—and you in particular."

"If you are winning my respect," said I warmly, "why may I not win yours?"

"Then wash your Black Ivory white, sir."

"You speak like a Quaker or some other pious hypocrite!" said I sharply.

"I? A hypocrite?"

"You told me yourself that, in France, your parents owned little blackamoor slaves like that vile Zamoor of the poor Countess Du Barry!"

"It was the custom—"

"It is now. Plenty of fashionable folk in New York own slaves. Your intimate friends, Mrs. Betsy Hunt and Eliza Osborn own them! Do you entertain a contempt for the Lockwoods—all those respectable, pious people of Poundridge Manor? Do you scorn Alsopp Hunt, then, because his wife dines with a little black slave, in a yellow turban, behind her chair to chase flies and wait upon her?"

She remained flushed and silent.

"Also," said I, "your late uncle told me that he maintains a country seat at Cross River in Westchester, where you are accustomed to pass the summer heat; and that all your servants there are black slaves."

"They were *his*," she said, biting her lip. "I shall free every one when I return to New York."

I felt that, for the first time, I had the better of Cintra. But I was too wary of her to pursue the matter.

To look at Cintra one might think she was in her soft and blooming teens; and I had to keep reminding myself that I had to do with a woman of twenty-three, and with no maid of bashful sixteen, however young she might seem to an admiring eye.

She had come into my cabin that day to sit idly upon my bunk and pick and strum upon a banjo which one of José Segrada's saddle-coloured wives had sent aboard *The Happy Parrot* to amuse her.

During our sojourn at Amelia Island, Cintra had seen and heard the almost continuous singing and dancing at Segrada's, where he had nearly a hundred negroes, long since tamed, and many raised there on his own plantation.

So she let the subject drop, which was irritating us both to the verge of a quarrel, and, sitting cross-legged on my bunk, began to dick the banjo and sing softly under her breath one of the interminable songs she had so often listened to:

" *Pat a juba-juba-juba,*
Tump de drum an' blow de tuba,
See de Goofa-jack a jumpin',
Don' you stop de drum a-tumpin',
Lawzee, hear de banjer talkin' !
Lawzee, hear de ju-ju squawkin' !

Bite de yam an' chew de gooba,
Pat a juba-juba-juba,
Shuffle kaffle, shuffle, shuffle,
Niggers dee ain' got no duffle ;
Quit yoh sobbin' ! Pat a juba,
Tump de drum an' blow de tuba,
Shuffle-shuffle-shuffle-shuffle,—
Buckra mek de Krooman scuffle ;
'Spec de dab-a-dab am comin';
Strike de bell an' set her hummin',
Keep a-drummin'; blow yoh tuba;
Pat a juba-juba-juba—"

I was writing up my log of the last two days, but I found my feet tapping the floor to the rhythm of her measure.

"Can you dance it?" she asked laughingly.

"Not the way they do," said I.

"*I* can."

Those dusky ladies we had carried on The Middle Passage had an odd and wanton way of dancing,—not moving their feet much, if at all, but waving and flinging their arms about and twisting their bodies until, from the haunches upward, they were but one serpentine undulation.

"You pick juba," cried Cintra, thrusting the banjo into my lap.

So I picked rip-a-tink! rip-a-tink! and she slid from the bunk to the floor and stood with her feet together swaying and weaving her arms with much

wild and dainty grace, and none of that vicious African wantonness which seems disgusting to a white man.

The frolic, revealing our growing comradeship, was very honest and innocent, and started us both laughing—I picking away at the banjo, she drifting like a wind-stirred flower on its stalk—when, of a sudden, I heard our look-out's cry: "Sail-ho!"

Going on deck I hailed mast-head and learned that a schooner was bearing down on us.

So I took a trumpet and went into the rigging to observe her.

The wind was light but steady; she was standing in for us from the open sea under a cloud of sail—a New England built vessel, I made her, and so did Mr. Wild.

When she was within a half mile of us she let fly the United States revenue flag and fired a gun.

So we hove to, and very soon she hailed us:

"Ship ahoy! Ahoy! What ship?"

"*The Happy Parrot* for New York, in ballast, Captain Strake. What ship are you?"

"The United States Revenue Cutter *Madison*."

The two ships were now running almost side by side, the *Madison* just abaft our beam.

An ironical officer in a navy blue coat, his face framed to the ears by the high gold-laced coat collar and cravatte, looked across at me.

"We know *The Happy Parrot* very well," he called out, "and she's under suspicion and so's her captain and her crew!"

"I'm sorry you entertain suspicions of Quinn & Maltby's ship, sir—"

"I do! You're a slaver in ballast and you know it, sir!"

"If you feel that way," said I, politely, "I hope you'll condescend to come aboard us, sir."

"Thanks. Very kind of you. I'd find aboard you what I discovered aboard *The Black Joke*. Which was nothing."

I laughed; but his responsive grin was grim and menacing.

"Do you think, sir, that your lawless traffic can continue? You'd better quit before you're caught."

"Sir," said I, "if you are looking for lawlessness, you'll find plenty aboard *The Lazy Lass*, Buke Gooly's pirate ship. And aboard *The Love Dove*, Captain Nanfan."

"Yes," said he, "we're watching for such craft as those, and Charlie Chatto's *Tigerette*,—and yours. The trouble is to catch them."

We were outsailing the revenue cutter, drawing ahead very fast on the same tack.

"I wish you good luck and a real war!" I shouted as the distance widened. "The day you stand for free trade and sailors' rights, and clear for action, I'll clear, too. And you can say so to your poltroon of a President!"

When I went below, Cintra said: "Did you mean what you said to that revenue officer?"

"I did."

Her face flushed and her features were working.

"I'd welcome the day," said she, "that brings you a letter of marque, if it beggars me."

"In the meanwhile," said I sarcastically, "I require daily bread. A letter of marque is no good to a dead man."

"You have ten thousand blood money, and fifty thousand more of me—"

"I have ten thousand Black Ivory money, hard earned," I retorted, "and not a penny more!"

"My uncle's debt is mine!"

"I cancel it!"

"Half my fortune is yours, too!" she cried in a temper, "and you know it!"

"Of which," said I, "I'll never touch a penny. And *you* know *that!*"

"Why, plague take you!" she stormed, "what are you so tender and nice about when you were bribed to marry me! You were, weren't you? It was your bargain with my uncle, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but I don't choose to carry it out."

"You have no choice. I'm your wife, am I not? You've completed your part of the bargain—"

"And I wipe the slate clean of *your* part, Cintra."

"Listen to me!" she said excitedly, "didn't you marry me because you were paid to, and for no other reason on earth?"

"I don't know why I married you," said I, "but it was not for that reason, anyway. . . . I don't

know what I did it for," I cried, exasperated. "Let me alone; I've enough to worry me."

2

The weather grew very hot; the wind failed; we were becalmed so often that we were no nearer Sandy Hook than Topsail Inlet; and our water-butts stank.

So, as there was good water and good anchorage inside, and a little wind and sufficient tide to take us over the bar, I took *The Happy Parrot* in and came to an anchor off the ruins of that ancient and notorious tavern of Tom Cocklyn, who turned pirate and was hanged.

For Topsail, in the last century and earlier, had been a great rendezvous for the old-time sea-rogues, where they put in to careen and carouse and to fill their casks with sweet water from Tom Cocklyn's spring in the woods behind the tavern.

It seemed a desolate spot with its dunes and tall, black melancholy pines; and no habitation, only the ruins of that rascal's tavern with its great crumbling chimneys and half the roof tumbled in, and staring at us out of gaping windows as empty as the sockets of a skull.

I had sailed from the factory with a crew of fourteen men, all told—all I needed to carry to New York and back again, where I could increase my complement to thirty-odd when again I sailed for the Guinea coast.

So, having come to an achor, I called all hands to water, leaving one foremast man and a boy aboard to man the tackle and hoist in our water kegs.

When we broke out the kegs we found 'em foul and guinea worms in several; so I ordered them to be well limed and scrubbed before filled.

It was a little after one in the afternoon, and I told Mr. Wild to be lively and keep the men busy, because I meant to weigh with the ebb.

It was very hot; the hatches were off and the hold still smelled of vinegar and tar-smoke—which, however, is better endured than flux, fever, small-pox, and ophthalmia.

I said as much to Cintra who came on deck complaining of the stench.

"The thing to do with this ship is to burn her," said she in disgust.

"Yes," said I, "I know your views."

She seemed to feel the heat. She wore a frail kind of wrapper or levete of surah gauze, sandals, and a Barbary girl's vest and drawers of thinnest silk. I myself wore only my shirt, trousers, and boots.

She said she desired to go ashore, and sit in the cool, and smell the pines.

So I signalled the gig, and we rowed ashore. I had limes in my pocket and a bit of cane; and a boy fetched us cold, sweet water. So I made a bombo for Cintra.

We were sitting, I remember, on the door-sill of the tavern a-sipping of our bombo. Cintra had

kicked off her sandals—she had lovely little feet—and was turning around to peep inside the doorless room which seemed to have been a tap-room, when suddenly she screamed; and, as I leaped erect, three men sprang on my back, and I fell crushed and smothered by the weight of bodies.

When they had tied me, wrists and elbows, and had jerked me upright, I looked for Cintra. She was gone, and her sandals lay by the door-sill.

The shock of it—as though from a blow on the head—still confused me, and, for a few moments, I could not see clearly.

Other men were around me now. I heard somebody ask where Cintra was. Somebody said she had run into the woods.

Then, in the instant, the horror of it blazed in my brain. It was all over with us now—with Cintra, with Mr. Wild and my men in the pine woods beyond, with me.

All these men crowding about me carried guns. They were Buke Gooly's men, or Nanfan's. They would massacre all—Cintra—everybody! God! if I had had a pistol and could have warned Wild with a single shot—

"Tie his feet," said a hollow voice behind me—a gusty, lungless, whispering voice—Buke Gooly's.

As the fellow stooped to obey he laid his cocked musket across the door-sill. Before any could notice or prevent, I kicked the set-trigger with all my might, striking it fairly with the toe of my right

boot and discharging the gun into the empty room.

The explosion was deafening, and no cannon shot could more loudly alarm Mr. Wild and my men than did the roar of that musket between narrow walls and shattered windows.

"God's death!" screeched Gooly, "who fired?"

Around me a tumult of imprecations rose, and a dozen fists struck at me, blocking one another in their ferocious eagerness, so that only a blow or two reached me at all.

Then I heard a calm, precise, bantering voice—and, God help me, I recognized it for Captain Nanfan's:

"Really, my dear fellow, he can't get away, you know—all trussed up like a basted turkey!"

At that Gooly ran at me like a great spider and gave me a kick, and stood grimacing, baring his spongy gums at me, speechless with a fury so dreadful that it paralyzed what ghostly voice he had.

Meanwhile, Captain Nanfan blew a boatswain's whistle, and I heard him ordering his men, in his precise, mincing voice, to scour the woods and fetch in what prisoners they could secure.

"And be at some pains to find that young woman," he added. "I never shall forgive myself if she should decline my invitation to our little pleasure party."

Buke Gooly's excess of fury subsided as suddenly as it had seized him; his features became as colourless as a deflated bladder. He was sweating; he

panted, showing his diseased gums again; and, to cool his head, he took off his great, flapping hat with the red wig sewed to the lining.

"A bad blunder," he wheezed in his hollow voice,"—I saw him kick at Bimbi Jim's gun, but couldn't stop'm—no—couldn't stop'm. Now the mate and the crew's run off into them woods, some'rs. Yuss. They'll get away in the bush sume'rs, Captain Nanfan. Yuss."

He sat down on the trunk of a great pine fallen across the dooryard. Behind him I saw one of their ruffians on sentry with naked cutlass and musket strapped across his back.

Beyond I could see *The Happy Parrot.* I had left a man and a boy aboard her. I could see a dozen fellows lining her rail, their weapons glittering in the sunshine.

Then I looked at Captain Nanfan. He was taking snuff—with a manner—daintily yet grandly—and I could smell the vanilla bean in it and the cologne on his handkerchief.

He was a young man, tall, slim, elegant, with a small, lipless mouth, long nose, and the eyes of a dead codfish.

A tangle of rich brown curls crowned a narrow head. His blue coat was wasp-waisted and the collar and choker invaded ears and chin.

Otherwise he was immaculate, too, in doe-skin breeches, gilt-top boots and tassels, and a waistcoat of primrose silk heavily flowered in purple.

"Do you take snuff, sir?" he said to me.

I declined.

"A tiresome habit ordained by fashion," he remarked, dusting his nose and fingers. Then he sauntered toward me.

"Be seated, sir," he said politely.

I sat down on the lintel. After looking me over very coolly, Captain Nanfan selected a gold penknife from a bunch of seals and gew-gaws dangling from a fob. Opening it leisurely, he walked mincingly up to me, severed my elbow and wrist cords, and the twisted rag that confined my ankles.

"There," said he, "I fancy you feel more comfortable, sir. There is a vulgarity about bonds and shackles. I never use them aboard *The Love Dove*."

"No," said Gooly in his ghastly voice, "the dead don't need 'em, and nobody lives long aboard *you!*"

Nanfan seated himself on the fallen pine; looked at me amiably:

"Life is an odd thing, and brief, sir:—a sigh and a yawn *en passant;* time for a lungful or two of air and a glance about you—" He shrugged and drew a pistol from the breast of his buttoned coat. This weapon he cocked, examined thoughtfully, then, holding it by the butt, rested it across his knees.

"Life is a wonderful mystery, sir," he said. "And yet, a pinch of saltpetre, a little charcoal, a splinter of flint, a drop of lead—and zip!—this

wonderful mystery called life is ended! . . . Are you a philosopher, sir?"

"No," said I.

"A mistake, sir—if you permit me," he said gravely.

"Yuss," wheezed Gooly, "it teaches you it's no good yelling for God when you know you're done for."

"Some," said I, "are not inclined to yell for anybody."

"Sir," said Nanfan in his precise voice, "that was a remarkable combat you maintained at St. Mary's River."

I nodded, absently, my tortured ears intent and straining for any sounds from the woods. For such deathly fear was in my heart concerning Cintra that I had to summon every atom of fortitude I possessed to show any countenance to these two ruffians.

If only I could know that she was safe from them.

"Captain Strake," said Nanfan languidly, "I have taken your ship. If you choose to sign articles with me she's yours again."

"I can't do it," said I.

"Why?"

Cintra was the reason. Suddenly I understood it. But I did not enlighten him.

"Why not?" he repeated. "You smuggle niggers. I don't. I merely rob the smugglers of their niggers."

"You prey on all flags," said I, wearily.

"Oh, yes," said he coolly, "I take any flag. Even a black one."

"Yuss," barked Gooly, "you fired onto me, and that's how I first knowed you. Yuss, and you'd a took me if the man'-o'-war hadn't scared us both. . . . And the next time we spoke each other we dipped flags and drank Madeira on my quarter-deck."

"*Drôlesse oblige*," remarked Nanfan, precise in his perverted irony.

So terrible was my apprehension regarding Cintra that I could scarce control the trembling of my body; and only the rage in me that these dung-hill bandits should see it, and feel pleasure, nerved me to subdue it.

"So you hesitate to sign my articles," said Captain Nanfan, gently.

"I can't sign them."

Gooly's windy, almost voiceless laugh indicated his satisfaction.

"No," said Nanfan to him, "you are wrong. With such a man, and you, and me, and Charlie Chatto, we'd take the next West Indian fleet. . . . And go and live in Italy. Ah, romantic and immortal Rome! Venice! Sicily! Ah, there to dream away the magic hours—"

He thrust his left hand into his breast pocket and drew out a thin packet.

"Sir," said he, "permit me to read a poem I have written, called 'Venice.' No doubt, after I am dead, some dishonest poet will pretend to it."

Gooly opened his toad-like mouth in a silent grin.

Nanfan, his cocked pistol in one hand, his manuscript in the other, read aloud in a fastidious, affected voice:

I

" *In Venice the Red*
All human life seems dead,
No floating torches burn,
Not a lantern.

II

" *Lonely above the strand,*
Towering o'er sea and land,
The Great Lion broods on
The horizon.

III

" *Gathered below in groups,*
Gondolas and sloops
Seem, in the shadow deep,
Sea fowl asleep.

IV

" *Gently the misty tide*
Cradles them side by side,
Rocking them rail to rail,
Flag and furled sail.

V

" *Leisurely, with grace,*
The Moon hides her face,
A web of vapour pale
Her ghostly veil.

VI

" *Thus the austere Abbess*
Of Sainte Croix doth dress
With white stole, chastely,
Her surpliced knee.

VII

" *Each aged palace vast,*
Gates, fountains of the past,
White steps where Duke and Count
Mount and remount,

VIII

" *Bridges and ancient ways,*
Sad statues, crumbling quays,
The dark gulf which rocks
Splashing the docks.

IX

" *All are still—save the guards*
With their long halberds,

Pacing the pierced wall
Of the arsenal.

X

" This hour more maids than one
Long to be wooed and won ;
Many their gallants wait
By wall and gate.

XI

" Many a dainty guest
For a masked ball dressed
Still lingers at her task
To tie her mask.

XII

" Vanina's silky head
Lies on her scented bed ;
She clasps her lover fast,
Asleep at last.

XIII

" Narcissa's laughter gay
Ripples across the Bay
Where the spectral lagoon
Reflects the moon.

XIV

'Ah, who in Italy
Is innocent of folly?
Who in a cloister stays
Through rose-crowned days?

XV

" Let the old clock-tower tell
The old Doge, with its bell,
How old and sad is he
Who sleeps with ennui.

XVI

" Whilst, on thy lips, my belle,
My lips count and tell
Of all our kisses given,
Or forgiven.

XVII

" Lying within thy arms,
Let us count all thy charms
And every tear of bliss
That seals our happiness."

While he was finishing, his half-naked men, with guns on their shoulders, continued to come out of the woods all around us. He merely glanced at

them and went on reading, but Buke Gooly was restless.

When Nanfan had finished he lifted his fishy eyes to mine as though avid of praise.

But I had scarcely heard him for my ears had been strained toward distances far beyond his mincing words.

" I perceive, sir," said he in a pained tone, " that you are no poet."

" You won't be anything at all in a little while," added Gooly.

A lank, shambling ruffian shuffled up and reported to Captain Nanfan that there were empty water-casks at the springs, but no trace of mate or crew.

" Were you at pains to search for the young woman? " inquired Nanfan in a penetrating yet stealthy voice, that had in it, somehow, an element of terror.

Yes, it appeared that they had beat up the thickets, but to no purpose.

I drew a deep, long breath. My gun-shot had done its work.

3

They did not tie me. Nanfan walked on one side of me, Gooly on the other. Behind me padded a yellow negro who had a cast in one of his eyes.

I had no idea of how I was to die. All I knew was that I was to die. Nobody needed to tell me. It was in Nanfan's dead eyes; in Gooly's; in the

slitted snake's eyes of the yellow nigger. It was in the features of all: it was in the air, in the forest, in the sunset sky,—death. The end.

When we arrived at the beach I saw Nanfan's blowsy brigantine, *The Love Dove*, at anchor near the inlet; and Gooly's schooner, *The Lazy Lass*, a cable's length astern; and both within pistol shot of *The Happy Parrot*.

They rowed me across to my own ship. And, as I touched the deck, instantly I guessed at the fate reserved for me; and the rigour of it, and its frightfulness, stiffened me with horror.

When I could master my voice I asked Captain Nanfan if I might speak to him aside.

He stepped a little way apart with me.

"Can't you shoot me?" I begged. "Or cut my throat—"

Oh, God, what pale and deadly eyes were his as they looked upon me. And his prim, lipless mouth was smiling.

"Really," he said, "my men are entitled to some slight diversion, sir, considering their disappointment in the woods."

While they were taking some casks of powder aboard and while Gooly was measuring and cutting a slow match to his satisfaction, I sat upon the after hatch, looking on. But my thoughts were all with Cintra.

The yellow nigger had found a board and some black paint. On the board he drew a skull.

Under the skull, in sprawling letters, he painted,

MERRY CHRISTMAS

While he was aloft, nailing this to the masthead, Gooly pulled me by the shirt sleeve and pointed out to me the corpses of the man and the boy whom I had left aboard *The Happy Parrot*. The skulls of both were battered in and their windpipes cut to the very spine.

"Yuss," croaked Gooly, "what we done to Captain Quinn and his sloop, we'll do to you, to Maltby, and to every ship the company owns. Yuss. That's our idee; a Merry Christmas to all—like Captain Quinn wished Captain Nanfan. Yuss."

Nanfan came sauntering, regarding his watch.

"I'll trouble you to go aloft, sir," he said to me.

I know now how the wretch feels whose nerveless limbs stumble up the gallows stairs.

When I stood up, aloft, the yellow nigger tied my hands behind me. A rope carrying a hangman's noose dangled beside me. The yellow man drew it over my head and adjusted the greased slip-knot under my left ear.

Just above me was nailed the board bearing the painted skull and Christmas greeting.

Nanfan, standing just below me in the rigging, hailed the deck:

"You may light the match at your convenience, Captain Gooly."

To me, looking up out of his dead-fish eyes: "You can always end it, you know. Just step outward, sir, and all your troubles are over."

I understood. I was to hang myself or be blown to atoms with my ship. Was that what they had done to Captain Quinn? Did *he* hang himself?

And, as though divining my fearful thoughts: "Yuss," yelled Gooly in his gusty voice from the deck, "Cap'n Quinn he hanged himself with his own playful words when he wished us Merry Christmas and gave us a broadside to confirm it!"

"I'm afraid," said Nanfan primly, looking up at me, "that your legs may fail you before your ship is destroyed. Legs are feeble props, sir. Faith is stronger. So put your faith in God, Captain Strake, —and a Merry Christmas to you!"

When he arrived on deck he lost no time but left with Gooly and the half dozen ruffians aboard *The Happy Parrot.*

I could see them rowing to the inlet, Nanfan going aboard *The Love Dove*, Gooly boarding *The Lazy Lass.*

Presently both ships weighed anchor. Then Gooly let fly a black flag at the fore and a bloody one at the main, and gave me a gun in derision.

There was a brisk land wind, and *The Lazy Lass* made sail and ran before, standing south by east across the bar.

The blowsy brigantine was slower, and seemed a slut at minding her helm. I saw all that passed

in the red sunset light like a dead soul waking in hell.

And the apathy of death itself was on me, I think, when the dull throbbing in my ears was shattered by a musket shot.

I opened my eyes and saw a cloud of smoke flying up from *The Love Dove's* quarter-deck. Then, bang! went another musket; and then her taffrail swivels spat flame; and I heard the shot strike our bows and go screaming aft through our rigging.

For a moment I thought they were making a target of me, and I prayed for a bullet to help me.

Then, suddenly, crash! went *The Love Dove's* long gun, and the solid shot shrieked past me. And at that instant I saw below me my first mate climbing over the stern—caught a glimpse of our long-boat swarming with my own people. They were all over the deck in the next instant—and it seems that, for better sport, Nanfan had left us with shotted guns and all our loaded shells on deck so that the explosion would be well worth watching when he was safe at sea—for now our long gun went off burying the deck in smoke; and all the forecastle guns were firing.

Into the rigging sprang Mr. Wild, but I shouted to him to run for the after hold and cut the burning match.

As he looked up at me with blanched face and dropped to the deck again, I saw a slim shape in

a Barbary woman's scarlet vest and drawers climbing the rigging with naked feet, a case-knife between her teeth.

When she came up to me she slashed at the rope, nearly strangling me, then sawed it desperately, clinging to the spar with one hand, until the noose fell to the deck below.

Then, busy with my bound hands, she finally freed them, so that I could grope dizzily for support and cling for a moment.

God knows how I got to the deck without falling. Our anchor was atrip, now, and Wild wore ship to bring our starboard broadside to bear on *The Love Dove*.

To my dazed eyes she seemed but a black and strangely distorted hulk all awry there in the cannon mist; and the flames from her larboard broadside appeared to burst straight upward.

Into my deafened ear Wild shouted: " She's on the bar and all heeled over, sir! Our broadsides are ripping the copper from her! Look, sir, she's on her beam ends! Our shots are tearing the keel from her! "

Then, on the forecastle, I heard Weems' voice bawling:

" Stand by to repel boarders! "

But there was only a single boat under our lee bow; and the desperate men who boarded us were slashed, beaten, torn to pieces by our frantic crew

using hangers, rammers, belaying pins, solid shot—anything to crush life out of them.

I had the barrel of a stockless musket, and was fighting with it when I saw Nanfan.

He sat in the scuppers, his back against the blood-spattered bulwarks; one hand, nearly severed, hung by the skin; both legs, shattered, spread out crazily. He had been shot through the body; the poem which he had read aloud to me was sticking out of his breast pocket. He was still alive.

When I came near him he opened his eyes of a dying fish, and the rictus jerked his small, thin lips apart. I saw them shuddering, shrinking, forming soundless words in dying and precise syllables:

"A Mer-ry Christ-mas—sir—"

Behind him *The Love Dove* was all on fire.

CHAPTER VII

BLACK IVORY

I

THE HAPPY PARROT lay in Burling Slip, New York. The crew had been paid off. They lost nothing; they had $1,500 each—every foremast man and boy. The second mate, Gene Weems, drew $3,200; Mr. Wild, first mate, had $6,000. I had nothing. I had lost my wages as Captain, and all emoluments and my bonus, agreeable to agreement and according to the articles I had signed with Captain Quinn; in all about $20,000 which was taken from me in cash and dust aboard *The Happy Parrot* by that filthy pirate, Buke Gooly.

Not one farthing was due me; not a penny had I saved; and when I went ashore in New York harbour I was as naked of fortune as the day I sailed, nearly a year before.

It was true that the late Captain Quinn had agreed to pay me $50,000 for marrying his niece, Cintra, who now had been my wife for almost a year.

But, though Cintra had inherited both his fortune and his debts, I stubbornly refused to let

her liquidate his debt to me. I did not even know why I turned so squeamish; my wife was not in love with me nor I with her. Yet a sullen resentment and a smouldering shame possessed me for having consented to such a bargain; and, now that Captain Quinn was dead, I continued firm in my determination to cancel the debt.

Not only that, but I wanted nothing of my wife's fortune. I wanted only work, and was determined to take the only work that offered—which was to smuggle slaves from the African coast—all other activity by sea being closed to sailor-men by the timid poltroonery of my own countrymen who permitted and endured this infamous embargo.

Well, the first thing I did when I went ashore was to go to the offices of Quinn & Maltby, and draw from Captain Brindle—who was a third partner—a month's pay in advance on account of my next trip to the Guinea coast.

In the same dim little den in Rider Street, smelling of cloves and pineapple rum, I drank Madeira and ate lichee nuts with Captain Brindle. Day after day I repaired thither to arrange for my next cruise, and contrive how to regain the money lost that year by piracy—the theft of ivory, gold, and pepper bales, and the robbery of more than $100,000 worth of prime slaves taken by Nanfan and Gooly out of the sloop *Mischief* on that fatal day that Captain Quinn determined to carry them to Savannah by water instead of by the overland route.

Captain Brindle, with many imprecations, urged me to take no coastwise risks, saying that every petty pirate was now engaged in preying upon slave-smugglers; and that there was no redress for us because we who smuggled in slaves from the African coast were legally outlawed and classed as pirates, too.

The embargo filled me with sullen rage. I had no intention of starving to suit the cowardly policy of my Government. Further, I honestly considered the forbidding of the slave trade on the African coast a law passed by hypocrites and fanatics—many of them vast slave-holders themselves, and, at this very moment, engaged in the coastwise traffic in slaves, which was permitted by law under the forty-ton clause.

Such pious hypocrisy nauseated me; slavery was permitted in every state of the Union; there were, in the United States, a million and a half slaves.

As for the institution of slavery, it was as old as history, and honest men considered it right.

Only two countries forbade the African slave trade—England and the United States. Yet, if it were not for black labour the world could have no sugar, no rice, no indigo, no tobacco.

More than that, negroes were far better off on American plantations—where, being valuable, they were well treated and well fed—than in their own jungles subjected to indescribable cruelties, slavery, starvation, disease.

Now, concerning the domestic situation existing between my wife, Cintra, and myself, it seemed to have mended considerably.

We were on terms of polite friendliness. Her humour was uncertain, and I suppose mine was, too, but we got along when together, and, sometimes, appeared to regard each other almost as comrades.

She could be entertaining; and seemed to find me so. Not that I understood her. I did not. But at moments I had an odd idea that this girl understood me—possibly, at moments, better than I understood myself.

When we went ashore I had no intention of living at her handsome house on Market Street; but she asked me to, pointing out that scandal would follow if I lodged elsewhere.

So I occupied Captain Quinn's former quarters separated by the corridor from Cintra's.

For a while we saw little of each other during the day, she being vastly occupied with lawyers, and I refusing to meddle in the settling of Captain Quinn's estate.

Also, she ran about to shop and visit friends, using her late uncle's horses and carriage driven by a black coachman, Zack, who, to my ironic surprise, turned out to be a slave. So was the footman, Duby; and, later, to my intense amusement, they confided to me that my wife had offered them their freedom, and that both had declined the well-meant manumission.

There came a day in May when the sun assumed full and final sovereignty, and all the budding trees on the Battery put out tender leaves, and tulip and primrose starred the park.

That day I had intended to dine at the City Tavern and return to Rider Street where Captain Brindle was still profanely busy over ledgers, casting up profit and loss.

Cintra sent Debby with word that she desired to speak to me in her bedroom before I left the house. So I knocked and went in; and discovered my wife in bed with her chocolate tray, very childish and frail and lovely in her clipped curls and lacy chamber robe.

"I wondered," said she, "whether you would make a few calls with me. People begin to consider it strange that they have not seen my husband."

"I didn't know you wanted them to," said I, honestly.

"Why not? You are presentable, I hope—perhaps too much so," she added, smiling, "—because Eliza Osborn saw you come down the stoop and she declares you are the handsomest man she ever clapped eyes on."

The jest embarrassed me, and I was aware I had turned red and that Cintra was amused.

So I told her, briefly, that I would go with her; and so left her to spend the morning listening to Captain Brindle's fearful imprecations.

That afternoon, among others, we called upon Mrs. Betsy Hunt and Eliza Osborn; and I noticed

a little black boy in a turban who waited upon Mrs. Hunt; and he had rings in his ears and Turkish pants with green and gold birds on them. More slavery in pious New York.

Well, little Miss Osborn blushed and turned shy, but presently found countenance in Cintra who sat with one arm around her.

Were it not a vulgarity I should say that these two young ladies seemed, at times, on the verge of giggling. Possibly Mrs. Hunt thought so too, for once or twice she cast stern glances on them, which subdued both.

In fact, any severity from Mrs. Hunt was calculated to subdue anybody; for I could see instantly that she was a lady of firmness, capability, and determination, and thoroughly understood herself and everybody else.

We had seed-cakes, guava jelly, a glass of exquisite Madeira, and, for me, a thimble of spirits so old and rare that it was like breathing the exhalation from a garden in dewy bloom.

We made many calls. A number of people had known my father. All were polite.

Concerning Captain Quinn, we said only that he had died at sea. Which was sufficient, considering the rumours afloat.

On the way home I noticed that the city had changed considerably during my year of absence. Old houses were being torn down and new ones a-building everywhere—and all this spite of the em-

bargo which ruined so many. Fashions, too, were changing, and I looked curiously at the extravagant coats and chokers and pantaloons of the young bucks on Broadway.

We passed the new City Hall a-building, which promised to be a magnificent structure of white marble standing at the northern end of a handsome park. The westering sun struck it with ruddy, level light, turning the marble a rose pink.

"They mean to surmount the cupola with a figure of Justice," said Cintra.

"They should stuff the President of the United States with the Embargo Act and set him up there," said I. "And hang Congress from the park trees."

Cintra seemed shocked.

2

Now I was determined that my wife should not sail with me when I sailed aboard *The Happy Parrot.* To permit her to expose herself to such perils as we must expect in line of duty seemed wicked and wrong—and merely because she desired to "see the world" and "discover how other people lived."

But I made up my mind that she had "seen" enough of "the world" aboard a slaver. A fine spectacle for a young lady nearing twenty-four! "Yuss!" as Buke Gooly used to say.

Upstairs among my papers I had the poem which Nanfan read to me. It was stained with his blood.

In my mind's eye I could evoke the end of that sunset day at Topsail Inlet—the fat brigantine on her beam ends, afire, the surf spouting about her across the bar, and our carronades smashing her copper bottom exposed to our every broadside. I could see the distant sail of *The Lazy Lass* melting away upon the horizon. I could see myself, hands bound, a hangman's noose around my neck, swaying up there at masthead on the verge of eternity. I could see Captain Nanfan in his gore, mutilated, dying, opening his glazing eyes and quivering lips to jeer at me with dying breath. And I concluded that my wife has seen all she ever was going to see of " the world " aboard *The Happy Parrot.*

I told her so after supper as we sat in the parlour by early candle-light, playing a game of chess —a diversion taught her by her late uncle.

" You know," said she calmly, " *The Happy Parrot* belongs partly to me."

" A third of her—yes," said I uneasily. " Nevertheless, I forbid you sail with me."

" Do you suppose a captain can forbid his owner? " she asked, smiling.

" A husband can forbid his wife."

At that she became serious. " I want to go," she said, but gave no reasons.

As I continued firm she demanded my reasons for denying her passage.

" I tell you," said I, " that the horror of your situation at St. Mary's River haunts me yet."

"If you argue so passionately," said she in a railing voice, "I shall begin to suspect you of a secret tenderness for me."

"I have come to regard you as a friend," said I, "and as pleasant company. Added to this, you are a woman and my wife; and you may ask yourself what my feelings must have been when you were in the hands of the vilest men who ever lived in any age."

After a silence, during which she seemed to study her position on the chess board: "—And what, sir, do you suppose are my emotions when I know you are exposed to the perils of piracy as well as punishment for carrying on a lawless business?"

"I suppose," said I, "that they are a natural aversion to having any husband of yours taken or shot as a smuggler. But that can't be helped, madam."

"So you regard me as without any sensibility whatever?"

"No; we are friends—seemingly. More than pleasant companions we are not, and so I scarcely credit you with any particular tenderness concerning me."

"Have you ever displayed any for *me?*"

"Once—but let that alone, now—"

"Do you mean when I discovered you kissing Debby's niece—"

"Let it alone," I repeated, reddening.

"Yes," said she, "it is not to be handled without tongs."

We finished our game in silence, she taking my queen and driving me into a corner where, presently, after counting pawns, I resigned.

"When do you sail?" she asked, leaning back in her chair and resting her narrow white hands on the table's edge.

"Monday—if wind and tide favour."

"I shall go," said she, "—if you go."

"You shall not stir a step."

"I shall go as far as Amelia Island. . . . And await you there."

"No."

She sat with both hands extended, playing with the ivory pieces. Suddenly she gave a kind of sob, averting her face and covering it with both hands.

"Good God," said I, "are you still so unstable, so wayward and wilful, so infatuated with travel that you can not bide at home at all?"

"I want to go," she said in a choked voice.

"Why, for heaven's sake?"

"I don't know. But I want to go."

That was so utterly feminine that I could neither understand her nor argue longer.

As though divining what I was thinking she said very pitifully:

"I know why I want to go. But I can't tell you. I can't. And I want you to let me go."

"Very well," said I, bitterly; "I suppose I can go through hell again, knowing the way very well, now."

"I promise to be no trouble to you," she whimpered. "And—didn't you find me pleasant company toward the end of the trip?"

"Yes, I did. And felt kindly and friendly. And suffered torture on your account at St. Mary's."

"Torture?"

"Damnation, yes! Do you suppose I could regard such a fate for a friend—or for any woman—unconcerned?"

After a silence she took a tiny handkerchief from her bosom and employed it about her eyes and nose.

"Sometimes," said she, "I begin to suspect you of a kind inclination for any woman—if she be well-favoured."

"Well," said I, "a year has passed; and have you noticed it?—except for an instant's silliness with that wench below stairs?"

"You seemed inclined to visit Dr. Sauveur's harem."

"That was your malicious imagination."

"Oh. . . . Have you noticed any malice in me lately?"

"No—not malice," said I; "but there is raillery in you, sometimes, which I don't understand."

"No," said she, touching her cheeks with her scented handkerchief, "you wouldn't understand. . . . You are becoming quite kind to me, whom once you threatened with a rope's end. Would you really have used it on me?"

"I might have," said I, honestly.

" Oh, lord," said she, " I am beginning to believe you might have, too. . . . There'd be some excuse if—you—loved me—"

She sprang from her chair and, running to the corner where her harp stood, kneeled down on one knee and clasped it to her breast. Ripple-tinkle! Ripple-tinkle went the strings; and her head fell back as she sang like a little bird toward heaven:

" *Oh, what is Love ?*
It is a jealous thing,
As cruel to a shepherd as a King,
And crueller, too ;
For Kings have concubines to cure their woe,
While shepherds mourn the only nymph they know—"

3

I weighed and sailed on the 26th day of May, as penniless as the day a year ago when I signed articles with Quinn & Maltby, importers of spices; and other goods.

And, vastly to my concern, and utterly against my wishes, Cintra sailed aboard me.

And now, to be honest, I have to say to you who chance to read this journal, that it was not alone the dread that my wife might suffer injury or death, or worse, amid the hazards of my unlawful business. No, there was another reason why I did not desire her aboard *The Happy Parrot.*

Because I had resolved to commit a kind of villainy, too; and meant to stop, take, and plunder the first sea-rogue I could overhaul—any coast pirate preying on negro-smugglers like myself, or merely sailing On The Account, or, as I was, engaged in the African trade. It would make no difference to me whether he attacked me or not; I meant to attack and take him and plunder him of every negro aboard him, and of every ounce of gold, every elephant tooth, every pepper-corn, and so recompense myself and, at the same time, be revenged on that jaunty, careless, and impudent freebooter-brotherhood which had meddled so ruinously with me and my affairs, and had beggared me after a year of moil and toil to better myself.

I was sorry that my wife should witness such double lawlessness in me, but determined, nevertheless, to commit it at first opportunity.

After the peril of a night's run without lights, through the Sandy Hook patrol so impudently maintained by British men-o'-war, when day broke we had brisk winds and fair skies and saw no patrolling sail upon the sea.

Hatteras was gentle as a coo-cooing dove; and the swift sailing of *The Happy Parrot*, and the bright, favourable weather, afforded us only pleasure —although, the second day, two United States Revenue cutters followed us—the *Madison* and the *Gallatin*—old acquaintances both—but we put to sea and easily outsailed them, and, the third morning out, they were not to be seen.

It was my policy, as I have said before, to avoid all ships so as to be spoken by nobody—for I was none too good at lying, my face usually betraying my tongue by a kind of sickly blush and some stammering.

Once, on the eastern horizon, we saw the British West Indian merchant fleet—more than two hundred sail—convoyed by a seventy-four, three frigates, and a snow or two. They passed in towering majesty across the world's far edge; and I thought to myself, God willing, that some day I would be waiting for that same convoy to help repay a few among countless insults, indignities, and wanton tyrannies practised by such ships upon the ships and commerce of my native land.

It was, I believe, our wise Dr. Franklin who remarked that, though we had fought the War of the Revolution, we had yet to fight the War for Independence. God knows how true it was; for even a British Admiral admitted that England would never for a moment submit to the insolence which she practised daily upon America—stopping our ships when and where she pleased, and taking from their crews men for her own Navy; forbidding our ships to trade except by her own permission; blockading our ports to search any outgoing vessels on flimsy pretext or on none at all; firing upon our ships and slaying American citizens on their decks—yes, committing such murders in the very shadow of Sandy Hook.

And, like a yellow dog, my country ran with tail between its legs to cower in its kennel for fear

of further kicks. Thus commerce died, and I, among thousands, had starved until I chose to become a lawbreaker instead of a corpse.

Where were the old sea-dogs of the Revolution —men of the *Bonne Homme Richard*, men of *The Lexington*, men of *The Ranger?* Were they all dead, then, like His mighty Excellency at Mount Vernon, leaving the presidency to timid demagogues who abased themselves and their high office to curry favour with the rag-tag and sans-culottes and swap their silver shoe-buckles for shoe-strings!

His Excellency, wisest of the wise, entertained no illusions regarding the heterogeneous mass of stupidity called "the common people," which will remain "common," ignorant, and stupid as long as they remain a mass; and only those who climb out of that mess of maggots ever can grow wings.

I said as much to Cintra where we sat drinking bombo on the quarter-deck—I think I told you that *The Happy Parrot* was a crazy craft and no ordinary schooner, and had as good a poop as any brig!—but Cintra replied that she believed in the plain people. Which made me laugh because she never knew any except her household servants and the crew of my schooner.

About sunset we saw a sail which we took to be a British frigate. She made for us but we put to sea, and night ended that chase.

The following morning, however, a dirty little Portuguese privateer had the temerity to chase us and fire a gun to stop us and let fly his flag. I showed the United States flag; whereupon he fired at us again. Which so disgusted me that I slackened sail and let him come abeam, within pistol shot; and then, loading with bar-shot, let him have the guts of our long gun, which broke his foremast and smothered him under a mass of wreckage.

There was a great yelling aboard her and she lost no time in striking to us.

So I went aboard her in a rage and scolded her skipper, and took out of her some casks of Oporto wine to teach her a lesson.

Then, ripping her flag from the halyards, I threw it into our long-boat, and, bidding him go to the devil, went aboard my own ship. He seemed grateful that I did not hang him to his own yard.

All this occurred under Cintra's excited eyes; and she told me that she considered that legitimate warfare and rejoiced in it and would not have missed a view of it for half her fortune. Further, she thanked me for not punishing the Portuguese or committing any cruelty aboard him.

Which annoyed me, and I asked her if she had thought me bloodthirsty.

" You raged like a devil at St. Mary's," said she.

" If I had not," said I, " where would you have been this day? "

She shuddered but smiled at me: " You, with

your strength, your temper, and—your rope's end—are something of a brute," said she, " but I find your brutality convenient in the hour of peril."

I reddened and requested her to forget the rope's end, which had been only a sullen threat and no more.

" I wonder," said she, staring so intently at me that I blushed again with annoyance; whereupon she laughed and sipped her bombo, watching me out of brilliant, unfathomable eyes.

However, we were friends at dinner, and tried a glass of the Portuguese Oporto together—which was muddy and required proper rest, ageing, and bottling.

" 'Tis not like that port you once gave me," said I.

" Ah," she cried impulsively, " that was a gay and charming day! "

" Sometimes," said I, " I wonder why the charm and gaiety ended with the day."

After a silence she said carelessly: " It seems to be reviving."

I know not what impulsive word was on my lips to reply, when I heard the cry of our look-out aloft: " Sail-ho! "

A moment more I was on the quarter-deck where Mr. Wild had the wheel.

She was very far away under our weather bow and standing toward us almost on our own course.

When she was nearer we made her out a tall ship but did not she look like a man-o'-war to me. Mr. Wild thought her a merchant and an Englishman. She had painted ports but they were not triced up.

I called Gene Weems aft, and he thought she looked like a Yankee making The Middle Passage.

"A slaver?" I demanded.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you should know a slaver when you see one," said I. "At any rate, I shall not sheer off for her."

"Sir," said Mr. Wild, "do you desire to have her speak us?"

But I was not in the humour for running away and I told him so. "Unless," I added, smiling, "she shows us a lower row of ports and behaves rudely."

I went into the rigging to have a look at her. I can't say what there was about her that I did not like. Not that I felt any fear of her.

However, I hailed the poop and ordered Mr. Wild to beat to quarters and clear for action. Cintra came on deck, hearing the bustle, but I called to her sharply to return to the cabin and keep it until we learned what to expect of this fellow.

The stranger now broke out the Spanish flag. We let fly the United States ensign; and when within hail I set the trumpet to my mouth:

"Ahoy! Ship ahoy! What ship?" I shouted.

"*The Malabar Maid*, Captain Endor, nine weeks from the Guinea coast with teeth, spices, and precious woods!" came the impudent reply in rough, swaggering English. "Who are you?"

I named my ship and myself, and asked him whither he was bound. He said Havana.

" I could have told you that! " said I in a jeering voice. " When did you find it convenient to sell your ship to a Spaniard, Captain Endor? "

It was a trick of the British slaver on the African coast to " sell " his ship to a Spaniard and stand out to sea under Spanish colours with his contraband cargo, thumbing his nose at British cruisers. Then, once at sea, he " bought in " his ship again. But this fellow had not yet done so, apparently.

But he smelled the old-time slaver a thousand leagues; and he incensed me with his jibing voice, and taking me for so flat a fool.

" Come, sir," I repeated, " when did you change your ship's name? "

" Well, damn your Yankee eyes and snout! " he shouted, " you stow your bilge or I'll change *your* name and sell *you* to a Gold Coast nigger! Clear out," he yelled, " or I'll come aboard and twist your muzzle loose! "

Now, in order to talk to us he had clumsily backed both his forward and after sails, and I had laid my main topsail to the mast, so we both were hove to—*The Malabar Maid* with ports triced up and tampions out of her guns.

Instantly it came into my head to take her by the board—which would be an act of sheer piracy, having neither marque nor any regular commission. Yet that she was an English slaver I was now confident, and, if so, she had no redress.

Even before I had come to this conclusion I was

on deck and calling away boarders. And it was a swift and pretty sight to see our boats overboard in a trice and my drilled rascals tumbling into them.

I had a glimpse above me of Cintra's white face, her startled voice asking me what I was about, but I ordered her below and came near swearing at her with the fidget she caused me.

"She's a slaver!" shouted Mr. Wild. "Look at the sharks all around her!"

"Careful, my lads," said I, "it won't do to fall overboard."

From *The Malabar Maid's* quarter-deck I heard a roar of astonishment and anger; hoarse voices, imprecations, a drum beating to quarters. Above us her carronades were exploding raggedly in a kind of running fire as we swarmed up and over her bow, slashing and buffeting aside the wavering pikes that opposed us.

She had so small a crew, and such a miserable, poxed lot they were, that I was almost ashamed to cuff and kick them aside as we bore aft where their captain, a great, beefy fellow, stood cursing and flourishing a musket to no purpose whatever.

And, oh, my God! the stench aboard *The Malabar Maid* when Mr. Wild knocked off the hatches and the hold vomited stenches like a belch from hell itself!

Captain Endor, deprived of his musket, fell a-bellowing about British flags and Yankee pirates, but I pointed to his Spanish colours and laughed in his distorted face.

But it was no laughing matter. The slaver was a festering horror.

She had a beam of twenty-eight feet and length between decks of one hundred. This small space was divided into three compartments; and, into these, nearly seven hundred negroes had been jammed and crammed with no more than three feet clearance for headway, and obliged to lie without moving, the head of one upon the chest of another.

Three-fourths of them, men, women, children, had died—some of the suffocating heat, some of putrid fever, some of thirst, others of fright and despair. Women manacled to rotting corpses gave birth to babies, unattended; girls blind of ophthalmia lay chained to others dying of smallpox or gone insane.

And the ferocious avarice that was guilty of this wickedness overreached itself: for, of seven hundred slaves bought and paid for on the Guinea coast, only two hundred now stood trembling on the deck of *The Malabar Maid*—wretched, emaciated, terrified creatures—cringing at the very sight of Captain Endor when I drove him forward at pistol point to confront them.

At first he was truculent and defiant, sneeringly admitting cruelty, cursing the negroes for diseases they had communicated to his crew. He acknowledged that he had heartlessly cast overboard the day before what sick, blind, or maimed creatures remained, and defended his actions by the nearness to Havana.

I wasted no more words with him but mustered his crew and set them to bathing every slave with sea water, then sponging each with vinegar, then rinsing them with sweet water.

I made them heat belaying pins, and soon had the deck aswirl with tar and sulphur smoke.

Those of his miserable crew who could use razors, I made to shave every African head, cleanse each slave of all vermin, rub each with palm oil, and knock off all leg and neck fetters, and unshackle all females and children.

When this was done I sent them away to *The Happy Parrot*, boatload by boatload, until all were aboard and stowed, and our cook beginning to feed and water 'em with the best—and ordered a draw of brandy bitters for them, too.

All this time Captain Endor stood glaring between a couple of my brawny men with naked cutlasses, ready to prick his fat flanks if he stirred.

And now I drove his crew below, with a few hearty kicks, to break out what cargo he had to suit me; at which Endor roared with rage, and yelped when pricked with the steel points.

I took from *The Malabar Maid* forty cabess of cowries, twenty ankers of brandy, forty bales of Grains of Paradise, six hundred ounces of gold dust in grain, dust, and bar; and six tons of elephant teeth.

It was sunset when I was done with *The Malabar Maid*.

As for this hell-bound skipper who now had lost all his effrontery and seemed too scared to swear, I was in two minds, whether to hang him or trice him up for two hundred lashes. And did neither, but had all his guns spiked and then ordered him below, with a hearty kick to confirm it; and so, leaving him his Spanish flag a-flying, went aboard *The Happy Parrot*, made all sail, stood in for the Florida coast, and left *The Malabar Maid* and her master in the doleful doldrums.

It was piracy. What else? Well, let him run to the Admiralty and complain.

The thought nearly stifled me with laughter. Mr. Wild was grinning, too.

4

At dinner Cintra asked me calmly why I had plundered the stranger, and I replied, as calmly, that he didn't know how to take care of negroes, and I did.

Our bulwarks had suffered, and we had been hulled; so Chips was busy the next day.

So was I; for I wanted no outbreak of disease aboard *The Happy Parrot*.

I don't suppose those negroes ever had been fed as I fed them with strong soups, rice, and beans with palm oil, mutton, peeled yams boiled with pork, biscuit, sago, and boiled fowl.

I served out towels, spoons, basins, pannikins.

They were obliged to wash their hands and faces before and after meals, and use lime fruit juice to cleanse mouth and nose; and chew sticks of aromatic sweet lime twigs to clean their gums and teeth.

About noon they had to wash all over and oil themselves with palm; then they were served a mess of bread and sweet pudding. At four they had supper, and at six were sent below for the night. And the very first night I heard them feebly singing in the darkness of the clean-scoured hold.

I had no linguist aboard, as Quinn & Maltby's ships always took them on at Amelia Island when outward bound.

However, Gene Weems, my second mate, was something acquainted with African tongues; and he tried to talk to the blacks, but with no success.

They were a gentle lot, of a light and rather pretty brown colour, sensitive to kindness, graceful, well formed, but not very robust ; and seemed more fitted for household servants, to be petted and indulged, rather than for field work and ruder labour.

In the few days I had them aboard they improved amazingly in spirits and sleekness; and gave us no trouble whatever, so that—although they were two hundred to our twenty—I took off all shackles and gave them the run of the deck and set only one armed man at the gratings at night.

Cintra was enchanted with the children and played with them on deck. She cut up a few fathoms of cotton and taught the little girls to veil

their nakedness. She taught them, also, to sew; and showed the little boys how to play hop-scotch and chuck-penny.

"If I were wealthy enough," she said to me, "I'd buy them all and set them free."

"Yes," said I, "what would they live on?"

"I don't know; I'd take them back to Africa. They'd find something to eat there, I suppose."

"Yes; and find somebody to eat them. . . . The kind of nigger who files his teeth and raises ridges all over his face and flanks."

"Do all negroes eat negroes?"

"Some eat; some are eaten. That's life. Some are masters; some slaves. That's the world. Wits win; not muscles. And wits are relentless, Cintra, and dominate at any cost."

"In France in '93," said Cintra, "stupidity overthrew wit."

"No. Keener wit organized stupidity and used massed imbecility for its own ends."

She sighed, linking her fingers, her gaze remote and troubled; as though something of the cruelty of life were beginning to dawn in her mind.

In the morning our watch aloft hailed land. We were off Cumberland Island, and stood in west by south for the Sound.

I was troubled to notice that sharks followed us. Mr. Wild called my attention to them. But sharks follow slop-buckets sometimes.

As we headed in Cumberland our mast-head made out a sail behind the dunes and sang out lustily, naming her rig—a schooner's.

But I was not to be crowded out of my way so near to the factory, and bade Mr. Wild hold his course; for I could out-fight or out-run any of the recent Mr. Jefferson's gun-boats; and I had information before I left New York as to where were cruising revenue craft and sloops of war.

So I cleared for action and kept on; and saw the schooner, presently, gliding out of the inlet and making eastward on a long tack as though to intercept and speak to us.

" Let her," said I to Mr. Wild.

Presently up went her flag—United States colours. Then she let fly a jack and dipped it politely, coming about and awaiting us hove to.

As we drove by her she hailed us. She said she was *The Jungle Cat*, coast trader, Captain Nix, with logwood from the Isthmus, bound for Boston; and she wished to send a boat aboard us to speak with me.

Mr. Wild did not know her, nor did my second mate. She rode high as though in ballast, as claimed; I could see no name painted on her.

" Very well, sir," I replied, " come aboard."

She had already launched a boat. Mr. Wild and I watched it intently, and I told him that if this was a cruiser or revenue craft I meant to pitch the skipper and his boatmen over my rail, give them a broadside, and run for the open sea.

It turned out to be the mate who came aboard. His skipper, he said, was ill, and wanted to see me on business. He said it would be a profitable business for me, and begged me to waive ceremony and return to his vessel.

"What do you make of that?" I asked Mr. Wild.

"Probably," said Mr. Wild, "he wants to get rid of something he dare not carry in to Boston."

"Are you in the Black Ivory trade?" I asked the mate, bluntly.

At that he grinned and gave me a wink. He was a villainous-looking fellow with buckteeth and warts, and wore a queue in eelskin to his waist.

"Well," said I to Mr. Wild, "here may be a bargain. We are but a short run to the factory, and can carry what we buy on deck."

So I told the mate of *The Jungle Cat* that I'd pay a call on his skipper, but I'd use my own boats. "Boats," I repeated, emphasizing the plural.

I could not see whether he was pleased or not, but he did not appear uneasy, and went back to his ship without further words.

So, discounting treachery, I launched three armed boats; and when I went aboard this Captain Nix I had what men I needed at my back, and a couple of yawls prowling under her bows and stern.

The instant I entered the cabin with Mr. Wild beside me I thought I had seen this Captain Nix before. There was something oddly and unpleasantly familiar about his small square face, of

a bluish cast from small-pox scars. But try as I might I couldn't place him.

He had an oily voice; pretended to indisposition; offered spirits and Madeira; both declined; and my memory striving to stir up my wits to recollection.

Captain Nix did not mince matters, nor beat about the bush. But I had been mistaken; he had negroes, but none to sell me; and he seemed to know I had some; and he wanted to buy them from me.

I was astonished. No ship had observed me whilst I was despoiling *The Malabar Maid.*

"Who told you I had slaves aboard me?" I demanded.

He readily admitted that he had spoken *The Malabar Maid.*

I quietly declined to sell him any negroes.

At that he scratched his greasy head. "Well, blow me to hell," says he, "I may as well sell you what I've got, for I haven't enough left to carry in. Come on deck, Captain Strake, and I'll break out all I have."

He led the way, helping himself along with a crutch, which, somehow, I didn't believe he required.

As I fell in to follow, Mr. Wild twitched my sleeve and said in my ear: "Look out! He's painted out his ship's name."

When I went on deck I took a look about me at the carronades, long tom, and at the crew of this strange slaver.

She *was* a slaver; no doubt of that from the smell aboard. It was blistering weather, yet this wretch had his hatches down, and it must have been hell and death for the blacks between decks.

Nix had a squeaky voice, yet fairly well oiled. As he went forward, giving his orders, Mr. Wild touched my elbow, and, not looking at me, said under his breath:

"I know. This is the pirate, *Tigerette*, and that's Charley Chatto who works with Buke Gooly!"

I do not think my face altered under the shock as I stepped forward to inspect the blacks to be turned out on deck.

But no blacks appeared, only the congested face of a sailor-man who came up as though strangling.

"What'n hell's the matter!" squeaked Chatto. "Where's them niggers?"

"Why, them niggers is all dead, sir," gasped the man.

"Dead?—the dirty sons of sluts!" yelled Chatto. "What'n hell'd they die for? Don't you try to tell me they're all dead!"

"One's alive, sir, but his hands and feet is all et off by rats—"

Chatto's small eyes turned to green sparks and he seemed to go suddenly insane.

"Fetch him up, damn you!" he screamed. "If that nigger thinks he's going to die on me like that I'll show him!"

The man descended, and presently staggered up

again, dragging a manacled black man; and Charley Chatto sprang on the dying creature with lightning ferocity, whipped a knife across his throat, nearly severing the head, and, lifting the starved, blood-drenched body, tumbled it over the side.

Transfixed with horror we stood staring, not comprehending what was being done until it was done.

The next instant I had Charley Chatto by the wind-pipe, and my men circled me facing outward with naked cutlasses and cocked pistols.

The moment I took him by the throat I knew him —knew I had desired once before to so take him.

"You dirty triple spy!" I said "—pirate, smuggler, British spy, revenue spy—you followed me in Rider Street and then betrayed my sailing to *The Melampus* spies!"

"Murder!" he screeched.

"Certainly," said I, "you have just done it. Now it's the sharks' turn!"

His awful screaming nearly deafened me as I dragged him to the side and hove him over.

As he splashed, Mr. Wild turned like a panther on the crew, and he and our men drove them headlong below and fastened every hatch.

Then we took to our boats; and, as we rowed for *The Happy Parrot*, I saw Charley Chatto clinging to a cable under *The Tigerette's* stern, silent, desperate, clawing. And round and round the drifting vessel were cruising great African sharks which follow all slavers to the world's ends.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAT-AND-KITTENS

I

THE piracy I had committed when I stopped *The Malabar Maid* and took out of her two hundred negro slaves, and other valuable sundries, amply recompensed the firm of Quinn & Maltby for the loss of slaves, elephants' teeth, gold dust, and pepper taken from the late Captain Quinn aboard his sloop *Mischief*, by the pirate Captain Nanfan.

Other accounts, also, were nearly squared now; we had lost *The Mischief* but, later, we destroyed *The Love Dove*, pirate brigantine, Captain Quinn lost his life; but so did Captain Nanfan. Besides, there was every chance that a large, African shark had terminated the career of Charley Chatto, pirate, slave-smuggler, triple spy and informer.

However, there were others like him to annoy us. Plenty. For, since the African or maritime slave-trade had been forbidden and those who engaged in it outlawed, such captains as myself, such vessels as *The Happy Parrot*, such firms as that of Quinn & Maltby, were a prey to various kinds of

human vermin—particularly Government spies and informers, and dishonest slave brokers and auctioneers who were as likely as not to attempt blackmail.

The way in which Quinn & Maltby disposed of its human cargoes fresh from Africa was as follows: from the "factory" on Amelia Island, which was Spanish territory, the kaffles, or coffles—which was a term for gangs of forty to fifty blacks—were taken by land across the United States boundary into Georgia, there to be mixed with tame, domestic, home-raised negroes, and sold as such to escape confiscation.

The "factory" on Amelia Island, with its fort and barracoons, was the receiving point for our smuggled Africans. Here they were well cared for, well clothed, taught a few words of English and also the rudiments of trades or husbandry or domestic service.

José Segrada was the factor. It was his business to see that the kaffles were delivered. In Augusta we dealt through Clay, Stoker & Co.; in Savannah through Brown & Bramill. In Charleston our dealer and broker was Noah J. Wilbur.

All these were disreputable people; but we couldn't help it, as no reputable slave dealers or slave brokers would touch consignments fresh from the Guinea coast.

Their terms were ten per cent. to twenty per cent. commission—when two and a half per cent. was the usual rate for legal negro sales. We had to pay it.

For board they charged each negro $100 when 30c was usual. All slaves were held at the consignor's risk.

As a matter of fact, these slave brokers were often hand-in-glove with revenue spies, and Government informers, and sometimes spies for the privateers and coast pirates who preyed on slavers.

Now, there was no doubt in my mind that what I had done to Captain Endor and *The Malabar Maid* would be swiftly conveyed by underground methods to every slave broker, dealer, auctioneer, agent, informer, and spy in Georgia, Carolina, and Virginia; and probably, ultimately, would spread through Maryland and Delaware as far as New Jersey.

I had taken nearly $300,000 worth of plunder which was very gratifying to Quinn & Maltby. There had been $150,000 in emeralds and diamonds among the gold dust bags, which I had overlooked at the time.

But how to realize on all this loot was a problem which preoccupied José Segrada and Mr. Maltby; and, though that end of the business was none of my affair, they had me in frequent consultation, detaining me and *The Happy Parrot* from our scheduled African trip, and ignoring my warnings concerning the September rains on that fever-cursed coast.

However, I didn't care much. The late Captain Quinn's villa, with its black servants, its luxuries,

remote from the factory, embowered in orange, lemon, camphor, and palm, was comfortable.

And now that my wife had condescended to make something of a comrade of me, and being on such pleasant terms with each other, I fretted not at all except when I thought of the rains on the Guinea coast.

To the several belles of varying shades of colour from white to glossy black, who composed the "wives" of José Segrada, Cintra was civil when she encountered them, but there was, of course, no other acquaintance. I, however, was on easy terms with these houris of Señor Segrada's harem; and I admit that, in pulchritude, Segrada was a man of taste and discernment.

I used to see these fair or dusky odalisques around his house when I went thither to consult with him and Mr. Maltby, and thought nothing of it though once, when I remained to supper, Cintra was very short with me when I returned.

Which puzzled me because Cintra was not in love with me and could not, therefore, be jealous. Yet she behaved pettishly; which vexed me.

There was an Arab girl there, perfectly white, sixteen, all carnation and ivory, with eyes like velvet pansies. Some slaver got her as a six-year-old child, among the Senegalese; *The Black Joke* fetched her here, and Segrada bought her in. He remarked that he meant to "marry" her in about a year.

She had come to our villa once or twice with messages from Segrada. Her name was Lella and her country the Djebel Amour, I believe.

I said to Cintra that Arabs are not negroes and ought not be slaves. She asked me if I thought the girl as pretty as Debby's niece.

That sarcasm further annoyed me.

"After all," I said, "if I were inclined to philander what difference could it make to you?"

"I don't care to be the wife of a Turk," she retorted.

"Well," said I with a shrug, "any lady in a Turk's household is more of a wife to him than you are to me."

She continued to sew, but her cheeks were flaming. It was just as well that she should realize the situation occasionally.

One evening when I was strolling in the garden I saw Lella outside the gate looking in, and beckoned her, supposing she had a message from Segrada.

Then she unfolded a story which troubled me. She had fallen in love with my quiet, efficient, faithful first mate, Tom Wild; and she wished him to buy her.

"Segrada won't sell you," I said.

She took hold of my hands and kissed them and I felt her tears.

"It's useless to appeal to Segrada," I repeated; "he will not sell you."

She asked me if I would befriend her, and I said I would, but that I couldn't make Segrada sell her if he didn't want to.

She said she'd speak to me again, and off she slipped like a shadow across the moonlit wall.

When I returned to the house Cintra's eyes were stormy.

"Be polite enough," said she, "to keep your love trysts elsewhere than in my garden."

"Very well," said I, amused, yet wondering why a woman who didn't want a man should object to another woman having him.

The following afternoon Maltby sent for me to consult with him and Segrada at the latter's house. Lella brought the note.

When I arrived I found Segrada bland as usual, but Maltby was much disturbed and as cowardly as he always was in a crisis, his shrill voice varying between whine and squeal.

For there was news from lower Florida, just in by a sponger, that a Spanish sloop of war was on her way to Amelia Island to investigate an alleged piracy; and Maltby insisted with hysterical gestures and fat sobs that our slaves must instantly be forwarded if we didn't wish to see them confiscated.

"I don't know where that accursed cruiser is!" wailed Maltby. "This is blackmail, this is. They're a nest of robbers at St. Augustine—taking the bread out of my mouth to starve and beggar me——"

"You, sare," said Segrada blandly to me, "shall furnish arm' escort to these Cat-and-Kitten Tavern. You will be so kind."

"That is your business," I remarked, drily. "Take your own escort and arm them in case the Spaniards cut in on you from Cumberland way."

"If I am attack," said Segrada with a shrug, "my escort he shall run. So! We lose these nigger ver' dam quick! One hunner thousan' dollar! All los'!"

"Oh, yes," wailed Maltby, "you had better go, Captain Strake. If I lose this cargo I might just as well start for the poorhouse in my old age. Yes, sir, I might as well."

He was rich and a liar. But he was also my employer, and I had signed his articles.

I said I'd go; and he begged me to depart that evening. Segrada said he'd have the kaffle ready and Kroomen in charge. Segrada's blandness troubled me.

Besides, I had no stomach for that end of the business. I did not like Maltby. I did not like Segrada, either, and had come to distrust him; and it occurred to me now that perhaps Segrada himself had secretly stirred up the Spanish authorities at St. Augustine. He might profit largely by treachery as an informer, if *The Malabar Maid's* cargo were discovered in possession of Quinn & Maltby. Who could suspect him?

All business is dirty, they say; but the dirtiest of all was the slave-smuggling business.

When I left Segrada's chromatic abode, refusing

supper, music, and dancing, I walked down toward the shore, taking a byway— a lane bordered with pink and crimson hibiscus, in bloom.

Down the lane I saw a girl with a crimson blossom behind her ear. She was talking to my mate, Mr. Wild.

When they saw me she gave me an excited smile and, seeing I had business with Mr. Wild, sauntered away a little distance to wait until I finished.

I told Mr. Wild what the trouble was. He said he'd be ready with an escort of burly foremast men, well armed.

"Sufficient, sir," said he, "to take care of the company's property."

When I walked on toward the villa I saw Lella rejoin Mr. Wild. Poor little devil.

When I went in I saw Cintra writing a letter to her bosom friend, Eliza Osborn.

We had become friendly again, and she looked up gaily from the Chinese table; but when I told her I would be away on business for a night or two her face clouded.

"Where?" she asked.

"I'm escorting the kaffles to The Cat-and-Kittens."

"Why, that is not your duty!"

"Not usually."

She was regarding me intently. And the first thing I knew she rose, flung down her pen, and walked out of the room.

"What the devil is the matter?" said I, following her.

"I don't care to discuss your escapades with Arabs."

"Do you think that—"

"Yes, I *do!*" said she. "The girl was here to-day, looking for you."

"She brought a note—"

"Probably written by herself."

It was so funny, so fantastic, that I laughed.

"If it's so," said she, "I am going back to New York."

"If it *were* so," said I, "what on earth do you care?"

"I'm going to find out if it's so," said she. "If it is, you can turn Turk if you wish, but I shall go home!"

"Very well," said I, "you had better go anyway."

Our supper was a silent affair. When it ended I went out without saying good-bye to Cintra.

There was a fine moon; one could read by its snowy lustre.

I found Mr. Wild and a dozen sailor-men awaiting me under the palms near the barracoon. He gave me a brace of loaded pistols and a musket.

Pretty soon the kaffles emerged, velvet-footed, from the barracoon, headed by Kroomen.

The blacks seemed very gay and excited over their moonlight journey. Moonlight excites all Africans.

I asked the linguist what they were gabbling about, and he said they were delighted to go and much interested in their new masters and in seeing white men's cities.

I couldn't stop their chatter and chanting, and I wouldn't let the Kroomen whip them, so it was a songful procession that started for the frontier.

The children rode in carts drawn by donkeys, and seemed enchanted. But they all went to sleep in heaps before we crossed the Savannah and, fording Little St. Mary's, came to St. Mary's River; nor did they wake when lifted into the ferry boats.

Our Kroomen drove the donkeys aboard and towed over our carts. It took us nearly an hour although we had five boats busy.

The branch we forded turned east; and presently came within half a mile of the tavern known as The Cat-and-Kittens, which was built along the river almost astride the border between Florida and Georgia—the " ordinary " being in the United States, and Barracoons East and West astride the river on piles, partly on Spanish territory.

Here, now, was peril. The Cat-and-Kittens must be cautiously reconnoitred before we dared venture to approach with our kaffles.

We had halted in a palmetto forest. The blacks had blankets, but it was sultry and they lay luxuriantly on the soft, brown litter shed by the palmettos and basked in their beloved moonlight.

As I was considering whether to go forward alone and investigate the Cat-and-Kittens or take a couple of brawny foremast men with me, Mr. Wild came up to me, and for a moment I thought he was ill, so pale he seemed in the moon's lustre.

" Sir," said he in a low voice, " a distressing thing has happened."

" What? " I demanded, anxiously.

" Lella, the Arab girl is here, sir."

" *Here ?* Where? "

He hesitated, then indicated a slender, half naked shape seated among the kaffle.

It was evident that the girl had planned to escape from Segrada. This was the way she chose.

" Were you privy to this, Mr. Wild? " I asked, sternly.

" No, sir."

" Well," said I, " the girl's in love with you and that's why she's done it. And, as it was none of your doings, I think it's your business to take care of her just as soon as we're on United States territory."

He said, after a moment: " Yes, sir. . . . I think I'll marry her."

" You can't legally marry a slave, Mr. Wild."

" She is Arab. I think I can manage it, sir. . . . If you will permit me a month's sick leave—"

I laughed: " Certainly, Mr. Wild; a severe case of love-fever. I'll just say ' fever ' to Mr. Maltby."

" Thank you, sir."

" I think," said I, " you had better leave her in the kaffle until she's over the border. These Kroomen might carry back tales to the factory if they recognize her."

" Yes, sir."

" Mr. Wild," said I, " the signal to come on is one white rocket. A red one and you must go back to the factory."

So I took a careful look at my pistols, slung a haversack across my shoulder, left the musket with Mr. Wild, and walked on through the moonlight toward The Cat-and-Kittens.

2

The Cat-and-Kittens was a great, lumbering, sun-bleached tavern standing on a treeless savanna by St. Mary's River—lonely, sinister as a cross-roads gibbet.

Four roads met there. One, crossing the river, ran south as far as the Spanish plantations on the Matanzas; one ran north to Savannah; one west into the Indian country; the other led east to Cumberland Sound and the open sea.

There were always people there—usually foul company—for few honest men had business on those roads.

Over it the moon flooded everything with so intense a radiance that the candle-lit windows glowed with a sickly light.

The door gaped wide; men stood, shadowy groups about the hallway, whispering, but fell silent when I came in.

I couldn't make out their features very well in the light of a tallow dip.

There were a few candles burning in the long room; other people there at tables or in compartments, or leaning on the bar.

I saw Jake Means, the landlord, coming up the cellar stairs with two jugs slopping full. When he had set them on the bar he came to me, wiping his hands.

"Who's here?" I asked in a low voice.

"You got a kaffle in the woods?" he asked.

"You answer my question, Jake."

"Say," he said, "you been raising hell at sea, hain't yeh? You know what you done to Charley Chatto? Well, a shark got one of Chatty's legs."

"Is he dead?"

"Naw; he's to Augusta fittin' up with a wooden pin. But Ben Endor wuz around here hollerin' like a kicked houn'-dawg. I guess he wants your gizzard."

"When was he here?"

"All this week, off'n on like. *The Malabar Maid* lies in the inlet yonder."

After a silence I asked him if there were any United States revenue agents on the border; and he said no.

"You want to look out for Ben Endor," he added. "He swears he'll catch you and sell you on the Barbary Coast like you was a nigger."

"Jake," said I, "the trouble with me is that I'm not bloody-minded. I ought to have killed Captain Endor and Charlie Chatto. Now I'm likely to be troubled by them."

"Damn likely. You got a kaffle out'n them palm woods?"

"Yes."

"I can't take care of 'em. Barracoon East tuk fire last week. Barracoon West is full of wild niggers. Feller name of Cap'n Diamond run 'em in last week. They all got filed teeth an' lumps onto their skin, an' when they fight over meals they claw and bite. Diamond thinks they et a baby. Raw. Gawsh! Well, I was a-tellin' you they're in Barracoon West and the brokers won't touch 'em, being big, wild baboons like that. So Cap'n Endor he's dickerin' with Diamond; and, as long as you took his niggers, I guess he'll have to buy Diamond's an' fix up his incoming manifest an' insurance. I got his policy. He wants that I should doctor it.

"Who are his insurance people?"

"It's The Louisiana Company—reg-lar marine policy for goods in transit—"

"What are his risks? Do you remember?"

"Men-o'-war, pirates, fire, letters o' marque, an' barratry of master and men."

"On how many head?"

"Nine hundred."

I whistled: "No wonder he wants to buy Captain Diamond's niggers. Ben Endor sailed from the

Slave Coast with eight hundred. He had two hundred when I boarded him—and he admitted he'd just weeded out and thrown overboard all the sick and blind and infirm before he put in to Havana."

"He has the name of a crool man," said Means.

"Jake," said I, "order enough bombo for two hundred and thirty people. Have the casks set along the Augusta road. And plenty of cocoanut dippers."

He went to the bar and gave the order, then returned to me.

I cast a glance around the room: "Jake, I'm going to take my negroes through. I wouldn't risk them in Barracoon West anyway. And I've a good mind to take Diamond's niggers, too. I'm in that humour."

"Captain Strake," said he solemnly, "if Quinn & Maltby's folks do that on my United States premises, Quinn & Maltby can't never run no more niggers through The Cat-and-Kittens."

"Yes," said I, "you talk like that to me, Jake, but suppose Ben Endor's men interfere with me in your Spanish back yard?"

"You took Ben's niggers."

"I did," said I, "and I'll keep them. . . . Are any of his crowd here?"

"His boatswain and second mate wuz suckin' bombo when you come in. I guess they've went, some'rs—"

"I don't care a damn if they recognized me," said I.

From my haversack I took a white rocket and went out to the cross-roads and set it off. Jake Means followed me.

"Now," said I, "if there's a fight I can't help it; I've got to take our kaffles through to-night because there's a Spanish cruiser coming to inspect our factory at Amelia."

"I knowed that, too," grunted Jake.

"No doubt. And if I knew who started her northward I'd kill him as I would a moccasin snake."

"I know," he muttered, "but I can't never tell nothin'; I got to keep my business runnin'; and I can't do it if some feller slits my whistle."

"I'm not asking you," said I, sullenly.

"You want I should fetch you a little brandy out here?"

"No; I'll take bombo, too."

He came back presently with a bowl of bombo. We were good customers; his commission was large; and he didn't care to offend Quinn & Maltby.

I had both pistols loose, and my hand rested on one while I drank.

Jake told me about an insurance company of Savannah which had recently lost $60,000 through a pirate off the Virginia Capes, who took one hundred slaves from a coast trader.

"Not," said he with a sigh, "that I ain't sailed under the jolly bones myself. But it's dangerous these days; and if *The Happy Parrot* gets the name of sea-rogue, some sloop o' war will nab her sooner nor

later. Take a old rover's advice, Captain Strake, and don't do no more nigger-snatchin' off'n gentlemen as sails polite and quiet-like in the Black Ivory trade."

" They'd do it to me. Nanfan tried it. Gooly tried it. Charley Chatto meant to, but his courage oozed out. You know as well as I do that there are plenty of vessels hanging around to stop and plunder a negro-smuggler. So I might just as well do it first."

Now, in the moonlight, I heard a distant rumour, then far voices, laughter.

" Jake," said I, " here's my kaffle coming. If any of Ben Endor's men are hanging around you may tell them from me that, if they interfere, I'll shoot it out with them to the last shot and the last man."

" I'm goin' tell them just that," said Jake, hastily retreating to the tavern.

Now the moonlight night was full of mellow and harsh sounds blending in an increasing tumult of gabble, laughter, chanting, the tinkle of light fetters, the velvety shuffle of naked feet.

I saw Mr. Wild leading; and I ordered him to halt the column and let the blacks help themselves to bombo. You'd have thought they were a thousand children dancing and shouting about the bombo barrels.

I said to Mr. Wild: " Ben Endor may make trouble. His ship lies in the inlet and he and his men are dickering here for a kaffle of cannibals fetched in by a Captain Diamond—"

I paused. The merry noise made by my negroes had aroused the burly blacks in the Barracoon West, and a heavy-voiced roar went up from the shadowy stockaded sheds—loud yelling, clanking of manacles, thumping and kicking on stout pine planks.

Our negroes heard it and their mirth died away. It was very evident they recognized the brutal noises from Barracoon West, and were frightened.

Then, from the tavern, came striding a big, hairy man. Jake Means was almost running to keep up with him. Behind them followed a throng of shadowy figures.

The big, hairy man strode up to me.

"I'm Zeke Diamond," he said hoarsely.

I asked him coolly how he did.

"*I'm* doing well enough," he said; "it's *you!* And I want you to get your niggers out of here because you'll spoil my trade if Ben Endor sees them."

I took him by the arm and led him aside: "That's exactly what I'm going to do," said I, "if you'll send your Kroomen and escort, under command of my first mate, across the border with my kaffle."

"To where, sir?"

"To Jill's Hundred where the escort from our agents in Savannah will meet them, mix them, and take them over."

"What do you pay?"

"What do you ask?"

He named a modest fee; I paid him then and there in minted Guinea gold.

"Damn my eyes," said he, "if you're a pirate, as they say, I want no honester man to deal with. I wish you were Ben Endor—the dirty thief."

He stalked away to call out his Kroomen and sailor-men.

I told Mr. Wild what had been arranged. He went into the kaffle, and returned holding Lella by the hand. The girl was lovely in the moonlight. She had stained her ivory-white skin to a light nut-brown, and, half-naked, looked like any other girl in our kaffle.

She was terribly nervous and excited over her triumph, and clung to Mr. Wild's hand and arm.

"You can wash off that stain at Jill's Hundred," I whispered. "I wish you had some clothing."

"I fetched her clothing, sir," said Mr. Wild, calmly.

He had it in his haversack—dress, stockings, shoes, everything.

So Lella ran lightly through the moonlight to a chicken shed. When she returned she was ready. I shook her hand; then I shook Mr. Wild's hand.

"You've a month's leave," said I. "If you need more, take it. I'll muzzle Maltby. And," looking at the girl, "as for Segrada, he need never know if you live North."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Wild; "I have bought a small farm in New Jersey for my wife. When I'm done with the sea I shall grow fruit and vegetables for New York market."

" And chickens and cows, Tom! " whispered the girl, wriggling in her excitement.

" Here come Captain Diamond's Kroomen," said I. " Good luck! "

They went to the head of the column. Mr. Wild spoke with Captain Diamond a moment, then, ordering my sailor-men and Kroomen to fall out, started off with our kaffle through the moonlight.

Diamond, passing, told me that Captain Endor, with his crew, well armed, had just arrived from the coast at Barracoon West. I nodded and told my men to cock muskets.

On the frontier I drew them up and waited until the last negro in our kaffle had passed over into the United States.

When the long column had vanished, and their singing, jingling, and laughter grew fainter in the silvery night, I ordered my men to sit down along the edge of the road and cover their pans against dew.

" Men," said I, " our old friend, Captain Ben Endor, is here with his crew. There they come, yonder, from Barracoon West. I've every inclination to finish the business I began at sea. It depends on him. Keep your powder dry."

Captain Endor, followed by Captain Diamond, came tramping toward me, his crew at heel—some thirty men armed with muskets, boarding pikes, and hangers.

When he had arrived at ten paces: " Stop! " said I sharply.

He seemed startled, and he stopped.

"Now," said I, "if you even so much as point your snout toward the Savannah Road, I'm going to give you a volley, and then a clubbing. And then I'll burn your filthy ship."

He began to bluster and hector and shout at me, and stride to and fro, gesticulating; but came no closer I noticed.

I said to Captain Diamond: "Sir, be pleased to make your bargain with Captain Endor. I shall not interfere."

Endor hesitated. I walked up to him and looked him in the eyes.

"You nigger murderer," said I, "finish your business with this gentleman and end it quickly. You're a coward. You haven't the courage of a sick eel! If you had you'd fight for your own niggers."

He found no voice to retort and his long horse-pistol was wobbling in his clutch.

I turned my back on him and went and stood near my squatting men, and waited.

Suddenly Endor broke out into a torrent of imprecations, yelling that he had no time to fight me or to stand here dickering all night for a gang of niggers.

"Break out your kaffle!" he cried to Captain Diamond; "I take them as they stand at the price you named! Break 'em out, sir, and I'll run them aboard me now!"

Captain Diamond said, "Done!" and called to a Krooman who stood swinging a huge bunch of keys.

Endor yelled for lights. Jake Means came with a lantern.

"Here," said Endor, thrusting a packet of drafts into Captain Diamond's hands.

While Captain Diamond was examining them I heard a horrid and savage uproar break out in Barracoon West.

Endor bawled to his mate to go thither with the escort.

The drafts seemed to satisfy Captain Diamond. He had his receipt ready, too, and handed it to Endor.

As for me, I had, now, merely to see that Endor carried his negroes and himself aboard ship, set sentinels to see he landed nobody, and, in the morning, march back to Amelia Island and *The Happy Parrot.* And to my wife.

The savage uproar from the barracoon had now become indescribable; the gates were open; and, yelling, gabbling, shouting in deep, menacing voices, these wild negroes came surging out, their manacles clashing, the guards and Kroomen running to keep up with them, push them back into the unruly ranks, and head them eastward toward the sea.

They appeared to be determined to continue south and cross the river; there was a scuffle at the head of the column, a rush, the din of fetters used as weapons. Then Captain Endor emitted a scream like a wild beast, and, seizing a great hide-whip, fell upon the naked savages, slashing, cursing, howling that he'd murder the last nigger among them.

"That is not the way to control these blacks!" shouted Captain Diamond. "They'll tear you to pieces!"

But they were already doing it; a huge negro went at him with bare, filed teeth and bit him full in the face. Before Diamond or I could stir a finger the cannibals were all over him, biting, tearing his flesh off in strips. Then a nigger bashed in his skull with his handcuffs, and continued beating the split skull into a scarlet mass.

"Look out!" cried Captain Diamond to me, dragging me behind the line of my own men who had risen and stood with presented muskets.

But the crazed blacks were after Endor's men, now, who were running for the sea; and it was like a wild moonlit scene in hell, I think, with two hundred great apes and hobgoblins rushing across the shadowy grass in howling chase of men who fled screeching into darkness.

It was hell's own hunting. Diamond and I stood listening to the far yelping. We looked at the mass on the grass which had been Ben Endor.

Diamond moistened his lips with furtive tongue.

"God," he murmured, "I was lucky to be rid o' them at that."

I arrived with my Kroomen and escort at the factory the following evening.

Segrada came rushing out to me with imprecation and lamentation. It appeared that Lella had disappeared.

"Perhaps," I suggested, "she went off with that young sponge-captain. He was a handsome boy."

Segrada gave me one distracted look and rushed toward his house. Probably to write to some of his Spanish friends in St. Augustine—the filthy traitor!

I was tired and dirty. I went to the villa. Cintra was lying on a couch. When I entered she sprang to her feet. Her eyes were red and had dark circles, and she seemed ill.

"Good Lord," said I, "what's the matter?"

She said there was nothing the matter. . . . Nothing particularly. . . . Except that Señor Segrada had caused an alarm to be sounded from the fort and had sent a hundred slaves to scour the woods for the Arab girl.

I began to laugh: "Well," said I, "it will require more than a hundred niggers to find Lella. Whom do you suppose she's in love with?"

Cintra's blue eyes flamed at me, and the colour rushed over her face.

"Oh," said I, grinning, "I forgot you thought she was flirting with me. What do you think of this?—she's eloped with Mr. Wild and he's going to marry her!"

Cintra seated herself on the couch. For a while she rested her forehead on one hand as though her head ached.

"You don't feel well," said I; "you'd better go to bed and let me give you a dose of quinine."

CHAPTER IX

THE BLACK JOKE

I

THE more I considered the matter the more firmly I became convinced that José Segrada had betrayed us.

Here was the case: I had stopped *The Malabar Maid* on the high seas and had taken out of her a large amount of plunder and two hundred negro slaves.

The Malabar Maid flew the Spanish flag—which was a trick and a subterfuge—nevertheless, from the standpoint of the Spanish Government I had committed piracy.

Now, although José Segrada was factor for Quinn & Maltby at the factory on Amelia Island —which was Spanish territory—I began to believe he also was an informer and a secret agent for the Spanish Government at St. Augustine, and had sent word to the Governor that two hundred slaves, taken from a Spanish ship in piracy, were being held at the factory of Quinn & Maltby on Amelia Island.

The longer I meditated the surer I felt that this was the case. Those negroes would bring $100,000 anywhere. And the informer's share was *half!*

This matter troubled me vastly. For, had the Spanish cruiser arrived in time to find those two hundred slaves in our barracoon, I didn't know what the Spaniard might have done to me. A Spanish prison was merely a slower method than hanging. However, the Spanish sloop of war, *Esmeralda*, Captain Quesada, had arrived a day too late.

All was in order at fort and factory and barracoon; no Guinea coast kaffles were to be seen; the polite captain dined with Mr. Maltby, Segrada, and myself in blandest ceremony; and presently weighed and sailed to puzzle out the matter alone in his cabin. For I never gave Segrada a chance even to whisper to him.

Now I not only distrusted and disliked Segrada, but I despised Mr. Maltby for his rapacity and cowardice; and I had no intention of voicing to him my suspicions concerning José Segrada's treachery. Yet I did do that very thing.

Segrada remained in an agitated state of mind concerning the disappearance of his little Arab slave girl, Lella. In his vanity it never occurred to him that she had run away to escape his amorous advances. He was convinced that the good-looking young Minorcan captain of the sponger had kidnapped her; and he sent one of the company's ketches to Matanzas Fort to lay a complaint.

Which made me laugh inwardly, and it amused me to think of Lella and Mr. Wild, by this time, respectably united and enjoying a New Jersey honeymoon.

It was now impossible for me to sail *The Happy Parrot* to the African coast before the September rains began.

Mr. Maltby, indifferent whether I took black-water fever or not, as long as his income fattened, insisted that I sail. Segrada, too, had the impudence to agree with Maltby, which made me wonder whether he would like to be rid of a man who—though apparently innocently—had ruined his chance to earn $50,000.

I told Mr. Maltby I had no desire for a grave in an African sandbank. I told him that he had held me and my ship at Amelia Island against my protests and in order that I save his two hundred negroes for him.

"But I'll tell you what I will do," said I. "I'll cruise until it's time to stand for Bonny River; and if I can pick up any more Black Ivory at sea, why, I'll do it."

At that he rolled false eyes toward heaven and began to bemoan the tendency of young men to lawless violence.

Which made me laugh, and, after considerable wailing in his high falsetto voice, the old hypocrite began to smirk a little as though pleasurably frightened.

"Remember," he said, "I don't send you and I know nothing about it—nothing—nothing!—" his voice mounting to a passionate squeal—"and don't you dare tell me what you're aiming to do—"

"I won't," said I, "—and you'd better say nothing to Segrada about it, either."

I shouldn't have said it, for it scared him and he wanted to know whether I suspected Segrada of duplicity. And I was ass enough to tell him what I suspected.

"If I run any blacks in here taken from some outlawed slaver," said I, "you'd better be ready to start them across the border that same night. If you don't you'll have another Spanish cruiser paying you a visit of courtesy."

"You mean Segrada would inform?" he said, aghast.

"Any rascal would—for $50,000."

He sat silent staring at me out of shocked and pious eyes. Finally he whispered:

"Is *that* the reward?"

"Informers receive half," I said.

"Why," said he, "that is half as much again as *I* get out of the transaction by being honest."

"It is; you get $25,000 honestly; so will Captain Brindle; so will the estate of the late Captain Quinn."

His fat mouth still sagged; his sly eyes of a pig still watched me under whitish eyelashes.

As he, apparently, had nothing further to say, I finished my bombo, wiped the perspiration from

my features, and went home to the villa to sup with my wife—a real pleasure now—for she had become very gay and companionable since my return from The Cat-and-Kittens, and used me frankly and with much kindness.

When I came into the larger room which served as library, sitting-room, and dining room, Cintra, in a Barbary night-robe of blue and gold, sat a-playing on her banjo, one knee crossed over the other, and one scarlet slipper fallen off her white bare foot.

"Polly in a ju-ju la-la-la!" she was singing, but when she saw me she put on her slipper and dropped me a curtsey.

"Lord," said I, seating myself beside her, "you certainly are a pretty thing, Cintra."

"I've been married to him for more than a year," said she, a-picking at her banjo, "and he's just discovered it."

I looked up at that, but the old raillery was in her eyes—a little kinder, perhaps.

"I hope," said she, "you are not going to sail to please that old villain, Maltby."

I shook my head: "Not for Bonny. No."

Cintra smiled gaily and began to sing "Bonny River":

"*Oh, the shore waves roar*
An' the surf's on the bar,
But I'll go no more
Down to ole Calabar,

Where a black girl's a-lookin' out to sea, out to sea ;
Let her look, let her look, for she'll never see me
As I sail up Bonny River ! "

sang Cintra, a-plucking her banjo.

And I lifted up my voice with hers and we sang together:

" Oh, Bonny River,
Whar's my Johnny !
Oh, Bonny River,
Big River Bonny !
When I'm old an' my hair's grown white,
They'll throw me to the crocodiles some dark night ! "

2

Before I was ready to sail—well—to sail " On the Black Account," as it was called when one slaver preyed on another—one of Quinn & Maltby's ships arrived from New York—*The Black Joke*, schooner, Captain Leon Cabasso.

Aboard Cabasso came the third member of the firm of Quinn & Maltby—Captain Brindle—with New York newspapers and mail.

Cintra and I were at breakfast when newspapers and letters were brought in to us by a lad I sent aboard Cabasso.

Cintra had, among others, a letter from Eliza Osborn; and we lingered over our coffee, amicably squatted side by side on the couch like two Turks,

she with her letters, I with my New York newspapers.

Bonaparte, it appeared in a brief paragraph, was raising the devil; but the English were still resisting tooth and nail on the Peninsula. I read that in *The Commercial Advertiser*. Also I read that some of our ships carrying provisions to the British Army in Spain had been stopped by United States cruisers because England had now become our admitted enemy and was rapidly driving us toward war with her by her brutal behaviour to our ships and sailors on the high seas and within our own waters.

And yet, with so alarming a war almost within sight, the Congress refused to build us warships, or increase our army and navy; and what in God's name we were to fight England with, if war came, nobody seemed to care.

During the past Administration we had had a demagogue for President and an asinine Congress. They gave us some useless gunboats and the contemptible embargo.

Now we had to do with a meaner Congress even than that contemptible body which nearly broke Washington's heart during the Revolution. And our new President appeared to be a nonentity. And the embargo remained.

That's about all I noticed in the New York papers except that an English actor was playing "Richard III" at the Park Theatre; the British

Bible Society was sending some Bibles to the Bishop of New York; many city streets were all torn up by pavers; new cross-streets of the city were to be laid out and numbered up to One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street; the Tammany Society didn't want De Witt Clinton because his election would establish a "pernicious family aristocracy"; in the Park of the new City Hall had been planted elms, poplars, willows, and catalpas; Mr. Fulton's new-invented steamboat had returned from Albany, making the passage in a little more than four days; and Mr. Fulton planned to improve his rickety steamboat and run her as a regular packet between Albany and New York, making the round trip in twelve hours. But the New York newspapers expressed editorial doubts of such a possibility; and I agreed with them.

Well, that was about all I found in the New York newspapers. I wished to hear more of Bonaparte, but there was much about Tammany Hall and very little about him.

Cintra was deep in Eliza Osborn's budget of news. She read me the letter, but it concerned new fashions and young men, mostly, and my mind roamed elsewhere, preoccupied with the arrival of *The Black Joke*.

So presently I went out to the fort where I found Captain Cabasso, Captain Brindle, Mr. Maltby, and José Segrada a-drinking rum-bombo—which was a sickening thing to quaff at that hour o'

morning, and I would have nothing except lime juice mixed with mulberries.

Now, although I had pledged Mr. Maltby not to mention my projected cruise "On the Black Account" to José Segrada, it appeared that he had done so. Which so vexed and disgusted me that I could have twisted his pious snout, yet, nevertheless, would not abandon my cruise.

Captain Brindle was so profanely against it that I took him by the sleeve, and he took his glass o' grog, and I led him out to the parade to argue with him. When finally, and with assorted imprecations, Captain Brindle changed his mind and indorsed my idea of cruising "On the Black Account" until time to sail for the Guinea coast, I found, on returning to the fort, that not only did that old hypocrite Maltby now openly endorse it, too, but both Segrada and Leon Cabasso applauded the plan very loudly.

More than that, Captain Cabasso proposed to sail in my company; for, said he, between *The Black Joke* and *The Happy Parrot*, we should comb The Middle Passage to admiration and lay by an honest penny whilst a-pleasure cruising at our ease.

So, all being understood, and all good fellows together, and very merry to think of despoiling other rascals, we arranged for a grand supper at José Segrada's and a ball afterwards; and so I went home to one o'clock dinner.

Now, as I left the parade, I saw a yellow negro going to Segrada's house, who had a cast in one eye.

For a moment I was startled, but soon saw he was a Krooman, for he had the band of blue tattoo running from his forehead to the end of his nose, his teeth were filed, and he was covered with scar-pattern, face and naked body.

And yet I fancied, for a second, that he looked like that yellow nigger of Buke Gooly's, who had leered at me from the long-boat, and who, later, had so deftly dropped a hangman's noose over my neck aboard *The Happy Parrot*.

When I came to the villa I saw Cintra, Turk fashion, on the couch as usual, painting very elegantly in water colours a cluster of pink hibiscus, oleander, and orange-bloom.

I looked over her shoulder as she showed the drawing with pride; and it seemed to me a fine nosegay which she had painted there; and I praised her art loudly.

While at dinner she told me that, while painting her flowers, she chanced to glance up and saw a strange Krooman leering at her through the window.

"Was he yellow?" said I, disturbed.

"Yes," said she; "did you ever see a yellow Krooman?"

"They ought to be black," I muttered. Yet only Kroomen wore the blue band and scar-pattern and filed teeth together.

"Cintra," said I, "I shall take *The Happy Parrot* out for a few weeks. She's had boot-tops and I want to see how she sails—"

"Am I not to go?" she demanded, astonished.

I shuffled and floundered and dodged the question until she became thoroughly convinced that I meant to commit a roguery; and she said so with a sudden break in her voice like a child swallowing a sob.

"Not at all," said I, my blush and stammer betraying the lie as usual; "I mean to put *The Happy Parrot* through her paces and nothing more——"

"My God," she said, "what's in that wicked mind of yours that you won't let me sail in *The Happy Parrot* with you?"

"Because," said I, "it is to drill the men and try my new carronades. Mr. Wild is absent and I have only a second mate, and shall take Antone Rumpf—"

"I want you to listen to me," she said; "I want to respect you. You've only one more year's contract with Quinn & Maltby—"

"And then?"

"My lawyers tell me my fortune will be ample—"

"I'll not touch it."

"Are you not my husband?"

"Am I?"

She flushed brightly and stood up.

"It is plain to me," said she, "that you have no other aspirations than to swagger about the high seas and fight somebody every chance you have."

"I have my fortune to make," said I. "If others fight me for a share of it I must fight to retain what I earn."

"You do it willingly, too," she said; "you like to fight. I saw you with my uncle; I've seen you aboard ship, too; and as soon as a gun goes off you begin to wear a silly expression of pleasure. Yes, you do; you laugh. And all the while you're fighting you laugh—"

She turned sharply from me, stood with one hand clenched on the back of a chair, her bare arm resting across her eyes.

"Cintra," said I, "if I dared believe—"

"You need not! . . . I c-can't help l-liking—to be in your company. . . . But I feel no p-particular t-tenderness—"

"Well," said I cheerfully, "once you detested me; so we are getting on much better. Sometimes you use me with much kindness and we are very gay together. Are we not?"

"Y-yes."

"Well then, be reasonable. I shall get into no mischief to disgrace you. Let us be friends again."

I laid my hand on hers and drew it from the back of the chair. I would have kissed it but was afraid of her—dreaded her raillery.

After a little she took up her painting again, but looked very solemnly upon it.

So then I told her about the grand supper at Segrada's, and a ball to follow. I did not know

whether she would consent to go or not, having only distant and formal commerce with the ladies of Amelia Island. But no man ever knows; for Cintra declared that I should take her to the ball because, said she, it was her desire to see the world, and Amelia Island was a part of it.

3

Segrada's mansion was brilliant with candles and Chinese paper lanterns; and, oh, those ladies of Amelia Island!—their complexions were of every possible shade from milk white to coco-brown, and the brilliant colours of scarfs and gowns and glitter of gems made me think of a vast congregation of tropical birds all a-flutter or preening.

Music was going all the time during the banquet —Spanish music with clashing of sequins and tambourines and click-click of castanets;—or else it was African music—I mean the melodious kind which you hear in Florida after negroes are tame and learn to tame the savage monotony of their jungle music—but always through it throbbed the jungle drum beating juba-time.

I was ashamed to have Cintra see how some of the slave girls danced for us; but, as I say, no man knows what a woman will choose to look at or listen to, and though I blushed for Cintra I did not see her blush, and her expression varied between intellectual interest and boredom.

But there danced, presently, a young Spanish friend of Segrada's, who was a dream of fiery loveliness. Lord! she seemed like a glancing flame—swaying, flashing, darting, then still as the starry glory of an altar candle—

Cintra asked me if I thought her handsome, and I said I thought so.

But sometime later, chancing to glance at my wife, I whispered on impulse in her ear that there was no beauty like hers at table. At that she blushed like a child, and laughed at me with some raillery, yet very friendly; and we took Madeira together and whispered little pleasantries to each other confidentially.

I will not say that everybody behaved with propriety and good taste, yet it was not by any means an orgy. But it was getting very warm and the air was suffocating and sticky and reeked with the pungent odours of dusky skins and the patchouli and heavy Spanish perfumes and powders in which such folk delight.

Segrada fondled his several exotic ladies rather publicly; Mr. Maltby, pious-drunk, played with a saddle-coloured nymph and cast a few sly, apprehensive glances at Cintra whose nose went up every time he caught her eye.

Cabasso was omniverous, taking wine with every lady who consented, and toying with the most convenient.

As for Captain Brindle, he was always stamping and singing and waving his great hairy hand to

time the music, whether Spanish or African; and when two café-au-lait ladies seated themselves on either of his knees, he continued to keep time by bumping their heads together.

This terrified Cintra; but when they escaped, shrieking, Captain Brindle merely kept on swilling brandy and beating time.

Then we all went into the great room which really was the lounging room of José Segrada's seraglio; and there, under orange-tinted paper lanterns, we danced quadrilles, seguedillas, cachuchas, and Spanish dances—Cintra always clinging to me and avoiding or evading any other who would have her for a partner—though it is true none ventured except Segrada and Captain Cabasso—for Brindle only desired to hornpipe by himself and Maltby, panting drunk, lumbered about in a kind of daze, vaguely pursuing Segrada's nymphs.

Toward midnight some license and savagery was becoming apparent, and some of the young housemaids and other slave girls put on cherished and hidden African finery—which means that they took off everything else—and danced in a necklace of sea-shells.

A beautiful girl from Barataria, saying it was growing very sultry, began to take off her clothes. I wouldn't have cared if she'd been black, but she was quite white. She had two of those gaudy paroquets which are so common flying about Florida, and she danced about with one of these

on each wrist; and they yelled and she yelled, which set everybody else yelling. Segrada's Senegalese light o' love possessed several monkeys which she fetched in, and the stench from these and from rotting jasmine and oleander bloom became unendurable.

"I've seen enough of the world on Amelia Island," said Cintra calmly in my ear. "Take me home."

So I led her out through the singing, yelling, whirling, stinking throng; and she took my arm and we walked slowly home under drifting fireflies and trembling stars.

When we entered the house she was laughing:

"I'm wondering," she said, "what Eliza Osborn and Mrs. Hunt would say to this night's frolic."

"What do *you* say to it, Cintra?"

"Nothing. I suppose it's the way of the world. But it smells badly."

"It's the way of the world on Amelia Island."

"And probably in every port where sailors go," said she. . . . "Is it?"

"Largely. The smells differ."

"Is there really a beast in *every* man?"

"I guess so. . . . If he's healthy."

"Well," said she, "I guess there is in every woman, too. But most of us know enough to tame it when we discover it."

We stood a moment looking vaguely about the room. Then I put out the candles and we went toward our separate quarters.

"I shall sail at daylight," said I. "You will be asleep."

"How long will you be gone?"

"Not long, I think."

"Well," said she with a sigh, "it seems that I cannot help it."

"You need have no slightest doubt of my perfect safety."

After a silence she turned toward me:

"Good-night," said she. Then, coming nearer, offered her hand. And I kissed it.

Since I first knew her she had neither offered nor suffered this.

She said nothing; neither did I. Then in silence we went our ways. My heart was beating unusually when I entered my room.

4

I had been at sea in *The Happy Parrot* for a week; and *The Black Joke* cruised in my company.

Once a British sloop-o'-war stopped Cabasso and he had to go aboard her, but lost no men and was merely warned he was suspected. I was too far away to stop.

Lord, how I itched to turn my guns on her and signal Cabasso to hedge in. It is well that I did not.

I saw few ships and none which interested me—nothing that looked like a slaver making The

Middle Passage to Havana—until one day late in the afternoon, cruising off Cumberland in company with *The Black Joke*, we made out a brig under full sail and signalled Cabasso to bear down on her and gave chase.

I know of nothing in the world which so elates the human heart as to sight a sail at sea and chase her. Something begins to sing inside one, the body glows, the mind takes wings and darts away in the stranger's distant wake.

When she saw us she altered her course to west by south three points south, making for Florida waters and letting fly, rather piteously, the Spanish flag—as a startled rabbit, rushing toward safety, shows the white ensign of fear.

So I had to do with another Guinea coast Englishman who had "sold" his ship to a Spaniard! And I looked at his rusty hull and patched sails with all the satisfaction in the world, not bothering to give him a gun, but enjoying the chase to the limit until sheer terror should bring him to. Nay, in the sheer exuberance of the hunting I ran around him twice without hailing, and could see his very canvas all a-shudder till he took his sails aback and fell astern as though paralyzed.

She was a Liverpool slaver, *The Cygnet*, Captain Haw, ten weeks out, bound for Havana with six hundred slaves out of six hundred and eighty, and all healthy.

Now, I had bent a few fathoms of canvas to

conceal the name of my ship, and had swathed the figurehead.

Also, I had not deigned to show any colours; and it was plain that the people aboard *The Cygnet* took me for a rover.

And it was in my mind to carry her into Amelia River, unload her, and chase her out to sea again —a convenient pleasantry that made me laugh to think of.

The only reason I hesitated was because I had not been able to understand the movements of Captain Cabasso in our consort, *The Black Joke*, which seemed odd and perplexing. For he answered none of my signals and, though sailing parallel, had made no effort to stand in and join in the chase.

Nor did I understand his movements now when mast-head hailed the poop, reporting a sail; and I went aloft to take a look at the stranger. And very soon I saw Cabasso was signalling, but could not understand him at all, nor could Gene Weems, nor my German first mate, Mr. Rumpf.

My throat was dry with talking to the Liverpool slaver, and I sent for bombo, asking Rumpf if he drank it.

"Yah," said he, "I haf bombo so willingly." So we stood on the poop swilling bombo and watching *The Black Joke* which now was standing in straight for us in belated co-operation.

Which was high time, too, because I saw the other vessel making toward us—a schooner—and

wondered what she was, though not uneasily, having *The Black Joke* at hand to help defend my prize if necessary.

My crew were at quarters, *The Happy Parrot* cleared for action; and, going aloft with a glass, I noted with complacency that Cabasso also was cleared for action, but, like me, he showed no flag, and had masked the name of his ship.

As for the stranger, he had tacked and now was running toward my prize on our starboard quarter.

When *The Black Joke* was near enough, I hailed Cabasso, asking him what was the matter and what he made of the strange schooner to leeward which seemed so curious concerning our business.

He replied that he'd explain all that, and that I need pay no attention to the strange schooner.

Then he yelled through his trumpet demanding information concerning my prize; and I told him who she was and how many blacks she carried, and added that I was minded to take her into Amelia River, unload her, and send her to sea with a couple of hearty kicks.

I had not finished speaking *The Black Joke*, which was running abeam of me to larboard, when, of a sudden, the strange schooner emerged from behind my prize to starboard and let fly a gun at me.

Instantly Cabasso's broadside crashed out in my very face, burying *The Black Joke* and *The Happy Parrot* alike in smoke. Through it from the

splintered deck beneath me rose a roar of astonishment, rage, agony.

"Have you gone crazy!" I shouted to Cabasso through the whirling powder gloom which nearly stifled me; "—you're firing into us! Take care what you're about!"

In reply he fired his long gun into us; and, at the same instant, the strange schooner crossed our stern and raked us with a terrible outcrash of carronades.

I don't know how I got on deck, reeling from suffocation and the blackest fury that ever possessed me.

The German sailing master, my new first mate, Antone Rumpf, lay gasping under the splintered bulwarks, half his body torn away. Three gunners sprawled dead amid the wreckage of our forward larboard battery; Gene Weems, scarlet with splashed blood, was making sail in the horrible confusion and trying to edge out from between our prize, the strange schooner, and *The Black Joke*.

I took the helm from the seaman who was standing wheel, my ears ringing with the roar of musketry from *The Black Joke*, now tacking to gain the weather of us once more.

When enraged I become as cold and calm as a snake. There was a good breeze; *The Happy Parrot* was the fastest keel I ever stepped aboard —a thoroughbred to control and handle—and sheer perfection when you knew her and she knew you and recognized your helm.

She rushed out of that trap of blackest treachery like a deer before grass afire; and, as she bore away on the larboard tack, Weems brought what guns he had to bear on *The Black Joke* and let Cabasso have every grain of powder full in the face, and then the very bowels of the long gun swung aft.

The Black Joke's sprit, forecastle, and foremast seemed to fly straight up in a million scraps and splinters. I threw over the helm to clear our starboard carronades; and whang! whang! went the broadside, tearing Cabasso's standing rigging, cutting chains and anchor and knocking his long gun against his main into a wreckage of top-hamper and sails bellying and flapping in ribbons.

I called to Weems: "Well done! That proves how useful is a drilled crew. Are you badly hurt?"

"It's the master-gunner's blood on me, sir."

He had taken what was left of the larboard battery's gun crews and mustered them to starboard and to handle the forecastle and poop swivels.

Mr. Rumpf lay dead in the scuppers. I had him, and four of the crew, carried below, and named Weems acting first mate, and Boll, the boatswain, second.

"Mr. Weems," I shouted, "I'm going back to settle our account with Captain Cabasso."

"Sir," said he, "the other is the pirate, Buke Gooly, in *The Lazy Lass*. He's boarding our prize now, sir."

It was true. Here was an astounding treachery, but how far it reached and who else it involved I dared not guess.

I gave Gooly one look, then glared at *The Black Joke*. She was a mess. I could see Cabasso clearing away forward, rigging a jury mast and trying to bend on sprit-sails and reeve rigging; but all his after stays were damaged and his main seemed to wag and totter. For all our iron had swept his masts and rigging and I could not see that he had been hulled at all, only that his bowsprit was shattered and forecastle partly wrecked.

By this time I had the weather of *The Black Joke*, but could give her only our long gun and swivels until I could bring our starboard battery to bear—the larboard carronades being mostly useless and the bulwarks in splinters.

Having the weather of him I was able, presently, to run within half pistol shot and let him have it with every ounce of metal aboard me. Then, on the same tack, I crossed his battered bows and raked him, and raked him so that *The Black Joke* seemed but a falling ruin—all things aloft coming down in avalanches—and fire breaking out aft.

The deafening crash of her smashed spars and timbers and the smashing discharge of our broadsides deafened me and I could not hear what Cabasso was bawling at me through his trumpet. Besides, showing no colours, he could strike none—if that is what he was trying to make me understand.

However, I had other matters to engage me, for now Gooly had left our prize and gone aboard *The Lazy Lass* in alarm at seeing what was happening to Cabasso.

So I steered for Gooly, and took his broadside—a most awful shock, for every shot hulled us, but very high; and, as the smoke blew clear of him, Mr. Weems poured the contents of our starboard carronades into him. Then, slackening sail to fall astern, we fired our long gun full into his cabin—chain-shotted and heated cherry-red. Almost instantly his poop blew up with a thunderous shock almost in our very faces, sending plank, guns, and human bodies masthead high into the air, and blowing the after-deck to smithereens. The débris rained upon us, some of it afire, some but bleeding gouts of flesh spattering all over our forecastle and spars.

Now, into the raw, torn, smoking vitals of the pirate we poured broadside after broadside, deliberately, and maintaining our position astern, she being unable to prevent it.

She, like *The Black Joke*, had showed us no colours, and therefore could strike none. And I think she dared not run up her black ensign and lower it.

She still fired at us from her forward swivels, but something was wrong with her long gun and it remained silent.

She was now all afire aft, and Mr. Weems called to me to say that her boats were leaving her from the bow and making for *The Cynget* prize.

That being convenient to me, and planning to take them later, I hailed *The Cygnet* and ordered her to lie to on peril of being fired into. Then I turned my attention to the treacherous *Black Joke*, and bore down on her; and, handing over the helm, went aloft to see what was doing aboard her where she floated like a stricken wild-fowl with shattered wings spread upon the waves.

I saw Cabasso, and three seamen, and a boy; and more than twenty dead men entangled in the fallen hamper or rolling as the ship rolled in the trough of the sea.

Cabasso went to the poop and there hailed me, saying that he had struck and asking me to send a prize crew to salvage *The Black Joke*.

"You treacherous dog," said I, "you have one boat left. Get into her and go aboard my prize; and I'll settle with you and Buke Gooly later!"

He seemed greatly depressed. He came to the side and said he was sorry for what had happened, and that Mr. Maltby and José Segrada had plotted with him to rob me of any slaves I might take, and then get rid of me at sea.

He was so near me that I could see the tears running over his powder-blackened features, and the trembling of his mouth as he tried to talk to me.

"For God's sake, Captain Strake," said he, "don't hang me; for I am a ruined man in this hour, and am mortally punished for my wickedness and my contempt of God's commands."

"Take your wounded and go aboard *The Cygnet*," said I. "And open all your hatches. And, as for you, you are a worm; but I shall not crush you."

I lay by while he and his four men and the boy launched their only remaining boat. Into it they lowered two wounded men. All others were dead. When they had rowed free of *The Black Joke*, I sent Mr. Weems into the rigging with a basket of grenades. He flung these into *The Black Joke's* hatches, which presently exploded, and the hatches began to vomit out smoke and red tongues of flame.

The reason I did this was to leave no trace of a war-battered vessel belonging to Quinn & Maltby, lest, if salvaged, the United States Government start an inquiry which would very soon engulf and destroy not only Maltby and Captain Brindle, but my own wife who was not yet clear of that partnership and must be responsible for her inheritance from her late uncle, Captain Quinn.

I now took a survey of *The Happy Parrot* and found we had lost six foremast men dead, beside Mr. Rumpf, our mate; and had three men and a boy wounded out of a crew of thirty-four with which I had sailed from Amelia Island.

My ship was well battered, but Chips and Bungs were busy a-plugging up; and the crew was clearing away and reeving rigging forward. Our bulwarks, also, were wrecks along with our larboard carronades.

I had prepared to send a prize master aboard *The Cygnet*, and an armed guard of ten seamen, and was only waiting to see *The Black Joke* sink and *The Lazy Lass* follow her. Both vessels were afire from stem to stern—two roaring masses of floating flame.

The sun was level in the west; *The Cygnet* pitched and tossed and rolled against the sunset, every spar ruddy, as though she also were afire.

All the sea to leeward was covered with smoke from the two burning schooners.

The Lazy Lass sank first, going down by the stern, decks awash, and her spars flaming till they soused; and only a great cloud of steam hung over the waves where she had disappeared.

The burning *Back Joke* was settling, too, on an even keel; and, as I watched, mast-head hailed loudly with a startling, "Sail-ho!"

I hastened into the rigging; and it was not long before I realized that I must lose my prize and all aboard her, and run for my very life. I descended and sprang to the poop. For out of the near haze in the east, with the sunset ablaze on their cloud-like sails, five great ships came rolling down upon us; and anybody who knew chalk from cheese must know that it was England's might in all its majesty and magnificence that came towering up over the world's edge to bear down like a thunder-cloud upon us.

"Mast-head there!"

" Aye-aye, sir! "

" What do you make them? "

" Three line-o'-battle ships and two frigates, sir."

Needless to inquire further. The squadron smelled of old England a thousand leagues.

As we ran past *The Cygnet*, crowding on all sail, I hailed her quarter-deck and bade her follow; but I knew she would not.

Yet, never was ship in a sorrier pickle than was that Liverpool slaver now, with slaves under hatches and pirates and smugglers on deck like a parcel of paralyzed penguins.

Well, that was England's problem now. Let her Admiralty deal with it. As for me, I steered for the setting sun and the coming night, the battle fever gone from my veins, and in my heart a chill lest this treachery had somehow enmeshed and harmed the woman with whom I was once more beginning to fall in love, Cintra, my wife.

CHAPTER X

JILL'S HUNDRED

I

IT was raining very heavily when I carried *The Happy Parrot* into anchor, taking good care not to advertise my arrival from the sea by saluting the factory and fort.

My arrival was not observed. No doubt the lazy black look-out on duty in the look-out tower had deserted his post and taken shelter from the rain; at any rate, the arrival of the schooner had been unnoticed; and I anchored behind a pine wood in the lee of the seaward dunes where nobody ashore could see my topmasts.

Before I stepped ashore, however, rain ceased, clouds parted, and the sun came out hotly. Birds sang with all their might; live-oaks dripped golden rain; the air sweetened with the scent of sparkle-berry bloom; a warm breeze set the palmetto fronds a-clattering, and everywhere the singing sands sucked up the sun as a purring cat sucks cream.

Our first duty was to bury our dead. I chose a dune set thick with sparkle-berry and scented bay.

We were very quiet about it. Chips had fashioned wooden crosses—a bigger one for Mr. Rumpf—and I read the services. There followed a cautious tap on a muffled drum. That was all.

As we filed away to our boats a great flight of paroquets came down in the scrub, seeming to cover the graves with a brilliant green mantle.

Mr. Weems whispered to me that it seemed suitable for *The Happy Parrot's* dead.

I told him I thought there could be no cleaner, sweeter grave than on some seaward dune; and would like to be buried in some such place when paid off and mustered out.

Mr. Weems took the crew aboard my schooner. I continued across to the main, going ashore unnoticed by any living creature save the wild birds in the palmettos.

I would have preferred to go immediately to my wife—rap gaily upon her door—for Cintra would be still asleep.

But I had another business to attend to first.

The stockade gate was open. To be sure of Segrada I asked the Krooman on duty whether Señor Segrada had arrived at his office. Yes, he had gone in a half hour ago, accompanied by Mr. Maltby.

They never had expected to lay eyes on me again. Some surprises are pleasant, some terrible. And some die of surprise.

They had a bottle of French brandy between them when I walked in, a pile of ledgers—Quinn

& Maltby records—and a strong box open, half full of pearls and precious gems.

When Mr. Maltby looked up and saw me he collapsed like a pricked bladder. As for José Segrada, his eyes came out of his head at me like the goggling eyes of a crab.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said I cheerily; "—a lovely morning after the rain!" And sat down upon a bamboo chair where, if necessary, I could reach the two pistols on the table beside Segrada before he could.

Mr. Maltby was too frightened to try to smile; Segrada's effort was ghastly.

"Carramba," said he in a shaky voice, "I am surprised to see you. I have not expec'. No, sare. Las' night I say to Mr. Maltby, one week, two week more—maybe. But so ver' dam quick! No, sare."

I laughed. It was a real laugh. Every drop of blood in me was singing.

I said: "Sometimes I do business quickly; sometimes I take my time, gentlemen. I'm taking my time, *now*. . . . But at sea I was in a hurry. You know how it is," said I turning on Maltby, "when a man has given his ship boot-tops he's anxious to see how she likes it." Then, to Segrada, "That's why I went to sea—and to try my new carronades."

I beamed genially upon them both. Segrada's eyes had settled back in his head; but Maltby's pallor remained, and he never stirred nor spoke —as though it were death to do either.

Segrada said: "So you haf try these new carronade, sare?"

"Yes, the new battery of eighteens. I had twelves, you remember."

Speech began to dribble and leak from Maltby's flaccid lips. He was so frightened that he didn't know he was saying, I think—some drivel about the English mode of rating batteries, and our own and how a thirty-two carried twenty-six twelves on her gun deck, according to the old mode of rating, and a thirty-six carried twenty-six eighteens —bla-bla-bla and buz-buz-buz—

"Mr. Maltby," said I, "you don't seem well. So here's news to hearten you. I took a Liverpool slaver full of prime blacks and flying Spanish colours! What do you say to that, sir?"

Segrada sat up with an uncontrollable jerk, and I thought his curly, silver-tipped hair rose higher on his handsome head.

But Maltby seemed near fainting.

"These ships," inquired Segrada in a brittle voice, "—haf you carry her here, sare? Jesu-Maria! These goin' mek me some scandal!"

"What," said I, "you smell the stench already? Well, you know the saying:

"Taste disposes
All human noses
To sniff at swill
Or sniff at roses—"

"And yours, Señor, has smelled out *The Cygnet* —that's her name. And another sniff or two and you'll scent your crony, Captain Cabasso. He's aboard her, too."

"What you say, sare? My fren' Cabasso—he is aboard these Spanish ship—"

"—English, Señor. 'Sold' on The Middle Passage, you know."

"Yes, I unnerstan' ver' dam well," he said excitedly. "But I don' unnerstan' where is these *Black Joke* schooner of Cabasso—"

"Why," said I, glancing at his pistols, "I thought your nose would smell that out, too."

A heavy flush swept Segrada's face.

"What you mean, my nose? All time my nose?" he demanded.

"Well, then," said I, smiling at him, "I'll have to tell you. Cabasso went crazy. I suppose you had smelled that out, too."

"Crrazee!"

"Stark mad. Poor fellow, he began to fire into me, so I sank him. . . . And *The Lazy Lass*—"

"You sank these *Black Joke!*" cried Segrada.

"—And Buke Gooly. I was sorry—they seemed such friends—Gooly and Cabasso—" With a swift snatch I forestalled Segrada, and his pistols were in my two fists, resting lightly on my knees. Cocked.

"Jesu-Maria and Josef!" he shouted, "it is you who are crrazee—"

"Sit down," said I. "You've had breakfast. So has Mr. Maltby. You don't want anything more in your bellies."

Segrada, seated again, scarcely touching his chair, was trembling. But it was the tremble of a leopard before pouncing.

I said to Maltby, who seemed too near swooning to understand:

"Write me my discharge relieving me from my agreement with Quinn & Maltby. You're too near dead to do it now. You'd better do it later—"

I had suddenly to turn my pistols on Segrada to keep him seated. Holding him there, I continued addressing Maltby:

"The British West Indian squadron has *The Cygnet*. She's under Spanish colours and they can't hold her. But they'll hang Buke Gooly—and your friend the yellow Krooman with a cast in one eye. And when Cabasso reaches St. Augustine he might better be dancing air-jigs with Gooly—"

I looked at Segrada a moment, and, still watching him, resumed:

"Speaking of jigs, gentlemen, your jig is up on Spanish soil. Amelia Island will be no place for you when *The Cygnet* anchors off the St. Augustine fortress and her master takes breakfast with the Governor. No, gentlemen."

Noticing a black servant passing the corridor, I called him and bade him fetch me a cup of bombo.

When he fetched it, I enjoyed it. I suppose he considered my pistols a pleasantry, but I didn't care what he thought.

With a weather eye on Segrada, I cooled my throat at leisure, then, setting the cup on the table:

"Where is Captain Brindle?" I inquired pleasantly.

As nobody answered I repeated the question and asked if he also were in this murder plot to destroy me and share the expected prize.

Waiting for a reply, something in Segrada's eyes arrested mine—something dimming the ferocity. . . . Fear.

"I'm wondering," said I, "whether you've killed him. . . . That would leave about everything to you and Maltby,—"

A cry like a shrill squeal burst from Maltby: "He stabbed him! Oh, my God, I didn't want him to—"

"A dam lie!" cried Segrada, fiercely, "you haf stab him yo'se'f—beeg peeg Americano—"

"Don't move," said I to Segrada. "I don't care how you settle it after I leave—"

"Don't let that wild beast touch me!" shrieked Maltby, cowering and shrinking away from Segrada; "—he's got a knife!—the same one—"

I had to shove Segrada down on his chair with the muzzle of my pistol, prodding his abdomen until he sat shivering once more and eying Maltby with, apparently, no further notice of me in his blazing eyes.

"What I ought to do," said I in a quiet voice, "is to land my crew from *The Happy Parrot* and take you into the garden and shoot you both. . . . That's what I ought to do."

Fat tears rolled down Maltby's cheeks and he blubbered, still watching Segrada who merely stared at him, shivering.

"This is a nice party," said I, laughing outright; and, with certain precautions, I took a good, deep draught of bombo.

I laughed again; I could not help it. It was like watching a jungle cat intent on a fat rabbit. Not that I'd seen any other rabbits on Amelia Island.

I felt quite cheerful. I admired my pistols. I even hummed a little tune.

"Blue water, how I love it,
In a topsail gale at sea,
With a wild sky above it
And a noggin on my knee—
The dripping carronades a-row,
The jack a-snapping free—
But oh, the niggers stowed below
And the grey sharks a-lee!"

"You ever hear that song?" I asked Maltby.

No answer.

I got up, leisurely. I had been going to leave them together—jungle cat and rabbit. But there'd been too much murder.

"Get up!" said I to Segrada.

He looked at me as though his mind were elsewhere. After a moment he got up.

"You go back to your black and tan wives," said I, "and let that flabby beast alone. He'll die of fear, anyway, I guess."

Segrada passed stealthily out.

Maltby fixed his red-rimmed, sagging eyes on me and seemed more dead than alive.

I said to him, curiously: "Was it out of your swine's head the idea hatched—for me to take a nigger-smuggler and Cabasso and Gooly to take *me?*"

But he only moaned and lied and slobbered; and I guess it was he who hatched the treachery.

"If you go aboard *The Happy Parrot* they'll kill you," said I. "If you stay here, Segrada will do the like for you. And what in hell does it matter to me?"

His falsetto blubbering nearly turned my stomach.

"As for me," said I, disgusted, "I'm going to take my wife to Jill's Hundred. And if I see you skulking about behind us I'll not drive you away."

I went out, leaving him grovelling his gratitude.

2

Coming into my garden I saw Cintra with an armful of Cherokee roses, and culling more.

When she caught sight of me she turned as white as the blossoms and let them fall.

"God bless me," said she; took a step toward me; stopped. But when I came near she gave me her hand, and turned pink enough when I kissed it.

"I heard no gun," said she. "Did you drop from the sky? And how is *The Happy Parrot?* Did she like her boot-tops?"

"Marvellous. And my new carronades!—you should hear them talking together all in a row! Such gossips; such biting tongues!—"

"Oh, misery me," said she, "have you been fighting again?"

I looked at her very solemnly, then drew her arm through mine, and we walked toward the pretty villa.

"I'm done with the sea," said I.

She seemed too astonished to speak.

"I mean," said I, "I'm done with it until I can sail in decent company again. This Black Ivory trade is a filthy business."

Tears suddenly glimmered in her eyes. She went to the couch and sat down, her face averted. After a moment she plied her handkerchief: "Do you mean it?" said she, her handkerchief very busy with her eyes and nose.

"Yes, I'm done with the sea until I can go into the China trade once more. Not that I've turned Quaker. There always have been slaves and masters; and always will be. Slavery is necessary —unless the world is ready to do without cotton and rice and tobacco and sugar—"

"Yes," said she, "I've heard all that before. Now tell me what has happened to disgust you with the Black Ivory trade?"

"Foul company, for one thing. Swindling, roguery, treachery, murder—to give a fillip to the business. . . . Not that I've turned Abolitionist or Quaker—"

"I understand. Do you break your contract with Quinn & Maltby, then?"

"Tell me," said I, "have your lawyers settled? I saw a letter from them when *The Black Joke* brought your mail."

"Yes."

"Have you withdrawn from all interest in the firm?"

"Yes."

"You are *out!*"

"Yes," she said, exasperated, "and I'm as poor as the devil!"

"*Poor!*"

"Quite."

"Why, your uncle—"

"Yes; and I've given the dirty money to the negro missions! Every penny!"

"Good Lord," said I, taken aback.

"Did *you* want it?" she said, insolently.

"I would not have refused it," said I, "because of any dirt attached to it; but because I told you once that I'd never touch a penny of yours."

She shrugged: "Anyway, it's gone. Bequeathed. Every penny I had from Quinn & Maltby. All my interest in the company, too. Captain Brindle bought it. He came down here on *The Black Joke* to settle everything."

"Yes," said I, "everything is settled for Captain Brindle."

She looked up, not understanding me.

I began to laugh; and presently she inquired why.

"Because," said I, "you've handed your dirty money to the missionaries and I've planned to settle with Quinn & Maltby by kicking Maltby down his office stairs."

"You haven't any money!" she demanded incredulously. "Why, I supposed—"

"Did *you* want it, Cintra?"

Her face flamed; but I began to laugh again, and her anger was dominated by fiercely mounting curiosity.

"*What* have you done?" she demanded. "What has happened? Captain Brindle called here yesterday and said *The Happy Parrot* would not be in for another two weeks—"

"Did old Brindle come to see you, Cintra?"

"Yes."

"He'll never come again."

"Why?"

"He's dead."

"Dead!" she breathed, wide-eyed.

"Yes. Very. Segrada stabbed him."

"What are you saying!—"

"Segrada stabbed him. Probably last night. Or, maybe it *was* Mr. Maltby—"

She leaned toward me and took hold of my arm with trembling fingers, staring into my face.

"He's stabbed and dead, anyway," said I. "And here's the rest of the news. I know I promised you to keep out of trouble. But there was too much trouble at sea to keep out of. . . . I had to sink *The Black Joke*."

"Good God!" she whispered.

"Yes, I sank her, and *The Lazy Lass*—Buke Gooly's pirate schooner. . . . You see they fired into me, Cintra—"

"Are you mad!"

"I was. Very. You see I had just spoken a Liverpool man—to call his attention to the colours he was flying. Spanish colours. Quite a mistake, you see. And he didn't seem to realize he was English—"

She came closer and held my arm with both hands, very tightly.

"It's all right now," said I. "Don't be frightened, Cintra."

"N-no."

"Because," said I, "there'll be another Spanish sloop-o'-war here very soon, and this time she'll make trouble. . . . I'm no longer employed by Quinn & Maltby. I'm not captain of *The Happy*

Parrot any more. . . . And we'd better leave this island after dinner."

"Yes. Where are we going?"

"North. You'll want to take your servants, I suppose."

"I can't leave them here to starve, can I?"

"Very well. Tell them to harness the mule wagons. Call your maids and have them pack up. Take what there is to eat and to wear. . . . Have you any money at all, Cintra?"

"I have five hundred dollars in three chamois bags."

"You'll have to lend it to me to get us to New York—"

"You know it's yours—"

"What! I take dirty money!—"

"It isn't. I have my mother's estate—the *rentes*. The Emperor Napoleon allows it."

"Bonaparte?"

"Certainly. I learned that when I inherited my uncle's estate. He never told me. But it seems that the revenue has been coming in regularly. I have that little fortune; and it's *clean!*"

"Bonaparte is a wonderful man," said I. "Not because he wrote the Code Napoleon; Louis XIV wrote The Code Noir, too; anybody can write codes. But it takes a great man to keep his fingers off easy money when it isn't his. Boney, I salute you, and may you knock England into a cocked hat! . . . Wait a moment and I'll pull that bell-rope—"

We got up, but Cintra still clung to me.

"Don't go," she said.

"I'm stepping aboard *The Happy Parrot* to take leave of my crew, that's all . . . my dear."

"Please don't keep dinner waiting," she said; "dishes get cold and the cook doesn't like it—my dear," she added with a brilliant blush.

I went away; my feet seeming inclined to time themselves to my heart which was beating a kind of Gold Coast shuffle—so wondrous kind was my wife becoming—so swiftly and so warm was growing my inclination for her affections and respect.

I met nobody on the path to the river. Mr. Weems was on watch, and pulled ashore for me in my yawl; and I was very soon aboard *The Happy Parrot.* Poor Pol! How Cabasso had raked her! And Gooly, too. Gooly—now, no doubt, a-air-jigging from some stout yard-arm. The yellow Krooman, too, I hoped. He'd have something to squint at in hell.

The men were reeving rigging and patching sails on deck; Chips was somewhere hammering like a woodpecker, Bungs helping.

I told Mr. Weems to muster the men abaft the mainmast; and when they were all arrived:

"Men," said I, "I am no longer in the employment of Quinn & Maltby. You can guess why. No foremast man was born yesterday. You've talked it over. Forecastle talk is dab-a-dab. Sometimes. Not this time, I guess.

"Men, I'm no longer captain of *The Happy Parrot*. Good old bird! Likes her boot-tops, too.

"Men, I'm taking leave of you. You're good men. Under articles, too. Let me tell you what to do with those articles; wad your guns with 'em.

"No; I'm not suggesting mutiny. I'm talking about safety. *Your* safety.

"Mr. Weems!"

"Sir," said my acting first mate.

"Take the ship, Mr. Weems. Men, obey your captain. Are you loyal?"

"Aye-aye, sir!" came their rolling reply.

"Very well. No man aboard this ship is going to lose a penny. Your pay is in New York at the office of Quinn & Maltby. Captain Weems, sir!"

"Sir?"

"Take your ship to New York. Burling Slip, sir. . . . And I think you'd better weigh and sail as soon as I go ashore. Because there'll be a Spanish cruiser on the way here. . . . Not that *The Happy Parrot* need fear a tub like that!"

"No, sir."

"However—there's the British West India fleet. You haven't the prize crews for three ships o' the line and two frigates. Let 'em alone."

A low roar of laughter rumbled aft.

Then I mounted the poop, took off my hat, clapped it on again, shook hands with Mr. Weems, and went over the side.

Those rogues broke out all their flags for me and let go nine guns!

3

We moved out of our villa in three wagons harnessed to six mules—household servants first in gala dress and clutching their own bundles; heavy luggage and provisions next, driven by two faithful Kroomen; and, last, Cintra and I with our own baggage behind us—Cintra driving, I walking alongside or in the rear with a rifle over my shoulder.

In the distance I could see a vast flurry about the fort and around Segrada's house where all gates and doors stood open and blacks swarmed everywhere, coming out laden with bales, sacks, strong boxes, furniture, and all proceeding eastward toward the wharf where lay Segrada's private sloop and a ketch and other lesser craft owned by him or by the company.

Exodus from the Spanish wrath to come grimly amused me, and I wondered where he meant to carry his saddle-coloured harem.

Of Mr. Maltby I perceived no sign; and did not care whether already Segrada had pounced upon his loathly person. The windows of his quarters in the fort were wide open, and I saw a naked black girl sitting on the window-sill tearing the pulp from an orange.

We took the Crooked River Road—which was but a track through long grass, slough, and flatwood. No birds sang, it being their siesta, and

the sun hot but agreeable. Thousands of butterflies of a pale greenish-pearl colour, with black stripes on their wings, darted like streaks of lightning through the palmetto woods. Nothing else lived except, in a dead tree, a dozen long-legged, grey birds, hunched up, like old gentlemen with their hands in their pockets, and, on the beach, two hulking eagles, tearing strips from a putrid fish.

I carried my rifle loaded, as I walked beside the wagon, although there was nobody to harm us that I knew of. Cintra inquired concerning robbers, and kept turning her head to scan the forest as she drove slowly along, and I had to reprove her for careless driving.

But she only smiled at me in her railing way, and hummed:

" Sois sage, ma fille !
B'en oui, Maman,
A cause-q' j'ai peur de Nicol-du-Bois ! "

One of her maids, ahead, who came from Barataria, heard her singing, and joined in. It's odd how lovely are the voices of these tame blacks when, in their own jungles, they screech and yowl, and have no real music, though their harps, sometimes, sound pleasant on a windy river.

St. Mary's Crossing took us a long time, what with the baggage and wagons and mules; but our blacks enjoyed it and sang loudly as they were

ferried over; and the woods rang with screams and laughter when a Krooman caught a tiny alligator and thrust it at the black girls in his boat.

There lay behind us, now, that stretch of wilderness where once I had fought for my own life as well as for Cintra's.

She remembered the palm forest; her singing ceased and she looked around at me very solemnly and, it seemed to me, with a certain seriousness almost tender.

Ahead of us was The Cat-and-Kittens Tavern, on the boundary between Spanish Florida and the United States.

No frontier guards were maintained there, but sometimes a Spanish patrol visited it, crossing the border and sleeping all day under the sheds while their officer drank French brandy in the tap, or strumming a guitar by moonlight whilst the officer snored garlic at the mosquitoes.

Some little time after we had crossed the river one of the Kroomen ahead called back to me that he believed he had seen a panther traversing the swamp to our left toward the cypress.

So I told Cintra to drive on while I walked out across the swale to see if I might espy the creature among the cypress.

I saw nothing. After a few minutes I made my way back to the wagon track; and was standing shoulder deep in long grass before I emerged, when I

saw a man in the palmetto scrub, slinking in the rear of our wagons which now were out of sight in the woods ahead.

Moving out across the wagon track to bar his way, I saw it was Mr. Maltby; and when he perceived me he instantly fell on his belly as though to avoid a bullet, though I had made no motion to present my rifle.

I walked up to him where he cowered on the ground, round-backed, his mean face looking up like a skunk's at me, and his sweating person soiled with mud and marl.

"I told you," said I, "that I would not drive you away. Why do you sprawl there?"

He said he thought I meant to shoot him, and began to bemoan himself and curse Segrada; and said he had fled to the woods when Segrada left and had been hiding and watching for my wagons so that he might follow them to the frontier in something of security.

"Segrada," said I, "seems to be as scared as you are, and his harem is embarking at the wharf. I don't believe he's bloodthirsty enough to take time to hunt you now. However, that's your affair; and if you want to skulk after us I shan't drive you off."

He said he did, and rose to a sitting posture looking like some gaunt toad all humped up in the silver-grass. He had his pockets crammed with papers and carried a valise. No doubt there was

money in it. He may even have robbed Segrada. Because, when I had left him alone in the factor's office after driving Segrada out, the strong-box was still open; and I had noticed many gems and pearls in the top tray, part belonging to Segrada, he having one and one-tenth per cent. of such by-product "salvaged" by the company's ships.

I gazed at him with overpowering disgust; and I thought there was a kind of slyness in his sagging eyes as he looked up at me.

No doubt he felt secure from Segrada, now, being across the United States boundary.

So I shrugged my shoulders and went on, walking swiftly to overtake the wagons, but already they had entered that wide plain, or savanna, across which, stark against the sky, stood the sun-blistered tavern called The Cat-and-Kittens, with its single barracoon on stilts, and the shabby out-buildings clustered along the frontier.

"Did you see a panther?" inquired Cintra anxiously.

"No, only a pole-cat."

I climbed up to the seat beside her and she turned as though on impulse and wiped my brow with her scented handkerchief. Which so astonished me that I said nothing but gazed at her with a silly grin.

Meanwhile the mules got into a brook and nearly overturned our wagon. I don't know why we laughed so.

Then I took the reins and Cintra removed her gloves to look at her hands.

"They are lovely," said I.

"You astonish me!" said she with a charming laugh, but presently stretched them out so that we both might contemplate them.

"If ever I can make any money and keep it," said I, "I would like to buy for you a ring such as once I saw in Liverpool. Which was a sapphire between two diamonds."

"Oh," sighed Cintra, "I would adore it."

I swore she should have it, embargo or no embargo, and begged her patience.

"You are very kind to wish to adorn me," she said softly.

"If I had my way," said I—but she laid her hand on my arm and whispered close to my ear: "There is a man behind the wagon!"

I picked up my rifle and looked around. But it was only Maltby in his slinking waddle, furtively keeping us in view above the silver-grass through which he made his way.

She became angry when I told her who it was:

"He tried to send you to your death," she said, "and you let him crawl after you to safety!"

"Would you drive him away, Cintra?"

"A villain and a rogue," said she; "and I might have been widowed in this hour!"

I began to laugh at her rising indignation.

"There was a time," said I, "when you would have accepted widowhood very gratefully."

"There *never* was such a time! Oh, lord," said she, "what a fool a man can be!"

"Do you mean your husband?" said I hopefully.

Her sudden laughter, clear and gay, rang out uncontrolled.

We now were approaching The Cat-and-Kittens. I saw nobody there except an old, yellow servant who shuffled out to scrape to us and pull a woolly and grizzled forelock.

No, there was nobody there. The landlord, Jake Means, had gone to Savannah on business. There were no slaves in Barracoon West, no kaffles expected, no dealers, no slave brokers. Everything had been very quiet since the outbreak in Barracoon West.

"Drefful doins, sah," murmured the old man, shaking his grey head. "But dey waz black cannibals, sah. Us 'spectable folk ain't holdin' none along wif dem ornary wile niggers. No, sah, 'scusing yoh lady's presence, dem ain't no niggers, sah; dem's wile ammles, dey is! Dem's baby-eaters. Scared me drefful; yaas, suh."

Cintra went up to look at the bedrooms while I walked out to the quarters. The quarters were not clean and our servants were. Cintra did not like the place, either, and would not even sup there. That suited me, also, as we had provisions and could sup at sunset when we reached Jill's Hundred.

"Who was Jill?" asked Cintra.

"Jill Gosset, one of Blackbeard's wives. He lent her to a hundred of his crew."

"*Here!*"

"I believe so."

"My God," said Cintra, "I thought it somebody named Jill who had a hundred acres."

"She had. Blackbeard said she deserved that much for a grave."

As our wagons rolled slowly along the frontier, a Spanish patrol, handsomely mounted, came jingling up along the road we had travelled from Amelia Island.

There were perhaps a dozen horsemen wearing great, wide hats of straw, and blue round-abouts faced with red and yellow. The officer's jacket was plastered over with tarnished silver, and everything about them and their horses jingled.

Whether they had meant to investigate us I could not tell. They drew up in a line across the river; and sat watching us until we were out of sight.

On our left, sunset flamed till the forest seemed afire. To our right the woods were already bluish with sea-mist setting inland. A faint coolness bathed us. Birds sang everywhere. Presently we came to a sandy road bearing due east. We had arrived at Jill's Hundred.

"Is there no settlement—no tavern?" asked Cintra.

"Oh, no. It's a plantation. The planter's

house and an ordinary are on the coast yonder above the wharfs. That road leads to the sea."

We were passing, at the moment, a clear stream running silently over whitest sands, and Cintra desired to sup here.

So I called to my Kroomen; and very soon two fires were going, fed by palmetto fans and dry logs.

Cintra's women cooked and waited upon us. It was pleasant. Lord, how the birds sang in the kindling glory of the sinking sun—mocking birds, red birds, and a kind of wren which poured out song like an English skylark.

" After all," said I to Cintra, " —and though she uses us like a bad stepmother—old England has a strange and wistful interest for me.

" And—let me whisper it—she is a great country and a mighty people. God knows why she treats us with such brutality and contempt—buffeting us here and there with blows and growls. It's the lion in her, maybe—to deal so roughly by her cub. . . . But she should remember there is lion in us, too."

" Once or twice," said Cintra, " I have dreamed I was in England. And saw primroses."

I sat brooding for a while, a glass of Madeira in my hand, watching the first pale firefly soaring.

" In spite of the Congress, in spite of the Administration, in spite of the embargo," said I, " the Lion's Blood is in our veins, and it must come to a fight one day. I am not afraid; but I am awed.

"And I am thinking now how, but a few days since, I saw the might of England in all its splendour roll like a cloud over the world's outer rim—towering, solid, magnificent. . . . I don't know why—being our enemies—yet deep in the depths of me I felt a dull stirring—as of pride—"

After a silence:

"God knows why she shows us such contempt and buffets us about."

Fireflies became thicker, drifting, rising, floating high among the trees, but their tiny lamps still burned pallidly in the red glow of sunset.

A servant fetched us a calabash of bombo cooled in the stream. As I was drinking mine I saw, over the cup's rim, a man squatted under a great oak tree across the brook; and knew it to be Maltby. He was eating, and drinking out of bottles; and there was something insolent in the way he continued to look at us. But that was the man, now that he felt himself beyond danger, yet too cowardly to continue on alone to the coast.

As I say, I was looking at him over the edge of my drinking cup, when, all at once, I noticed another man with him—close behind him.

And in that very instant that I caught sight of him, something happened over there—I could not make out what—but a most horrid, falsetto screech, long drawn in agony, assailed our shrinking ears. Then I saw a man running, carrying a valise—saw that he had a horse and was mounting, spurring,

galloping southward with the desperation of a damned man hurtling hellward.

Cintra rose trembling, her hand on my arm, as we watched the flight of the horseman.

Some of the negroes ran over to the oak tree, and then set up a-screaming.

"What has happened?" whispered Cintra; "who was that horseman?"

"I'm afraid," said I, "it was José Segrada. This plantation happens to belong to him."

"But—but what did he do under that tree?"

"I'll walk over and find out," said I.

But I knew very well what José Segrada had done in the red sunset light at Jill's Hundred.

CHAPTER XI

TOAD-FACE

I

WE drove into St. Mary's Fort about ten o'clock at night. It was a shadowy little village along tide-water, facing Cumberland Sound. There was not a light in it.

There had been no fort there since revolutionary days. The hamlet included wharfs and two straggling streets where dwelt fishermen, oyster-dredgers, a few humble farming folk, and overseers. There was no barracoon but there were quarters. In these lived slaves who worked in the woods and loaded such vessels as came in for lumber and naval stores.

There was an ordinary where sea-captains and traders stayed when ashore. It was rough but clean. . . . There were no planters' houses in St. Mary's Fort, except that one belonging to José Segrada who owned Jill's Hundred; but his overseer was dead of yellow fever, Jill's Hundred run to weed, and the planter's house empty, locked up, and going slowly to ruin.

Now, my wife and I had agreed not to risk her nice, clean negro servants in any barracoon or quarters. Cintra's personal maid, Luli, slept at the foot of her bed, which solved her problem.

So I determined to break into Segrada's house, lodge our slaves there where they could be clean and cook their meals for themselves and stable our mules.

It was evident that the house had not been inhabited for several years. Window frames under the pillared portico were rotten, and gave way easily.

One of my Kroomen got in, unbolted the door; and the entire black contents of the wagon tumbled out with muffled shrieks and giggles and huddled around the gaping doorway, fearful of going in until candles were lighted, and the Kroomen were unloading baggage, bedding, and provisions.

I helped Cintra to descend, and we went into the house to see if there was any accommodation for her in case the ordinary proved impossible

On the top floor, which was the second, we discovered several clean and comfortable chambers, partly furnished, and with wide mahogany couches in each— ample space to sleep in—and we had our own bedding besides.

So when Luli fetched her mistress's portmanteau, Cintra decided to remain here until I had investigated the ordinary.

There were, in our family, fourteen people; Cintra, myself, the two Kroomen, Tip and Gangli; Luli, my wife's personal maid; Zeppa and Saffi,

under-maids; Mrs. Primrose, our cook; Willa and Ruby, under-cooks; and the house-maids, parlour-maids and other servants, Miss Tinkle, Frizzy Ann, Bee, and Ololo.

Except the efficient, dangerous-eyed, busy Kroomen, they were behaving like children on a picnic; even my wife was gaily promenading the house with Luli carrying two candles, exploring every corner of the shadowy, silent place.

"Come back and stay here!" Cintra called after me; "it will be much nicer to live here until we can get a ship than to lodge in a nasty old ordinary where the tap-room smells of rum!"

"Well," said I, "I'll go down and find out whether any ship is here and ready to sail."

"We'll have some supper when you return!" cried Cintra. "Hurry!"

As I left the house I told Gangli that I'd be back shortly, but that the two muskets and my rifle must be loaded, and he and Tip mount guard alternately until I returned.

The road which ran down to the sea was more like a lane. Humble dwellings, unlighted, silent, were scattered along it between two irregular white coquina walls, over which the moon cast shadows of oaks and China trees. The strong odour of the sea filled the street, mingled with heavy perfume of China-bloom.

Facing the wharfs where the tidal river's flood ran molten silver, stood Sinclair's ordinary; and

there, in the rear, I saw the only light in the hamlet—a lantern dangling from the arm of a dark figure emerging from the outside steps of the cellar.

I went immediately toward him and saw he was a white man.

"Are you Mr. Sinclair?" I asked.

He reckoned he was. He looked ill and care-worn. Unkempt, thin, black hair straggled over his ears; a limp cotton shirt outlined his bony body. There was fever along the coast and he looked as though he'd been born with a bad case.

"I'm wondering," said I, "whether there is a ship in and likely to sail pretty soon."

"Three," said he. "Which way you a-goin', suh?"

"North. To New York."

"They's *The Cherokee* fo' Baltimo' with naval sto'se. She sails Wednesday. They's *The Carib King* fo' Rio with mo' sto'se. But you ain't aimin' to sail south, suh."

"No. What is the third ship?"

"She's no good, I reckon," he muttered.

"No good?"

"No, suh. She's a Liverpool man showin' Spanish colours."

"A Liverpool man? Why does she put in here?"

He shrugged his emaciated shoulders.

"What's her name?" I asked.

"*The Cygnet*, suh."

"*The Cygnet?*" I exclaimed in amazement. "You tell me that the Liverpool ship, *Cygnet*,

Captain Haw, flying Spanish colours, is lying *here?*"

"I reckon."

"How long has she been here?" I demanded.

"She came to an anchor near sundown."

"Did Captain Haw come ashore?"

"He's in the bar now, suh. . . . You want I should fix you a brandy draw?"

"Wait a moment. Are you aware that *The Cygnet* is a slaver?"

A dull flush tinged his hollow cheeks.

"Yaas, suh, I'm awah of it. Are you a revenue gentleman, suh?"

"No. Is Captain Haw going to run his negroes overland by Jill's Hundred to The Cat-and-Kittens?"

"I reckon."

My astonishment grew as I considered the news. It was plain that *The Cygnet's* Spanish flag had protected her from the British squadron which must have overhauled her. But what had happened to Captain Cabasso? And to Buke Gooly?

I took hold of Sinclair's bony arm: "We'll go in the rear way," said I. "Is there anybody else in the tap-room?"

"No, suh."

"Nobody in there with Captain Haw?"

"No, suh."

"Well—I'll just take a look at your tap-room before I go in."

"You' welcome fo' to peek in through the butt'ry, suh."

I followed him. The house was very dirty. A hog was sleeping in the kitchen and several hens roosted on a pile of fire-wood in the corner.

"Thet runt," whispered Sinclair, "is po'ly. Acts like he got hawg-trouble, so I done tuk him out o' the pen. 'Pears like he ailin' right smart, suh,"—leaning down to scratch the listless ear—"I declar' it 'spicions like he done catch hawg-cholery—it sholy do, suh."

He gazed wanly upon the hog, then, lifting his lantern, showed me into the buttery where a ray of candle-light indicated a serving panel half closed.

Sinclair continued on into the bar. I peered through the crack.

A candle, burning still and thinly, illuminated a pine table where a little old man sat all hunched up over a tumbler of brandy.

My first thought was that this man was not Captain Haw.

Then, as Sinclair shuffled into the bar, the little old man looked up like a disturbed toad.

The man was Buke Gooly.

For an instant I was too astounded to comprehend that I was staring at a living man whom I supposed had been hanged.

But he was dreadfully alive; he wore the same big hat with his red wig sewed to the lining, and the

great, slitted mouth opened almost from ear to ear as he bade Sinclair fetch another brandy draw.

What on earth had happened to Haw and Cabasso, that this withered, malformed old pirate had become master of *The Cygnet ?*

Not that I cared. I had done my best to kill Buke Gooly. I had sunk his ship, *The Lazy Lass*. I had sunk Cabasso's *Black Joke*, too, and let him go. As far as I was concerned I was through with them both; being neither vindictive nor bloody minded.

As I gazed at the shrivelled little wretch I noticed the pistols in his belt. But I had two of my own.

So after taking a good look at them I went around by the bar and walked leisurely toward Buke Gooly.

His lipless mouth was sucking up brandy from a tumbler clasped in his blackened talons. So he had no chance to touch his big horse-pistols when his small eyes caught sight of me.

I give him credit for all the coolness in the world; he never moved a muscle except in his baggy, withered throat, which went on sucking and gulping whilst his bright eyes remained fixed on me.

When he had sucked the tumbler empty he set it down and leered at me.

" Yuss," he said in his windy, whistling voice, " it's me and me shadow, Captain Strake. Me and me shadow—two of us—old shipmates, man

an' boy—allus arm in arm—we are—an' allus a-keepin' company like we couldn't bear no separation nohow. Yuss."

"How are you, Captain Gooly?" I inquired pleasantly.

"Middlin' hearty, middlin' hearty. Yuss. An' how is our hell-roarin' young Captain Strake? Still a-rarin' an' a-tearin' in The Middle Passage? Still as brave 'n' bright as ever?"

"I supposed," said I, "that the British Admiral would hang you."

His mouth split open and he showed his gums in a kind of roguish mirth. In his hideous way he was giving me to understand that he had not been hatched out yesterday.

"Yuss," said he, "when I raised that cloud o' sail I just clapped a pistol to the Captain's head an' I axed him did he know my name. An' he said he did; an' I sez, 'You're a liar! My name's Haw—or over you go to play slap-me along o' them gray sharks what's been a-follerin' you from the Guinea coast!'"

"You carried high with the British?"

"Higher'n a hawk. Yuss. What's I care what he called me an' what he said about my Spanish flag?"

"So after he let you go, you took the ship?"

"Yuss."

"Where is Captain Haw?"

"Afloat."

"At sea?"

"Yuss. I give him a yawl an' water'n biscuit. The way he hollered you'd think he expected to go ashore riding on to a elephant!"

"Oh. And Captain Cabasso—your crony in that *Happy Parrot* enterprise?"

"He fell overboard—" Gooly yawned and looked into his empty glass.

"What?"

"Yuss." He turned and ordered another draw.

That he had murdered Cabasso I did not doubt for a moment. Here was a creature more heartless than any I ever had heard of, excepting Blackbeard and Low and Avery—those terrible rovers who had devastated this same coast more than a hundred years ago.

While he was sucking in his brandy I watched him, never forgetting the brass butts of those big horse-pistols sticking out of the waistband of his pantaloons.

"I suppose," said I, "you will try to run your slaves to Barracoon West by way of Jill's Hundred."

"You know the way," he said with his windy, whispering laugh. . . . "Where's your ship?"

"She's sailed."

"Hey! Sailed without a skipper?"

"Yes. I've quit."

"Quit the sea?" he screeched.

"Yes."

"Quit Quinn & Maltby? Quit the Black Ivory trade?"

"Yes, I'm done with it."

"I know. You got mad. What me an' Cabasso an' Maltby an' José Segrada done along o' you was enough to make any captain mad."

"That was it—partly."

"You have a draw along o' me," he said.

"No."

"Yuss! You was bad done, Captain Strake. I ain't mad at you. No, I ain't. Them carronades —and the way you handled *The Happy Parrot!*— He was a slubberly son-of-a-slut, Cabasso, an' he fit *The Black Joke* like she wuz a scow. Yuss. No good. Good shark-slop, mebbee. Good boot-tops if you tried 'em out. Never'd made a sailor-man nohow. White liver 'n yeller guts. I know 'em. Yuss."

I refused my brandy. He sucked that up, also.

"You need an anker, I should think," said I.

"I don't never stop when I'm a-goin'. All I do is I air my head—" He lifted his hat and the red wig went with it, leaving a loathly skull as wrinkled and naked as a buzzard's.

"That's the way; ventilate your knob. That lets the smoke out. Yuss."

"I wonder," said I, "what those two ship captains out yonder are thinking of you and your ship alongside of them."

He gave me a disgusted look, saying that he never bothered with ships carrying naval stores or lumber. Also, he added that he had to get his niggers to a

broker and that was all the trouble he could attend to at the moment.

"I tell you what I'll do," said he. "You ship along o' me an' write your own articles, an' I'll give you either o' them ships, an' we'll sail in company. Yuss. An' I'll lay down ten thousand dollars when you wet your pen!"

"If I did that," said I, "maybe I'd use you as I used Charley Chatto."

His dreadful mirth stretched his mouth till he looked like a sculpin:

"Have you seen him since you hove him overboard an' a shark took his leg?"

"No."

"Got a peg leg to Augusta. I wuz to Havana an' I seen him a peggin' it, 'n' all poor 'n' ragged lookin' for a mob along the docks.

"'Well, Chatty,' sez I, 'when the last trump sends us to quarters we'll all be runnin' on j'yful feet, I'm told; but you'll have to stump it!'

"'Yuss,' sez he, 'they'll be a wailin' an' a gnashin' of teeth, too,' sez he, 'but you hain't got no teeth an' you'll hev to gum it!'"

"Is he aboard you?"

"Yuss. Second mate. But he can't hold his temper with them niggers. No. He biles 'em and that spiles 'em. Costs money to spile a nigger. But Chatty he's fond of a joke, too; an' if he gets mad at a nigger he pours bilin' grease on him. Then the nigger's whole back kinda cooks and comes off

in flakes, and you can see his backbone like he wuz a mackeral. That spiles him. Yuss."

I got up: "Well," said I, "you'll both get your punishment in hell if you don't on earth."

"You won't sign along o' me, Captain Strake?"

"I think," said I, "that it won't be long before you and Charley Chatto will be doing a double rope's end hornpipe off some yard-arm."

His only notice of this remark was to take his slopping tumbler between hooked and blackened claws and watch me over the rim out of little, unwinking eyes.

"God!" said I, and spat on the floor, "—you're enough to turn a man into an Abolitionist or a Quaker. I never struck a nigger in all my life."

"I don't, either," he said in his ghastly voice. "I shoot them sometimes."

I went back to the bar where Sinclair sat asleep on a hard chair, shook him awake, and borrowed his lantern.

Then I went out and down to the long wharf where out in the moonlight at the end of it, lay a tall ship, *The Cherokee*, Captain Conner.

The watch hailed me; we parleyed; then the Captain was sent for and he came in his night-shirt and took a look at me.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

I told him.

"Oh," said he, "I've heard of you and *The Happy Parrot*. I think the Revenue Cutter, *Gal-*

latin was looking for you. Was it you sank Captain Nanfan? "

" Is he sunk? " I asked.

The Captain laughed: " All right, Captain Strake, bring your lady aboard. I'll take good care of your black servants, too."

So I went back to the planter's house where I found the Krooman, Tip, on guard and all as still as death under the moon. The only light burned in Cintra's chamber. She came to the door, hearing me on the stairs, and I told her all was well and that we should sail for Baltimore on Wednesday aboard *The Cherokee*.

" And I'll tell you another thing, Cintra," said I, "—not that I'm turning Abolitionist or Quaker—but I sail no more on The Black Account."

She came out of her room in her frail night-rail and naked feet:

" Oh, Eric," she whispered,—the first time ever she had spoken my name.

Her hands had moved a little way toward me; I came close to her and took them into mine.

" I want you to understand," said I, " that I'm no Quaker. All the same, I never lifted a finger to hurt a negro in all my life."

She was listening, her lovely eyes lifted to mine.

" You'd better not stand here; you may take a chill, Cintra—"

" I wish you to talk to me, Eric."

" You did not feel that way on our honeymoon."

She blushed: "We did not have any," she said, hanging her head.

After a silence she lifted it, gave me a frightened, confused look as I swept her into my arms. But when I kissed her mouth she put both arms up around my head and drew it tightly to hers.

Cintra, holding to my arm, bent over her black maid and shook her gently.

"Luli," she whispered, "wake up! I want you to sleep downstairs to-night—"

2

A most frightful noise awakened me—shots, crash of splintered windows and doors, the red light of torches outside my window. The screaming of our servants filled the house.

Scarce knowing what I was about I pulled on trousers and boots and got hold of one of my pistols. Cintra, in her night-rail, sprang from the bed and groped for a candle.

There came another crash and she ran to the window.

"There are hundreds of horsemen outside," she whispered. "They're breaking all the windows and doors—"

The screams of her black girls on the stairs drowned her voice; the corridor glowed red with torchlight, and the next instant our blacks rushed into the room and flung themselves on the floor

behind us, naked, panting, frantic with terror, filling the house with their shrieking.

I pushed Cintra violently behind me and sprang forward to close the door; but it was already choked with men, their muskets and cutlasses gleaming in the torch-glare.

"This way!" they shouted, laughing hoarsely, "here are your pretty nigger gals, Cap'n Toad-face!"

The throng cramming the doorway sagged aside to admit a little, misshapen old man in a huge hat and red wig, whose blackened fingers clutched two horse-pistols half as long as himself.

"Hey!" he cried in his spectral voice, "here's the roarin', rarin' young Captain! Brave and bright like he allus is. Yuss—"

"Keep out of the room," said I; but he came in, pointing both pistols and showing his toothless gums; and I dared not fire on him, Cintra being beside me.

"What do you want, Captain Gooly?" said I.

"What do I want?" said he; "I want twenty thousand dollars wuth o' black girls what's a-screechin' there behind yeh! Yuss. That's what I come for; an' that's what I want; and that's what I'm a-goin' to git! Twenty thousand in black gals. Yuss."

"They belong to my wife," said I, coolly. "Is it your purpose to commit robbery on United States soil?"

He laughed and laughed and smacked his gums at me.

"Sile be blowed!" he retorted huskily. "You think twenty thousand dollars pays for *The Lazy Lass!*"

He crept nearer, his long pistols levelled at me.

"You sign along o' me, my bright and brave young feller, an' you keep your niggers. Think fast, my rip-roarin' friend. Ten thousand when the pen's wet; you write your own articles—"

The increasing noise outside interrupted him—shouting, a tremendous din of iron manacles, the smacking of rawhide whips, a yell of pain here and there.

"You hear that!" demanded Gooly, strutting to and fro with his levelled pistols; "I got a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in niggers on the way, to Jill's Hundred. You get your commission—one-half of one in ten, an' five to your account. An' you keep your own niggers at that—"

There came a loud tap-tapping from the corridor behind him.

"Hey, Chatty," he cried without turning his head, "you better stay below an' keep a weather eye on the kaffles!" But Charley Chatto came stumping into the room, carrying a heavy snake whip looped up in his fist.

He thrust his mean little square-shaped face at me, all livid with pox scars.

"Shoot him and take his niggers, Toad-face,"

he sneered. "I guess you and I are enough to carry on business without that fancy trader."

"Your leg's talkin', not your brain, Charley," retorted Buke Gooly. "I want a feller to sail On The Black Account while you and me attends to the coast trade. Yuss. And this here bright and brave young Captain's a high-price man. I ain't a-goin' to spile him if I can help it—like you go a-spilin' of valler'ble niggers a-cookin' 'em alive with bilin' grease—"

"I tell you, shoot him while you got the chance," insisted Chatto. "There's more poison into this here Captain Strake 'n' you'll find into a blue-gum nigger!"

There fell an ominous silence, shattered suddenly by the din of iron fetters outside, beaten together in rising excitement as the gabbling voices of half a thousand blacks rose to a shrill and beast-like roar.

"What's the matter with them?" snarled Gooly. "Why in hell don't you go look after them niggers—"

"Gimme a pistol," whispered Chatto, the pox scars in his malignant little face turning purple.

"Hey!" cried Gooly to me, "you a-goin' to make up your mind?"

"Who's that white woman?" demanded Chatto, pointing his whip at Cintra. Even as he spoke he seemed to understand, for he took a swift, stumping step toward her, uncoiling the loop of his murderous whip.

"I'll mark his woman for him!" he yelled. But, as he swung the metal-tipped lash, I had him off

his feet in a single leap, turned, hurled him through the window, smashing out and carrying away frame and glass.

Crash! went his body into the shrubbery outside; then silence, followed by an outburst of black laughter and a deafening jangling and clash of fetters.

Gooly's hollow voice rose to a windy whistle:

"You sign along o' me, by God, or I'll have you hauled aboard by your heels! I gotta have you! I gotta have you! Yuss, by Christ—"

The deafening yelling outside drowned his ghostly voice. There were shots, now; white men shouting to each other amid the clanging of fetters; a rush and trample on the stairs, explosions.

"Hi, Toad-face!" bellowed a voice, "the Spanish are running off your niggers!"

Gooly ran squattering to the window, leered down, then turned and tried to get out of the door, but it was crammed full of his own men fighting; and, in the din of the cutlasses, he shouted and strove in vain to get through.

Groans, imprecations, screams of agony filled the house; the struggling men in the packed doorway were torn from the landing and dragged below. And now Gooly could get out; but when he did, instead of starting for the stairs, he squatted, levelled both pistols, fired, then hurling the empty weapons down the stairway, he turned and bolted into my room across the corridor, and, slamming the door, bolted it.

Then, to my amazement, I saw José Segrada bound up the stairway, seize the door-knob, and shake it.

"Ah, Jesu-Maria!" he cried, "you ver' dam sure you goin' rob me my share these nigger! I goin' mek you unnerstan' mine you business ver' dam queek!—"

A rush of negroes of every colour from black to nearly white filled the stairs. Their cutlasses were bloody; they raged like beasts to break in the door; and I saw Spanish-looking white men pushing them aside and shoving them back.

Suddenly the door splintered and gave way. I caught a glimpse of Buke Gooly's blazing eyes where he squatted by the window; then Segrada was on him like a leopard, knife in hand—and he got the blade into Gooly's neck, twisting and pushing and boring at the windpipe, but the withered neck, squirting black blood, proved tough, and he was a long while with the struggling creature before he could cut through to the backbone.

Nobody noticed me in the excitement. I do not believe that Segrada ever dreamed that I was within many miles of him.

There were two oaken bars on the chamber door, and these I shoved into place; then I went cautiously to the window and saw Segrada's Spanish riders spurring their horses up and down the long lines of shrinking, fettered negroes.

Listening behind me I heard many men running downstairs, their big spurs ringing and clashing at

every step. Outside, in the brilliant torchlight, I saw Charley Chatto's corpse, already stripped and looted, his wooden leg splintered, lying in a smashed kumquat bush. On the blood-wet doorstep lay the bodies of my two brave Kroomen, shot down by Buke Gooly. The corpses of some of Gooly's men lay here and there among the weeds. Segrada's blacks had stripped them naked.

Then Segrada came out, handing his reeking knife to a slave to wipe. Another slave came, pulling a horse behind him; and held the stirrup while Segrada climbed wearily into the saddle.

I heard him say in Spanish to a horseman whose jacket was plastered with silver, that there was no time to lose if they hoped to drive their kaffles into Spanish territory.

There came a great jingle and trample of horses, high-pitched cries of black kaffle captains, pistol-loud cracking of cruel whips, then the vast, velvet shuffle of naked feet on sand and a mournful sound of jangling iron and human sighing.

Dawn paled the torchlight as the long kaffle moved away into the pallid western mist, shuffle-shuffle-clink-clank, and the dancing hoof-beats of half a hundred grotesque and gaudy riders, white and black.

After a long while, and at the tail of the tragic caravan, rode José Segrada, all alone, wearily smoking a long, black cigar.

CHAPTER XII

LION'S BLOOD

I

MY great passion for my wife, Cintra, changed in me much that I never thought would ever change.

I was sorry that ever I had sailed On The Black Account. It horrified me that I once had been a smuggler and something resembling a pirate.

I was sorry I had said that Thomas Jefferson was a poltroon and a demagogue—though I fear he is something of the latter, and never can digest that matter of shoe-buckles and shoe-laces, and detest his gun-boats.

In later years I learned what fundamentally ailed him; he was a character totally devoid of any sense of humour. This, coupled with perfect incapacity for any foresight or vision, makes, I believe, what is known as a humanitarian.

Well, let that rest. Perhaps my utter adoration of my trinity—Washington, Franklin, Hamilton—leaves in me no room for lesser tolerance. These were *men!*—faultily but wholesomely human in body; god-like in mind.

In them were no doubts; from them came no babblings concerning equality—well, let that rest, too.

God rest our mighty dead.

Well, the pot was now a-boiling over.

When Cintra and I returned to New York the previous year, and I had retired from the disgusting business in which I had been employed by Quinn & Maltby, the pot had begun to bubble furiously.

For the same old British man-o'-war, *The Guerriere*, which had been blockading our harbour off Sandy Hook so long, and which had once fired into my schooner, *The Happy Parrot*, stopped an American brig near Sandy Hook and took from her an American sailor-man.

And now, at last, the patient Yankee got mad; and went after *The Guerriere*, and, coming up with a British man-o'-war in the dark, made kindling of her. But she turned out to be *The Little Belt*, 18 guns, and not *The Guerriere*.

I thought war was coming then, and broached the subject of my participation to Cintra who wept and accused me of a love for slaughter, and told me she was done with me.

All that summer and winter the excitement grew in New York, and every day the militia marched up Broadway and then marched down again.

My agitation became extreme, but there was no war and Cintra became kind again and clung the closer, only she watched me ever with a passionate

jealousy which made me something of a hypocrite, and hiding my intentions.

She read aloud to me in the newspapers that we possessed only twelve war vessels, and Britain had ten hundred and sixty. But in the coffee-houses I heard how England jeered at us, saying that " the Yankees could not be kicked into a war "; and I could scarce eat my dinner a-thinking on it.

Meanwhile, our city artillery regiment of militia continued to parade up Broadway and parade down again, and in all hotels, coffee-houses, taverns, inns, and ordinaries, patriotic fires blazed higher with every draught from the bar.

I remember that evening, the 20th of June. Cintra and I, after supper, were sitting upon our stoop, our fingers discreetly intertwined, enjoying the freshness of the sea-air from the bay, and the perfume of lilacs from Battery Park.

Ours continued to be a long honeymoon—perhaps because we had lost the first year of it—and Cintra whispered that she had rather sit here with me than run in next door to gossip with Eliza Osborn and Betsy Hunt, but that she had promised and must go.

I, being somewhat afraid of Mrs. Betsy Hunt, pretended an engagement at the City Tavern; which made Cintra laugh.

So presently I took Cintra to our neighbours; and then put on my beaver hat and took my walking-stick with tassels, and, lighting a long cheroot,

sauntered toward the City Tavern where I had cronies—not all reputable, perhaps.

When I arrived, the bowl was going 'round and gentlemen already somewhat heated and a-singing of patriotic and derisive songs in dauntless chorus:

" *—There was an old hooker,*
She sailed from Jamaica,
The rats had forsook her
And so had her Maker;

" *The Admiral sez to the Captain, 'You tell 'em*
To back the main tops'l and saw off her hellum,
Promoting His Majesty's service and glory!'
My song it is ended and so is my story.

CHORUS

" *Billy-be-dam, the ship's a-sinkin'!*
Billy-be-dam, she's gone aground!
Billy-be-dam, you quit your drinkin',
Billy-be-dam, we'll all be drown'd-ded! "

So I ordered a pineapple bombo with bitters, and, with my arms on my comrade's shoulders, joined the chorus:

" *—In Olden Time of deeds sublime,*
When England ruled the sea, sir,
She loved to spank the naughty Yank
Who sank her Bohee tea, sir.

"*Avast, avast! Those days are passed;*
Old England, cease your searching,
Else you shall find we have a mind
To give your rump a birching!

"*All undismayed and unafraid*
The Yankee nation fights, sir,
To settle matters long delayed—
Free Trade and Sailors' Rights, sir!—"

Lord! There were more than two score verses. But we sang 'em all, I'm ashamed to say. There were officers there from the City Artillery and the City Light Horse—the only uniformed militia we had, and they drew their large sabres and made a tremendous din by striking the blades together.

An elderly gentleman got up and started for the door remarking that as long as there were wars there'd be fools.

He was too old to castigate or challenge, but several red-faced gentlemen arose and remonstrated to no purpose, for he went out saying something about jackasses.

Replying to indignant questions, our landlord said that our insulter had been Colonel of a fighting Continental regiment during the Revolution. Also he had killed four opponents in duels.

Which information made us feel silly.

Songs less warlike and more sentimental now arose from our bibulous company; like "The Light Horseman's Lament":

" *Darling, when this war is over,*
When the cannon roar no more,
Useful ploughs shall gently cover
Meadows red with human gore ;

" *Hand in hand amid the clover*
We shall wander near our door,
While above us love-doves hover,
Teaching us their tender lore !

CHORUS

" *Blue-eyed Mary, how I miss you,*
As I never missed befo——re !
How I long to kiss and kiss you,
Sitting by our cottage do——or ! "

We were, I remember, wailing out the third verse of this tearful ditty, when a sudden commotion arose in the lobby—exclamations, cries, cheers, the noise of many feet—then our landlord, red, gesticulating:

" Gentlemen, the United States has declared war against Great Britain ! "

I paid my reckoning, clapped on my hat and went home directly.

" You can't go," whimpered Cintra; " I'm going to have a baby."

" If he lives," said I, " would you wish him to know that there had been a just war and his father was not in it? "

"It may be a girl—"

"Then she'll be like you, and I would not have her know it; nor would I have you, either."

"Oh," wept Cintra, "I had thought to have seen the last of blood and fighting as far as this family is concerned. . . . Come here to me, darling. . . . Do you remember when you threatened me with a rope's end? I loved you, all the same. And before that I was in love with you. All the time. In the very beginning when you wanted me to go and see the British ships. . . . Did you love me then?"

I said I did. God is tender to such lies. Also, He knows I've loved her enough since to make up for it.

She went to sleep in my arms that night, tearfully resigned.

Noisy music awakened us in the morning. An indifferent band was discoursing "Yankee Doodle" in Battery Park.

While we were at breakfast Luli came in to inform us that a procession of prominent citizens, wearing their best beaver hats and shiniest boots, and armed with picks and shovels, was marching to Harlem to dig trenches and throw up redoubts for the purpose of defending McGovern's Pass.

I was inclined to laugh; but when we went to the window and saw, in the solemn marching ranks, middle-aged gentlemen wearing their old Continental uniforms—among them such grim veterans

as our late Mayor of New York, Colonel Marinus Willet, bravest of the brave—why, my inclination to laugh vanished.

And in a few moments my Cintra beheld her spouse with the family coal shovel on his shoulder, following the drums and fifes and footing it proudly Harlemwards with the flower of the city's chivalry.

That night I told my wife that Colonel Willet, who knew my father in the army, had given me a letter of recommendation to Captain Hull of our frigate, *Constitution*.

She turned a little pale, but said very quietly:

"I have to thank God that, if you must sail at all, you sail with Captain Hull, and not aboard *The Happy Parrot*."

"Amen, darling," said I cheerfully.

We promenaded, that evening, in the beautiful park of the new City Hall where the artillery band was playing and everybody of consequence and respectability in New York was strolling under the trees.

And amid all the youth and chivalry and beauty gathered there, my Cintra was the loveliest.

2

On the second of August, 1812, the United States frigate, *Constitution*, Captain Isaac Hull, weighed and sailed from Boston in search of that old pest of all our ports, His British Majesty's frigate,

Guerriere. And I was of the company; without commission, but most kindly received by Captain Hull and attached to his person as a gentleman volunteer.

I had a fine time aboard the *Constitution*; the discipline was magnificent, the frigate a wonder, the ship's officers agreeable, and the weather excellent—excepting during the chase of our ship by a British squadron of eleven sail, where only superb seamanship enabled us to escape.

The *Constitution* sailed from Cape Sable, eastward, toward the Isle of Sables, always looking for my old enemy, *The Guerriere*.

We didn't find her. We took a couple of small vessels, sent their crews ashore, and destroyed them.

On the 15th our mast-head made out five sail—one a sloop of war, which, when we gave chase, turned on one of her consorts, a brig, and set her afire. Evidently one of her prizes.

The sloop of war went to windward; we followed a ship, but, overhauling her, discovered her already a prize to one of our privateers, and fleeing from the British sloop of war.

So we then chased a brig, which proved to be an American—one of the sloop of war's victims with a British prize crew aboard. We put another, still, aboard her, and sent her in to Boston.

There were other vessels, but they got away from us. So we altered our course to the southward, and bowled along looking always for *The Guerriere*.

It was, I believe, the 19th of August, in lat. 41° 41′, long. 55° 48′, and after dinner on a fine, windy day, that we first discovered traces of His British Majesty's devilish frigate, *Guerriere*, Captain Dacres.

Captain Hull liked to muster his crew on the spar-deck, dressed to suit his whim—one day in blue jackets and blue trousers, another day in white trousers and scarlet vests with anchor-buttons, and black, glossy hats bearing the name of our ship.

That afternoon the crew had been mustered, wearing blue, white, and scarlet; and Captain Hull was passing them in inspection followed, by Lieutenant Morris, second in command, and myself, when our mast-head hailed the quarter-deck just off Cape Sable; and very soon we saw, followed, and overhauled a Salem privateer.

When we spoke her she offered us information that an English frigate was cruising in the neighbourhood; and he laid our course for us.

Captain Hull was perfectly cool—in mind if not in person—for the day was warm; he was very fat; and he wore the tightest breeches I ever beheld upon any man, which coyly displayed his cherub-like rotundity in its every subtle curve.

His hair was rolled up and curled protusely, with a lovelock like a scented tendril over each ear, which the high, gold-laced collar of his too-tight coat tickled every time he turned his head.

The inspection finished, Captain Hull walked aft followed by Lieutenant Morris and myself. We

were terribly excited and told each other our hopes in whispers.

On the quarter-deck Captain Hull did a very odd thing; he bent at the waist two or three times as far as he was able and tried to touch the deck with the flat of his gloved hands.

After this strange exercise he said to me:

"Sir; my uniform seems a trifle tight for fighting. If it splits you are not to be alarmed, sir."

He spoke so gravely that both Mr. Morris and I merely stared at him, but, seeing the twinkle in his handsome eyes, we shouted with laughter.

He took off his gold-laced cocked hat, wiped his brow with a handkerchief, put it on again.

"Mr. Strake," said he, "Heaven can be kind, sometimes, if importuned. I hope that you and Mr. Morris are praying that we discover and overhaul this English frigate. And that she turn out to be *The Guerriere*."

"Yes, sir," said I, "we are praying hard."

"Because," he said very gently, "Captain Dacres, who commands her, is a friend of mine, and a most charming and cultivated gentleman. A few months before war was declared, our two ships were lying in the Delaware, and he and I met at a banquet on shore.

"And I bet him a new hat that if ever we had a chance to fight, the *Constitution* would take *The Guerriere*."

"Sail-ho—o—o—o!" hailed our mast-head from his lofty look-out.

"Mast-head there!" shouted Captain Hull.

"Sir!"

"Where away is the sail?" The subdued roar of excitement on deck disturbed him and Mr. Morris shouted: "Silence, fore and aft!"

You could have heard a quid drop as Captain Hull again hailed the look-out: "What does she look like?"

"A large ship, sir, standing toward us."

I could feel exquisite thrills running all over me.

"Aloft there!" shouted Captain Hull.

"Sir?"

"What does she look like now?"

"A large frigate bearing down upon us, sir."

"Oh, my God," whispered Morris to me, "I hope he wins his new hat!"

"Clear the ship, Mr. Morris."

"All hands!" shouted Morris; "all hands clear ship for action, ahoy!"

Instantly our drums beat to quarters; guns were cast free and tampions knocked out; there came a rush of barefooted men; midshipmen shrilly called off quarter-bills, answered by the hoarse, eager voices of the men at quarters.

Lieutenant Bush of our Marines gave my arm a terrific pinch as he passed; Lieutenant Hoffman, commanding in the cabin, pulled a wry but excited face at me.

I saw our surgeon and his mate descending to the cockpit; midshipmen led the topmen aloft;

sail-trimmers mustered below; powder-passers aligned themselves; powder-monkeys skipped hither and thither playing their usual antics upon one another, while our drums still rolled for battle.

We continued to run free until we were within a league of the stranger to leeward.

Top-gallant sails were now furled; light spars lowered, and our course was set for the stranger. All light stay-sails and flying jib were stowed; we took a second reef in the topsails, hauled up the courses and sent down royal yards.

At Captain Hull's order I passed forward with Lieutenant Bush to direct the Marines and boarders just how to behave if boarders were called away; and we swiftly inspected their pikes, pistols and cutlasses.

Now all guns were shotted and matches lighted as double precaution in case our gun-locks missed.

It was, I think, a little after five o'clock, when the two ships were nearing each other, that the stranger backed her main topsail and showed us English colours—a flag at each mast-head, awaiting us.

"*The Guerriere!*" whispered Morris; and we clasped hands and nearly crippled each other's fingers.

Captain Hull calmly surveyed the Englishman, then leisurely bent his body several times, attempting to touch the toes of his boots. No use.

As we ran toward her, we yawed now and then to avoid raking, and fired a gun or two as they bore.

Suddenly *The Guerriere* triced up her ports and let us have her weather broadside.

"Well, well," murmured Captain Hull, "my friend Dacres is growing impatient."

Morris smiled excitedly as the shot fell short, making a vast splashing everywhere.

But *The Guerriere* wore around and her larboard broadside crashed out, hurling an iron storm through our rigging and hulling us twice.

Then the deck leaped under me as we let go our bow guns at her, but the sound of the discharges was obliterated in the tremendous roar of the Englishman's broadsides.

Little damage was done; the two ships were not yet within effective range. We fired only our bow guns now and then, but the tension of impatience among our crew grew to a strain almost too keen to be endured.

Even Morris felt his nerves near to the breaking, for I heard him ask the Captain permission to open with his broadsides.

"Not yet," said Captain Hull, carelessly continuing his flesh-reducing exercises on the quarter-deck.

Crash-crash! came *The Guerriere's* broadsides. Three of our crew fell. The intensity of excitement became cruel in the extreme among the men.

"Sir," said Lieutenant Morris to our Captain, "have I your leave to give them one broadside?"

"Oh, no, not yet, Mr. Morris," replied Captain Hull.

I do not know how we endured it. *The Guerriere* was hulling us; her iron hail stormed through our rigging; two more men were down in their blood; Captain Hull continued to pace the deck in silence.

We were within half pistol shot when the Englishman let fly a broadside.

"Now!" roared Captain Hull, "pour it into her, my bullies!"

I do not know whether it was due to his own suddenly unleashed excitement, or the awful violence of our broadside, that split Captain Hull's tight breeches.

"Give to her!" he shouted. "Rip the bowels out of her, my hearties! There you are, my bullies! Let her have it again!"

Lieutenant Morris and I were shouting madly: "Hull her! Hull her!" And the crew caught the significant play upon words, cheering at every shot with shouts of, "Hull her, boys! Give her Hull!"

The Guerriere was reeling and trembling under the terrific earthquake blast almost at a pike's length. With a frightful shock her mizzenmast fell upon her deck, hurling her topmen into the sea.

The cheering of our crew became so deafening that neither Lieutenant Morris nor I could hear Captain Hull's orders, though he pulled us by the shoulder and bellowed into our ears.

In the cannon gloom I saw an imp of a powder-monkey, black as a little devil from the pit, throwing handsprings across the deck.

From a port of *The Guerriere* a small, thin, English gunner looked out at me and fired a pistol at me.

"Pull down that striped rag!" he yelled. "Why don't you pull it down and strike to us!"

Naked to the waist, smeared with blood and powder, her gunners and ours hauled at the gun-tackles, sponged, rammed home the shot, and fired right into each other's vitals, broadside and broadside nearly touching.

Through the smoke I saw sailors aboard the Englishman trying to clear away the wreckage of the mizzen which had badly smashed everything aft.

We were drawing very slowly ahead, now, and presently we luffed and lay straight athwart *The Guerriere's* bows, so close that her huge bowsprit towered up over our quarter-deck, fouling our mizzen rigging; and she swung around so that her bow lay against our port-quarter.

"Call away boarders, Mr. Morris," shouted Captain Hull.

As our bugle rang out the summons, the British bugles echoed the instant order; the bulwarks of both ships were crowded with cheering men; pikes and cutlasses clashed for a moment; then a heavy sea came thrashing through between the ships, separating them from each other; and we heard the

British bugles recalling their boarders to the guns again.

Now our sides blazed with pistols shots, and, from our tops, a leaden storm beat upon *The Guerriere's* decks. So closely we fought that our gun muzzles sometimes scraped the Englishman's sides, and their men and ours fired at each other with muskets when the guns were run in again for reloading.

" Mr. Morris," said Captain Hull, holding his split breeches together with one white-gloved hand, and pointing with the other; " I want you to smother the fire of *The Guerriere's* bow guns. If you don't we'll be afire ourselves in a minute."

Mr. Morris carried the order; but those terrible English guns would not be silenced; and presently the flame from their muzzles set fire to the cabin.

As the dreadful cry of fire was raised, I ran toward the cabin, but found Lieutenant Hoffman in charge and perfectly able to attend to the matter. I then ran to a gun-crew, and they swung their gun, and I laid it; and our shot hit the gun which was damaging us, breaking off the muzzle and capsizing the piece.

I saw Morris, all alone, trying to lash the two ships together; but he couldn't do it; and he and his boarders clambered over the taffrail to await another opportunity.

As I started to aid him, Lieutenant Bush, of the Marines, and Mr. Alwyn, Master, joined me.

"The old man's got to get that hat!" said Bush, giving me a dig in the ribs.

As he spoke, a dozen muskets were fired at us from the Englishman's tops, and Bush fell stone dead with the grin still quivering on his handsome features, and a bullet in his brain.

Mr. Alwyn was down, also; and so was Mr. Morris, shot through the body—both badly hurt; and I ordered them below at once, and ran to the quarter-deck to report. Morris would not leave the deck, however, when the surgeon's mate came for him.

Somebody had found some pins for Captain Hull. He stood there in that raging hell a-pinning up his breeches. He gave me an absent-minded glance:

"Mr. Strake," said he, "I've got 'em."

"Do you mean the British, sir?"

"Certainly. Did you think I meant my breeches?"

I laughed hysterically.

"Tell them to lay every gun on *The Guerriere's* foremast, Mr. Strake," he said coolly; "we've drifted far enough asunder; here's a pretty range; and I'm anxious to be done with my friend Dacres."

At the second broadside *The Guerriere's* foremast crashed down, dragging with it, in its fall, her mainmast; and *The Guerriere* lay tossing, plunging, rolling amid the waves, completely dismasted. Yet still, from the grotesque stump of her mizzenmast, a Jack fluttered feebly.

We now hauled aboard our tacks, ran off a little way, secured our masts, rove new rigging. About seven o'clock we wore round, took a position for raking—the Englishman still wallowing in the trough of the sea.

"Rake her," said Captain Hull with a casual glance at the enemy.

But, as we prepared to sweep her, down came her ragged Jack.

Captain Hull, having pinned up his breeches, regarded his work with complacence.

"Mr. Strake," said he, "pray ask Mr. Read to go aboard Captain Dacres with my compliments and inquire whether he has struck his colours. You may go with him."

So Lieutenant Read and I went aboard that floating wrack of hellish devastation; and met Captain Dacres sauntering toward us.

"Sir," said Lieutenant Read, "Captain Hull presents his compliments and wishes to know whether you have struck your flag."

Captain Dacres glanced ironically aloft, then his gaze wandered over his mastless ship:

"Really," said he, "I don't know. My mizzen-mast is gone; my mainmast is gone; and I can't see any foremast either; and, on the whole, I think you may say to Captain Hull that we have struck our flag."

"Sir," said Lieutenant Read, embarrassed by such cool levity, "would you care to have the assistance of a surgeon for your wounded?"

"Dear me," said Captain Dacres, in mild surprise, "I should suppose you had business enough aboard your own ship for all your medical officers to attend to."

"Oh, no, sir," said Mr. Read, "we have only seven wounded aboard us, and seven dead."

Captain Dacres gazed upon him in amazement. He thanked us, presently, remarking that he had lost seventy-nine dead and wounded.

I could easily believe it. The decks were horrible, being one vast slippery glare of blood. The ship was rolling horribly; corpses rolled over and over into scuppers and out again, only to be crushed and mangled by three guns which had got loose of their tackles and were rushing and sliding here and there, battering everything to splinters. As for me, I don't see how anybody survived on either ship.

It was plain enough that *The Guerriere* was sinking, and we had no time to lose about getting our prisoners aboard us.

When I returned to our ship, Captain Hull left the quarter-deck and motioned me to follow to his cabin.

To him, in a little while, came Captain Dacres escorted by Lieutenant Read.

The two Captains bowed to each other; then Dacres began to unclasp the sword at his hip.

"No, no, my dear fellow," said Captain Hull gently, "I'll not take sword from one who knows

so well how to use it. . . . But I'll trouble you for that hat."

A polite but pallid smile hovered upon the Englishman's features. Then Hull went up to him and took his hand.

"It was a good fight," said Dacres. His voice was not quite steady.

"It was," said Hull. "And that ought not to surprise you, Dacres. After all, my dear fellow, the old Lion's Blood is in us both, you know."

"Yes," said Dacres, "I believe it is."

While the British were throwing overboard their dead, and boatload after boatload of prisoners, wounded, and unwounded were coming aboard us, I seized the opportunity to scribble a line or two to my wife:

Darling and Beloved—

We have taken *The Guerriere*. Seven dead, seven wounded aboard us; aboard him, seventy-nine.

I wish you would tell Luli to take my best coat, waistcoat, and pantaloons to the tailor and have him make for me a uniform for a naval lieutenant, of the best material, with plenty of gold lace; belt and epaulettes to match. Also a cocked hat to the head measure of my best beaver, which I beg you to have Luli command for me at the hatters'.

I have the honour to be, my darling, your humble,

Obedient and adoring husband,

ERIC STRAKE.

P.S. Mr. Bush shot through the head; Mr. Morris and Mr. Alwyn through the body.

Tell Luli to brush all my clothes for fear of moths.

P.P.S. Captain Dacres is a gentleman. When he came into action he said to ten seamen who were Americans: 'I fancy you'll not care to fight your own people, so you may go below and remain out of harm's way.'

Also, he had aboard him one of our sea-captains, a Mr. Orne of Salem, I believe; and sent him below to the cockpit for fear of any harm. There are Englishmen *and* Englishmen, you see.

P.P.P.S I forgot to say that Captain Hull's breeches, being too tight, split at the first broadside. I hope I never grow fat. However, I'd rather be Captain Hull, to-day, than any man alive.

And I have to tell you something else. Thomas Jefferson I have never loved; and have called him poltroon—which he never was—and demagogue—which perhaps he is not.

But in one thing he said—which Captain Hull told me about—I must applaud him and agree with him with all my heart. And this is what Mr. Jefferson hath written to a friend from Monticello:

"I deprecate," he wrote, "the maniac course of hostility and hatred pursued by England toward the United States.

"I hope in God she will change. There is not a nation on the globe with whom I have more earnestly wished a friendly intercourse on equal conditions.

"I know that I am represented as an enemy to England. But fools only can believe this, or those who think me a fool. I am an enemy to her insults and injuries. I am an enemy to those who govern her conduct toward us.

"But were England to exercise decency, and, at least, neutral passions toward us, there is not, I repeat, a people on earth for whom I would sacrifice so much to be in friendship."

Darling, we have taken a noble British ship commanded by a noble-minded gentleman, who seemed astonished to discover that not only do we know how to fight, but also are humane and courteous.

How strange, when the same Lion's Blood courses through our veins and theirs!—

Of wars and rumours of wars by land and sea I shall write no more. I have been too busy fighting them. And I am too busy still, to write, where I am sitting in our parlour where all windows are open to the June dusk. A fragrance of the mounting sea, and of lilacs, steals in from the Battery Park. I have twin children—girls—upon either knee.

So you see I am very busy.

Also we three are busy listening to Cintra who has her harp between her arms and is singing:

"*Ah, what is love?*
It is a sacred thing,
As sacred to a shepherd as a King—
More holy, too;
For Kings regard with dread our Lord above,
But all the shepherd knows of God is Love."

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