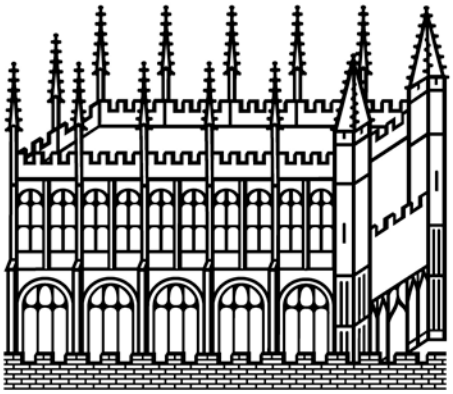
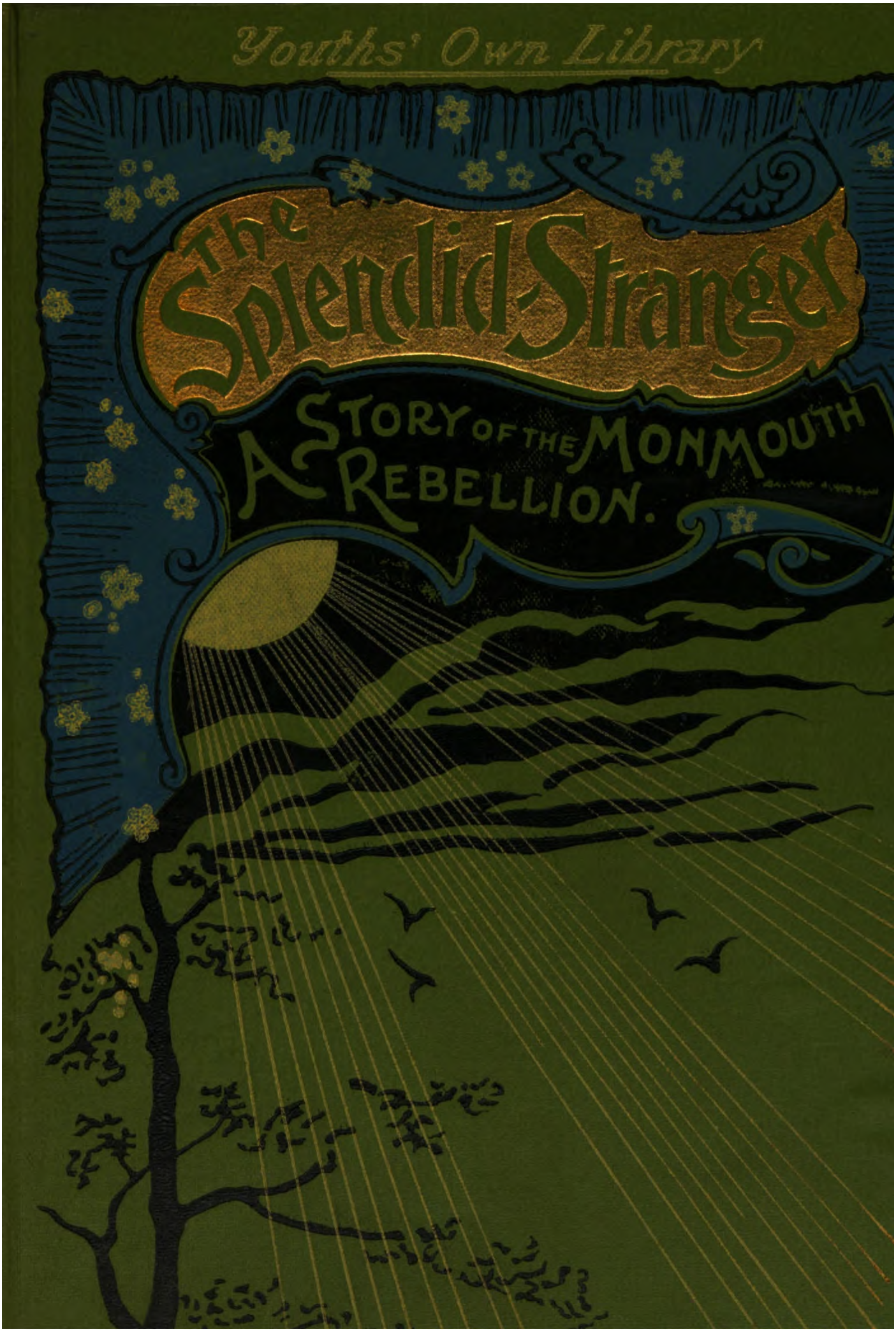
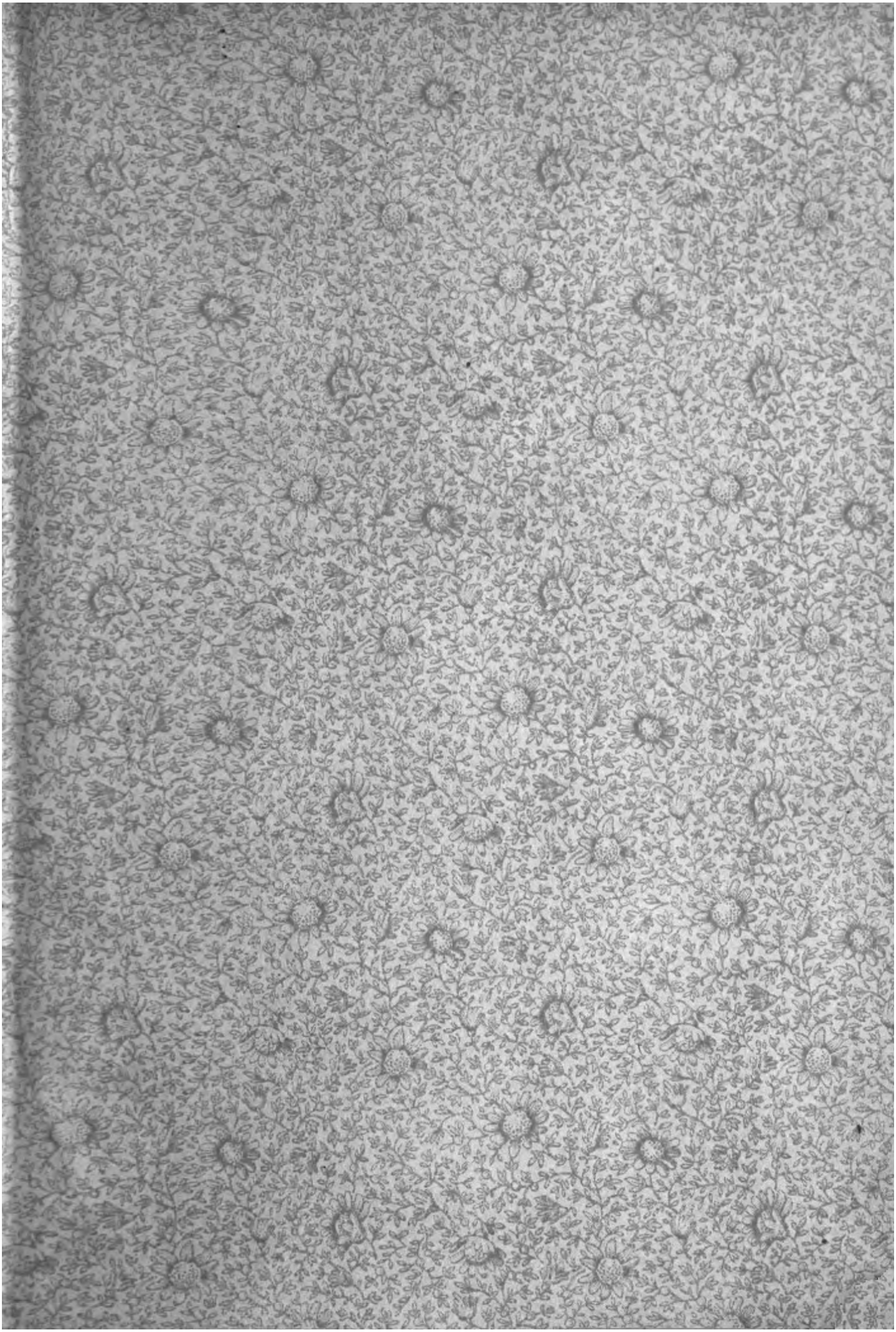


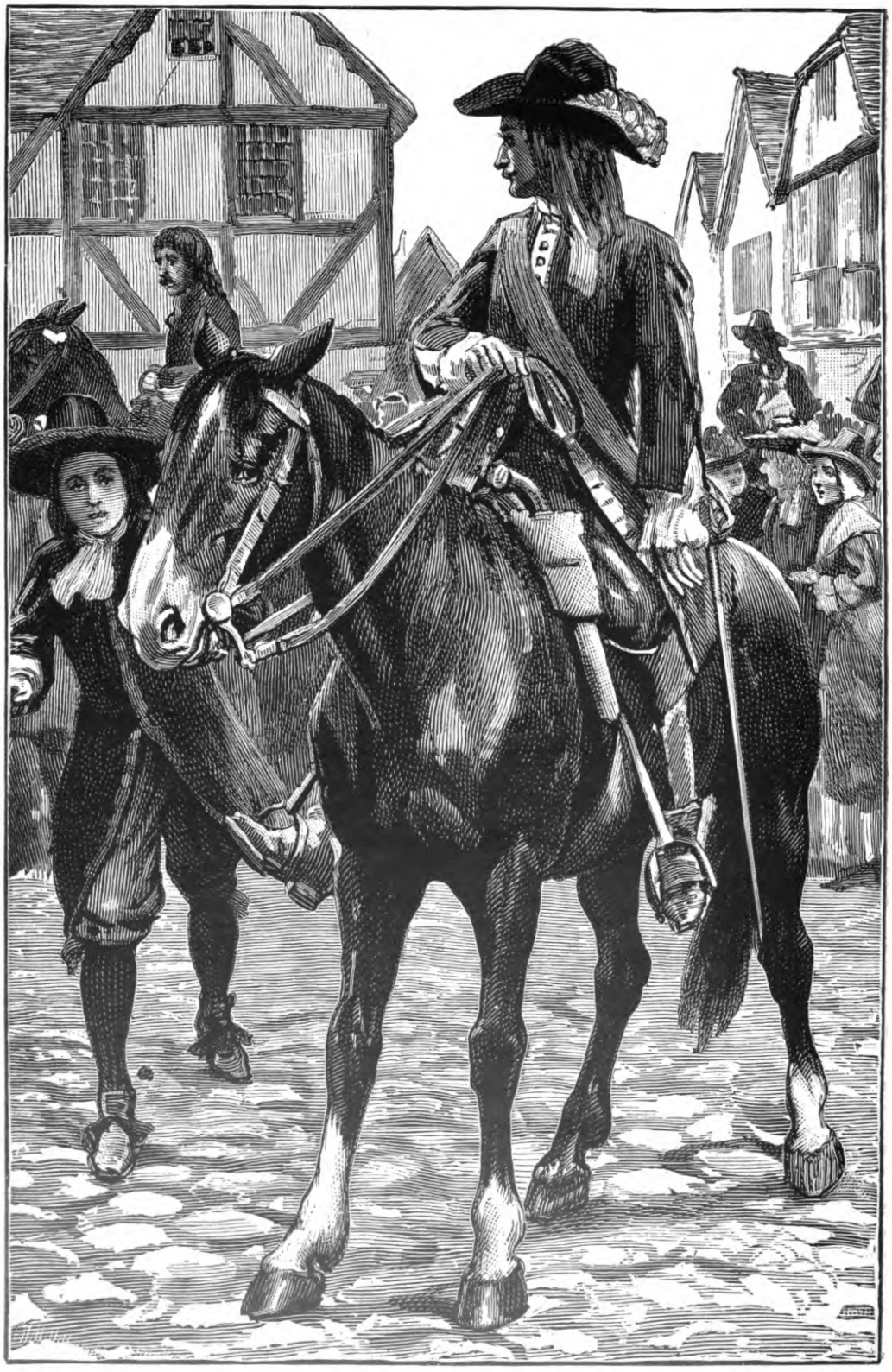
Youths' Own Library

The Splendid Stranger

A Story of the Monmouth Rebellion.







"ARE YOU HURT—BADLY HURT, MASTER FOE?" I CRIED.

Frontispiece.] [*See page* 71.

THE SPLENDID STRANGER

A STORY OF THE MONMOUTH REBELLION

BY

ROBERT LEIGHTON

AUTHOR OF

"THE PILOTS OF POMONA" "THE GOLDEN GALLEON"

"IN THE GRIP OF THE ALGERINE" ETC. ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY SYDNEY COWELL

LONDON:

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57 AND 59 LUDGATE HILL, E.C.

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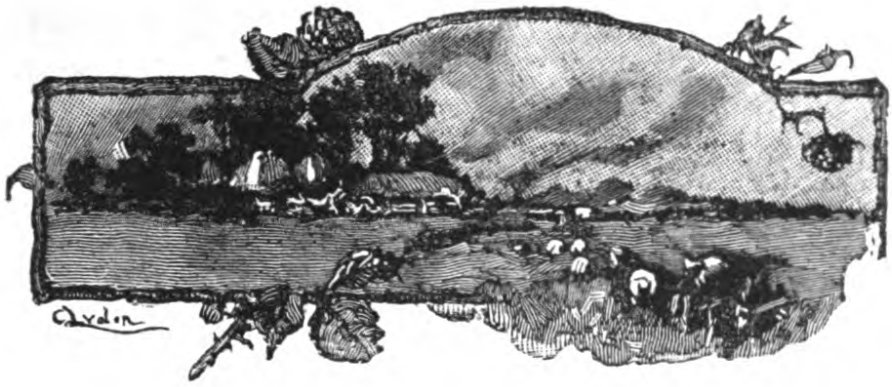
from an old print



THE SPLENDID STRANGER

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH I SET OUT UPON A JOURNEY.

THIS is the simple record of how I, Peter Endicott, took a part (albeit a very small and unimportant part) in the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion, and in the disastrous fight that was fought against the King's troops on Sedgemoor; and in beginning it I go back in memory, as by instinct, to the morning on which I quitted good Parson Cradock's cottage at Cheddon, and started upon my journey to join Captain

Pinstone's ship; for that, as it seems to me, is the natural opening of the story.

It was on an early June morning in the year 1685. I had risen with the sun, and had packed my little bundle ere yet the rooks had ceased their clamorous cawing in the elms and flown off to the fields. Yet I was scarce earlier than Mercy and her father, who both knew that it was the morning of my departure, and who were anxious to see me away as well equipped for the journey as their poverty could afford. Over our breakfast of bread and roasted eggs and home-brewed ale Master Cradock plied me with good advice, bidding me be careful of my small store of money, cautioning me against evil companionship, and, for the twentieth time, telling me how I might hope to discover my uncle, Thomas Dare, in the port of Amsterdam, which was my intended destination.

As for Mercy, she spoke never a word throughout the meal, but only looked at me with her sad blue eyes from her little chair across the table, as if in regret that her playmate was about to leave her, peradventure never to return.

She was equally silent when, the meal being over, I took up my cap and bundle and strode

to the open door. There we stood for many minutes under the trellised porch where the roses were breaking out into bud. We looked forth upon the little garden that she and I had so carefully tended throughout the spring, and planted with such humble flowers as we could bring home from the wayside and the woods,—anemones and violets and celandine and fragrant wallflower,—each one of which had its own tender memory in our childish minds. Near to the little wooden latch-gate lay Dan, the companion of many of our happiest days. The dog rose and came to us with tail in air, and a look of pleasure in his blood-shot eyes that seemed to betoken the hope that we meant even now, as so often before, to take him out for a romp in the meadows. But the very sight of him brought the tears to my eyes, and I only caressed his wrinkled head, and bade him lie down upon the sanded stone step on which we stood.

"You had best set off then, Peter, if you mean to be in Axminster town before the setting of the sun," said Master Cradock, coming out from the living-room where we had left him. And he put his thin, trembling hand upon my shoulder in a fatherly embrace.

"Farewell, then, Master Cradock," said I.

"Farewell, my boy," said he, "and may God bless you and watch over you at all times and see you safe to your long journey's end. Remember, Peter, that whatever ill betide you, He is always your Father and your Friend."

I nodded silently, taking his parting words to heart, and turned to Mercy, taking her hand.

"Good-bye," I said; and, for lack of something better to say on such an occasion, I added, "you will take care of Dan for me until I come back to you?"

The girl only smiled and patted the dog's nose. Her father answered in her stead.

"Yes, Dan shall have our care," said he. "While there is food for Mercy and for me, be assured the dog shall share it, for your sake."

"Nay," I returned, making bold to mention a matter that had been in my mind for many days past, "I meant not that you should stint yourselves for the dog; but rather, if it should be that times become more hard than they now are, I would have you find the poor brute some other home. I would have you sell him to some kind-hearted farmer who may be in need of such a hound to guard his homestead. The dog, as you well know, is of the true

bloodhound breed, and you will get a couple of crowns, at the least, in exchange for him; and the money may help you in an hour of need."

He shook his head and murmured softly, "God grant that we come not to so sorry a pass as that." And with these words he strode down the narrow gravelled path and, lifting the latch, held the gate open to let me pass out.

Their two figures as they stood there in the early sunshine, watching me as I walked down the leafy lane towards the Taunton high-road, come back very clearly into my memory across the years that have gone by since that June morning. Many times did I turn round to wave my hand to them. But at last a bend in the lane hid them from sight, and I plodded on my way thinking less of the journey that was in front of me than of the two happy, uneventful years that I had passed in company with Nathaniel and Mercy Cradock in their sweet little straw-thatched cottage at Cheddon.

And here, so that you may the better understand certain matters which must enter into my story, I must tell you something of myself and my parentage, of how it chanced that I was left in Parson Cradock's protection, and of how it came about that I was now

quitting his humble home to seek my fortune in a foreign land.

My father's name was Christopher Endicott. He was in the profession of the law, an honest man; and there was a seed of God in him. The neighbours in Taunton town called him Righteous Christer, and, indeed, if the truth must be told, his poverty was wholly due to his honesty and his righteousness; for had he cared to stoop from his high sense of honour and justice 'tis certain that he might easily have made a goodly fortune for himself and his family. But he nobly scorned to make money out of other people's woes and distresses, and so it came about that he died a poor man. My mother was an upright, godly woman. Her maiden name was Elizabeth Dare. She was of the family of the Dares of Pamborow Park, in Somersetshire, and of the stock of the martyrs. I knew her but little, for she died ere yet I was in my fifth year. After her death my father abandoned his practice of the law, and, retiring to a cottage near to Cheddon, spent the rest of his days in quiet peace, educating me, his only child.

It seemed that, upright and honourable though my father was in all his dealings with his fellow-men,

yet he was not without secret enemies; for on a certain night in the autumn of 1682, when he was returning home from Taunton, he encountered some foe in Fitzpayne Wood, which is nigh unto Cheddon, and was found there on the following morning, lying among the bracken and brambles, with a bullet in his honest heart.

I was then a lad of some thirteen years, ignorant of the world, and since I had now neither father nor mother, I went to Parson Cradock and besought him to counsel me as to what I should do. He took me to Taunton where my mother's brother, Master Thomas Dare, followed the craft of a goldsmith, meaning to leave me in my uncle's care; but when we came to the goldsmith's shop we discovered that on the very day after my father's death Master Dare had gone off to Amsterdam. So Nathaniel Cradock led me back with him to Cheddon where, as I have said, I lived with him for the space of two years.

During that time the parson, who was as poor as most country parsons at this period, was helped in a measure by the sale of my father's furniture and books, and by the trifling sum that we had found in the old stocking up the chimney. It was some

satisfaction to me to know that I was not a burden upon the good parson's charity; but at length my little patrimony came to an end, and although I did indeed earn a few pence a week by labouring on a neighbouring farm, yet my help was so small that it could scarce be counted as adding in any way to the comforts of the little family.

Master Cradock's household became more and more beggarly. Holes appeared more and more plainly in the parson's cottage thatch and in his single threadbare cassock. He toiled on his glebe, but all his toil brought little profit. His one cow died, and two of the swine that he was feeding up for the market were stricken with a fever and had to be killed and buried. The last blow came when the squire, disagreeing with some opinions expressed by my good friend from the pulpit, made this an excuse for depriving him of his benefice. Then it was that Nathaniel Cradock spoke to me touching the matter that brought about my projected journey to Holland.

"You must know, Peter," said he, on a certain evening when we sat together under the walnut tree at the end of the garden, "you must know that at the time of your father's death he was engaged

in making a claim upon certain property that was due to your dead mother. Your grandfather, Edward Dare, who was a man of substance, had many ventures or shares in ships sailing from the port of Bristol to Virginia and the Antilles. He died, leaving his fortune to be equally divided between your uncle Thomas and your mother. Your mother never received so much as a single penny of this great wealth. But your father, who was learned in the law, knew full well that it was due to her, or after her death to you, as her natural heir, and he went to vast trouble and great personal expense to make good his claim on your behalf. It was in order to conclude the business that he went to Taunton on the last day of his life. All was finished, and he was coming home, no doubt rejoicing in his good fortune, when he met his death in Fitzpayne Wood at the hands of some secret enemy. The papers, duly signed and sealed, which he was carrying home with him, were stolen from him, and from that day to this nothing has been heard of them."

All this was news to me, and for many moments I remained silent, trying to understand. At length I said—

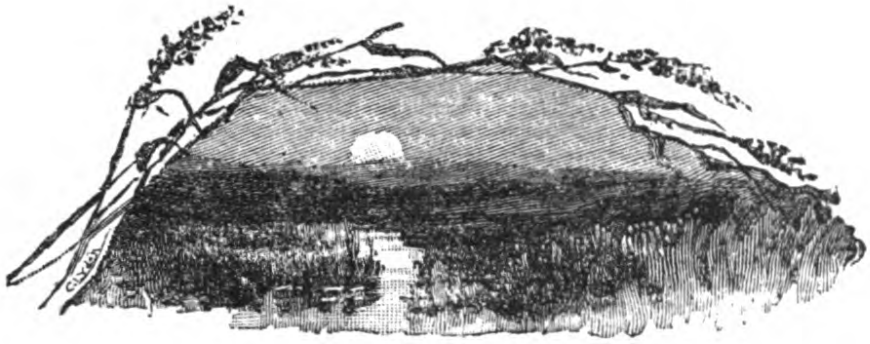
"It seemeth to me, Master Cradock, that the man who thus robbed my father must have known that he carried those papers in his pocket. Nay," I ventured further to suggest, "might he not even have murdered my father with the object of robbing him of them?"

Master Cradock nodded.

"'Tis even so," said he. "That he was murdered there can be no manner of doubt. And for my own part, although I have no proof of it, I do firmly believe that the missing papers found their way into the hands of the one person who, apart from yourself, could most benefit by their possession, namely, your uncle, Thomas Dare. Yet, even if this be not so, Thomas Dare doth surely owe you the duty of an uncle; and since we now find that 'tis no longer possible for you to abide with us in Cheddon, I would counsel you to travel to Amsterdam and beseech his help."

Here, briefly stated, lay the reason of my present journey. I was to travel afoot to the little port of Lyme Regis, and there await the coming of Captain Pinstone's ship, the *Daffodil*, of Falmouth, in which vessel I was to sail as a passenger.

BEFORE I COULD UNDERSTAND HE HAD CLIMBED THE BANK AND STARTED OFF.



CHAPTER II.

DANIEL FOE.

I WAS well acquainted with the road from Cheddon-Fitzpayne to Taunton, and from Taunton to Lyme Regis, by way of Chard and Axminster, for I had done the journey many times before, both on foot and on horseback. I passed through Taunton ere the town was yet fully awake. At noontide I was in Chard. Here I rested me for a while, leaving the shorter half of the journey to be done more leisurely in the cool of the evening. I had intended to sleep in Axminster that night, at a little inn which Nathaniel Cradock had recommended as being both clean and

inexpensive; but this plan was frustrated by a circumstance which I had in nowise foreseen.

I had come to the little village of Weycroft, where the river Axe crosses under the high road, when I bethought me that I would go down to the streamside and bathe my feet, which by this time were sore and weary. Accordingly I left the dusty road, and went down the sloping bank to the water's edge. As I sat there enjoying the cool rippling of the water over my feet I became aware that I was not alone. From the other side of the elder bush, under whose shade I was resting, there came the sound of men's voices.

"I'll engage that you have seen the inside of a prison-house at least as often as the inside of a church," one of them was saying, with a laugh. I peeped through the lower branches of the bush and saw that the speaker was a young man of, it might be, four-and-twenty years of age. He wore his own hair, which came down about his neck and shoulders in long, lank wisps; his soft, wide-brimmed hat was crushed in the crown and almost white with the dust of the roads; his wide linen collar was limp and soiled, but his jerkin fitted him well, and was of good cloth, and cut in a fashion that I had only seen in the clothing of men of quality. The tone of his voice

was soft and silvery, and he chopped his words in a manner which proved him to be a stranger in these parts. There was something about his face—an open candour of eye, a merry smile about the lips—that won me to him. I felt that I could trust him.

"Come," he continued, addressing his companion, "how long is't since you was last in the lock-up?"

The other did not answer for a few moments, but at last he said—

"Why, 'tis zum four weeks agone zince I were in Taunton gaol. But I never zeen you there, my master; and it do beat me to know how you did guess so much. Do I bear the marks of the prison on my face, peradventure?"

"Nay," remarked the other, "I said not that; though, 'tis true, I have ofttimes seen such faces as yours at the doors of Newgate, and, being in some measure a student of men, I by the same token judge you to be of the brotherhood of rogues. To be sure, I may be wrong, friend; nevertheless, I'd think twice ere I'd trust your close companionship on a dark night on the open highway—that is to say, if I chanced to be carrying money in my pocket. At this moment, however, a silver crown is the sum of my wealth, and by this you may know beforehand

that I should make but a sorry victim for your plundering."

"You need have no fear for your crown," returned his companion, with a laugh. "When I exercise my calling 'tis my rule to make sure that the man I rob is a man of zubstance; and he'd be a rogue of poor discernment who should hope for much by rifling the pockets of a scarecrow." He paused, and then added in a tone of inquiry—

"Be you a man from Zumersetshire, master?"

"No," came the answer. "I am from London."

"Ah!" cried the other, "I could ha' zworn you was a knave of zum zort. What might be your name, now, and your calling?"

"My name," said the Londoner, "is Foe—Daniel Foe. As for my calling, I am neither knave nor highwayman, but a mere butcher's son of St. Giles, Cripplegate. For the moment I am here in the West Country on a—well, on a mission of State, if you like."

The other man leaned forward, and now I could see his face, and recognised it as that of a rascal well known in Taunton by the name of Tom Hubberthorne. It was a coarse, brutal-looking face, with small, evil, restless grey eyes, a large hooked nose,

and a heavy mouth, with overhanging under-lip and uneven yellow teeth.

"Be you for the king?" he questioned.

Master Daniel Foe pulled a tuft of grass from the bank beside him and slowly tore it to shreds.

"Which king?" he presently asked.

"Why, the new king," explained Hubberthorne; "him that they call James the Second."

"God forbid," said Foe, sitting more upright and glancing aside at hearing a rustling of the leaves in the bush behind which I was hiding. "No. I am not for the king. I am Protestant, and will pay no loyalty to such a son of Rome."

Hubberthorne heaved a great sigh, which I could hear even at the distance of a score of feet.

"Neither am I for the king," said he, with a confident smile; and then, after a long interval of silence, he added, "since y'are from London, Master Foe, mayhap you could tell me if it be gospel true that the late king was poisoned? Folks do zay that he was; but I can't rightly get to the bottom on it. One man will zay that 'twas the queen that poisoned him in a dish of dried pears; another will declare that her grace of Portland concealed some poisonous herb in his majesty's snuff-box; and yet another, that

some plotting Papist did put something into his favourite dish of eggs and ambergris. No one zeems rightly to know who did it, but all agree that he was in truth poisoned, for 'tis known that there were blue spots on his breast when he died, and black spots on his shoulder. Mayhap you can throw some light on the matter, eh? I have a notion myself that 'twas none other than this James the Zecond that was at the root of it. Think you that that was so, Master Foe?"

Master Foe shook his head decisively.

"These be but idle and unfounded tales," said he. "The king was not poisoned, but died a natural death. The only matter that I don't quite like about his death is, that ere he died he was admitted into the Romish Church, persuaded so to by his brother, the present king, who is himself, as you may know, a devout Catholic. Ay, you may well look amazed, but 'tis true. I had it from the lips of a certain Benedictine monk, by name John Huddleston; and it was this same John Huddleston who performed the rites in the royal death-chamber."

Hubberthorne leaned nearer to Master Foe and spoke in a low tone which I did not quite catch. But I gathered from odd snatches of their conversa-

tion that they were speaking of some man who was now in Holland, and who might, as they said, prove a powerful rival to the new king, and even drive him from his throne if he would but come over to England and assert his rights. The mention of Holland reminded me that I was tarrying over long listening to the talk of these two wayfarers. I crept softly round the elder bush, intending to regain the road and continue my journey. In doing so I revealed myself to the younger of the two men.

"What, ho! there, young jackanapes!" cried he, not unkindly, as he caught sight of me. "Art on the road, like ourselves? Whither go you?"

"I am on my way to Axminster, sir," I answered, feeling at my pouch to make sure that my money was safe.

"'Tis my own destination for the night," returned he. "Wait but a little while and I will bear you company; for I like not to travel these unfamiliar roads without a companion." He made room for me at his side, signing to me to be seated between himself and Tom Hubberthorne. "Come," he added, seeing that I hesitated, "y'are not afraid, eh?"

I might have assured him that I was in nowise afraid of himself; but my feelings concerning his

companion were not unmixed with fear, for I mistrusted Tom Hubberthorne, and dreaded the thought of being near to so evil a rogue as I knew him to be. I therefore continued standing, and was gratified at the discovery that, although Hubberthorne eyed me closely from head to foot, yet he did not seem to recognise me.

"I make no doubt that your home is in Axminster town," remarked Master Foe. "Haply you will be able to tell me where I may find a decent inn there?"

"I may, indeed, tell you of a good inn," I answered. "But I am not of Axminister, as it happens, but of a village to the north of Taunton. I am on my way to Lyme Regis ——"

"Ah, I might even have guessed as much," cried Foe. "But for the moment I had forgot that Lyme Regis was a seaport, and that where there is a seaport there be ships, and wheresoever there be ships, there, too, will be silly boys who are ever ready to leave their homes to seek a phantom fortune on the main. But if 'tis your intention to run away to sea, my young friend, take my advice and go back home to your mother ere it is too late."

"I have no mother," I said, "nor father either.

Nor have I any thought of seeking my fortune on the sea. I am but going to Lyme to await Captain Pinstone's ship from Falmouth, which is to take me over to Amsterdam to my uncle."

My eyes were fixed upon Daniel Foe as I spoke, and I had not paid any regard to Hubberthorne, but now I felt the touch of his hand on my belt, and his hot breath was wafted into my face, as he said—

"And who may your uncle be that is in Amsterdam?"

I drew back from him, misliking his touch.

"Thomas Dare," I answered.

"What! Tom Dare, the goldsmith of Taunton?" he cried.

"Yes," I said.

"But your name is not Dare, is it, my lad?" he pursued.

"No," I replied; "my name is Peter Endicott. I am the son of Christopher Endicott, who was shot dead two years agone in Fitzpayne Woods."

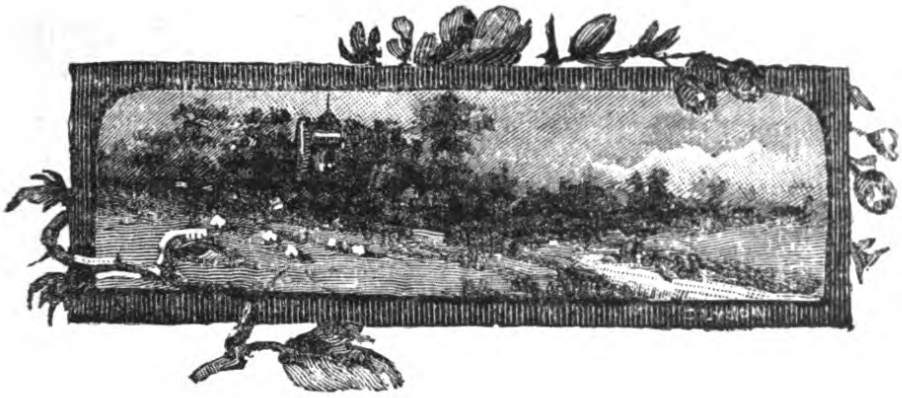
The sudden change that came upon the man's countenance as I spoke these words was something terrible to behold. His forehead and cheeks grew crimson; a look of fearsome villainy came into his eyes. He moved away uneasily, as if wishing to hide

his face. Bending down, he picked up his walking staff, and, before I could well understand his intention, he had climbed the sloping bank into the road, and started off at a quick, steady pace in the direction of Chard.

Daniel Foe appeared to be pleased rather than sorry at the man's disappearance, for, as I gathered from his conversation as we walked together towards Axminster, he had a very poor opinion of Hubberthorne's honesty, albeit he had taken an interest in the rascal, as he seemed to take in all vagabonds and criminals. His talk as we went along was mostly of highwaymen, pirates, pickpockets, prison-breakers, and all manner of villainy; but he also spoke of the king, of certain political exiles and conspirators, who were at this time assembled in Amsterdam, and of a plot that the Whigs had on hand to oust King James from the throne and re-establish the Protestant religion.

It was not until we had entered Axminster, and were about to part at the door of "The Three Cups" inn, that I thought of my bag of money. I felt for it now, and, to my uttermost dismay, found that it was gone.

Tom Hubberthorne had robbed me!



CHAPTER III.

THE SPLENDID STRANGER.

THE loss of my money was a grievous misfortune. It was not much, it is true, but to me it was everything.

I thought of all the difficulties we had had in gathering it together, of the little economies we had exercised, of the sacrifices Parson Cradock had made to save these few crowns so that I might pay them to Captain Pinstone for the expenses of my keep during the voyage to Amsterdam. I had needed some few pence to pay my score on the morrow at the little tavern where I had intended to sleep to-night. But now I had not a penny

with which to bless myself, and what I was to do I did not know.

When I told Daniel Foe of my misfortune he most generously offered to share his last remaining crown with me, assuring me that he was to receive a new supply of money from a certain hosier in Axminster with whom he was to do business; but I would not agree to accept this kindness. It was not many miles to Lyme Regis, and I resolved at once to go forward on my journey, and explain my plight at "The George" inn, whose landlord, being well known to Nathaniel Cradock, and owing him many obligations, had agreed to give me food and lodging until the *Daffodil* should arrive in the port.

Accordingly I bade farewell to Master Foe, and set forth anew upon my road.

It was near to eight o'clock at night when I arrived, weary and footsore, at "The George." The landlord, whose name was John Ramsom, received me kindly, gave me some supper, and showed me to a little bed in the loft, telling me that I need not trouble myself about the loss of my money, but must take the theft as a lesson, and be on my guard in the future against associating with felons and footpads.

The sun was already high in the sky when I rose the next morning. The inn parlour wherein I took my simple breakfast was noisy with the talk of fishermen who had just come ashore from their boats.

The casement window was open, and a sweet perfume came in from the climbing white roses and honeysuckle that grew about the porched doorway. The little garden in front of the inn reminded me of the garden at Cheddon and of Mercy Cradock. From where I sat I could see across the sunlit harbour. There was a ship lying at anchor in the green water, with her loosely-hanging sails idly swaying in the breeze that blew from off the sea. A little fleet of brown-sailed fishing boats lay about her, dancing and curtseying on the glassy waves, and a school of clamorous seabirds hovered over them or floated near, feeding on the refuse that had been thrown to them by the fishermen.

I thought that the ship might be the *Daffodil*, and, anxious to make myself certain upon this point, I left the table and went up to John Ramsom, who stood at the far end of the parlour busily polishing a tall, slender drinking-glass. I besought him to tell me if Captain Pinstone's ship had arrived. He

held the glass up between him and the light, breathed upon it, and continued to rub away with his white napkin, glancing at me the while with a broad smile on his jolly round face.

"No," said he, breathing yet again into the glass. "'Tis surely over soon to expect him, seeing that he is not to sail out of Falmouth for a good seven days to come."

Seven days? The time seemed an age. I could scarce contemplate so long a delay; but there was no help for it.

During those days of waiting I made myself well acquainted with the little town of Lyme, with its rambling main street and its steep and narrow alleys, and took many a pleasant walk round the harbour and along the wild, rocky coast. I scrambled up the slopes beyond the Cobb and wandered in the mazy wildernesses below the Ware cliffs, and spent hours in rambling about the hillocks and thickets of the Giant's Grave, and amid the rank copses of Donkey Green. Oftentimes I borrowed a little boat and rowed out beyond the jetty below the church.

On a certain morning—it was the morning of the eleventh day of June—I was stepping into the boat at the end of the Cobb, when, on turning to loosen

the rope by which she was moored to a ring bolt in one of the massive slippery stones, I chanced to see a man standing looking out upon the sea. His back was towards me, but there was something about his figure, his long, lank hair, and his soft, wide-brimmed hat, that was in some way familiar to me. As I watched him he turned round and stepped towards me, and then I recognised him as Master Daniel Foe.

"So, Master Peter, you are still here, eh? Ecod, lad, I thought you had been safe in the Low Countries by this time!" said he; and then he glanced again to the seaward at three great ships that were bearing inward to the port.

It was these ships that had brought me down to the jetty, for I did not doubt that one of them must surely be the *Daffodil*, and in my eagerness to get on board of her, and speak with the captain, I had hoped to pull out to her in the row-boat.

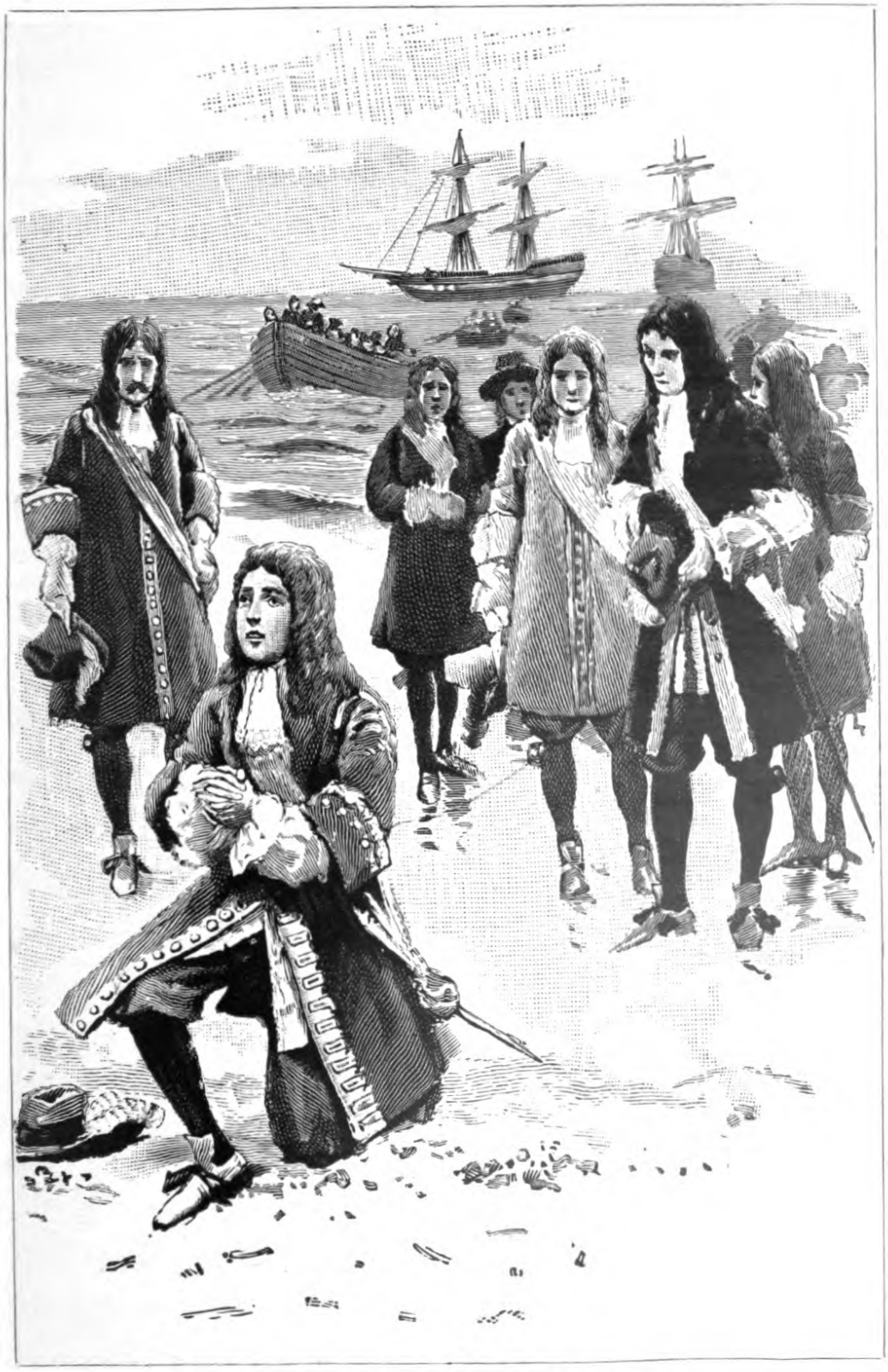
"No," I said, in reply to Foe's remark; "I have been waiting all these days for the coming of the ship that is to take me. But one of these vessels that are approaching must be Captain Pinstone's, and to-night I shall be sailing."

"The ships that you see are not English ships,"

said Daniel Foe, "for they are of foreign build, look you, and they carry no colours at their mastheads. I have seen such ships as these lying in London Pool; and if they be not Netherlanders, then you may write me down a Dutchman. So there is little need for you to put out in your boat."

Already a large crowd of the townsfolk—fishermen, farmers, and artisans, women and children — had come down to the shores of the haven, and the revenue boat, with the Customs' officers on board of her, was being rowed out to the strange ships. It was steered to the foremost and largest of the three barks. We watched it as it drew alongside. The officers climbed up the ship's bulwarks and entered upon her decks. As the ship drifted nearer I could see many guns pointing outward from her port-holes, and the morning sun glinted upon the brass swivel guns that were mounted upon her poop.

The Customs' boat lay at her side for a time, and then fell astern, being drawn along in her wake by a rope that had been fastened to the vessel's taffrail. One of the fishermen who stood near us declared that there was something very suspicious about the ships, and he bade his



I SAW HIM FALL UPON HIS KNEES.

companions beware lest presently the guns should be fired upon the town. At this there was a general rush away from the exposed wall of the Cobb. Afraid for my life, I ran also, leaving Daniel Foe standing alone at the farthest end of the pier.

I ran to the safety of a narrow passage that led up through the town, and here, ready to retreat at the moment of danger, I stood trembling with trepidation and listening to the dread forebodings of the people around me. Some declared that the Spaniards were come, some that it was the French; others declared that it was the Dutchmen come to invade England; but all agreed that the ships were ships of war, and that they carried many thousands of soldiers—enemies of our king and country.

Presently from round the end of the pier, where Daniel Foe still stood, the hull of the largest ship came full into view, with seven boats, crowded with men, a few yards in advance of her. At sight of these the townsfolk, in their terror of an invasion, began to move away backward into the town. Some even went to the top of the cliffs.

I had thought of following them to this place of security, and was about to retreat, when John Ramsom, my host of "The George," brushed against

me. Seeing me, he bade me follow him down to the lower beach, whither he was going; and, afraid though I was of the possible consequences, I followed him, and waited beside him while the boats approached.

We could now see the men who were aboard of them. They were all well-armed and appointed. Many carried firearms; many held their naked, glistening swords over their shoulders; but my eyes rested most lingeringly upon a very splendidly apparelled man who sat at the stern of the nearest of the boats. He was a man of some six-and-thirty years of age, of very fair and comely countenance. He wore a full, fair wig, whose curls rested on his broad shoulders; his coat was red, trimmed with gold lace, and across his breast there was a wide, blue ribbon, upon which many favours sparkled with precious stones. When the boat's bow touched the shingle of the shore he rose to his feet. His companions moved aside to let him step over the thwarts; then he leaped over the gunwale, and stood upon the beach in all his princely splendour.

Holding to the tail of Master Ramsom's coat, in very dread lest these soldiers should fall upon us, I had hardly the courage to speak.

"Who can he be?" I presently asked. "Who can he be—this splendid stranger?"

But Master Ramsom only gripped my arm and drew me backward a few steps. Then, watching the splendid stranger, I saw him fall upon his knees. His companions, most of whom had by this time landed, bowed their uncovered heads, while their leader's voice sounded clear and distinct above the soft music of the tide, thanking God for having preserved "the friends of liberty and pure religion from the perils of the sea," and imploring the Divine blessing upon what was yet to be done on the land. He then rose and drew his sword, calling upon his men to follow him.

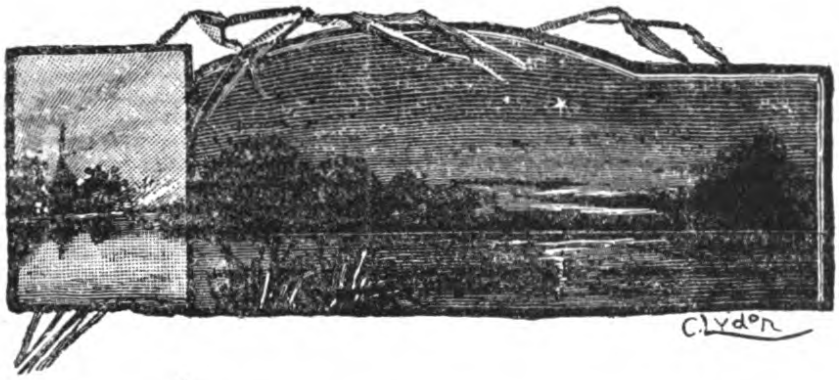
Just at this moment I espied Daniel Foe. He approached the splendid stranger, took off his hat, and spoke to him. I did not hear what words passed between them, but presently Daniel Foe came near to me, and I went up to him.

"Who is this man?" I asked, "and what does he mean to do?"

"You will soon learn, Peter," said Foe. And as he spoke there arose a great cry from the soldiers.

"A Monmouth! A Monmouth!" they cried. "A Monmouth and the Protestant religion!" And

then I understood that the splendid stranger was the Duke of Monmouth, the reputed son of the late King Charles the Second, who had come to claim the throne of England for his own, and to enforce his claim at the point of the sword.



CHAPTER IV.

A FULL-FLEDGED REBEL.

NO sooner had that cry been raised, "A Monmouth! A Monmouth! The Protestant religion!" than it was carried from mouth to mouth throughout the town. The people, who on the first appearance of the foreign-looking ships, had been perplexed and terror-stricken, now became enthusiastic in their greetings of the handsome duke and his followers. For it quickly became known for what purpose the strangers had come, and there was joy in the little port.

The common people of Lyme were mostly

Protestants, who disliked King James the Second because he was an avowed Catholic, and they received the Duke of Monmouth with open arms, because they saw in him not only a Protestant who was prepared to restore that religion in England, but who was himself, as they believed, the lawful son and natural successor of the late king, having a truer right to the throne than King James, who now reigned. So, when Monmouth waved his sword and called upon his ship companions to follow him, the townsfolk took up the cry and went with him also to the market-place.

With a boy's curiosity I followed in the wake of the crowd. I knew little or nothing of the purpose of this expedition, but seeing that Daniel Foe and John Ramsom had already joined in the general enthusiasm, I mingled my voice with theirs in crying, "A Monmouth! A Monmouth!" I had been brought up strictly as a Protestant, and had been taught to look with suspicion upon all Catholics; also I had heard Parson Cradock drop words in disparagement of King James the Second, and thus it was that I justified myself in allying myself, even for a few idle hours, with the adventurers, partly from a feeling that their cause

was a good and true one, but more, as I have said, from mere boyish curiosity.

As we passed through the main street of the town I saw Daniel Foe detach himself from the crowd and step towards a man who stood at the corner of one of the alleys. He caught hold of the man by the collar of his coat and shook him. The man struggled to release himself. I saw his face, and recognised it as that of the vagabond, Tom Hubberthorne. I thought of my lost money, and ran aside to claim it from him who had stolen it.

"Ah, here is Peter himself!" cried Foe, as I joined him. "Give the lad his money, I say." But at sight of me Hubberthorne wrenched himself free and dodged up the alley, where he was quickly lost to sight.

"'Tis certain the man took your money bag," said Foe, "for I accused him of the theft and his face grew to the colour of my Lord of Monmouth's coat. I'd have given him in charge of a constable had there been one near, if 'twere only for the sake of protecting others from his thievish hands. But I much fear that 'tis too late to get back your property. I'll be sworn he has squandered it to

the last groat. Never mind; I have a few crowns in my pocket, Peter, and you shall share them with me rather than go away penniless upon your long voyage." He turned, drawing me with him in the direction of the market-place. "Many of these rebel strangers have come from Amsterdam," he added. "It may even be that you will find some of your uncle's friends among them if you but hold speech with them. Come, let us see what they mean to do."

Walking along with me, he spoke of the invaders, as he called them. "The Duke of Monmouth," he said, "had been in hiding in the Low Countries with many other exiled English gentlemen. He had gathered adherents to his side to the number of eighty, who had now come with him over from Holland in the frigate *Helderenberg* and two other ships, with the intention of proving that he, the Duke of Monmouth, was, by right of blood, King of England, and of claiming for him the position of Captain-General of the English Protestants, who were in arms against the tyranny of Popery."

I asked Master Foe if he had a mind to join them. He shook his head in doubt, but declared that he certainly had some sympathy with their cause. "I

will wait," he said, "and see more clearly what his grace of Monmouth means to do. He has many men of good family and high renown in his band. There is Robert Ferguson, who once had a school in Islington, that he thought to make a rival to Westminster, and was afterwards deeply engaged in the Rye House Plot. He is, if I mistake not, at the head and front of this adventure. There is Lord Grey of Wark, too, the same that fought against the old Earl of Berkeley in Westminster Hall, and who, as a soldier, is known for his great courage everywhere but in the field of battle. Then there is Fletcher of Saltoun, a valiant Scot, who has a wiser head on his shoulders than any other in the whole band, if I may set myself up to be a judge of such matters. Also, there is Nathaniel Wade, a lawyer of Bristol, who was mixed up in the odious plot against the late king. They are all of them tainted with the spirit of rebellion, and all have been fugitives from their country. In sooth, I like not to be associated with such men, for, although I am but the son of a Cripplegate butcher, yet my father spared nothing in my education, and I can account myself a man of parts and learning, if not a gentleman."

And then he said something in a foreign tongue

which I did not understand, but which impressed me with the belief that he was indeed a man of learning.

We were already in the crowded market-place, where a large blue flag—the ensign of the adventurers—had been set up. We made our way to the flag where the Duke of Monmouth and his personal friends stood. One of these gentlemen, who stood at the foot of the market-cross, was addressing the crowd in a loud ringing voice. He declared that they had taken possession of Lyme Regis, although how they had done this I did not quite comprehend, seeing that there had been neither resistance nor agreement on the part of the people. Then he unfolded a large sheet of parchment, which Master Foe afterwards called a manifesto, and read it aloud.

This document said that King James was a mortal enemy of the people, a tyrant, a murderer, and a usurper, and that the sword should not be sheathed till he had been brought to punishment as a traitor. There was much more that I could not understand, but Daniel Foe and all the men who stood near appeared to comprehend its purport, and to accept its arguments. They cheered Monmouth, and vowed that they would stand by him in his enterprise until he should get his own; and so great was their

enthusiasm that had he already been king they could not have shown him greater honour and adoration.

The Duke of Monmouth, whose manners were graceful and courteous as those of a crowned monarch, smiled and spoke to the peasants, artisans, yeomen, and fishermen who pressed about him, and his walk from the market-place across to "The George" inn was like a royal progress.

During the rest of that day the Duke's gentlemen were kept busy enlisting recruits into their service, while the men who joined occupied themselves in going to and fro between the shore and the ships, landing stores, arms, and ammunition, and carrying these up to the Town Hall, where they were deposited.

It was at "The George" inn that the leaders of the expedition lodged, and every room was occupied, even to the loft wherein I had slept since I had come into the town. I myself was now to sleep in the stable with the horses.

During the following day new recruits from the outlying villages arrived in great numbers, and the Duke's hopes rose high. At about noon that day when I was down at the beach wearily watching for the coming of the *Daffodil*, one of the Duke of

Monmouth's followers approached me. He was a little man with a lean face that was marked with the smallpox. He wore a brown periwig, a long, mulberry-coloured coat trimmed with silver lace, and great jack-boots with silver spurs. He had been pointed out to me on the day before by Master Foe, who had spoken of him as Andrew Fletcher, the Laird of Saltoun in Scotland.

"Y'are a strong, braw-looking lad," said he, in an absent way, as he looked into my face. "Hae ye joined the Duke's forces yet?"

I shook my head, and glanced out upon the sea.

"No," I answered. "Even if I were not too young to be a soldier, there are yet other reasons why I should not join. I do not belong to this town. I am but waiting here until Captain Pinstone's ship shall come to take me across to Holland."

At mention of Holland, Fletcher glanced at me sharply.

"Holland!" he echoed. "What seek ye there?"

I remembered Daniel Foe's words. He had said that it might be that some of my Uncle Dare's friends were in the Duke of Monmouth's train, and I thought it just possible that this Fletcher of Saltoun

might be one of them. I looked up at him, and said—

"I am going to Amsterdam to seek my uncle, Master Thomas Dare."

An odd smile came into Fletcher's face.

"I'm thinking ye need not journey so far as Amsterdam to find him," said he. And then, Lord Grey passing by, he turned away and left me in doubt as to the meaning of the words.

Later in the day I came upon Daniel Foe in the little front garden of "The George" inn. To my astonishment he wore a sword, and was busily engaged in examining the lock of a musket that he held in front of him. It seemed to me that he handled the weapon as if he were familiar with its use.

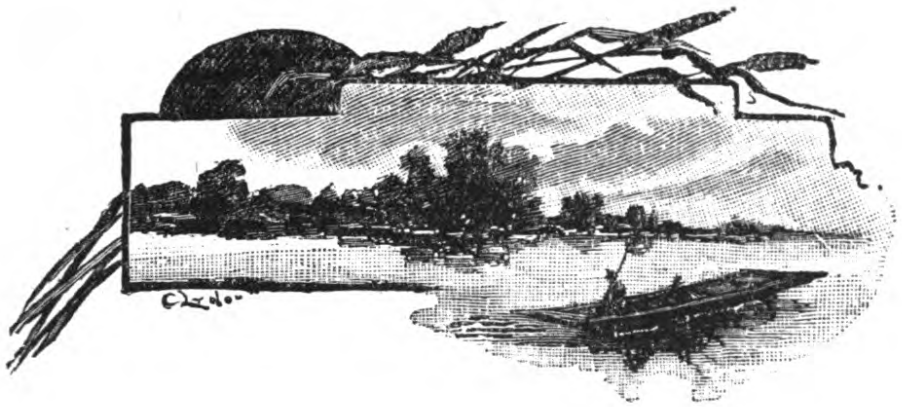
"What! Master Foe," I exclaimed, "have you joined?"

"Yes," said he; "'tis a good cause, and it would become me ill if I were out of it. So I have given in my name, and am now a full-fledged rebel." He shouldered his gun and stood stiffly upright like a very soldier. "How do I shape for it, Peter? Do I strike terror to your heart, prithee?"

"Ay, truly," said I, although the merriment in

his eyes was anything but dreadful. Then I added the question, "How many men has his grace now gathered to his side?"

"A good ten hundred at the least," answered Daniel, seating himself on the settle under the climbing roses at the inn window; "and I'll engage that ere nightfall there will be five hundred more. Recruits are swarming into the town like bees into a flower garden."



CHAPTER V.

THE DAPPLED FLANDERS MARE.

DANIEL FOE had asked me to join him at dinner, which he had ordered to be got ready in the parlour at "The George," and when it was ready we went within and took our places at the ordinary. I did not quite understand why he had taken up this friendship for me. I had had a good schooling, 'tis true, and had even read some books — notably, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which had newly been published, some of the sacred poems of George Herbert, and a large part of Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World.* But a knowledge of these could hardly make me a

fit companion of a man so learned as Master Foe, who had been trained for the Church, and who could read and speak in half a dozen foreign tongues.

But, indeed, it is probable that our acquaintance grew more out of my own seeking than out of his inclination. Nevertheless, our friendship, such as it was, was very sincere; and now, many years after the events that I am now setting down, I am very proud to have known him. He has, for reasons which I cannot guess, made an alteration in his name, calling himself not Foe, but De Foe. And this name De Foe is the one which appears upon his books—*The True Born Englishman, The History of the Plague of London,* and that other book upon which his fame, as it seems to me, must ever rest, namely, *The Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe.*

Many were the exciting tales of adventure that he told at the table that afternoon—tales of highway robberies, of the London playhouses, of duels in Leicester Fields, and of strange crimes that had been committed in the great London from which he came. They were told mainly for my own benefit, but many of those who sat near us listened also,

and presently one of Monmouth's soldiers drew him into a political discussion of the Rye House Plot, and of the contending parties of Whig and Tory. It was in the midst of this discussion that one of the waiting women, coming to my shoulder, whispered into my ear the news that Captain Pinstone's ship had just been seen dropping her anchor in Lyme Harbour.

Putting aside my knife, and pushing back my plate, I rose with a fast-beating heart.

"My ship is in the port," I said to Daniel. "I am going down to the harbour. But I will come back to see you once more ere I depart."

He nodded and continued with his discussion, and I hurried out of the inn. As I went out a party of horsemen, dusty with travel, halted at the door. Their horses, which must have numbered about two score in all, were rough, ill-groomed animals, with hairy fetlocks and long, uncombed manes. It was plain to see that they had not long been released from the plough and the farmer's waggon. Only one of them could be esteemed as a suitable charger for a soldier, and this one was a very fine dappled Flanders mare that was well-saddled and bridled. I admired the animal as I passed under its nose to

cross the street, and only noticed in passing that its rider wore the same sort of foreign-looking garments as those of the men who had landed with the Duke of Monmouth, and that he had a brace of very fine pistols in his belt, and a long sword at his side. The faces of one or two of his companions were known to me. They were men of Taunton, and by this fact I guessed that their leader had been inland gathering recruits to the Duke's standard.

These matters gave me very little concern, however; for my mind was full of the thought of the *Daffodil* and of my coming voyage, and I gave no more thought to Monmouth and his projected expedition than I did to the ducks and chickens that fled from before me as I hurried through the street and went down to the harbour.

Captain Pinstone was just coming ashore as I got to the jetty. I knew him by the token that the boat from which he landed had the name *Daffodil* roughly carved upon her bows. I caught at the man's coat skirts as he walked by me.

"Captain Pinstone?" I cried. And he stopped and looked into my face.

"That's me," said he. "What want you?"

"I am Peter Endicott, sir," I answered. "I am the boy that you are to take across to Amsterdam."

"We are well met, then," said he. "I was but now on my way to "The George" to make inquiries concerning you, and to bid you be ready to come aboard. For we shall up anchor and be off by the evening's tide." Then, as I walked back with him to the inn he plied me with questions as to the three strange ships that were in the harbour, and as to the unwonted commotion that he saw about him at every step.

For the most part of the afternoon Pinstone sat in the inn parlour drinking strong drink and gossiping with the soldiers, while I went out into the town to search for Daniel Foe. I discovered him at last in the market-place drilling with other recruits under Lord Grey, who had been appointed to command the cavalry. It was no wonder that I had not noticed Master Foe at an earlier moment. I had looked for him among the foot-recruits, but now I found him mounted on a stout little cart horse and drilling like a very trooper under the command of Fletcher of Saltoun.

As I watched this detachment of troops I overheard some men at my back saying that a force of

the king's troops were already assembled in the town of Bridport, including the red regiment of Dorsetshire and the yellow regiment of Somerset, and that the Duke of Monmouth had but a few minutes ago given orders that certain of these his horse-soldiers were to march at once to Bridport and strike an immediate blow.

"I can't zay much for the charger as Master Fletcher be mounted on," remarked one of my neighbours in the crowd. "Why, 'tis but a spavined old nag that beant vit to drag a harrow, let alone carry zuch a high and mighty zoldier as he."

"Ay," agreed another, "youm right there, Dick. And yet none of the other 'orses be much better, except that there grey one as come vrom Taunton. Who might be the man as is a-ridin' of it, Dick? Is he another of them lords or dooks, think you?"

The man named Dick laughed aloud.

"No; *he* beant no dook, nor not even a earl or a lord. I've zeen 'im afore, many a time, in Taunton town, though he be vastly altered these past few years, zince he've been over there in the Low Countries. He's rich now, by all appearance. When I know'd him he were a struggling goldsmith. His name be Thomas Dare."

Thomas Dare! My heart leapt within me at sound of the name. Could it be true, then, that he, my uncle, the Thomas Dare whom I was about to seek in far-off Holland, was here now in Lyme Regis? I could scarce believe it to be true. But before I could separate myself from the crowd I heard more, and was soon left without a single doubt.

"He came over with the Duke of Monmouth from Amsterdam," continued the man Dick; "but they put him ashore at Seaton, so that he might get up to Taunton with all haste and let the people in that town know that the Duke was at hand. He got that fine grey mare of his at Fort Abbey."

This mention of Fort Abbey, which I knew to be the seat of my uncle's friend, Master Percival Prideaux, convinced me. I hastened out of the crowd, intent upon finding Thomas Dare and making myself known to him. He was not in the market-place, and, believing that he might be found at "The George," I ran to the inn.

At the inn door I saw Captain Pinstone, waiting for me. It was not until the kindly-faced mariner asked me if I were ready to go on board that I realised that my voyage to Amsterdam must now be abandoned. Where was the need of my going to

Holland when the man I sought was so close at hand?

Hurriedly I explained my new situation to Captain Pinstone. I believe he thought that I had suddenly taken leave of my senses, but I did not wait to answer his astonished questions. Entering the inn, I searched among the men who were in the parlour for Thomas Dare. I called aloud for him by his name, but it seemed he was not present. I asked John Ramsom if he could tell me aught of my uncle, and of him I learned that the Duke of Monmouth and Thomas Dare had only a few minutes before gone down to the Town Hall.

To the Town Hall I went. When I arrived at the front of the building I saw, indeed, the dappled Flanders mare that my uncle had ridden, but my uncle himself was not to be seen. Thinking that he would not be long separated from his charger, I followed the horse whither it was led by the man who was minding it, namely, to the market-place. I should have gone up to the man who was leading the animal, and inquired of him where I might find Thomas Dare, but to my dismay and discomfiture I quickly observed that the man was none other than Tom Hubberthorne. Although I had no real reason

to fear Hubberthorne, yet I had not the courage to go near to him. I knew him to be a common thief, and somehow I thought that he would do me some personal injury if I spoke to him.

Nevertheless, I followed him at some distance as he led the dappled mare to the open space where the troops were assembled, and was witness of an unhappy occurrence which had a marked influence on my own fortunes, and probably on the fortunes of the Duke of Monmouth's expedition.

Fletcher of Saltoun, whom Daniel Foe and many others had spoken of in my hearing as the man of the greatest military genius in Monmouth's camp, had been appointed to command the cavalry under Lord Grey. Fletcher, as I have said, was ill-mounted, and it was natural that, if he were to take a leading part in the attack on Bridport, he should wish to have a good horse. Now, the dappled mare which Thomas Dare had ridden into Lyme had already attracted his attention. He considered that times of danger were not times of ceremony, and when Hubberthorne led the mare forward into the market-place, riderless, Fletcher leapt off his nag and, without asking leave of anyone, went up to my uncle's charger and sprang into the saddle.

Tom Hubberthorne protested, and declared that the mare was Thomas Dare's own personal property. But to this protest Fletcher paid no attention, and only drove the mare to the front of the troops, and continued to put the men through their drill.

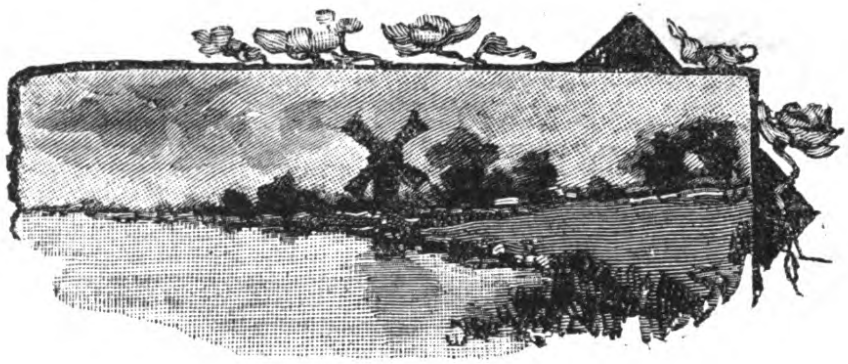
He had not given many commands before Hubberthorne, having run to the Town Hall, brought Thomas Dare into the market-place.

I knew my uncle by his description, and by having seen him for a moment earlier in the day. As he crossed the square I gathered courage to go up to him.

"Uncle!" I cried, trying to detain him; but he brushed past me with a savage frown and a yet more savage oath, and strode quickly to where Fletcher was, looking very gallant and martial on the dappled mare.

My uncle rudely called upon Fletcher to dismount, Fletcher refused, and then my uncle assailed him with a volley of insults and bad language. Fletcher preserved his good temper, and was patient under the insults that were flung at him. But Thomas Dare grew more and more excited, and evidently thought from the calm demeanour of Fletcher that he could bully him into giving up the horse, and at

last, presuming on the patience with which his abuse had been endured, he ventured to shake his stick at the high-born and high-spirited Scot. On this Fletcher's blood boiled, he pulled out a pistol from his belt, leaned over in his saddle, and in another moment Thomas Dare was a dead man.



CHAPTER VI.

DESOLATE AND OPPRESSED.

I HAD heard the shot; I had seen my uncle fall; and now I pressed through the crowd and went to his side.

"Uncle, uncle," I cried. "Do you not know me?" But Tom Hubberthorne pushed me rudely back. I turned upon him. "'Tis my uncle," I declared. "Let me speak with him! Let me speak with him ere he dies." But Hubberthorne glared at me with his restless, evil grey eyes, and thrust me back yet again.

Already the people in the market-place, understanding what had occurred, and resenting such a

sudden and violent act of revenge, had broken out into a general cry for justice against the foreigner who had murdered an Englishman. The Duke of Monmouth, who quickly rode forward into the throng, roundly chided Fletcher for his intemperate and unruly passion. Fletcher made some excuse or explanation, but the Duke was imperative, and commanded his friend to make haste on board the frigate. There was some difficulty in keeping Fletcher from the fury of the people, but under escort of half a dozen troopers he went down to the beach, dismounted, and was rowed off to the ship. With the same boat a message was sent to the ship's master bidding him to set sail.

It was clear to see that the Duke was sorely distressed by this fatal incident. In dismissing Fletcher from his service, he lost the only really competent officer in his little army, and one of the very few men of rank who were with him; while the death of Thomas Dare was a disaster scarcely less serious, for my uncle had known the country well, and, as I afterwards heard, he had been selected to act as a guide for the expedition in the West.

None of the people of Lyme or of the new recruits paid much regard to the absence of Fletcher of

Saltoun. They did not know any more than I did that his removal meant nothing less than that Monmouth's chances of success in war had suddenly left him, and they watched the troops depart for Bridport, under the command of Lord Grey, believing that Grey would be well able without Fletcher's aid to gain an easy victory in his coming encounter with the militia.

In the meantime some men had carried my uncle's body across to the Town Hall. I followed them, hoping to hear something of his affairs, if only a little idle gossip from those who had known him. But I could learn nothing. I secretly thought that, as I was Dare's only relative, I might lay claim to his personal effects; but I soon discovered that these, including a leathern satchel which was filled with documents, and the money that was found in his pockets, had been appropriated by the man Tom Hubberthorne. I could not even guess upon what grounds he made his claim for these things. Certainly he could have no greater right to them than I, who was the dead man's nephew; nevertheless Hubberthorne took possession of them without interference. The money would have served me in good stead at the present time, for I was absolutely penniless and

destitute; but I dared not ask for any of it, since I felt that I had no proof beyond my own bare word that I was related to the dead soldier, and this might not be credited.

For the rest of that afternoon I was occupied in lonely despair, wondering what was now to become of me. The discovery that my journey to Holland would be to no purpose had brought me to a realisation of how very little of settled aim I had in the world apart from the finding of my uncle, and now the death of my uncle before my very eyes ere yet I had exchanged a word with him, flung me into utter desolation. I had no father, no mother, no home; every channel of hope seemed closed to me, and all around seemed dark and cold and inhospitable.

One thing, however, was clear to me; I could not any longer accept the hospitality of John Ramsom at "The George," since he had only been asked to help me till the *Daffodil* should arrive in Lyme. Neither could I think of returning to Parson Cradock, for he, poor man, was almost as penniless as myself. And yet I was sorely in need of good Master Cradock's advice.

I pondered the matter over as I walked along the

cliffs by the sea, and the more I thought of it the more sure did it appear to me that my only course was to return to him, if only to tell him of my misfortunes, and ask his wise counsel as to my future movements. Still hesitating, I remembered Daniel Foe. Foe was a wise man, and knew the world. He, I thought, would be able to advise me. But he had gone off with Lord Grey and the troops to Bridport, and, for the present, I could not hope to profit by his wisdom.

Turning back to the town I made my way to "The George" inn. Master Ramsom met me on the threshold.

"I have come for my bundle," I said.

"Why," cried he, "y'are too late, my lad. Captain Pinstone has already sailed! I thought you were aboard!"

"No," I replied. "I did not go upon the ship, and I know that she has sailed. I saw her going out of the harbour just now when I was on the cliffs." Then I reminded him of the fact that I had before questioned him about Master Thomas Dare, and told him that that same Thomas Dare was the uncle whom I had been about to seek in Holland. At this his slow wits recognised my situation. He had, of

course, heard of the death of Dare, and a little thought enabled him to realise now why I had not gone on board the *Daffodil*.

"Well," said he, "'tis a mortal pity that this thing has befallen, and I would gladly help you. I am very busy now, however, as you see. Wait until to-morrow morning, and then I will see what is to be done. You need be in no haste to leave us."

"I cannot stay with you any longer, Master Ramsom," I explained; "for I have no money wherewith to pay you for my lodging and my board."

"Who spoke of payment?" cried he. Then he added, after a pause, "But the mention of money reminds me. Your young friend—Foe, I think, he named himself—who has gone off with the troops to Bridport, left some money in my charge, bidding me hand it to you. 'Twas three crowns he left. Here they are." And he thrust his fist into his pocket, and gave the money into my hand.

This thoughtful kindness of Daniel Foe brought the tears to my eyes. He had once said that he would share his money with me; but I had not thought that he meant to keep his word so generously. The three crowns were to me as a godsend,

and on my rough, straw bed in the stable that night I prayed that Master Foe might be preserved from all injury in the battle that was expected between the rebel troops and the militia.

It was late on the next afternoon when we heard the first tidings of the fight. A Taunton man named Hugh Twisden, whom I knew by sight and reputation, came galloping into Lyme on a dusty, weary horse. He brought news that the insurgents were in retreat. His intelligence was doubted; but very soon others of the troops rode into the town. They came in small, detached companies, a broken-up regiment without order. Then stragglers dropped in, and these later arrivals seemed to have borne the brunt of the engagement, for their faces, their hands, and their clothing, were smeared with blood; many of them had ugly wounds, and some could scarcely hold their seats upon the saddle.

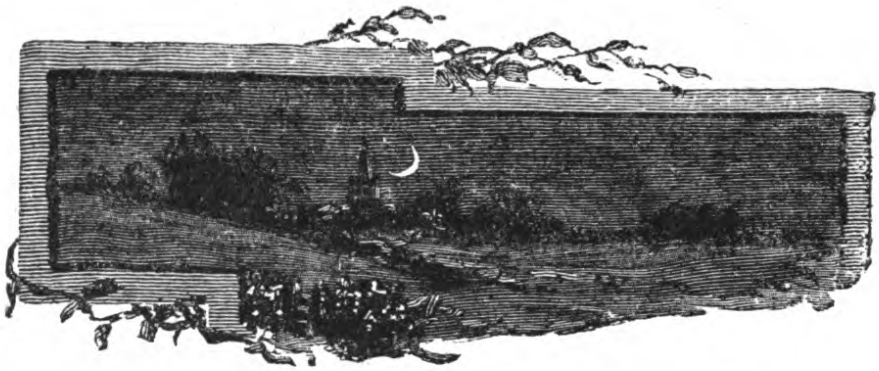
Among the last of them came Daniel Foe. His face was black with dust, a little stream of blood trickled down his cheek from a wound in his head, and he held his left arm limp at his side. His eyes were bright with excitement.

He slipped awkwardly from his saddle when he halted in the market-place.

"Are you hurt—badly hurt, Master Foe?" I cried, coming to his side.

"Not I," said he. "A bullet from the gun of one of the yellow-coated men of Somerset tore through my hat and grazed the skin of my head, and I sprained my arm in lifting a wounded comrade to his horse. But 'tis nothing to speak of, and I am game for another battle as soon as his grace may wish."

He then told me of the attack upon Bridport. There had been a confused and indecisive action, such as was to be expected when two bands of undisciplined peasants, officered by country squires and lawyers, were opposed to each other. For a time Monmouth's men had driven the militia before them. Then the trained bands of Dorset and Somerset had made a stand, and the insurgents had retreated in confusion, never stopping till they were safe in Lyme.



CHAPTER VII.

A RAW RECRUIT.

ONE effect of the action at Bridport was that Daniel Foe, who had before shown no great enthusiasm for the cause of the Duke of Monmouth, had suddenly become surprisingly zealous. He had a natural abhorrence of Popery, and he now looked upon Monmouth as an embodiment of the spirit of Protestantism; he regarded him as a great military genius, and declared that, notwithstanding this first reverse, the enterprise was certain of ultimate success.

It seemed, indeed, that the Duke was winning

favour among the peasantry, hand over hand; recruits thronged into the town, and the clerks who took down their names were kept busy as bees until late into the night. I noticed that by far the greater number of the volunteers were of the humbler sort—yeomen and farm-labourers, poor artisans and tradesmen—and that professional men and gentlemen generally were notable by their absence. This was to be expected, since, with few exceptions, the gentry were Tories, and were on the side of King James and the existing Government.

On that Saturday night Daniel Foe occupied himself among the men who still wavered and hesitated to join the rebel army. He spoke to them with high-spirited eloquence, setting forth the aims of the Duke of Monmouth, and promising them all sorts of rich rewards and new liberties if the Duke should, by their aid, come to his own. It was not until close upon the stroke of midnight that he came, weary and almost exhausted, into the stable at "The George," where I was sleeping. He flashed the light of a lantern into my face.

"Peter!" said he, prodding me with his foot.

I sat up, rubbing my eyes. "Yes?" I answered. "What want you?"

"We have got our marching orders," said he. "We move to Axminster early on the morrow. 'Tis on your way homeward to Taunton. You had better give in your name. You're young and of no experience in warfare; but I have spoken to the Duke concerning you, and he has bidden me enlist you. What say you? Wilt join?"

Now I had been pondering on this same matter for some hours past. I knew that I could be of little use as a trooper, but I had been bitten by the general enthusiasm; I had been persuaded that the cause was a righteous one, and I had come upon the brink of the conclusion that since I had now no other object in life, and was practically destitute, I might do worse for myself than become a soldier. One thing alone appalled me—the thought of entering into battle—I was naturally timid on occasions of danger. Some of my playmates had beforetime twitted me with accusations of cowardice. The sight of blood sickened me. I was by nature a lover of peace, and my hand shrank with an unconquerable instinct from the touch of a warlike weapon. I had never in my life fired a pistol or held a sword. I was, therefore, a most unpromising person in the character of a prospective trooper.

I shook my head at Foe's invitation. "No," I said. "I cannot help it, Master Foe, but I am afraid. I tremble at the very thought."

He knelt upon the straw at my side and put his hand upon my shoulder.

"Your fear is but born of ignorance, Peter," said he, in his soft and winning voice. "Once you are on horseback—and you have told me that you can ride like a very jackanapes—once you are on horseback, I say, with a jangling sword at your side and a pistol in your belt—when you hear the call of the trumpet and see the Duke's gallant blue standard waving in front of you—a martial ardour will come into your heart, as it came to-day into mine; you will, I promise you, think nothing of the whizzing of bullets and the clash of steel upon steel. You will think only of rushing forward to victory, and you will cry, 'A Monmouth! A Monmouth!' with the best of them."

It seemed to me that these were his own honest views. I trusted him as I would have trusted a brother, and, stealing my hand across the straw, I touched his fingers. He gripped my hand.

"'Tis settled, then," said he, before I had rightly answered him. "I will get you a horse and a set of

arms. You shall ride at my side in the ranks. And now," he added, rising to his feet, "get you to sleep again, my boy. At sunrise I will come and wake you."

On the next morning when I went out and saw the troops, both infantry and cavalry, drilling in the road that led out of the town, I again felt a sensation of inward fear. My legs shook under me, my hand trembled. I had almost a mind to slink away and hide myself from the very sight of the soldiery until they were well upon their way to Axminster. But Daniel Foe was at my side, and so firm an influence had he upon my spirit that I dared not escape for dread of offending him. He took me by the arm and led me to one of the enlisting clerks.

"Here is another, Master Desborough," said he. "He is yet but a young colt, but he knows the country well up north by Taunton, and may do good service. Peter Endicott is his name, Master Thomas Dare was his uncle, and he is as good a Whig as any of us."

The man wrote down my name in his book, and Daniel took me to the front of the Town Hall, where he procured for me a pistol and some ammunition, with the lightest sword that he could find. Then he

drew me with him to a stable in one of the side streets, where many rough and ill-equipped saddle horses were waiting in readiness. Two of these stood apart, and signing to me to mount the smaller of them—a shambling, broken-winded post horse—Foe leapt upon the other, and we rode out of the town into the road where Lord Grey was marching in front of the serried ranks of his great troop of cavalry, and where Nathaniel Wade was vociferously drilling his infantry in the exercise of the musket.

Now, if at any time, I should have been imbued with a martial ardour. Never in my life had I seen so many men gathered together in one place. The Duke's army seemed to me to rival in strength and numbers even the army of Philip of Macedon or the army of the great Hannibal. I had no eye for the awkwardness or for the lack of discipline that distinguished these rough and untrained countrymen. I thought their order was beautiful, that their movements were as those of a great machine, and that their military valour was beyond all question.

True it was that the horses of the cavalry were heavy-footed, ill-groomed, clumsy-looking brutes, and

that they were restive and unmanageable under the restraint of their new and unaccustomed occupation. True it was that their riders sat upon their backs like farm-labourers riding home from the harvest field. It was true also that the infantry seemed incapable of standing in a regular line, and that, almost to a man, they still bore traces of their daily work. There were blacksmiths with the smoke of the forge clinging upon them, carpenters with their foot-rules still peeping out of their pockets, ploughmen with the red clay of the field still sticking to their heavy boots, butchers in their blue smocks, vintners with the stains of wine upon their jerkins, wool-combers with the fluff of the factory clinging to their clothes, and millers who were yet white with the flour-drift of the mill. But I regarded them all as valiant soldiers, and thought that never before had such an army been assembled on English soil.

I took my place side by side with Daniel Foe in the ranks of Lord Grey's regiment, and noticed with some discomfort that the man in advance of me was the rascal Tom Hubberthorne, with my dead uncle's leather satchel strapped across his back. He rode upon a long-tailed black mare that I thought I

recognised as Ephraim Twisden's funeral horse from Taunton.

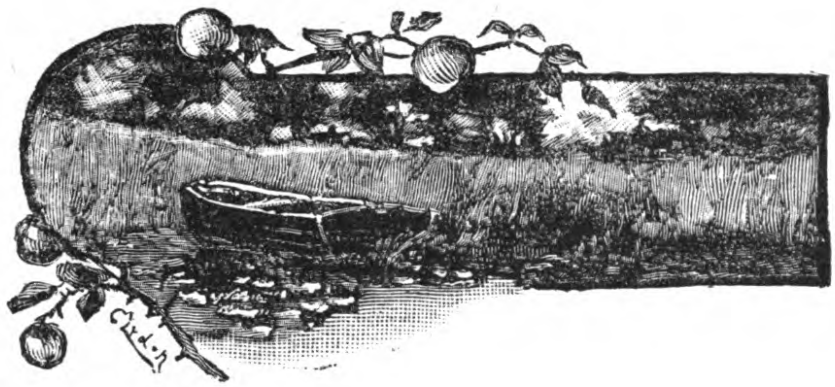
Not long had we taken our places when the standard-bearer rode by to the front, followed by the Duke of Monmouth, who looked more splendid than ever in his newly-combed wig, his jaunty feathered hat, his gold-trimmed coat, and his blue silk sash. I noticed that he was mounted upon my late uncle's dappled Flanders mare.

When all was ready the order to march was sounded, and we set off at an easy amble in the direction of Axminster. The champing of bits and the clinking of swords were mingled with the voices of the men, who kept up a merry conversation unchecked by our officers. I learned from their talk, what I had not known before, that on the evening on which the Duke had landed, Gregory Alford, the Mayor of Lyme Regis, had sent off his servants to spread the alarm among the gentry of Somerset and Dorset, and that he had himself taken horse for Exeter, there to join the Duke of Albemarle and his regiment of four thousand militiamen. Daniel Foe, leaning over on his saddle, said—

"Peter, my boy, you shall soon smell gunpowder."

"I was not aware that gunpowder possessed any smell," I remarked. At which Foe laughed.

"Nor does it," said he, "until 'tis fired. You shall both hear it and smell it when 'tis shot from the four-field-pieces that we have in the front."



CHAPTER VIII

THE LEATHER SATCHEL.

WE arrived in Axminster early in the afternoon. The Duke of Monmouth and his gentlemen attendants were accommodated in the inns and the best houses of the town, some of the men were quartered in the cottages, while the rest of us made an encampment on a meadow that sloped down to the banks of the River Axe.

It so chanced that the tent in which I slept was occupied also by Tom Hubberthorne and two or three men, who seemed to be shepherds or farm-workers. These others had been drilling during

the day, and the unusual exercise had wearied them. They slept like heavy logs, never stirring. I was myself disturbed by a painful toothache and by the noisy snoring of my companions.

Hubberthorne was late in entering the tent. He came in carrying a lighted lantern, which he laid down behind a thick horse-rug that he hung up before the opening of the tent to shield the light from the observation of the sentries. Seeing by his movements that he had some secret business on hand, I lazily watched him. He glanced round the tent to make sure that we were all asleep, then he crept to the lighted lantern, and going down on his hands and knees drew something out from under the bundle that he had set down to mark his sleeping-place. He put the thing down on the grass near to the light. It was the leather satchel that had belonged to my uncle.

"Ah," I thought, "there is something of value in that wallet!" and I continued to watch him. He opened the satchel and drew from it a packet of parchments and papers. These, one by one, he spread out upon the grass and carefully examined, returning them one by one to the satchel. At length he came to one folded-up parchment that

seemed to be the document of which he was in search. There was a little tag of vellum hanging from between its folds, and the tag of vellum bore a disk of red sealing-wax, large and round as a crown-piece.

Suddenly, as his fingers were about to open the parchment, there was a movement at the opening of the tent. Hubberthorne glanced quickly round.

"Is that you, Will?" he whispered.

"Ay," returned the other. "Have you found it?" And he crept into the tent, and bent down by Hubberthorne's side.

I caught a glimpse of the stranger's face as the light fell upon it, and recognised it as that of Will Ketch, a young scrivener of no good reputation, who lived in Taunton.

"Run your eye through it, Will," whispered Hubberthorne, "and tell me what you think on't."

Ketch spread the document out upon his knee, while Hubberthorne held the lantern so that the light was full upon the parchment.

"'Tis all right," muttered Ketch. "'Tis, as you say, his father's will, signed and sealed with all lawful particulars. You see, the money and the estate are bequeathed in equal parts to his two

children, Thomas Dare of Taunton, goldsmith, and Elizabeth Dare, lawful wife of Christopher Endicott."

"Ay!" broke in Hubberthorne, "'twas thus that Thomas told me it was left. And 'twas for that same reason that——"

Ketch nodded.

"I see," said he, "you mean the matter that befell in Fitzpayne Wood?"

As though with a flash of insight I seemed to apprehend the purport of the present discourse between the two men. The parchment they were examining was my grandfather's last will and testament—the self-same document that my father had searched for and that he had got into his possession on the day upon which he had met his so tragic death in Fitzpayne Wood.

Scarcely able to repress my heavy breathing, I yet pretended to be sound asleep, but continued to listen and to watch.

"You see," said Hubberthorne, in so low a voice that I could scarcely catch his words, "Christopher Endicott could never have proved his wife's right to her share of the estate without the evidence of this bit of parchment; and when, after long striving,

he at last got hold of it, and was taking it home, the matter looked ill for Thomas Dare's chances of holding the whole of the estate, and 'twas of the first importance to Dare that his dead sister's husband—who was well learned in the law—should be prevented from making good his claim. And 'twas a fortunate mischance for Dare that Endicott did not live, and that Dare was thus able to get the will into his own hands."

"But," objected Ketch, glancing at the parchment, "there was surely no need for Thomas Dare to trouble his head about the matter, for his sister being already dead, he was himself the lawful heir and inheritor of the whole of his father's estates. And you, Thomas Hubberthorne, being Thomas Dare's first cousin and his next of kin, as the lawyers say, may, on production of the will, easily prove your just and lawful claim to the property."

Hubberthorne stroked his chin and looked with a leering, evil glance into Will Ketch's face.

"Perhaps I should tell you, Master Ketch," said he, "that Dare's sister, Elizabeth Endicott, had a son, and that that son is still alive, and that, moreover, the lad is even now in the Duke of Monmouth's camp."

Ketch gave a long, low whistle of surprise.

"Why, man," said he, "that makes all the difference in the world! For, you see, this son is the rightful inheritor of his grandfather's estate, and nothing you can do will make it otherwise."

There was a long spell of silence, during which Hubberthorne sat with his eyes fixed upon the flickering light of the lantern. At last he glanced upward.

"Look you, Master Ketch," said he, as with a trembling hand he took my grandfather's will and thrust it under the lappet of the satchel, "you know more of the law than I do, and I would have your help. Make good my claim for me, and I promise you that on the day the fortune comes to me you shall have a round two hundred pounds for your trouble."

Ketch hesitated an instant, and then said—

"I can do naught whatsoever while this boy Endicott is alive with his nearer claim. What of him, Master Hubberthorne? what of him?"

And then, lowering his voice to the faintest whisper, Hubberthorne answered—

"Leave that to me, Master Ketch. A stray

bullet in the heat of a skirmish with the militia may well find its way into the youngster's body. Who is to tell whence it came?"

He said more that I did not hear, or dared not listen to, for I was trembling like a dog in a fit, and I scarce could breathe for very fear that I should be discovered. It was clear to me that Hubberthorne did not know that I was present in his own tent; and, indeed, he was not likely to know, since I had only been put there at nightfall when it was found that Daniel Foe's tent was already overcrowded.

Presently Hubberthorne rose to his feet, blew out the light of his lantern, and followed Will Ketch out of the tent.

They had gone but a few moments, when a strange, bold idea came into my mind. Knowing full well of what importance it now was to me to get possession of my grandfather's will, I dared to think that I might even now purloin it from its place in the satchel.

Still shaking and trembling and with teeth chattering in my timidity and fear, I crept quietly round the feet of one of my sleeping comrades. I felt about for the satchel. My hand touched it.

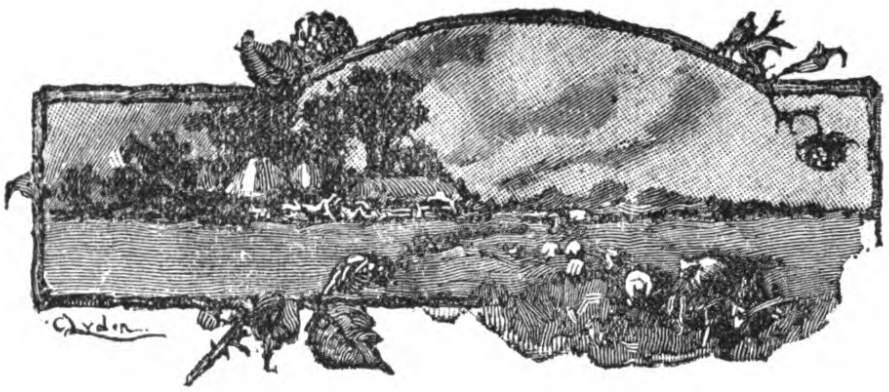
The parchment was crumpled under the nervous touch of my fingers. I grasped it, and quickly thrust it into the breast of my jerkin. Then the thought struck me—What if Hubberthorne should suddenly return and discover me? I could hardly stand for the terror that was upon me, but I managed to totter to the opening of the tent.

A sentinel was passing. I waited till his back was turned, and then darted out into the open. Turning round the back of the tent I came full tilt against Tom Hubberthorne. I trod on his toe. He hurled a savage oath at me, cursing me for a clumsy lout, and went on.

All through the night I wandered through the encampment, now resting for a space under one of the trees, now prowling anxiously to the end of the meadow where the horses were. I meditated mounting one of the horses and riding off at hot haste to Parson Cradock's. But there was no bridle handy, and also I should have been quickly discovered, and perhaps arrested as a deserter.

At last the light of dawn broke over the moor. I returned to the tents and made my way to the one in which Daniel Foe was quartered. The men were already moving, and among them I found Foe.

Quickly telling him my adventure, I gave him the parchment, bidding him keep it safely in his breast-pocket. Then I went to give my horse a brush down, and prepare for the day's work of drilling.



CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH I FIRST SMELL POWDER.

NOT until the afternoon did I again see ought of Hubberthorne. We were then marshalled and drawn up in the road. One of the Duke's outposts had ridden in with the alarming news that the Duke of Albemarle, with four thousand men of the train-bands at his back, was marching towards Axminster. Monmouth, Wade, Ferguson, and Grey immediately prepared for an encounter. They ranged their four field-pieces at the first milestone outside of the town, pointing them outward upon the road through which the Royal troops must approach. The thick hedgerows

that bordered the narrow lane were lined with musketeers, while our cavalry were ranked in a solid body in the rear, ready to charge upon such of the militia as might escape the fire of the cannon and the muskets.

The sight of the drawn swords of my companions and of the loaded muskets, whose shining barrels peeped out among the wild roses and the tangled honeysuckle of the hedges, brought a thrill of fear into my heart. Not yet had the martial ardour come upon me. I reflected that, despite the differences of political opinion and of religious belief, the Royal troops were still our own countrymen, and I shrank from the very thought of engaging in active warfare against them. Had they been blackamoors or Spaniards or Frenchmen I might have loaded my pistols with a will and gripped my sword hilt with fervour and determination. But to fire upon my own people and to charge with sword upon men who spoke my own tongue—the thought appalled me!

But I had taken an oath of allegiance to the Duke of Monmouth's cause. I was a Protestant, and I tried to persuade myself that I was doing right in fighting against those whom Daniel Foe called idolatrous Papists, and I sat in my saddle endeavour-

ing to hide my trembling distaste of the work that we had in hand.

We were posted at the corner of the main street, ready to advance when the command should be given. The clock in the church tower struck three, when Daniel Foe, looking across the green meadows that were bathed in sweet sunshine, cried—

"Here they come!"

And following his glance, I descried a cloud of dust in the distance. I could hear the regular beating of horses' feet, and presently the metallic clanking of stirrups and side-arms. Nearer and nearer the sounds came—confused at first, but afterwards very clear. Then, ere I could well believe that the enemy had come within range or sight, I heard for the first time the dull, rumbling report of a cannon. It was followed, after some moments, by three other reports. Then came a prolonged rattle of musketry fire, mingled with yells and shouts.

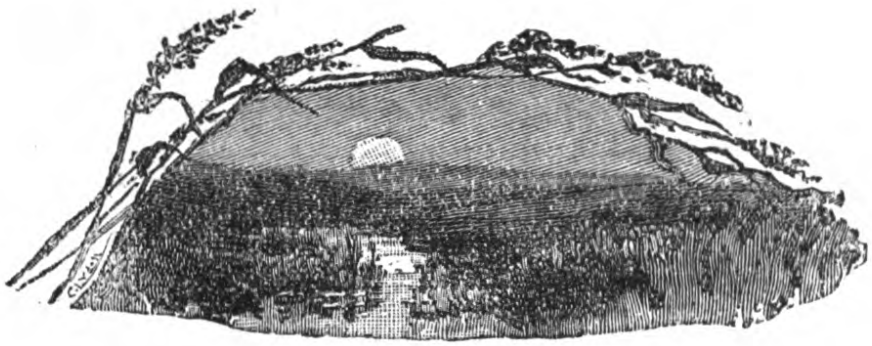
There was a movement among the horses in front of us. Without pausing to reflect further I dug my heels into my horse's sides and followed in my place. Very soon our slow amble was increased to a gallop. We pressed forward through the lane until we came near to where the four field-pieces had stood. The

sharp crack of pistols, the fuller ping of muskets, the clashing of steel upon steel, and the loud cries of the men filled the air. Now and then I could hear a cry of pain, and more than once my horse half stumbled over the prostrate form of a wounded man.

We were soon at the end of the lane where it opened out upon the wide moorland, across which I could already see the crowds of yellow and blue-coated militiamen flying in retreat. As they ran they flung away their swords, their pikes, their pistols, and their muskets. The ground was strewn with all manner of arms and uniforms that the fugitives had thrown aside. Some few of the bolder troops had remained behind to fight, or had been surrounded by Monmouth's cavalry.

Just as I emerged from the lane I missed Daniel Foe. I turned round in my saddle to look for him. As I did so I caught sight of Tom Hubberthorne. He was leaning over and pointing his pistol, taking deliberate aim, as I supposed, at some of the Royal troopers who were beyond me. I saw the flash of his weapon, and then my horse stumbled, went down on its knees, and rolled over, shot through the heart.

My left foot was entangled in the stirrup, imprisoning me under the weight of the horse. I feared that my leg was broken; but I soon managed to release it, and found that it was only slightly sprained. As I crept away my hand rested for an instant upon the elbow of a man who lay motionless upon the grass. Thinking I might help him I bent over him. He wore the black habit of the Church. His white wig had fallen from his head, his eyes were closed, his hands were clasped upon his breast. I looked into his white, thin face, and then drew back with a great pang at my heart; for it was the face of my good friend Nathaniel Cradock, and he was dead.



CHAPTER X.

KING MONMOUTH.

I KNOW not how long I lay there weeping over the body of my dead friend. The turmoil of the fighting ceased. I heard only the painful moanings of some wounded men who were near me, and the cawing of some rooks in the trees that bordered the Axminster lane. Albemarle's little army was flying in retreat with Monmouth's men at their heels. I knew this much; but just then I cared neither for Monmouth nor King James, for Protestant nor for Catholic. I only thought of my dear dead friend, and puzzled my brain to know how he had come to be here. There

was a pistol in his belt, but I saw by its clean condition that it had not been used. His neckband was wet and red, and a little red stream had trickled down from it, and made a pool among the daisies.

I knew that he had died in supporting the faith that he held dear; but it passed my understanding how it had come about that he had joined the Duke of Monmouth's insurgents. I afterwards learned that after the close of Divine service on the previous evening he had set out to walk to Axminster. I learned, also, that on this morning he had written his name down in the clerk's book as a recruit. He had marched out of the town with Wade's infantry, and taken up his position at the end of the lane; and a Royalist bullet had ended his sweet, good life.

As I knelt by his side, saying all the prayers that he had taught me, I heard one of the wounded men cry aloud for water. Not till then did it occur to me that I might be of help. I rose to my feet and limped back across the few yards of moorland that divided us from a rivulet under the hedgerow.

On my way I kicked against a soldier's discarded morion. The steel-wrought headpiece would serve better than my own cap to carry water, I thought,

so I picked it up, and went to the stream. I thrust aside the blue forget-me-nots that grew abundant in the shallows. A tiny trout darted away as I dipped the morion into the clear water. Then I strode back to my wounded companions and tended them as best I might. Thus was I occupied until the red sun sank behind the uplands in the west.

Many people from the town—women and girls and men—had by this time ventured out to give help. They carried the wounded into their houses, and the dead into the Town Hall, and did all that was needful and expedient.

I remained in Axminster two days, when, having seen Master Cradock decently buried in the churchyard, I set out on my sorrowful way towards Taunton and Cheddon to acquaint Mercy Cradock with the news of her father's death.

It was noontide when I entered Taunton, and found the town gay with many-coloured flags and the sounds of rejoicing. Every door and window was adorned with wreaths of flowers. Every man in the streets wore in his hat a green bough as his badge of the popular cause. The name of Monmouth was on all lips.

I walked through the town, feeling that the whole

world was for me changed and altered. I was in hopeless despair. I thought, too, of Mercy Cradock, and wondered what her life must be in the future, now that her father was dead. I thought of Daniel Foe, and wondered what had befallen him. Was he, like many another of the rebel army, lying dead upon the track that the retreating and the pursuing troopers had left in their wake? or had he deserted and gone back to that great London of which he had so often spoken? or might it be that he was here in Taunton, where, as I had already divined, the Duke of Monmouth and his forces had halted?

As I passed in front of the church of St. Mary Magdalene I heard my name spoken, and a hand was laid upon my shoulder from behind. I turned round, and found myself once more face to face with Daniel Foe.

"Why, Peter, my boy!" he cried, "where have you been these three days past? I had given you up. They told me you had been shot dead on Axminster Moor!"

"Who told you?" I questioned.

"The man Will Ketch," said he. "Will Ketch and the rogue Tom Hubberthorne. They averred that they had seen you engaged hand-to-hand with

three of the king's troopers, that you had slain two of them with your pistols, and then been slain in your turn by the third."

I was for a moment amazed at this record of my supposed prowess; but then I reflected upon what I had heard said between Ketch and Hubberthorne to the effect that none would ever know whence might come the bullet that should kill me.

"They spoke falsely, Master Foe," I returned. "My pistols, that were loaded full five days ago, have never yet been discharged. But it may well be that Hubberthorne truly thought that I had been shot, for a bullet from his own pistol killed my horse."

I was about to explain to Daniel my suspicion that Hubberthorne had deliberately aimed at me with intent to take my life, when a blare of trumpets sounded from the farther end of the town.

"Come!" cried Foe, "come, or we shall be too late to see the great things that are happening!" And so saying he dragged me along with him, and before I could well guess his intention we were in the midst of a vast concourse of people in the market-place. With a polite but firm "By your leave," Foe pushed his way through to the front, drawing

me after him; and presently I saw, standing on a raised platform, the commanding and splendid figure of the Duke of Monmouth, with Lord Grey, Ferguson, and others of his personal staff crowding about him under the shadow of the blue standard.

Even as we arrived a great shout rose into the air crying—

"Long live King Monmouth! King Monmouth!" and again, "King Monmouth!"

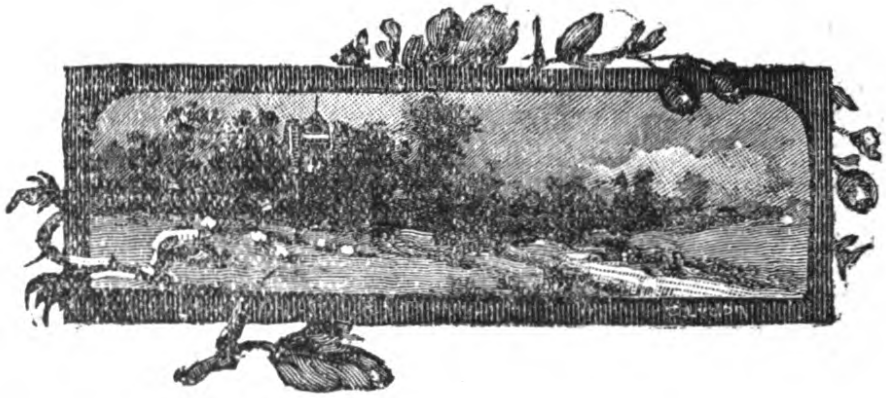
Then the crowd separated, making a wide lane, and through the lane there appeared a procession of young girls arrayed in white. One bore a beautifully embroidered flag, which she presented to Monmouth. Another, a very tall and fair lady who wore a garland of fresh-cut roses, bore in her hands a blue velvet cushion, upon which lay a small Bible. She advanced and knelt before him. He took the Bible in his hand with a show of reverence.

"I come," he said, "to defend the truths contained in this book, and to seal them, if it must be so, with my blood."

At this there was a jubilant cheer and a wild waving of hats. When she who had presented the book rose and drew back, another maiden came forward from the train and handed to King Monmouth

a bunch of roses. As she turned I caught a glimpse of her face. My heart gave a leap within me. I gripped at Daniel Foe's arm.

"Look! look!" I exclaimed, "'Tis Mercy! 'Tis Mercy Cradock!"



CHAPTER XI.

IN HORNER'S HOLLOW.

AS soon as the crowd dispersed, I made my way across the market-place in search of Mercy Cradock. I had kept my eyes fixed upon the white-dressed maidens who had been her companions in the procession, but had not been able to get near them by reason of the pressing throng of soldiers and townsfolk. At last, however, I got through to the farther side of the square, but only in time to see Mercy disappear into a large house which, as I presently learned, was the dwelling of one of the wealthy magistrates of the town.

STANDING THERE IN THE LIGHT OF THE FIRE WAS MERCY CRADOCK.

I lingered near the door, hoping that she would soon come out, and as I stood there, one of Monmouth's corporals of horse caught sight of me and bade me hasten to the mustering of the troops. I had a mind to disobey him, but he commanded me with such sternness that I was forced to follow him.

When I answered my name at the calling of the roll, the adjutant demanded to know where I had been during the past three days and rated me for a deserter. My explanation seemed to satisfy him, and, reminding him that my horse had been shot, I asked him if I might be provided with another in its place. I was then told that there were no other horses to be had, and, much to my annoyance, I was drafted into a company of infantry and made to go through my musket drill with a number of raw louts who had joined the army only that afternoon.

On my dismissal from the lines, and when we were free for the evening, I ran once again to the house into which Mercy Cradock had gone. I boldly knocked at the door and asked for her. A serving man informed me that he did not know her name, but that if she was one of the girls who had formed

the procession then I should most likely find her at her own home, for that his master's house had only been used by the girls as a convenient place in which to attire themselves in their garlands and their holiday gowns.

Turning away, I reflected that Mercy's home was a good two miles' walk out of Taunton and that I was already weary of my tramp from Axminster, of my wandering in Taunton town, and of my drilling in the ranks. But it was important that I should see Mercy at once, so I strode out from among the houses and made my way to Cheddon-Fitzpayne, by the same road that my father had taken on the night of his murder.

It was sunset time when I came to the front of the little cottage that had been called the parsonage. As I opened the gate and walked once again up the little gravelled path, it seemed to me that the place wore an unwonted air of desolation. The flowers in the garden were limp and faded for want of attention, the grass was untidy, the weeds grew rank where weeds had never before grown. The door was shut. I knocked at it with my knuckles, but no answer came. I knocked again and again still louder, but there was no response.

I went to the little front window to look within, but the shutters were closed and barred. It was probable, I thought, that Mercy had not yet returned from Taunton, and I resolved to wait.

The sight of a dog's footprint on the step reminded me of my bloodhound. He, at least, would be here to welcome me. I went round to the back of the cottage to rouse him from his kennel, wondering why he had not barked at my loud knocking. But neither kennel nor dog was there. I peered in through the tiny kitchen window, and then all was explained. The room was empty and bare even of furniture.

I had known that Parson Cradock had received from the squire his dismissal from his benefice, but I had not dreamed that his dismissal meant that he was so soon to leave his cottage. This seemed now to give a fuller explanation of the fact that Master Cradock had brought himself to turn soldier and join the Duke of Monmouth's forces.

Not long did I remain to argue these matters in my mind. I had seen Mercy in Taunton during the afternoon, and it was more than probable that she was in Taunton still. Therefore, my one course was to return to the town.

My backward way lay, as before, through the woods of Fitzpayne. Clouds had overspread the sky and a soft rain was falling—a steady, drizzling rain. I drew my hat down over my ears and turned up the collar of my coat, and, bending forward, plodded on over the stile and across the footpath leading over Hyde's meadow into the woodland. It may be that my bodily weariness affected my spirits, or perhaps it was my recent misfortunes and the death of Nathaniel Cradock that made me sad and caused me to feel a strange nervous fear as I passed into the deep shadows of the trees. I started more than once at the sound of the raindrops dripping on the dry leaves, at the creaking of a tree branch, or the hoarse voice of a restless rook. By the time that I came to Horner's Hollow—the spot where my father's body had been found—my courage had well-nigh fled, and I was ready to take to my heels from very fear. Truly, I was but a sorry soldier.

And yet, although I did not seriously and soberly expect that any harm could befall me, there certainly was for me some danger lurking in the woods that night.

I had scarcely got past the lower ground of

Horner's Hollow, and was just beginning the ascent on the farther side, when I thought I heard a low whistle. I stopped and listened. The whistle was not repeated, but, just as I was about to continue on my way, there came to my ears the quickly whispered words—

"Here he comes, Tom! Have at him!"

The words had been uttered barely more than a moment when I heard a sharp click. It was like the click of a pistol that had missed fire, and it was followed by a savagely muttered oath that sounded strangely like the oath that Tom Hubberthorne was in the habit of swearing. I tarried no longer to search into the matter, but took to my heels as fast as I could run; nor did I stop for an instant until I saw the lights of Monmouth's encampment shining clear before me.

At the northern end of the town, on the open meadows, there were many camp fires. I made for these, and was passing by the nearest of them when, for some reason that I do not now remember, I went up to a group of men whose tall figures loomed dark against the flickering light. I was speaking with one of the men, when, looking aside, I saw something which was gladder to my eyes than

anything else I could have wished for at that moment.

Standing in the light of the fire, with the hood of her cloak drawn over her head, was Mercy Cradock. She was conversing with Daniel Foe.

"At last I have found you, Mercy!" I cried, as I went up to her, and then she fell upon my shoulder, weeping.

"I have been telling her of Master Cradock," explained Daniel. "I lost you in the crowd, but followed her and made myself known to her as your friend. She has been seeking you these three hours past, and, not finding you, came to me here to ask my help."

Mercy lifted her wet eyes to mine.

"You have been to Cheddon?" she questioned.

I nodded.

"Yes," I said, "and found the old home empty. Where have you been living, Mercy, since your father went away?"

"With Margaret Ketch, in Taunton High Street," said she, and at mention of the name Ketch I was reminded of Margaret's son Will and of his companionship with Tom Hubberthorne. I liked not to think of Mercy living in the family of that man, who, as I

had reason enough to know, was not over nice in matters of honesty. Still, Will Ketch was quartered in one of the camps, and, after all, there could be little harm in the girl remaining under his mother's roof, particularly as there was no other easily available place for her.

I offered to accompany her back to the town, and we were just bidding a "good night" to Daniel Foe, when two men passed near us. They did not notice me, but as the light from the fire glanced upon their faces I recognised Will Ketch and Tom Hubberthorne. Their boots, like my own, were muddy with red clay, and by this I knew that like myself they had lately walked in Fitzpayne Woods and through Horner's Hollow, where the ground was of soft red clay. It gave me no great difficulty to reason further that it had been these two same men who had lain in ambush for me and who had attempted to take my life.

The thought of my late adventure kept me unwontedly silent as I walked towards the town with Mercy Cradock. But I soon discovered that Daniel Foe had already told her of most of the things that had befallen me since the time of my setting out upon my journey from the cottage at Cheddon.

Nevertheless there was much that we had to tell to each other, and many matters that we had need to decide upon. For Mercy was now, like myself, a poor and homeless orphan, and our future prospects were vague and shadowy.

In the end we determined that Mercy should, as soon as might be, go north to Bridgewater, where, it seemed, she had an aunt; and that I, being less fortunate, should continue in the following of the Duke of Monmouth. And, since there was talk of the army moving further towards Bristol on the morrow, we decided that at least a few miles of the journey might be covered in each other's company.

As we were parting at Mrs. Ketch's door, I took Mercy's hand and pressed into it the two silver crowns that still remained to me.

"Lest we should not meet to-morrow," I said, "take this. I would that it were more; but small though it be, 'twill serve you for a little time."

But she thrust it back.

"No, Peter," she said, "I cannot take it. Indeed, 'tis I who should give money to you, not you to me. For we sold your dog Peter—we sold him even on the very day you left us—to the squire's gamekeeper, who gave us in return five crowns. Father thought

the money was more than the dog's value; but I have since heard that the keeper has now sold the dog for double that price."

"Have you the five crowns now, Mercy?" I asked, still pressing my own money upon her.

She hung her head.

"Alas, no," she said. "For it went, together with all that we got for the sale of our household belongings, to pay father's debts."

"Well, then," I urged, "you must take this that I offer you." And at length she was persuaded, and we bade each other a good-night, promising to meet on the following morning ere the troops should be ready to march, which was to be at eight of the clock.

Daniel Foe and I were now to be in separate regiments; he in Lord Grey's cavalry, and I in a company of Wade's foot.

Until we were summoned to the roll-call on the next morning I had not even remembered that he had possession of my grandfather's will; and now, when I reflected upon the possibilities of our expected battlings with the King's troops — the possibilities of Foe being wounded or taken prisoner or perhaps even being killed, and of the risks that I

myself might be exposed to—I thought that it would be at least a wise precaution to get the document from him and secure it in some place of safety. I therefore went to him where I knew that he would be.

He was in the act of hurriedly mounting his horse when I approached him.

"Master Foe," I said, catching him by the heel.

He looked at me as if resenting my touch, and sprang into the saddle.

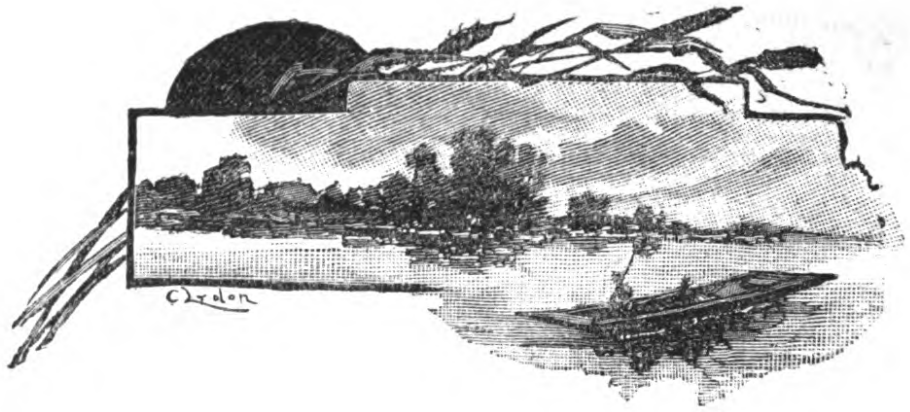
"I have no time to speak with you just now, my lad," said he, fingering the reins. "Can you not see that I am already behindhand? What want you?"

"'Tis my grandfather's will that I want—the parchment that I gave into your keeping," I said.

"And how can you expect that I should have it and look after it when you have minded it so ill yourself?" said he. He put his spurs to his horse's side, and as the animal broke into a trot he glanced back at me and added, "You must e'en look somewhere else for it, Peter; for I have no longer got it."

This was the first ill-turn that Foe had done me, and I was much vexed. For since I had seen the plight in which Mercy Cradock was now placed, the

will had become suddenly a thing of value in my eyes. I thought that by its means I might be able to regain some, at least, of my dead mother's property, and that, however little it might be, it must prove useful in helping Mercy through the world until I should earn something for her by working, as I intended to work. But now the only instrument by which I could establish a claim was lost, and all through my thoughtlessness in entrusting it to a man so irresponsible as Daniel Foe!



CHAPTER XII.

KING MONMOUTH'S PROGRESS.

WE had marched a full mile out of Taunton before I saw sign of Mercy Cradock. I had thought that she had lingered behind in the town. But when we got to the corner of the lane, leading down towards Cheddon, there she stood watching for me.

She walked along by my side for another quarter of a mile, and then, as we came to the familiar footpath that I had travelled on the previous night, she suddenly touched my elbow.

"Keep where you are in the ranks," she said

excitedly. "I must run to the cottage. I will overtake you presently."

As she went off, the morning breeze caught her cloak and blew it aside. I thought I saw something white in the hand that it had covered, but my musket strap catching on the butt of one of my pistols drew away my attention.

We were marching but slowly, and it was not long ere Mercy was again at my side.

"You have not been into the cottage," I said. "You have come too quick. Where have you been?"

Her two hands were visible now, and both were empty. She laughed.

"No," said she, in a low voice that I alone could hear, "I have not been into the cottage. 'Tis locked, and the key is in the squire's keeping." And then, seeing that I expected a further explanation, she added, "I have but been to the hollow tree that is at the end of the meadow—the tree wherein you hid the ribbon that you bought for my birthday. 'Tis a safe place when one wants to hide anything from prying eyes."

"And, prithee, what have you been hiding in there this morning?" I asked.

"Nay, do not ask me, Peter," said she; "but some day you shall know."

I did not press her further, believing that it was but some girlish frolic that she had been after. Little did I then understand or dream how wise she had been, and how much her wisdom would mean to us both in the after years!

It was past noontide when we came in sight of the houses of Bridgewater, and at a little road to the south of the town Mercy Cradock bade me farewell.

Many strange things were to happen before our next meeting, and both she and I were to pass through many dangers and troubles ere our hands should be clasped again as they were clasped in that moment of farewell.

The coming of Monmouth's army into Bridgewater had been expected. This was manifest to everyone by the reception that met us even before we entered the town. Crowds of the townsfolk awaited us on the road, and cheered us when we came. At the entrance to the town the Mayor and Aldermen, arrayed in their robes, welcomed the Duke of Monmouth. They walked before him in procession to the High Cross, and there they proclaimed him king. From our splendid leader, who took up his

residence in the castle, down even to myself, who was the youngest and least important of his followers, we were all furnished with such necessaries as befitted our stations. Those who could afford to do so recompensed the people of the town for their kindness and their attentions; those who were penniless received none the less all the comforts that they needed or desired.

Our camps were pitched on the castle field, and when I saw all our army gathered together I was astounded at their great number. We had, as Daniel Foe and others computed, no fewer than six thousand men; and the number might easily have been multiplied twofold but for the lack of arms. The Duke had brought with him into England only a scanty supply of pikes and swords and muskets; and we who had joined him early were fortunate in having our choice of weapons. But a large number of our men had, perforce, to content themselves with such weapons as could be rudely fashioned out of sickles and scythes and the tools which they had used in the mines or in the fields.

On that same day of our arrival in Bridgewater many carts were brought to the encampment bearing loads of scythe-blades, and these were fastened erect

upon the ends of strong poles, forming a most terrible weapon.

I observed that many of my comrades, both of cavalry and infantry, wore the red and yellow uniforms of the militia. These men, I learned, had either served their term in the train-bands, or, as in many cases, had deserted from Albemarle's army at Axminster.

The least presentable portion of Monmouth's force was the horses, most of them being but the large-limbed colts that one sees on the Somersetshire marshes, feeding there and running almost wild until they be fit to send to London to drag the gentlefolks' coaches or the tradesmens' carts. The larger number of them had never been ridden by man. They fretted under the bridle and the saddle (when, indeed, such furniture could be provided), and when they heard the blast of a trumpet, or the beat of a drum, they started in affright and became ungovernable. As for the sound of a musket, or the boom of a field-piece, the unaccustomed noise turned them almost frantic. But the calvary, who numbered some ten hundred, were not all ill-equipped, for the Duke had a bodyguard of twoscore of young gentlemen who had their own chargers, and were well armed

Of the Duke of Albemarle's army I heard very little at this time. I only knew that they had been put to rout at Axminster, and that they had wholly disappeared. This fact in itself was doubtless accountable for the elation of Monmouth, who saw in it a good augury of his future success. But the Royal troops, although out of our near ken, were nevertheless active. They had been joined by the Duke of Beaufort, the Earl of Pembroke, Lord Lumley, the Earl of Abingdon, and other nobles; and it afterwards became known that the Bishop of Oxford had summoned the undergraduates of his university to take arms for the Crown. John Churchill, the great soldier who afterwards became known to the world as the Duke of Marlborough, had been sent westward with the Blues; and the Earl of Feversham was following with all the forces that could be spared from the neighbourhood of London.

The near vicinity of Churchill soon became apparent. He had but few men under him, but he was a brave and skilful soldier, and he did all he could to annoy and harass us. Heavy rains, too, added to the discomfort of our march to Glastonbury. In this town, which was new to me, I was quartered,

with some two hundred or more of rough and noisy fellows, in one of the churches. This was the case also in the city of Wells, where many of us slept and ate our food in the beautiful cathedral — a building the like of which had never entered into my dreams.

During our northward march recruits joined at every village and every town, and it seemed to me that Monmouth's only decided purpose for the present was to collect troops and arms. Certainly I could perceive no other plan. On a certain day, however, I chanced to meet Daniel Foe, who informed me that it was the Duke's design to seize the town of Bristol.

We did, indeed, come within sight of Bristol when we came to the side of a river near to a village named Keynsham. But the bridge over the river had been destroyed by the militia in anticipation of our approach, and that was the only sight of Bristol that ever met my eyes, saving only a great glare of light that came into the sky on the same night from a conflagration in the port, some ships having been set on fire by incendiaries with the view of occupying the train-bands while our rebel army should boldly enter the city on the Somerset side.

That entry, as I have said, was not made. When the bridge was repaired it was already too late for us to proceed, for the king's forces were close at hand, and the plan of attacking Bristol was relinquished.

We were still in Keynsham on the following morning, when Colonel Oglethorpe, at the head of a hundred men of the King's Life Guards, dashed into the village, scattering two troops of our cavalry, which ventured to oppose him. I was not a witness of this action, but I saw many of our men who had been wounded in the fight, and heard from them that the conflict had been sharp and severe, and that the Life Guards had suffered but little compared with the injury they had done.

Our next march was towards the town of Bath, but we made no attempt upon the strongly garrisoned walls. It was rumoured that the Earl of Feversham was quickly approaching, and the Duke of Monmouth thought it wise to hasten to Philip's Norton, where we halted on the evening of the twenty-sixth of June.

Feversham followed us thither, and early on the next morning the advanced guard of the Royal army appeared, commanded by the young Duke of Grafton.

We were ready for him; for many of our musketeers had been stationed behind the fences of the deep lane through which he must pass, and a strong barricade was erected across the lane nearer to the entrance of the main street to meet him full in his front. It was in the lane that I was posted, and never shall I forget the thrill of timorous excitement that ran through me as the muskets were fired upon the galloping horsemen, so gallant in their bright trappings and their gay uniforms. More than a hundred of them were killed or wounded ere their main body turned to retreat, for they could not pass the barricade, and retreat was their only course. They were intercepted by a company of Monmouth's cavalry as they returned along the lane; but they gallantly cut their way through, and Grafton himself escaped in safety.

From Philip's Norton we made a wearisome night-march southward to Frome through a deluging torrent of rain. There had been talk among my comrades of reinforcements that were expected from Wiltshire; but this succour never came, and I observed that the Duke and his officers, one and all, now wore a look of despondency. It was clear even to me, who had small knowledge of such matters,

that our rustic regiments, with all their courage and all their zeal, were no match for trained soldiers such as those I had already seen.

While we were still in Frome a report reached our camp that the men of the marshes near Axbridge had risen in defence of Monmouth's cause, and had armed themselves with flails, pitchforks, and bludgeons. They were said to have assembled near to Bridgewater, and towards Bridgewater we turned, halting by the way at Wells.

On this occasion many hundreds of our men, both infantry and cavalry, were quartered in the magnificent cathedral, and it was a sorrowful sight to see how little honour and reverence they paid to the holy place. They were hostile to Prelacy, and they showed their hostility by ruthlessly destroying the furniture, breaking up the organ, stabling their horses in the chapter-house, and making the house of God a scene of riot. Not only did they climb to the roof and tear down the lead to make bullets, but they wantonly defaced the stone ornaments of the building, broke the stained glass windows, and even insulted the altar by carousing round it and playing cards upon its steps.

I wondered what Parson Cradock would have

thought of such an unholy sight; and I grew sick as I realised what manner of men I had fallen amongst. It was evident, however, that these fanatical excesses were not countenanced by our leaders. In the midst of one very disgraceful scene of riot Lord Grey strode into the cathedral with a face so furious with indignation that it might well have appalled the worst of the rustic clowns. He took his stand in front of the altar, and, drawing his sword, defied any man to come near. They shrank like dogs from his noble rage, and for a time order was restored. But much mischief had already been done, and the stately building must ever bear the marks and traces of the desecration.

We again entered Bridgewater on the second day of July, and found that the promised reinforements amounted only to a mere handful of farm-labourers.

It was some comfort to me to know that I was now near to Mercy Cradock. Many times during the few days that we were encamped outside the town I had a mind to go to her, and let her know of my safety. But the corporal under whose direct charge I was held was an austere man, and ever when I besought him to give me an hour's leave he discovered a new duty for me. There was drilling

to be done, there were muskets to clean, and buttons to polish, and muddy boots to scrape, or some such distasteful work, at which he kept me from morning to night.

Once, when I asked him to let me be absent from camp for an hour, he suddenly remembered that his superior officer had given him a letter to deliver to a young gentleman, Master Hubert Avison, who was one of the Duke of Monmouth's bodyguard and personal attendants. He gave the letter into my hand, bidding me deliver it.

"And when you have done so," said he, "you may have your hour's leave, but you must be back here by four o'clock."

It was then barely past two, and I went off feeling assured that I should have ample time in which to see Mercy Cradock. I went to the castle, where I expected to find Master Avison with no great trouble. I was told that he had gone in the Duke's company to a certain house in the town. Hither I followed, only to be told that the Duke of Monmouth and his staff had gone to the parish church. When I got to the church it was already three by the clock. The door was closed and locked, and I was about to turn away when I caught sight of a spurred

boot disappearing round the corner of a little doorway leading into the church tower. I heard many voices. Here, surely, at last, I had found the man I sought.

I went in by the little doorway, and followed the clanking footsteps up and up the dark stone stairs. Never in my life had I climbed such a stupendous staircase. Round and round, and ever upward, I mounted until, at last, I came into open daylight, and found myself in the midst of a crowd of gaily apparelled gentlemen, who stood around the majestic figure of King Monmouth.

They were looking out across the town to the eastward. I spoke to a soldier who was near, asking him which might be Master Hubert Avison, and he singled out one who was leaning over the stone parapet of the tower. To him I made my way and gave him the letter. Believing that there might be an answer to deliver, I waited at his side.

The Duke of Monmouth spoke.

"Is there none here," said he, "who knows the geography of this place?"

He glanced about him at his companions. Then his eye fell upon me, and, tapping me on the shoulder with a telescope that he held in his hand, he said,

"Are you of these parts, my boy? Can you tell me the name of the village I see yonder across the fields?"

He pointed with his gloved hand to the north-eastward.

"'Tis the village of Chedzoy," I answered. And then, deeming that he would have me tell him more, I added, "Beyond it is Sutton Mallet. And to the south are Weston Zoyland and Middlezoy."

He nodded, and presently questioned further.

"What water is it that I see in the midst of the trees?" he asked, directing my glance to the southward.

"So please, your Grace," I answered, "'tis the river Parret — the same water that runs through Bridgewater."

"Ah," he said, raising his telescope to his eye, "it seems you know this neighbourhood passing well. How name you the vast swamp that lies due east there, where the troops are assembled?"

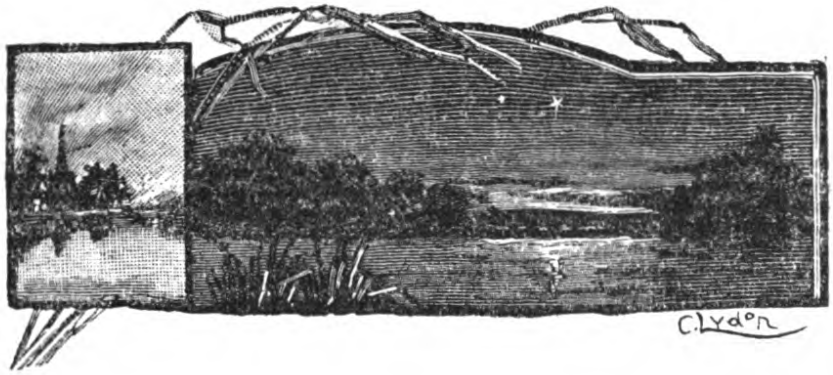
I had observed no troops up to this moment. But now, when I followed the bearing of his glass I saw a great dark mass of men far away in the distance, with here and there a glint of light, like sunshine reflected upon bright steel.

"That, your Grace," I returned, "is the plain of Sedgemoor."

He turned to one of his attendants and made some remark concerning the number of the King's troops that were gathered on the moor.

"A good three thousand at the least," he said, with a surly growl of dismay. And with that he handed his telescope to Master Avison and strode towards the stairway at the farther side of the church spire that rose from the square tower on which we stood. He looked over his shoulder as he went, and called aloud to Avison, "Keep that boy within sight, Avison. His knowledge may be of service to-night."

Had that word "to-night" been my sentence of death it could scarcely have filled me with greater trepidation. For it told me just how soon I might expect to be in the midst of the King's soldiers, perhaps fighting, perhaps wounded, perhaps lying dead beside the swamps of Sedgemoor!



CHAPTER XIII.

THE BATTLE OF SEDGEMOOR.

VERY soon it became known throughout our encampment on the castle field of Bridgewater that an attack upon the royal forces was to be made under cover of the night. Some of our men, seeing the gloomy countenances of the Duke of Monmouth, Lord Grey, and others of the rebel leaders, and believing that our defeat at the hands of the trained soldiers was a foregone conclusion, incontinently deserted; and among these, as I learned by a mere chance, was Tom Hubberthorne.

While our men were being ranked in marching

order, I was detained, for I knew not what reason, by Master Avison. On hearing the trumpet call to muster, I spoke to him, asking to be allowed to take my place among the infantry. But he told me that I was no longer an infantry soldier, but one of the scouts. I was to have a horse and to ride with the advance guards, guiding the way across Sedgemoor towards the royal encampment.

Behold me, then, at one o'clock in the morning of that Monday, the sixth of July, riding in front of a great regiment of cavalry, my immediate companions some of Monmouth's proudest gentlemen.

The moon was at its full, and the rosy streamers of the northern lights shone flickeringly in the sky. But round and about us the marsh fog lay thick upon the land, making it as difficult for us to find our way as it was certainly difficult for the enemy to perceive our approach. Orders had been given that strict silence was to be preserved, that no drum was to be sounded, and no shot fired. And if any doubt should perplex us as to who was friend and who was foe, we were to recognise one another in the darkness by the word "Soho."

Our march out of Bridgewater was by a round-about path, whose hedgerows were a sufficient guide.

But once we emerged upon the open moor, with the mists surrounding us, our direction was not so easy, and it needed that there should be some among us who were familiar with the country; for the moor was intersected by many ditches, or rhines as we call them in these parts, and these could not be crossed by reason of their width, their depth, and the water and soft mud which filled them.

Two of these rhines—namely, Black Ditch and Langmoor Rhine—lay between us and the enemy. There was also the Bussex Rhine; but whether the royal army was encamped in front of it or behind it I, for one, did not know. Had I been the only scout, I should have mentioned my doubts to one of the officers; but there were others—men of Bridgewater and Zoyland—who knew the lie of the land as well as I, if not better; and with them lay the main responsibility.

We successfully crossed by the causeways over Black Ditch and Langmoor Rhine, and once, when the fog momentarily lifted, I saw, not far away, the moving lights of the encampment. But again the mist came about us. I knew now that Bussex Rhine was between the two armies, but whether the causeway lay to the right or to the left I could not for the

life of me remember. I drew rein, hesitating. Then, turning to Ferguson, who was near me, I proposed that I should dismount, and seek the right way on foot.

He whispered his instructions, bidding me carry my loaded pistol in hand, but to be careful not to discharge it. I was to go in advance, and when I should have found a crossing I was to return and show the way. Tethering my horse to a tree, I went forward carefully. The grey, moist mist hemmed me round, yet the moon, shining high in the sky, made the air not altogether so dark that I could not distinguish a tree or the parapet of a bridge.

I had not gone many yards when the sound of a man's foot striking on a stone caught my ear. I stopped. Then there came to me a heavy breathing sound, like the sniffing of a dog. I crept forward stealthily. Suddenly, full in front of me, there appeared the figure of a man. I took him to be one of Monmouth's guides, but the dark form of a large dog beside him perplexed me.

"Soho!" I cried, loud enough for him to hear me, yet not so loud that the cry might carry farther.

"For whom are you?" he demanded.

I replied, "For the King."

"For which king?" he asked.

"For King Monmouth. God with us!" I returned. And then, as a beam of pale moonlight pierced through the mist, I saw the man more plainly, and knew him to be Tom Hubberthorne.

"Lay hold of him, lad!" he cried, speaking to the dog. The dog sprang upon me, throwing me over with his weight. As I fell I gripped the trigger of my pistol so tight that the weapon was fired. The report rang like a challenge through the night air. A stinging pain shot into my leg. I guessed rather than felt that I was wounded by my own weapon, but the weight of the dog upon me was my chief thought just then. I expected the animal to tear me to pieces. Instead, it gave a glad whine, and began to lick my face.

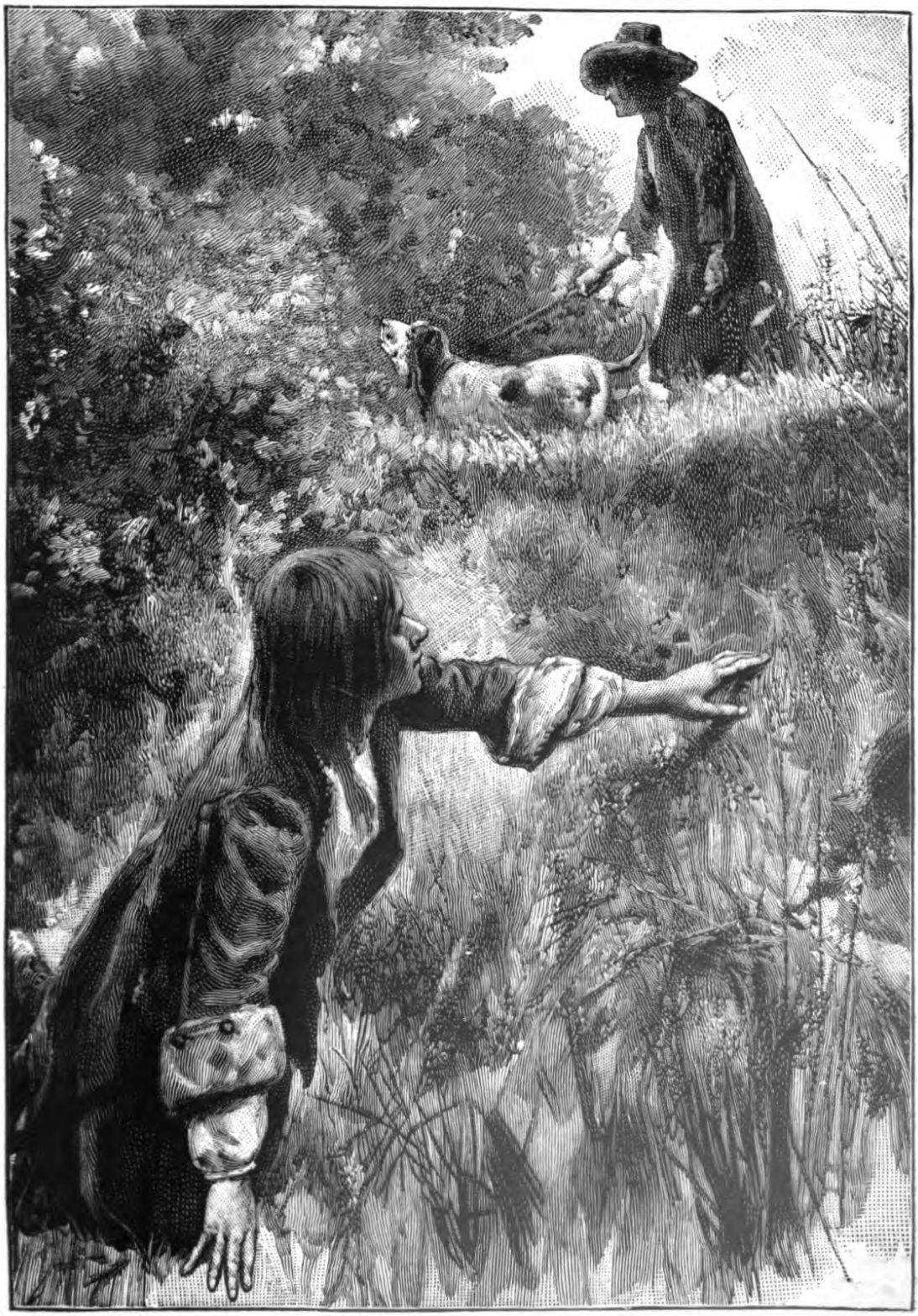
"Dan! Dan!" I cried, knowing the dog to be my own true friend. But the dog was dragged away from me. It gave voice in a hollow bark. I heard it struggling to return to me. Rising to my feet, intending to go back to my officers, I felt the pain more acute in my leg. My stocking was wet. I limped back, and with less difficulty than I had expected, discovered the horsemen, who had, indeed, advanced to the edge of the ditch. But already the

firing of my pistol had spread alarm in the encampment of the royal troops. The drums were beating to arms. Lights quickly appeared on the farther side of the rhine, and the King's Foot were forming in order of battle.

Suddenly there was a flash of light and a deafening volley of musketry from the crowded ranks of the royal infantry. Monmouth's men returned the fire across the ditch, but their horses were ill to manage, and presently they retired in confusion, to be replaced very soon by the regiments of foot who took up the conflict with courage and energy.

It seemed to me as I lay wounded and trembling with terror on the moor that the interchange of shots, the wild cries of the combatants, and the yells of the wounded were continued without abatement for fully an hour's time. Then the battle took a turn. Companies of cavalry rode up upon both sides of the ditch. I heard the rumble of ammunition waggons, the fierce shouts of men, the rattle of musketry fire, and the louder booming of cannon. But which side was in the better condition I could not tell.

I had thought that I was sorely wounded, that my leg was shattered at the least. Soon, however, when the heat of battle drew apart from my near presence,



IT WAS A BLOODHOUND!

I staggered to my feet and found that I could still walk. I limped away, not knowing whither, and at last I stumbled against the warm body of a horse. The animal was riderless. I caught at its saddle and tried to find the bridle. I almost laughed when I found the reins bound about the branch of a tree and discovered that the horse was the same that I had ridden.

Untethering him I struggled to mount into the saddle. It was difficult, but at last I succeeded, and rode away without thought of my destination, but only wishing to be free from the danger of the bullets that flew about me.

Presently I found myself in the midst of a company of galloping horsemen. My own horse, without guidance or hindrance, joined them, galloping with them. We tore through a mass of men whose cries we could hear, calling vainly for ammunition. We came near to the roar and flash of cannons, but our leaders avoided the fire by altering the direction of their flight. For it was indeed a flight, and we were in hot retreat, routed, overmastered, defeated.

How the battle had been managed I cannot personally tell. It is said that the soldier seldom knows anything of the tactics of his generals; and

this is true of my own experience of the battle of Sedgemoor. I only knew that the royal troops and the insurgents had had a pitched fight, and that the insurgents had been beaten; that Monmouth's army of 2600 foot and 600 horse had been met by the King's forces to the number of 2700; that Monmouth's men had been baulked by the fact that they could not cross Bussex Rhine, and that they had been mown down by the royal artillery, 300 of them falling on the field and 1000 more during the hasty retreat.

Everywhere around me, in the dim light of the early morning, I could see the rebel soldiers flying from the field. Some, as I could tell by their groans as they ran or galloped away, were wounded. All were scared. They preserved no order, but each man flew for himself, thinking only of saving himself from the pursuing regiments of the King's army. Many fell exhausted to the ground, and often I heard the pistol shots of the Royalists as our men were overtaken in the flight. On and on we galloped, leaving those who were on foot far behind.

At four o'clock we dashed through the streets of Chedzoy. The clamour, the clatter of horses' feet, brought the people to their doors, and many a white

nightcapped head was thrust out from the upper windows. The uproar, the sight of bloodstained faces, and the tattered clothing of the fugitives, as they swept by, spread alarm throughout the little town; for it was plain to see that we had been utterly routed, and that the ambitious schemes of the Duke of Monmouth were at an end.

As I came to the last of the houses, and was passing a lane that led down towards a farm, my horse swerved suddenly and cantered down the lane. It was evidently the animal's home, but I had no notion of allowing him to abandon the flight so soon, for I already had evidence that we were being pursued. I tugged at my right reign, and, at last, managed to guide the horse back to the main road.

Most of the horsemen, in whose company I had so far been, were now far in advance of me. But, from behind, I still heard the clattering horsehoofs of other fugitives, and presently a small band of Monmouth's officers dashed towards where my horse still struggled stubbornly to escape down the lane. They drew to an expected halt, and among them I observed the now haggard and despondent face of the Duke of Monmouth himself. He was in the

act of tearing from his breast the conspicuous blue ribbon that had adorned it for so long.

"Catch me that horse!" he cried, pointing over the hedge, near which my own charger stood; and, looking over the hawthorn bushes, I saw the quiet face of a horse that was making friendly advances to the animal upon whose back I sat. The two were evidently old acquaintances. I dismounted with some pain, and crept through the hedge. Catching the horse by his forelock, I led him out through a gate that was near at hand and out into the road.

The Duke was by this time on his feet, and two of his followers were taking the saddle and bridle from off his grey Flanders mare. These they presently fixed upon the fresher horse which I had captured, and which Monmouth now mounted. One of the troopers, seeing my difficulty in regaining my own saddle, assisted me. Then we all rode off again in a north-westerly direction, now crossing a wide stretch of moorland, now galloping in single file adown narrow lanes, and now rushing along wide, tree-bordered highroads. Often, when we were upon high ground, I glanced behind towards the battle-field, and saw the flash and smoke of the last volleys fired by the defeated and abandoned rebels.

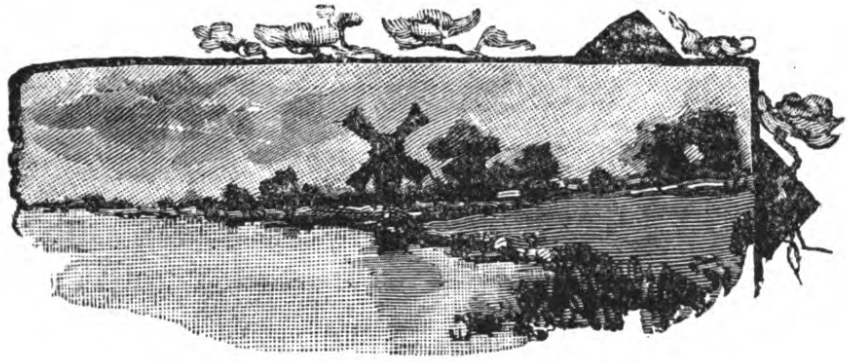
Later in the morning we saw in advance of us the gleaming waters of the Bristol Channel, and from what was spoken by my companions I gathered that Lord Grey and another of the fugitive leaders, named Buyse, had advised Monmouth to cross the Channel, and take refuge in Wales, where he might remain for a long time undiscovered. I did not quite understand why it was that he should thus seek to hide himself, for I did not then know that a reward of five thousand pounds had been offered for Monmouth's arrest, or guess at the terrible punishment that awaited him. The advice of his companions, however good it may have been, was not followed. Instead, the Duke determined to turn and find a hiding-place in Hampshire. There was mention of the New Forest.

I do not exactly know by what particular way we travelled. The villages and towns were avoided. We rested under the cover of trees and in forest dingles, and went on and on, ever hurrying, until the horses were utterly exhausted. At last it was determined to abandon the animals and proceed on foot.

This constant travelling wearied me, and soon I began to ask myself why was I keeping in the

company of these men? I had no great zeal for their cause. I was not bound to them by any duty. I could gain nothing by keeping with them, and lose nothing by deserting them. And, indeed, when it came to dismounting, there was nothing else for me but to desert, for my wounded leg was now most painful. Therefore did I resolve to go my own ways, and return as speedily as might be to my own native countryside. I had lost my pistols, my sword was broken and thrown away, and there was nothing in my appearance, saving only my lame leg, that could betray me as one of the rebels.

It had been better for me, however, if I had come to this resolve at an earlier time, as you shall presently see.



CHAPTER XIV.

COMPANIONS IN ADVERSITY.

THE spot where we were halting was a wide tract of cultivated land separated from the open country by an enclosure of hedges. All about us was a growth of green rye and oats, already high enough to conceal a man if he lay down. Our horses had been allowed to stray where they willed; their saddles and bridles had been hidden under brambles and bracken.

Monmouth himself had thrown off his fine attire, had exchanged his jack-boots for a pair of ploughman's clogs, his plumed hat for a labourer's cap, and had covered his tall body with a shepherd's grimy

smock-frock. His beard was of several days' growth, and had turned grey. Very different did he appear now from the splendid stranger who had landed at Lyme but a few short weeks earlier!

It was evident, by many signs, that the news of the defeat of the rebellion had reached this part of the country where we now were. It was evident also that the fugitives were being pursued and sought for. Consequently, the little band parted company. Grey went one way, the Duke another; others distributed themselves in many directions. I myself, not being able to walk very far, took refuge in a thick copse; yet I believe that the Duke of Monmouth was concealed at no great distance from me, for I had seen him enter a dry ditch, and knew that he intended to remain there until the darkness of night should permit him to proceed. He had been provided with a capful of raw peas, wherewith to stay his hunger.

As I lay half sleeping on a mossy bank under a friendly beech tree, I was alarmed by the sound of crackling twigs and the low voices of men.

"I'll be bound we shall come upon 'em in here," said one voice.

They were still at a considerable distance from

me, and I had the curiosity to creep towards the ditch to discover if Monmouth had escaped, or if he were still there. I crept very cautiously, and drawing aside the lower branches of a large elder bush that grew at the side of the ditch, I peered through. There was a slight movement, like the sudden darting away of a water-rat. It was not a rat, however, but a man's foot; and I now knew that the Duke was still there.

Even as I waited, pausing ere I returned into the copse, there suddenly appeared, right in front of me, the figures of two men. I lay quiet, moving not even a finger. They passed, and I breathed in relief. But in another moment a third man came. He was accompanied by a dog that dragged strongly at its leash.

At first I saw only the dog's up-tilted tail; but suddenly the animal's great wrinkled head was lifted, so that I could make out its heavy flews. For it was a bloodhound, and in that moment I recognised it as my own dog Dan that Parson Cradock had sold to help pay his debts. With an excited bark, the dog broke away, and bounded into the ditch. Its master called aloud to his fellows, giving a view halloo. They speedily returned, while from across

the neighbouring cornfield there came a company of mounted soldiers.

Before they had advanced many paces I was down in the ditch struggling with the dog, calling it by name, and dragging it back from the Duke of Monmouth, at whose throat it had sprung. It seemed to know my voice, for it turned and leaped upon me with a glad whine, licked my face, and put its great splay paws upon my shoulders. The Duke staggered to his feet, and drew his sword from under his smock, standing at bay. Had he been furnished with a loaded pistol, I doubt not that he would have used it also in his defence; but with his sword he could do nothing against his captors, who were well provided with firearms. These they were ready to use, but one of their officers, dismounting, bade them stand back, while he strode boldly up to Monmouth, glanced into his face to assure himself as to the man's identity, and then demanded of him to give up his sword.

The Duke trembled violently, looked despairingly about him, hesitating to obey. At length he dropped his weapon upon the ground. The officer stamped his foot upon it, and at the same time took hold of Monmouth by the collar of his smock-frock.

I was watching these proceedings, when suddenly a heavy hand was laid upon me. My arms were secured. I turned and saw that my captor was the man who had before held the dog. The man himself was my old enemy, Tom Hubberthorne.

To free myself from him was impossible. Having bound my arms tightly behind me, he flung me to the ground with a savage curse. There I lay for a long time, while near me the soldiers occupied themselves in searching the Duke of Monmouth's pockets. They turned out the raw peas that he had been keeping in a kerchief under his arm, a watch, a purse of gold, a book on fortifications, another book of songs and prayers, the Bible that had been given to him at Taunton, and his order of St. George, with which his father, King Charles the Second, had decorated him. These articles were proof sufficient of his identity. The men helped him upon one of their spare horses, and rode off with him, a forlorn and miserable prisoner, to London. And that was the last that I saw of him.

Long afterwards I heard, by a letter that came to the West, of the scene at the Tower of London, of how the Duke of Monmouth, walking to the scaffold, saluted the guards as he passed them with a smile;

of how every window and housestop and chimney stack was crowded with people who wept at his fate.

"I shall say little," he declared, "I come here, not to speak, but to die. I die a Protestant of the Church of England." Then he prayed for the King, after which, turning to his executioner, he said, "Here are six guineas for you, Jack Ketch. Do not hack me as you did my Lord Russell. I have heard that you struck him three or four times. My servant will give you some more gold if you do the work well."

He then took off his cloak and bared his neck. Before he knelt down he caught the axe and ran his finger along its edge. "I fear 'tis not quite sharp enough," he said, and laid his head upon the block. The first blow of the axe made only a slight wound. The stroke was repeated many times before the work was complete. And that was the end of our Splendid Stranger.

But to resume. When the soldiery and their prisoner rode off in a body, with a joyous shout and a great clatter of hoofs and side-arms. I thought that I was to be left lying there to escape as best I might. I fancied that I should soon free myself from the strings that bound my arms, and be able

to wander back into Somersetshire by easy stages, begging food or shelter as I required it at the wayside cottages. But this agreeable prospect was not for long allowed to comfort me. The horsemen were hardly out of sight, when to my side came Tom Hubberthorne. He gave me a heavy kick in the ribs, bidding me rise to my feet.

"You young rebel!" he cried. "You young thief. Where is the parchment that you stole from me what time we were in Taunton?" Where is it, I say?"

I knew what he meant, but made no answer. There was a look in his eyes which I felt sure meant that he would have thought little of murdering me at that moment. I saw his hand clasp his dagger. He glanced round, then dropped on his knees, drawing the dagger from its sheath. I saw the long sharp blade gleam in his upraised hand, and a sickness came over me. I closed my eyes to shut the thing from my sight, shrinking as I expected the point to be plunged into my breast. But the weapon did not descend. I opened my eyes again and saw a second man standing over me. He had caught Hubberthorne's wrist in his hand.

"Stay!" he cried, in a voice of stern command.

"None of this. The lad is a rebel, I know; but it is not for us to be his judges and his executioners. Leave him for the hangman."

Hubberthorne returned his weapon to its sheath, rose to his feet, and, with a scowl in his face, echoed blankly—

"The hangman?"

"Ay," returned the other, who, as I now saw, wore the uniform of the Dorset militia. "They will all be hanged. Be sure of that. Indeed, a good dozen of them were gibbeted yesternight at Weston Zoyland. And more would have been strung up, but that there was a lack of gibbets and chains."

This information, so callously dropped, filled me with horror and dismay. I was beginning to realise what it meant to have been a rebel.

"Go, fetch a horse," the man added, "and let the lad be taken with us back to Bridgewater."

Hubberthorne went off, while the soldier, prowling idly around, picked up a piece of gold that had fallen from the Duke of Monmouth's purse, and smilingly thrust it into his pocket. He returned to me, and, not unkindly, asked me some questions concerning the Duke's flight from the battlefield, and whether Lord Grey had been with him. I answered as best

I could, not thinking how every answer that I made betrayed me as one of the unfortunate Duke's followers.

After some fifteen minutes' time Hubberthorne returned, leading a bare-backed horse by its halter. The soldier gave me a leg up, and I was soon on the animal's back, being led away to a road where some thirty troopers were halting, watering their horses in a wayside rivulet. An officer who was in command now divided the company, telling off two men to convey me to Bridgewater, ordering others to ride this way or that way in pursuit, it seemed, of fugitive rebels.

When we were about to start I saw that Hubberthorne was about to accompany me, and that he had tied the bloodhound by a long chain to his saddle. The officer demanded to know what he meant by carrying off the dog, since its work was not yet finished. Hubberthorne replied that the dog was his own, and that he meant to take it home with him, for that his business with the royal troops was done now that the battle was over and Monmouth taken prisoner. There was some wrangling at this; but it ended in the dog being once again sold to a new master, and this time for a price that was fully

four times the amount that Parson Cradock had received in the first transaction.

It was already towards evening, and darkness fell before we came to the little village, at which we halted for the night. The four horses were stabled, and, having been provided with a crust of bread and a drink of stale cider, I was allowed to sleep upon the straw, with one of the soldiers keeping guard over me. I slept but ill, for my leg was most painful, and my mind still excited with the events of these few days and the fear of what was in front of me. And ere I was half rested I was awakened to get to horse and continue the march.

In the forenoon we passed through Weston Zoyland, and from here to Bridgewater the road was lined with newly-erected gibbets, and from each gibbet a prisoner was suspended. Already I had begun to feel the rope about my own neck.

Bridgewater Castle had no more room for prisoners, and I was thrust into the crypt of a church which did service as a lock-up. For four days I was kept in the darkness, without a companion. On the fifth day three other prisoners were ushered in, and a special guard was set over us, each sentinel being relieved in turn every four hours.

For a long time my companions were silent, uttering nothing but sighs and groans. One of them at last spoke.

"There is no need to be groaning and sighing in this woeful fashion, my masters," said he, in a reproachful tone; "I'd be vastly obliged to you if you would just allow me to sleep undisturbed for an hour or two."

The sound of his voice struck familiar upon my ear. I crept towards him—for he was in a corner by himself—and laid my hand upon his arm.

"Is this you, Master Foe?" I asked.

"My name is indeed Foe," returned he; "but I do not know your voice. Who are you?"

"I am Peter Endicott," I answered.

"Then are we well met, Peter," he cried, "for I have been seeking you these many days past. I believed that you were slain on the field or else hanged, like so many of them."

I told him of my flight and the capture of Monmouth, at which he was greatly interested. After asking me many questions on all manner of little points of fact, he said with a sigh—

"Ah, then the whole game is over. I had heard so much, but am glad to have an account from an

eye-witness. And now, Peter, I in my turn have news for you. 'Tis about Mistress Mercy Cradock."

He paused, and was silent for many moments.

"What of her?" I asked. "I pray God that all is well with her. Have you seen her, Master Foe?"

"I saw her three days ago," he answered sadly. "And she gave me a message for you, if I should ever find you; for 'tis possible you will not yourself meet her again."

"Not meet her again?" I cried. And in response he only pressed my hand. "What has befallen her, then?" I implored.

"Great ill," said he. "She is in prison, Peter. She is in prison on the same charge as the rest of us, namely, for being a rebel. It was that rascal Hubberthorne who gave information against her, betraying her in that she was one among the maids who paid homage to the Duke of Monmouth what time he was proclaimed King of England at Taunton Market-Cross.

"But they will not punish her — they cannot, surely, punish her, a mere girl, for that?" I cried.

"We shall see," said he. "Had you been free, there might have been the possibility of your aiding in her escape. But you are now in an even worse

plight than she. Had you been free you might at the least have paid some wise lawyer to act in her defence when she is brought to trial in the court."

"I could not have paid," I murmured; "I have not a pennypiece in the world. Although," I added, remembering my grandfather's will, "I might indeed have given such help had you not lost the parchment I gave into your keeping, Master Foe.

I expected him to resent my implied accusation, but he only laughed.

"You are but young in the world's wisdom, Peter," said he. "Be assured that I took better care of the thing than you wot of."

"Then the will is not lost?" I exclaimed.

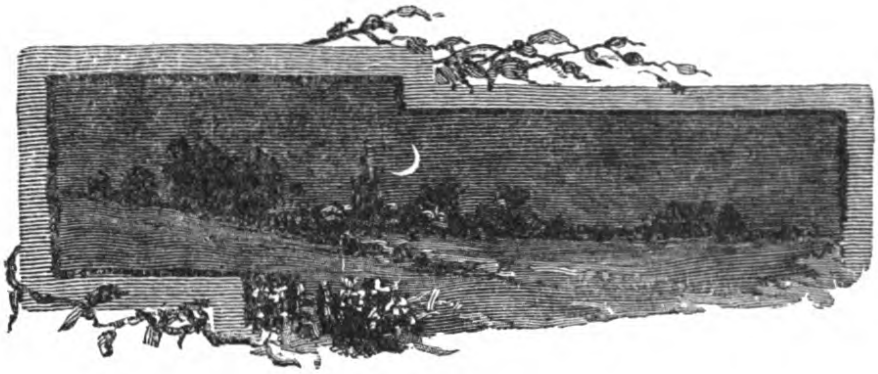
"Hark you, Peter," said he, speaking, as he had all along, so that our fellow-prisoners could not overhear him. "When you accused me at Taunton of having lost it the document was already in the safe keeping of Mistress Mercy Cradock. I gave it to her, knowing that I might myself be lying dead on the battlefield ere night. And when we were marching towards Bridgewater she accompanied us, as you know. If you remember, she went aside from the road at Cheddon."

"I remember well," I remarked, calling the matter

to mind. "She spoke of going to a certain hollow tree that stands near to the cottage."

"And in that hollow tree," continued Foe, "she hid your grandfather's will. There you will find it when, if I can but contrive it, we escape out of this, our present prison. I have already had speech with a certain man of law in this town, who, it seems, was a friend of your late father, and who has promised to prove your claims to the fortune that is yours as soon as you can go to him and show him the will."

I was silent for many minutes, digesting all this that Daniel Foe had told me. I looked around me in the darkness of our cell. To escape from the place seemed an impossibility. I spoke to Foe, meaning to ask him how he could dream of winning our liberty. But he did not answer. His breathing was deep and steady, and I knew that he was asleep.



CHAPTER XV.

AT LIBERTY.

OUR escape came sooner, much sooner than I could have expected.

It chanced that one of our fellow-prisoners was a friend of one of the soldiers who acted as sentinels over us; and on the following morning this soldier, when bringing food into our cell, spoke to his friend, saying that on that same day we were to be removed into the more secure imprisonment of the dungeons of Bridgewater Castle. Overhearing this, I waited until the man had gone, and then communicated the news to Daniel Foe.

"Let me think," said he, and he lapsed into a long silence. I thought that he had abandoned all notions of escape, so long was he in speaking. But at length he drew me near him and whispered in my ear.

"You know, Peter," said he, "that if I should be brought to a trial in the court I shall most surely be hanged." I pressed my hand on his knee to indicate that I understood. He went on, "Now, I am still young, and have many schemes in front of me. I do not want to slip out of the world at the end of a halter, and to hang in chains for the crows to peck at my bones. I have now more than ever before a desire to get back to London, there to engage in the work that is awaiting me. If I can but get out of this dark hole I shall make my way at once to London, leaving you to do what you may for your own life and for good little Mercy Cradock. But, mark me, 'tis as easy for two to escape as for one; and if I can but manage it you shall escape by my side."

"Yes," I said, "but how? How, Master Foe? Sure Bridgewater Castle is a harder place to get free from than this."

"Well do I know that, Peter," said he; and then,

after a pause, he added, "this place that we are now in is but the crypt or cellar of St. Mary Magdalen's. To get out into the street from here we must pass through the church, with which, as it happens, I am so far acquainted that I have the whole plan of the building clear in my mind's eye. So well do I know it, that I remember a certain stairway that leads up into the belfry.

"Now, look you, Peter," he went on, "this is my plan. When we are being marched out, and are passing that dark stairway, we shall, if chance favour us, be able to slip away from the company of our fellows and run quickly up the stairs and into the belfry. If we should be followed and caught 'twill of course go ill with us; but if we be smart we shall be able so to hide ourselves, that when the soldiers are after us we may let them pass and, so doubling, run down the staircase again and escape into the street. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I said, thinking, nevertheless, that his plan was utterly hopeless.

"Well," said he, taking my hand in his, "lest we are taken out of here sooner than we expect, let us say farewell to each other."

I pressed his hand and said, "Are we then never to meet again, Master Foe?"

"That is as fortune favours us," said he. "But if all go well, and if I ever get home to London, I shall hope that some day you will come and renew our acquaintance. Remember that my father is a butcher in the parish of St. Giles', Cripplegate. You will easily find him, and from him you may learn where I am to be sought."

These were among the last words that I was to hear from his lips for many long years. Not until I was a full-grown man did I go to London; and then, when I found him, he had come to greatness and celebrity as an author, and was the friend of all the wits and poets of the town. Many days did I spend with him, and glad was I that I chanced to be a friend in need, whose purse could be helpful. But this is another story.

It was evening when two of the guards came to remove us. By a little contrivance Foe and I got to the rear of our fellow-prisoners. We were marched up the dark stone stairway into the church. We were walking down the aisle when, whether intentionally or not I do not know, Foe stumbled, and the soldier behind him fell over him. Seeing my

chance, I slipped unobserved into one of the pews. The others strode on, apparently not missing me. I crept along the floor to the end of the pew, and watched them as they passed the door of the staircase up which we were to have escaped. Foe did not turn aside, but went straight out through the main door. I heard a scuffle of feet and then a cry from one of the soldiers.

"After him, corporal!" the man cried. "Look you, lad, you've let one of the rascals escape!"

There was an uproarious hue and cry, in the midst of which the church door was shut with a loud bang. Not till years afterwards did I know for certain that Daniel had escaped. As for myself, I was now alone in the church. I waited with a fast-beating heart, fearing that at any moment the guards would come back to search for me and carry me off to certain death on the scaffold. But the minutes went by, the hours crept on, darkness filled the building, and still I was alone.

At last, feeling in some measure secure, I limped up the aisle and wandered round the church, hoping to find an exit. But in the darkness I could not discover any other than the main door, and this was locked. Curling myself up on a cushion that I found

in one of the front pews I fell asleep, only to awake when a gleam of sunlight fell upon my face through one of the east windows.

Hunger assailed me, and this more even than my desire to be at liberty made me alert. I searched again for a door, but although I found even half a dozen doors, yet every one was barred and locked. All through the morning I languished there with neither food nor drink.

At last, when my hopes were at their lowest, I heard from across the church the rasping sound of a key being turned in a lock. Then after an interval a door was quietly closed; footsteps, light and quick, sounded along a distant part of the stone flooring of the church. They grew fainter as I listened, and at length ceased altogether.

For a time I fancied that my ears must have deceived me. Cautiously I went in the direction of the door whose closing I had heard. As I approached it the footsteps sounded anew; they were hastening now even more than before, and they were coming nearer. I saw now that the door was in the outer wall of the church. Through a window that was near it I could make out the gable of a house rising only a few yards across the intervening space. I quickened

my steps, hoping to reach the door and find that I could open it and escape into the street. In my hurry I fell over a hassock that lay outside of one of the pews. My wounded leg was under me. The pain of it made me cry out.

"How came you in here?" a young voice said tenderly. I looked up and saw that the speaker was a little boy. He carried a chorister's surplice over his arm. I rose to my feet and caught him by his wrist.

"Do not ask me how I came into the church," I said, peering into his bright blue eyes. "Let me out! Let me out! I have been here for a long, long time, and I am near to starvation."

He smiled at me.

"How could I hinder you from going out?" he questioned. "The door is open. You can surely go out without my help?"

I followed him out into the street, when, feeling the free air about my face, I should have started off running had not my leg so pained me.

"If you are very hungry," the boy said, lingering beside me, "I can get food for you from my mother. I live but a few yards away from here."

I thanked him as best I could, and limped along

at his side. He asked me what had made me lame, and I told him that there was a bullet in my leg, at which he remarked—

"Father had a bullet in him also. But 'twas in his arm, not his leg. The doctor got it out. You should get him to do the same for you."

"Was he for the King—King Monmouth?" I asked.

"Hush!" said the boy, with a frown, "you must not speak that name now;" and he stepped out in advance of me, not pausing until he came to the door of a large house, with white stone steps and a heavy polished door. It was not until he knocked upon one of the panels that I noticed that the boy was exceedingly well dressed, and that his collar was of fine white lace.

I was about to walk on, not liking to be seen as it were in the guise of a beggar, but the boy beckoned me after him, and I followed him within the house. As I passed over the threshold I observed that there was a name painted upon the door, and when I read it I said to myself, now surely I am fallen upon my feet! for it was the name of Mr. James Hill, the attorney, of whom Daniel Foe had spoken to me as being my late father's friend, and the man of law

who had so generously offered to make good my claim in the matter of my grandfather's will.

It is not necessary to tell how, when food had been given to me, I made myself known. The fact that I was a rebel made little difference to Mr. Hill, who, as I soon discovered, had himself been in sympathy with Monmouth. But when I told him of my imprisonment, he declared that it would be no longer safe for me to go out into the streets, and he made my wounded leg an excuse for putting me to bed and keeping me there for three long weeks.

So much kindness was bestowed upon me, that I should have been happy had it not been for the thought of Mercy Cradock. I besought Mr. Hill to discover what he could concerning her. He made inquiries, and found that, together with a vast number of other perfectly innocent persons, she had been committed for trial, and that she was soon to be removed to Taunton, where the assize was to take place. I spoke of my wish to rescue her, to break into the prison and effect her escape; but Mr. Hill only shook his head gravely, and bade me leave the matter in his hands.

In the meantime he had busied himself concerning

my affairs to such good purpose that all was now clear to him, saving only the production of the piece of parchment that Mercy had hidden in the hollow tree. And since this could not be easily found by any other than Mercy or myself, it was arranged that I should be fitted with new clothes, which would so disguise me that none of my enemies might know me if I should venture to ride to Cheddon.

So on a certain evening I set out upon Master William's pony, and rode southward, accompanied by Mr. Hill.

Our journey was a melancholy one, for the sights that met us on the road were terrible to behold. Gibbets had been erected on the highway, and their hanging victims had attracted clouds of buzzing flies and quarrelling crows. I learned that a cruel colonel named Kirke had taken the law into his own hands, and that he had been hanging and quartering the rebels even without the usual preliminary of a trial. His evil work had left its traces upon the whole countryside. He had put no fewer than a hundred of his captives to death during the seven days that succeeded the battle of Sedgemoor. I could tell many fearful tales of these executions, but this is not to my purpose.

When we came to the lane leading down to Cheddon we turned aside, and, dismounting, I crossed the field to the hollow oak tree. Therein, as I had expected, I found the roll of parchment that Mercy Cradock had so carefully hidden.

THE SIGHTS THAT MET US ON THE ROAD WERE TERRIBLE.

Mr. Hill read it through while we were yet in the field.

"This is even better than I had hoped," said he, as he folded the document up and thrust it into his

breast pocket. "You are a rich man, Peter, and I give you my congratulations."

I was silent during our ride back to the high road, but at length I said—

"I should have little joy of the money if I thought it would not help me to be of service to Mercy Cradock."

"It shall help you, most surely," returned Mr. Hill. And then he told me how he meant, with my permission, to use what was necessary in defending Mercy against her accusers in the coming trial. "But there is another matter that I must also attend to," he added, "and that is to ensure the arrest of the man Tom Hubberthorne, who, as I have now no shadow of doubt, was your father's murderer."

We took up our quarters in one of the best inns of Taunton, and there we remained in greater comfort than I had ever enjoyed in all my life. On the day after our arrival Mr. Hill took me before a magistrate, and I was made to swear certain oaths and sign many legal-looking papers, the meaning of which I did not fully comprehend. After that I was taken to the house of a banker, who gave me a bag of gold, and told me that I might

draw upon him again for as much more as I might wish, for that my fortune amounted to many thousands of pounds in personal property, apart from the yearly income of my estate of Pamborow Park.

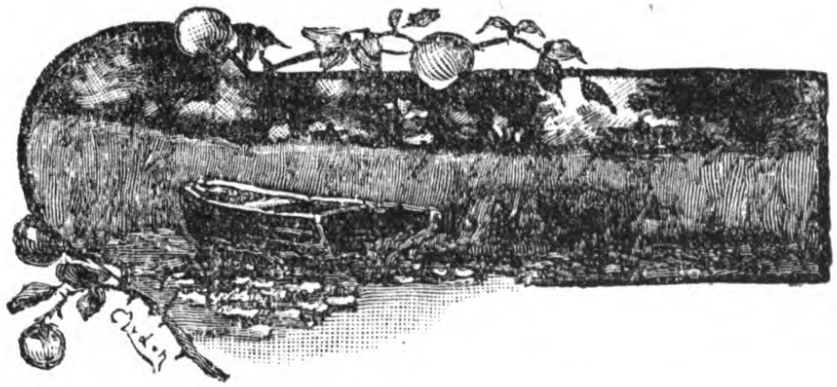
During the time that we were in Taunton, I went about the streets feeling secure in my freedom; for if there were any of the people who knew me, and knew of the part I had taken in the rebellion, they were persons who had themselves had sympathy with Monmouth, and who had no wish to betray me. There was but one man whom I feared—Tom Hubberthorne, and I had heard that he was absent in London.

At the first I had also had some fear of the man Will Ketch. But seeing him one day in the market square, I went boldly up to him and asked if he knew aught of Hubberthorne. He answered that he wished he did, for he had a mind to pay him out for the ill turns that he had done him, and would gladly see him hanged with the rest. Whereupon he told me most freely all that he knew against Hubberthorne in the matter of his attempt to rob me of my mother's property, adding that if Hubberthorne should ever be brought to book for a certain

other matter, he, Will Ketch, was ready and willing to bear evidence against him.

"And what other matter might that be?" I asked.

"Why," said he, lowering his voice, "the murder of Christopher Endicott."



CHAPTER XVI.

THE WAGES OF REBELLION

MR. HILL brought word to me at last — it was one day in September — that after many vain efforts, he had managed to get permission for me to accompany him into Taunton gaol, wherein Mercy Cradock was imprisoned. I had been hoping and longing for this boon for many weeks, for although I had indeed been allowed to send some good food into the prison to Mercy, yet the happiness of seeing her had been hitherto denied me. So I set off with a glad heart, walking by the lawyer's side with bold confidence.

As we came near to the prison our passage was

abruptly stopped by a couple of the King's soldiers. They stood in front of us, barring our way. One of them turned to a third man, who stood behind him, and asked a question.

It was the voice of Tom Hubberthorne that made the reply.

"Yes," said he, "that is the young rebel. Take him. And may he be hanged on the highest gibbet in Somerset."

One of the soldiers laid his hand upon me. But Mr. Hill intervened.

"Wait," he cried. "Where is your warrant? You have none."

"No warrant is needed for rebels," interposed Hubberthorne, pressing forward.

"In that case," returned Mr. Hill, as he put forth his hand and grasped Hubberthorne by his collar, "I arrest you, Thomas Hubberthorne, and," he added, drawing a paper from his pocket, "should it be doubted that you are a rebel, I have here a warrant for your arrest on another charge—the charge of murder and highway robbery."

He gave the warrant to one of the soldiers, who, seeing that the matter was in due legal form, bade his companion help him to take Hubberthorne to prison.

To be done with Hubberthorne, I may here add that the charge against him of having murdered my father in Fitzpayne Woods was duly proved by the help of Will Ketch's evidence, as given some three days afterwards before Judge Jeffreys, and that he suffered death on a gibbet that had been erected not a dozen yards from the door of his own cottage on Taunton Heath.

When we arrived at the prison gates, expecting to be admitted into the cell wherein Mercy was kept, we were rudely told that all such permissions had been cancelled, in consequence of the unexpected arrival in the town of the Chief Justice, who had given orders that all prisoners were to be strictly watched, and to be held in readiness to be brought before him for judgment. The assizes were to be begun on the following day.

This was news even to Mr. Hill, who, as a lawyer, might have been expected to be one of the first in the town to know of the judge's arrival, particularly since he had been retained by many of the richer rebels to act in their defence.

Understanding that it was within his power, by the persuasion of his arguments, to gain a prisoner's release, or at the least to secure a mitigation of his

punishment, I told him to exert all his influence, and to spare no money in helping Mercy Cradock. He gave me his assurance that everything that was possible should be done, and accordingly I left the matter entirely in his hands. One thing alone distressed me. It was his deep-rooted dread of the severity of the judge before whom the girl was to be tried.

Judge Jeffreys, I was told, had been sent down from London purposely to punish those who had been involved in the late rising, and he was fulfilling his instructions with a rigour which many considered to be beyond the limits of all justice. Already at other towns he had sent scores of people to the gallows, when the most simple imprisonment would have been a sufficient punishment for their crimes. He had seemed to take pleasure in the sufferings of his victims, and his tour of justice in the West has earned for him an infamous notoriety. It may be that many of the accounts of these assizes are untrue and exaggerated, but that the trials were hurried through without decorum or fairness, that every device was used to intimidate innocent prisoners to plead guilty, and that ferocious sentences were passed, there can be no reasonable doubt.

Judge Jeffreys had not been on the bench in Taunton a single day before he proved himself to be an intemperate and brutal bully. To the cry for mercy he turned a deaf ear, and innocent girls and boys, as well as many unoffending, but perhaps too enthusiastic, men, were sent by him to be hanged or to be whipped by the score.

Mr. Hill having found me a place in the back of the court, whence I might wait and watch for the appearance of Mercy Cradock, I attended each day, and many were the harrowing scenes that I witnessed. One example of Jeffreys' brutality I remember very clearly, since the victim in the case was a boy with whom I had often played upon Cheddon Common. His name was James Luke, and his offence was merely that of having spoken some wild words in favour of Monmouth and his cause.

The lad was brought into court by one of the gaolers, and he was charged with sedition. Before a word was said in his defence Judge Jeffreys, from his high seat of judgment, flung at him a coarse and brutal jest. "You are a rebel," he growled; "ay, and all your family have been rebels since the days of Adam. You shall be imprisoned for seven years, and during that period you shall be

flogged through every market town in Somerset every year."

James Hill, who was defending the boy, spoke aloud, addressing the judge—

"My Lord," he said, and his face was purple with indignation, "the prisoner is very young. There are many market towns in Somersetshire. The sentence amounts to his being whipped once a fortnight for seven years."

The judge scowled and waved his hand to the lawyer to sit down.

"If he is young," he declared, "he is an old rogue. You do not know the villain as I do. The punishment is not half bad enough for him, and all the interested pleading in England shall not alter it. Let him be removed."

The boy staggered, appalled at his sentence, and then recovering himself a moment he called aloud, imploring that he might be hanged. But the judge only requested that the next prisoner should be brought before him.

When the door opened, and the gaolers ushered in three girls, Jeffreys rubbed his hands with brutal enjoyment. If I had had a loaded pistol in my hand at that moment, I think I should have fired it

at him; for I had seen that one of the girls was Mercy Cradock.

Her face as it was then haunted me for years. It was thin and haggard, and white as that of a corpse. Her eyes stared wildly, her hands trembled, she seemed to have lived a score of years since the time when I had last seen her standing in the rain, with the glow of the camp fire upon her fresh and rosy cheeks.

Her two companions I recognised as the maids who had done homage to the Duke of Monmouth in Taunton market-place—the one by presenting him with a silken banner, the other by offering him the Bible. The judge listened to the accusations that were made against them, nodding his head and smiling in savage satisfaction.

Then James Hill rose and spoke, pleading warmly and eloquently in defence of the three prisoners. So forcible were his words, that surely, I thought, no man on earth could see aught but maidenly sweetness in what the girls had done. He spoke of the respectability of their families, and of the innocence with which they had performed the graceful acts that had brought them under the vexed eye of the law. He spoke of the shame that

it would be if these three young and beautiful girls should be punished; and finally he reminded the judge that they had already been kept within the walls of a prison for many weeks, and that the sufferings they had endured were a sufficient punishment, even if he should still maintain that they had been guilty of rebellious acts against the Crown.

Many people in the court were weeping when the eloquent speech came to an end, and none doubted that the girls would be at once set free. But the wicked and compassionless Jeffreys only shook his head, declaring that the sex and the beauty of the prisoners was no excuse for their crime, and that he was not to be cozened by such weak and tawdry sentiment as had just fallen from the lips of the advocate. Thereupon he astonished us all by pronouncing a sentence which thrilled every hearer with horror.

The eldest of the girls—she who had presented the Bible—was to be hanged on the gallows. The second was to be publicly flogged at the cart tail and imprisoned for ten years. The third—Mercy Cradock—was to be whipped and afterwards transported for life beyond the seas.

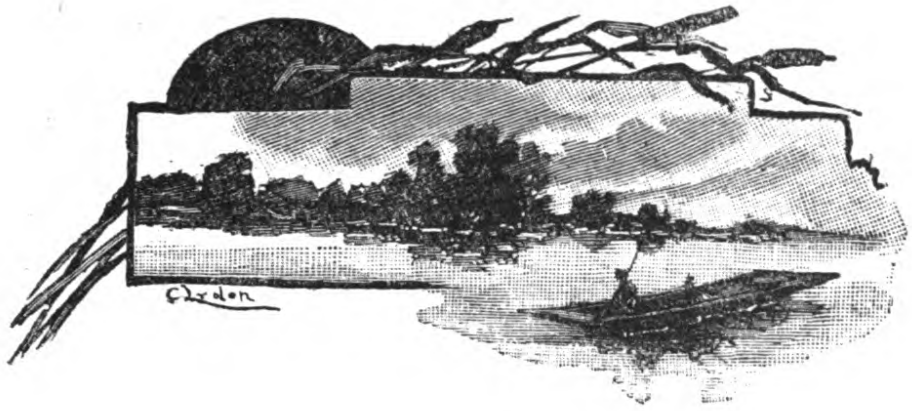
There was a loud and prolonged cry of protest at this most iniquitous judgment. James Hill sprang to his feet and addressed the judge in language so forcible, that even Jeffreys himself seemed for a moment to be moved by it. But the protests had no material effect upon him, and with an ostentatious wave of the hand, he dismissed the unhappy prisoners and called for the next case.

The three girls had not yet left the court when Mr. Hill, writing quickly upon a slip of paper before him, passed the note up to the judge. Jeffreys read the written words, and then, looking up with a glance of contentment, asked that the three prisoners should be brought back.

"I have just heard something," he said, with a rather bad grace, "which prompts me to reconsider my last sentence." He paused, then added, "I will remit the whipping. But the other items of the punishment must be carried out to the letter."

I afterwards heard from Mr. Hill the contents of the note that had thus altered, although in so small a degree, the severity of the sentence. Mr. Hill had offered the judge a thousand pounds as the price of the liberty of the three girls, or at the least as the price for the remission of some part

of their punishment. Jeffreys had effected a compromise which was not wholly satisfactory, and for what he chose to call his undue leniency he demanded and received the immediate payment of the thousand pounds.



CHAPTER XVII.

A DESPERATE RESOURCE.

THE one thing that was borne in upon me now was the horrible thought that Mercy Cradock was condemned to the fearful punishment of transportation to the West Indies. At first I did not fully realise the enormity of this punishment; but when Mr. Hill explained its precise meaning, my indignation know no bounds. I implored him to discover, if possible, a means by which Mercy's liberty might be effected. I offered to sacrifice every penny of my new-found fortune if only the girl could be set free. And in pleading for Mercy Cradock I also pleaded for her two

companions. But Mr. Hill, who knew more than I, assured me that there was no way out of the difficulty.

"Then," said I, "if you cannot help me, Master Hill, I will help myself. Even though I sacrifice my own life in the attempt, those three girls shall be rescued!"

He protested that my zeal was all to no purpose. But I would not listen to him. A new life had come into me. Before, during the rebellion, during the engagement at Axminster and the battle on Sedgemoor, I had been timid, weak-kneed, an unmistakable coward; but now—now, when I had a true, and what I believed to be an honourable and Christian purpose in front of me—I was bold and courageous and resolute. It seemed to me that there was nothing on earth that had power to balk me of my determination.

Of one thing I was certain, namely, that whatever my plans should be, money, and money in plenty, would be required. And, accordingly, I went straight to the house of the banker who held my property in trust, and drew from him as much gold as he could put his hands upon, together with certain drafts which could be honoured wheresoever I chose to

present them. I armed myself with pistols, I bought three saddled horses, and then I set myself to think out my process of rescue.

It was not very long ere I had matured a bold plan. Discovering Will Ketch, whose long practice of roguery, I knew, would be of great use, I gave him a bag of gold, and revealed to him the plot that I had conceived. He agreed with me that, daring though it was, there was still a probability of its success. We should, of course, require help; but this could be the more readily secured, since every man and woman in the town was firmly and fully in sympathy with our adventure. Ketch, who was acquainted with most of the vagabonds and ruffians of the neighbourhood, undertook to engage a full dozen of them in my service. They were to force the prison by means of a barrel of gunpowder, and, having discovered the cells in which the three prisoners were immured, they were to bring them forth to the place where I should be in readiness with the horses to carry them off to the coast.

My first thought had been that, to escape completely, it was necessary to cross the sea; and, accordingly, I despatched a trusty man on horseback

to the port of Lyme, with a message to Master Ramsom, of "The George" inn, biding him charter a sloop, and await our arrival.

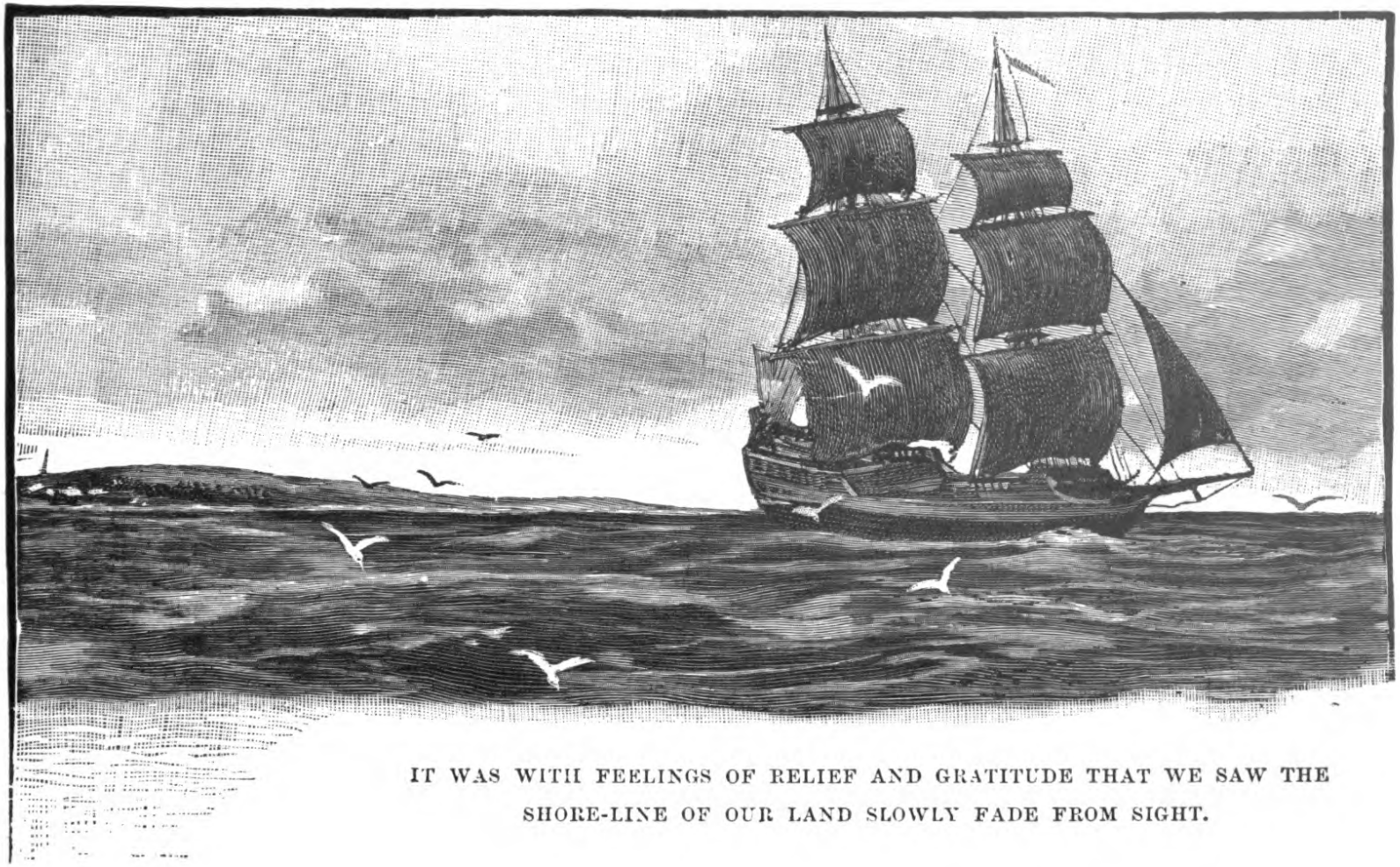
The sentence which had condemned Mercy Cradock to the plantations had not been pronounced more than a dozen hours when I took up my post with the horses at the corner of the market-place.

The night was dark; the town was asleep. Here and there, as I waited, I saw shadowy forms flit to and fro between me and the side of the prison. Then, after a half-hour or so, all was still and silent. The clock in a neighbouring steeple chimed the half-hour after midnight. Then, again, there was stillness and silence. I waited another quarter of an hour before Will Ketch came creeping towards me.

"All is ready," he whispered. "The men are at their stations; the train is laid; the match is lit. Give me the money."

I handed him the bag of gold wherewith the ruffians were to be recompensed. He disappeared, leaving me with a fast-beating heart.

I kept my eyes fixed upon the wall of the prison. Presently there appeared on the darkness of the pavement, close under the wall, a little, moving thread of light. It moved slowly and jerkily at



IT WAS WITH FEELINGS OF RELIEF AND GRATITUDE THAT WE SAW THE SHORE-LINE OF OUR LAND SLOWLY FADE FROM SIGHT.

first; then, with a sudden spurt, it darted forward, ending in a great flash, so vivid that my eyes were well-nigh blinded. The flash was accompanied by a thunderous roar of falling masonry. When it had died away a score of figures sped from different directions towards the gap that had been made in the prison wall.

I brought the horses nearer, and waited. Lighted lanterns now began to appear. A bell began to toll. I heard the sharp, quick voices of the prison officers. But in the midst of the tumult the men I had engaged emerged from out the darkness bearing their precious burdens; and in an hour's time from the moment of the explosion I was riding southward with Mercy Cradock on the saddle in front of me, and followed by the two other horses carrying Mercy's two friends.

Before daybreak we had passed through the town of Chard. At Axminster we got new horses, and at noon we were safe in Lyme Regis, where, leaving our companions in the charge of Master Ramsom at "The George," I took Mercy on board of the waiting sloop, which lay waiting to carry us over to the Channel Islands. That afternoon we sailed, and it was with feelings of intense relief and gratitude

that we saw the shore-line of our land slowly fade from our sight. We were, indeed, exiles, but we both hoped that the time would soon come that would permit of our return.

Years have gone since those troublous times, and I am now a bearded man, living in peaceful happiness on my estate of Pamborow Park.

Mercy Cradock is now Mercy Endicott, and our two sons are prospering — Nathaniel studying for the Church in one of the great colleges, and his elder brother Daniel (so named after my friend, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*) winning his spurs as a soldier in the Netherlands in the army of the Duke of Marlborough.

THE END.

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