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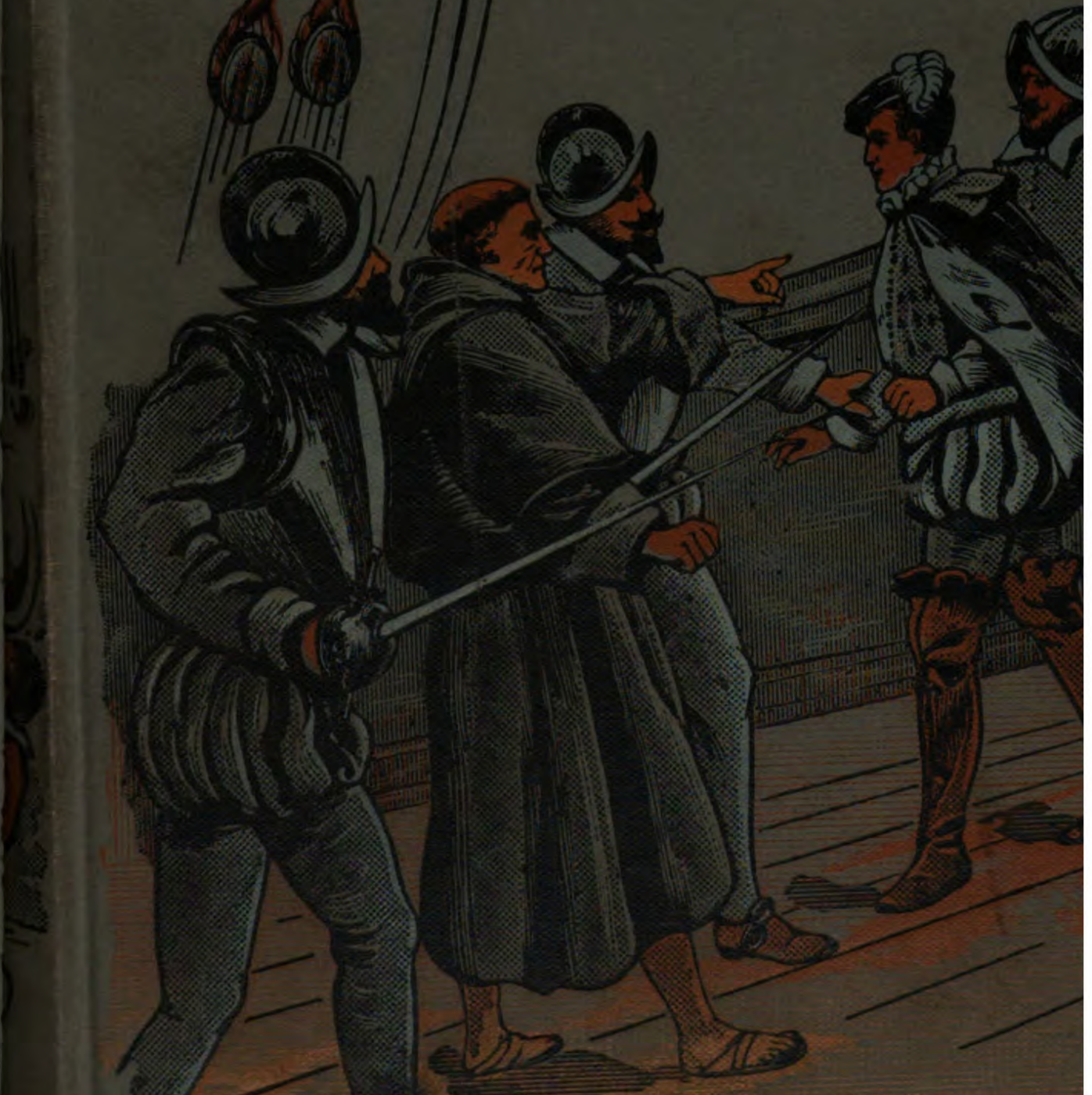
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Under the Foeman's Flag



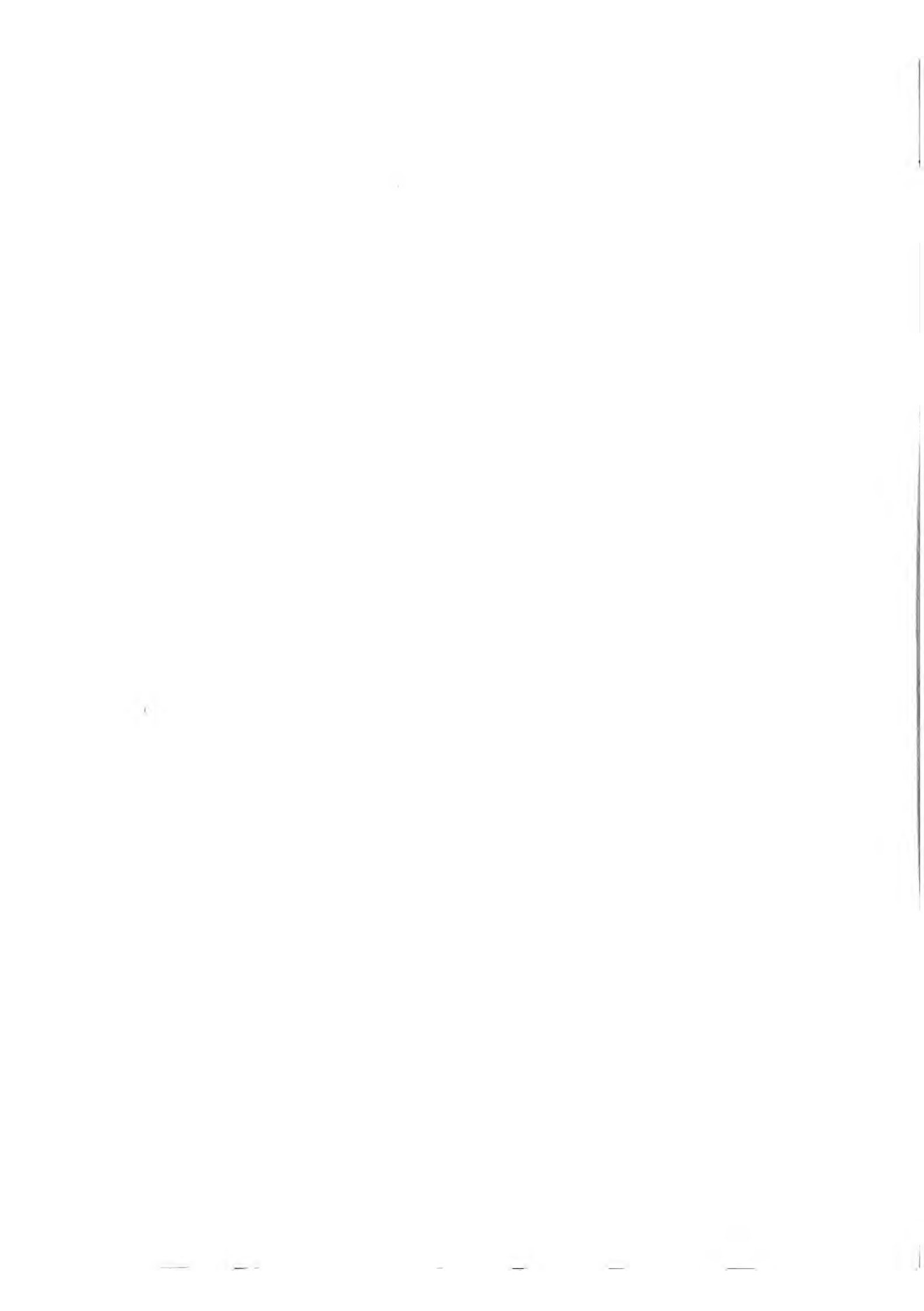




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UNDER THE FOEMAN'S FLAG







“ HE HOISTED HIMSELF UP, AND SWUNG HIS LEGS WITHIN
THE PORTHOLE.”

Frontispiece.]

[See page 217

UNDER THE
FOEMAN'S FLAG

A STORY OF THE SPANISH ARMADA

BY

ROBERT LEIGHTON

AUTHOR OF

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

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL HARDY

LONDON:
ANDREW MELROSE
16 PILGRIM STREET, E.C.



PRINTED BY
MORRISON AND GIBB LIMITED,
EDINBURGH.

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UNDER THE FOEMAN'S FLAG

CHAPTER I.

AT THE SIGN OF THE SARACEN'S HEAD.



AS I take up my pen to write this record of my young lord's adventures, I feel a more than common embarrassment, not seeing at the outset at which point it were best to begin.

I might, indeed, begin by relating once more the oft-told tale of how the war between England and Spain was brought about—of how Philip the Second sought to restore the Papal authority in our land, and of how Queen Elizabeth (God bless her!) so valiantly prepared to resist him. But these are familiar matters of history, and have been told by far skilfuller pens than mine.

I might, on the other hand, begin by giving a full account of the family of Haughton and the Earls of Dersingham, bringing it down from its antique origin in the ninth century to the birth of my Lord Sidney, whose story I am now to tell. But this, methinks, would be as little entertaining in the reading as easy in the compiling ; so I will dismiss it, and begin by telling of what things befell, within my own experience, on a certain fair morning in the year 1588—the morning when my young lord and Mistress Cicely Markham met for the first time together at the sign of the Saracen's Head, in the port of Chatham.

Lord Sidney Haughton was then a smooth-faced stripling of sixteen years, eager and impetuous of spirit, and (as I, his college tutor, had ample reason to know) somewhat prone to take his own way against the counsel of his elders ; but withal one of the most gentle, noble-hearted lads in all England.

Well do I remember him as he sat that morning at the window, waiting for the return of Roland Grenville.

The casement stood open, and a soft breeze from off the Medway played with the brown curls of his bared head, and brought into the room the sweet odours of jasmine and honeysuckle and roses. His blue eyes caught the glint of the sunlight as he raised them to gaze out across the garden. He paid little regard, however, to the gay flowers—the beds of blue lobelia and yellow marigolds,

the flaunting red poppies and the towering hollyhocks—or to the wanton butterflies that fluttered above them. It was the sight of the ships down in the harbour that mostly concerned him, and, as he half turned to lean out over the window-sill, I saw his strong young hand grip the hilt of his rapier, as if in impatience to draw the weapon from its scabbard, and wield it against the Spaniards.

I remember thinking as I watched him how snowy white was his frilled ruff against the healthy colour of his cheeks and neck. His face and hands were burned to a ruddy brown by the hot sun that we had encountered on our long ride from Oxford, and by his complexion one might well have fancied that he was an adventurer newly come off the high seas, instead of a studious, home-keeping youth, whose days of perilous roving were all in front of him.

So engaged was he in contemplation of the shipping that he did not notice the opening of the inner door, or the entrance of a stranger. This stranger was my own little sister, who had lately arrived in the town, having come round from the Thames in Will Pimpernel's sloop. I had greeted her and helped her to take off her travelling cloak without his seeming to know that she was in the room. Still holding her hand in my own, I led her nearer to him.

“My lord!” I said.

He moved slowly round, and, seeing that I was not

alone, rose to his feet. As he stood there in shy hesitation, with his plumed hat in his hand and his russet velvet cape thrown back from his shoulders, the sunlight, streaming in through the casement, gleamed upon the crimson slashings of his doublet, and glittered on the gold lace trimmings of his trunk hose. He looked at the girl in surprise, doubtless wondering who she might be.

“My lord,” I repeated, “this is my sister, Cicely Markham, who, as I have already told you, is to bear me company across to Flanders.” And to my sister I added, “My friend and pupil, Lord Sidney Haughton.”

My lord, showing all the courtly grace of which, even at this early age, he was so great a master, bowed low before her; while Cicely, with no less regard for ceremony, caught up the two sides of her grey quilted gown, and, spreading them out to their full width, made her most humble curtsy.

She was at this time, if I remember aright, about fifteen years old, tall for her age, although her puffed-out sleeves, her wide ruff, and her farthingale had the effect of making her look less slim than was natural to her. Her hair was (like my own) dark almost as a Spaniard's, but her eyes were of the true English sort, being exceeding bright and large, and the colour of the moonlit sky, while her face was very fair and beautiful, with just a little rosi-ness about the cheeks, on which the dimples played with every smile.

When he had greeted her, my lord led her to the window seat.

"You are newly come from London, then, Mistress Markham?" said he. "Sure 'tis a wearying ride along the rough Kentish lanes in rainy weather, such as it hath been these two days past," and he glanced down at his riding boots, which still bore traces of the muddy roads.

"I have come hither by way of the sea, and not by land, sir," explained Cicely, removing the lace mittens from her hands. "I came from Tilbury two days since, in the little ship that is to bear my brother and me across the water to Flanders."

"From Tilbury?" quoth he, with growing interest in his tones. "Ah, then, you shall tell us of the great matters that are afoot at that place. Prithee, how many soldiers hath my lord of Leicester gathered to his banner?"

"Nay, how can I say?" returned Cicely, "for their numbers are far beyond my counting. Indeed, I had never dreamed that there lived in all the land so many men as I have lately seen about the fort; and every one of them armed with the sword and matchlock, ready to encounter the Spaniards should they come over to the invasion of England."

"Which Heaven forbend!" cried my lord, seating himself by her side.

"On a day in the last week, too," continued my sister,

with more confidence, "the Queen herself appeared in the camp. She rode through the lines on a most beautiful horse, apparelled in her royal robes of purple and ermine, wearing long strings of pearls about her neck, with glittering rings on her fingers, a great sword over her shoulder, and I know not what else of splendour. The Earl of Leicester and many other high and noble courtiers rode at her side, and it was a sight most beautiful to behold, with the soldiers ranked together, the sun shining on their morions and breast-pieces, and the Queen riding by under a gorgeous canopy of cloth of gold. I saw her on that great occasion, and I shall remember it so long as I live. But more than all else did I enjoy to hear Her Majesty speaking to the soldiers."

"Said she aught touching the coming of the Armada?" asked Lord Sidney.

"I can ill mind her own words," answered Cicely; "but she indeed spoke of King Philip's forces being even now encamped on the other side, at Dunkirk, and of the danger of their presently crossing with intent to lay siege to London. She bade the men remember their duty to their country and their religion, and declared that, even though a woman, she intended to lead them herself into the field against the enemy."

"Methinks there will be little need for Her Majesty to run such a risk," said Lord Sidney, as he glanced out once more at the harbour. "While there be English ships to

guard the Channel, and English seamen to man them, King Philip and his idolatrous Spaniards will try in vain to set foot upon our shores."

"Nevertheless," I interposed, "the fact remains that the Prince of Parma with his vast forces is even now preparing to cross. While the enemy is so near, 'tis but simple wisdom in Queen Elizabeth to muster her land soldiers to the fullest number possible, and to awaken their martial spirit by showing them so noble an example."

"Yet," objected my lord, "the Prince of Parma, though he had thrice his present number of men at his back, cannot even attempt to come over to England until his passage be protected by Spanish ships."

"As it doubtless will be ere long," said I, "by what the Spaniards choose to call their Invincible Armada."

"Tush!" exclaimed he, with a gesture of impatience, which he ever assumed when it was a question of comparing Spanish galleons with English war-ships. "Tush! Master Markham, I will never believe in the coming of the Armada until I see it under our own guns. And as to its being 'invincible'—why, 'tis no more invincible than a navy of cockboats or a train of Thames barges! Nor are their seamen any better than their ships. Since the death of old Santa Cruz (who, if report speak true, was, at the least, a man capable of handling a ship in action), King Philip hath not a single admiral in all his much-

vaunted Armada who can stand up against our Howard or our Drake, our Hawkins or our Seymour !”

“Far be it from me,” quoth I, “to cheapen the glories of the brave men you name, or to forget the great victories which they have achieved. But, let me tell you, the Spaniard, with all his faults and weaknesses, is yet a foe whom it ill becomes us to despise. The West Indies and Mexico and Peru have not been conquered by men in their sleep, mind you. Spain is still a mighty power upon the seas, and what is needful for a great naval expedition is as well understood in Lisbon and Cadiz as in any harbour in the world.”

“Marry!” cried my lord, springing to his feet, “you will next be saying that the Spaniard is a more valiant man than the Englishman !”

“Not so,” said I. “Never shall I be guilty of so much lack of patriotism. I will but argue that he is an enemy well worthy for England to encounter in warfare. And the greater his power (whether on land or on sea) so much the greater will be England’s glory in vanquishing him.”

He strode backward and forward in the room as I spoke, and made no further answer. Presently he approached the door, and looked idly out through the rose-embowered porch.

“Roland Grenville is tarrying over long,” he said, donning his plumed cap ; “I have a mind to step down towards the port, that I may meet him, and also, mayhap, gather

some gossip concerning the *Fearless*. Shall I inform my father that you will come on board to-day?"

"Yes," I agreed, "and it may be that Cicely will accompany me; for I doubt not that she will be well pleased to go over the ship, as well as to meet your brave father."

Bowing to her once more, he went out and down the little leafy lane that led towards the harbour, while my sister's eyes followed him until he passed out of view.

"Certes! what a pretty boy!" she exclaimed, "and how gallantly attired! Prithee, who's son is he? and what hath brought him to Chatham?"

"He is the son of that famous admiral, the Earl of Dersingham," I answered; "and for the past twelve months he hath been under my care and private tuition at Christ Church College. Alas! he is but a desultory scholar; for, despite my most earnest efforts, he hath ever bestowed less thought upon his studies than upon his great ambition to be an adventurous seaman like his father. His companion and fellow-student, young Roland Grenville—who, as you know, is also the son of a famous mariner—hath striven always to imbue my lord's mind with a love of ships, with the desire to rove the wild seas, and to win renown by the discovering of new lands. Of a truth, the two lads are well matched in their disposition. I know not which of them is the less inclined to his Latin and Greek, and which the more attracted by the glories of

navigating the ocean and of fighting the proud Spaniards wheresoever they may be found. Howbeit, it seems that they are both at last to have their will. 'Tis but a week since that Lord Dersingham wrote to me at Oxford. He had heard that I was about to be sent over to Dunkirk on matters of State, and he bade me bring the two lads with me so far as Chatham, where his ship, the *Fearless*, is now being fitted out. We rode hither in all haste, arriving at the Saracen's Head but two hours ago. Grenville hath now gone down to the harbour to gather news touching the *Fearless*, and to inquire when she is to sail."

"And whither is the vessel bound?" asked Cicely. "To the Indies?"

"Marry, no!" said I; "for in two months' time the boys are to be back at college, Roland to take his degree, and Sidney to fit himself for undergoing a like ordeal at the year's end. No, 'tis not to the Indies that the ship goes. She hath newly been put into commission by Queen Elizabeth, with orders to join Admiral Seymour's squadron in the Downs, and so help, if need be, to avert the crossing of the Prince of Parma. Haply we shall pass within sight of Seymour's ships as we sail down this evening abreast of the Foreland."

"This evening?" echoed Cicely, in surprise. "And are we, then, to depart so soon?"

"Of a surety; for the matters I am to attend to are of

pressing import, and we must waste no time in dalliance by the way."

"I had not known that you were to do more than take me across to our sick father at Bruges," said she. "Tell me, I pray you, what other matters are these you speak of—or is your mission a State secret?"

"From you, at the least, it need be no secret," I replied; "and there be no reasons why I should not tell you. The matter is this: you have already learned that the King of Spain, with his Romish allies, hath resolved upon the invasion of England, intending to bring about the overthrowing of Queen Elizabeth and the Protestant faith which she so strenuously upholds. He hath despatched a vast army of land-soldiers into the Low Countries—Spaniards and Italians, Irish, French, Germans, and even English Catholics, who are all banded under arms together in the common interests of the Church of Rome. They are assembled even now at Dunkirk under the Prince of Parma, and so soon as the Armada arrives to protect their passage they are to cross over to the Kentish coast, and so march upon London. The army which you saw encamped at Tilbury hath been raised to protect the capital. But in London there is also gathered together a great force of English Catholics—Jesuits who, having forgotten their country in their creed, are only waiting for the signal from the invaders to break out into open rebellion.

“These English Papists until very lately have had for their political leader the Earl of Arundel, the same who is at present imprisoned in the Tower of London. When the moment is fitting, when the Armada is in the Channel, and when our own forces are drawn to the coast to resist invasion, the rebels mean to rise, set fire to the city, force the Tower, release Lord Arundel, and raise the Popish standard. The Catholics of England are everywhere expected to take arms and join issue with the Spaniards.

“Now you will see from this that our country and our Protestant faith are menaced by a great danger. It is of grave importance to Queen Elizabeth and her loyal supporters that they should be informed of Parma's movements and preparations, and that they should know at what moment to expect his crossing. Accordingly, the Earl of Leicester hath commissioned me privily to sail over to Dunkirk, to wait upon Monsieur Gourdain, who is his friendly agent in that place, and to hasten back to London with such information as he can supply.”

I know not if my sister fully comprehended this brief explanation of the situation, or if she understood aught of the risk I was running in thus becoming a spy upon our enemies. She showed less concern at my possible peril than at the thought that I was not to accompany her all the way to Bruges, and that I had resolved to give my services to our Queen and country rather than to fulfil my duty to a dying father. But I well knew that Sir Miles

Markham, although grievously ill, had yet strength enough remaining to keep him in life, it might be, for many weeks, while the danger to England was immediate.

My talk with Cicely was interrupted by the entrance of our hostess of the Saracen's Head, bringing in a trencher of food. While the two were gossiping together I busied myself in arranging the despatches that I was to carry to Monsieur Gourdain, and in preparing for our speedy departure.

CHAPTER II.

THE "PRIDE OF WAPPING."



HAD not gone far into this matter when a commotion from without caused me to look towards the door.

"Here, forsooth, is a fine thing, Master Markham!" cried Roland Grenville, striding noisily into the room. "What, think you, hath happened?"

"Ay, a fine thing indeed!" cried Lord Sidney, following him within, and flinging himself into the nearest seat. "To think that this journey of ours hath been all in vain! 'Tis monstrous!"

"In vain!" I echoed. "In vain! say you? Why? How?"

"Well may you ask why and how," answered my lord. "Never in all my life have I suffered so grievous a disappointment! The matter is this, Master Markham :

the *Fearless* hath already sailed, and we are left behind in the lurch!"

"You amaze me," said I. "Surely you have made some mistake. Your father would never have set sail without you, knowing full well that you were to be here at this time."

"Nay, there is no mistake, Master Markham," said Roland Grenville, wiping the moisture from his sunburnt face. "The ship, so it seemeth from what I have heard down at the port, put out to sea with the last night's tide, and we are just twelve hours too late. 'Tis a sore disappointment, truly; for we had both set our hearts upon this cruise. As the matter stands, I see nothing left for us but to return as we came; for Seymour's squadron hath been ordered to leave the Downs, and 'tis not known in Chatham whether the ships are to pass to the opposite side of the Channel, or to join Lord Howard's fleet off Plymouth."

"This is, indeed, most unfortunate for you both," I said, trying to console them, "and I am at a loss to know how to advise you. But our horses are still here, and——"

"Tush! what want we with horses?" cried my lord, impatiently rising and pacing the little room. "'Tis a good swift sailing sloop that we want. For I am resolved to get on board of the *Fearless* wheresoever she be. As to Seymour going west to Plymouth, that is by no means

likely. His duty, as my father told us in his letter, is to guard the Straits of Dover. Therefore, if he hath left the Downs, 'tis but to be nearer to the place where Parma's forces are gathered, and where we shall most surely find him."

"Your plan will not work, Sidney," said Roland Grenville calmly, standing at his ease, with his thumbs in his belt. "There is but one fast-sailing sloop in the Medway, and her we cannot engage, even though our lives depended upon it."

"And wherefore cannot we engage her?" asked Lord Sidney, with an eager glance at his companion. "Have I not money in plenty? What is the sloop's name, and who owns her?"

"She is named the *Pride of Wapping*," answered Roland. "She is to leave for Dunkirk by the next tide."

"Dunkirk?" echoed my lord, and with quick apprehension he turned towards the little table, where I sat tying up my despatches. "Markham," said he, planting his outstretched hands upon the board, "you will, of course, carry us with you across the water. This sloop—this *Pride of Wapping*—is the craft you are to go over in. I have guessed as much. You are bound for Dunkirk; therefore, 'tis almost certain you will sight Lord Harry Seymour's squadron, and 'twill be an easy matter for you to put us on board of the *Fearless*."

I shook my head in doubt.

"I am enlisted in the Queen's service," I said, "and my present mission is of so great importance that, despite my wish to help you, I fear it will be quite impossible for me to go aside from the direct path which hath been marked out for me. Also, there be many dangers in approaching so near to the enemy, and it would go ill with me should any harm befall you."

"A plague on your fears!" cried he. "And as to your service to the Queen, why, methinks you will be doing Her Majesty an excellent good turn by adding two volunteers to her forces. What say you, Roland?" he questioned, turning to young Grenville.

"So we get on board one of the English ships of war I care not what risks or perils we encounter," answered Grenville; "and if perchance there be any fighting to be done, I for one shall be all the more content."

Now I was myself inclined to the belief that Dunkirk must, in truth, be the destination of Seymour's fleet, for at that place lay England's greatest danger. I opined, too, that the great Spanish Armada, of which we had heard such divers alarming rumours, was still lingering in Lisbon, and that whatsoever risks I might myself run in venturing by stealth into the midst of Parma's encampment, there was, at the least, no immediate danger to be feared from King Philip's galleons. Even should I fail in my attempt to put my two young friends on board

Lord Dersingham's ship, there would still be no evil wrought; for I made sure that I could bring the lads back safely and unharmed to England, having given them—what they seemed so much to desire—a taste of the sea breezes and the sight of a foreign shore.

“I am willing enough to take you both over,” I said, when I had considered the matter in its divers aspects in my mind. “And if it be within my power I will indeed put you on board the *Fearless*. But you must perforce abide by my will in all things; you must run your own hazard of missing Admiral Seymour, and blame only yourselves if it so chance that you are delayed in Dunkirk.”

The two lads looked at each other questioningly, although I had already seen that they were well agreed.

“Let the risk be our own,” said my lord, and, turning to Cicely, he added, “Come, Mistress Markham, let us at once get on board the *Pride of Wapping*, and make ready to set sail.”

I watched the three of them walking away, Cicely tripping daintily along between the two lads, my lord offering his hand to help her over the pools of water that lay upon the roadway, Roland Grenville, tall and stalwart as a full-grown man almost, marching heedlessly through mud and mire. I could hear their merry voices as they rose in laughter long after they themselves had turned the bend of the lane and disappeared.



“CICELY TRIPPED DAINTILY ALONG BETWEEN THE TWO LADS.”
29

CHAPTER III.

THE BEACON FIRES.



HAD remained behind to pay our reckoning at the Saracen's Head and to dismiss the two serving-men who were to return with our horses to Oxford. When I got down to the harbour I found that the tide had turned. The sloop—a stout little vessel carrying four guns—was moored in the mid-stream, with her sails half hoisted and her men preparing to weigh anchor. A wherryman took me on board, and we presently dropped down the Medway and stood out to sea.

For the first hour or two Captain Pimpernel was very fully occupied in attending to his vessel, and, rather than trouble him with a landsman's idle questions, I went below with Cicely, sitting with her in the cabin and listening to her news; for we had not met for many months, and there were sundry family matters to confer upon. But

when at length we got out of the estuary, and were beginning to feel the swell of the sea, I went up on deck in search of the old mariner.

I discovered him sitting astride one of the gun carriages with Sidney and Roland, telling them a strange tale of his voyages into distant lands, of the cruelties of the Inquisition, of his captivity in Istrombouli, and of many tough encounters with the Spaniards.

He had bared his two shrivelled arms to show the marks left there by Indian arrows and Spanish bullets, and to point out the red bands on his wrists where Turkish chains had clasped them. As I came near he was in the midst of a wild tirade against the enemies of England, and against all Spaniards in particular; and he ended by declaring with a round oath that he would give up the last breath of his life if he could but help to bring the rascally King of Spain to his deserts.

“But, alas!” he sighed, clambering down from his perch and limping across to the farther bulwark, “there is but faint hope that I shall ever again draw sword or fire an arquebus in defence of Old England, or that I shall ever have the chance of repaying the Spaniards for the ills I have suffered at their hands!”

“And yet,” said Roland Grenville, following him across the deck, “the Armada of Spain is every day expected off the coasts. Seymour and Hawkins have left their anchorage, and my lord of Dersingham hath been ordered in

great haste to join them. What should that bode if it be not that the Don is already moving?"

"I know not what it may bode that Seymour and Hawkins have sailed out to sea, my lad," answered Pimpernel; "but as to the *Fearless* leaving Chatham in so great haste, that hath nought whatsoever to do with the Spaniards. What man that knows aught of Spain believes for an instant that this Armada will ever come? Not I, for one. And no more doth the Queen herself believe it, else would she not have disbanded so many of her ships' crews as she hath done of late. Had Dersingham lain much longer in the Medway, 'tis well-nigh certain Her Majesty would presently have told him that she had no use for his ship. But Dersingham, being a privateer, like Drake and Frobisher, had no mind to be so dismissed, and yesternorn, when a royal messenger came with word that the Queen refused to pay for a crew or to grant him the money for his equipment, Dersingham made answer—and I heard him make it, for I was aboard the *Fearless* at the time—'Tell Her Majesty,' said he, 'that the Earl of Dersingham is happily not dependent upon princes' favours, for that he hath both men and money at his command, and needeth not to await Her Majesty's pleasure ere he account himself prepared to meet his country's foes.' And with that he lifted his anchor and sped out to sea. I doubt not, indeed, that he hath by this time joined Seymour's squadron, but, as I tell ye, 'tis to escape the

Queen's unwelcome instructions that he hath gone, rather than in the hope of falling in with the enemy."

"You do not, then, credit the late rumour that the Armada hath left Lisbon?" said Sidney Haughton, still incredulous.

"Not I, my boy, not I," returned Pimpernel. "Not while such men as Howard and Drake are guarding the Channel. As well might King Philip thrust his head into the cannon's mouth as adventure such a journey! True it is that the Spaniards have many more ships than we, and it may be, as some say, that their ships are larger and stronger than ours; but their men are not made of the same stuff as ours, and they have scarce an officer in all their boasted Armada fit to enter battle against any one of our English captains."

I thought that the old mariner was disposed too much to ignore the greatness of Spain's admirals.

"They have their Oquendo and their De Leyva, nevertheless," said I; "and what of their Duke of Medina Sidonia?"

The man looked at me steadily from under his thick grey eyebrows, and a grim smile played about his lips.

"Had you made mention of the first two alone, Master Markham," said he, "I might even have commended your knowledge. Oquendo and De Leyva are in sooth the two greatest and skilfullest admirals in all King Philip's navy, and 'tis no new thing for either of them to lead his vessels

into battle and come out victorious. In these two dauntless adventurers even Hawkins and Drake might find themselves for once well matched. But the Duke of Medina! Marry, sir! he knoweth no more of seamanship, or of taking a fleet into action, than do I of ploughing a field or building a haystack!"

"And yet," said I, "he hath been appointed the King's High Admiral, with the sole command of the Armada."

"All the worse for Spain and the better for Old England!" returned Pimpernel.

In such discourse as this did we pass away our time as we sailed that evening along the Kentish coast. There was a stiff western breeze in our wake, and we sped onward at a merry rate. It was dark ere we came abreast of the North Foreland, and a fine rain was falling. Wrapped in our great cloaks we still paced the deck, ever talking of the Spaniards.

Suddenly I heard a great cry from Roland Grenville, who was aft near the helmsman.

"Markham! Markham!" he cried, "look! look!"

I turned, and saw that he was pointing towards the headland.

"Look!" he cried again; "can you not see? 'Tis the beacons! The beacons are alight!"

We gathered in a group at the bulwarks, peering eagerly landward through the darkness. Along the dim line of the coast there burned a row of beacon fires, one

topping each headland, small as cottage lamps in the far western distance, and growing larger and larger near at hand. As we watched, yet another rose, bright and glowing, on the North Foreland, shining in a long flickering path across the waves. Alarm filled all our hearts.

“’Tis the Armada! the Armada!” cried my lord.

“Heaven save us!” faltered Will Pimpernel, and he caught my arm in his trembling hands. His teeth chattered as if he were in mortal fear; for despite all that he had said, despite his boldness of an hour before, he well knew the meaning of those beacon fires and the terrors that they foretold.

CHAPTER IV.

WILL PIMPERNEL.



CONFESS that I was somewhat amazed to discover the terror with which Captain Pimpernel regarded the chain of beacon fires that were the signal of the enemy's entrance into the Channel. He was a man who had fought, and fought bravely, against the Spaniards in many a tough sea battle. He had been with Drake in the Indies; he had endured years of cruel captivity among the Turks; he had rowed as a chained slave on the Spanish galleys, and had been tortured almost to death in the Chamber of the Inquisition. Hardship and suffering had filled a large part of his life, as the scars on his body and the lines of trouble on his face did amply show.

From many things that he had told us I judged that he was at heart no craven, but a bold and fearless man, ready at any time for hot or cold death—fire or steel—so that

his life were given for the greater glory of the English name. And yet he trembled in every limb at this first alarm of the coming of the Armada. Wherefore this seeming fear? I was perplexed at finding that he who had braved so much under the fire of an enemy's guns should display so much cowardice now, when the enemy had not even come within sight.

"Why are you in so great terror, Captain Pimpernel?" I asked.

"Terror?" he echoed.

"Ay, terror," I repeated, "for your limbs are trembling like a flag in the wind. Be you afraid of the Spaniards, then?"

"Ah, sir," said he, gripping one of the halliards, and so steadying himself, "methinks if you knew the Spaniards as I do, you too might show some fear; and yet," he added, "'tis not my heart that misgives me. I know not how it should be, but my limbs do tremble thus whensoever I hear aught of sudden news. 'Tis a kind of ague that doth seize me. But as to downright fear, believe me, sir, I know it not."

He then limped away, and presently disappeared down the companion-way.

"The old dog hath gone below to lock himself up in his cabin for safety," smiled my lord. "If his crew be no bolder than their captain, methinks we were wise to make Roland Grenville our commander."

"I had rather that office were filled by Master Markham," said Roland, speaking over my shoulder; "and if there be any fighting, then will I be the chief gunner, for I have fired a cannon ere now—ay, and have hit the mark, to boot, and a smaller mark than the hull of a Spanish galleon. With four good guns on board we might well hold our own against the Don."

"Ay, if it be that there is a good store of gunpowder below," said my lord.

"Never fear as to that," returned Grenville; "there be both powder and shot in plenty, as I have seen with mine own eyes."

"Our greater danger," said I, "will be in coming to close quarters. For the Spaniards, though but sorry gunners, are, nevertheless, marvellous good soldiers at a hand-to-hand fight."

"Tush!" cried my lord, "can we not all three use our rapiers?"

"True enough," I returned; "but 'twere as well to remember that we have neither morions nor body-armour to protect us withal."

"Alack-a-day!" cried Grenville; "I had never given thought to that!"

He had but spoken when there was a great clatter of metal on the deck. Stepping to the companion-way, we saw Will Pimpernel standing with a lighted lantern in his hand, and at his feet there lay a varied collection of

morions, corselets, and tassets, which two of the seamen had brought up from below.

“It may be, Master Markham, that you and your two friends will have need for some such furniture as this,” said Pimpernel, holding his lantern aloft so that the light shone upon the armour. “’Tis but an ill-assorted lot, but peradventure you will find what will fit you. That scholar’s garb that you now wear will be but a sorry protection to your body when the Spaniards board us. Here, now, is a goodly morion that should suit you, if it be not too small for so great a head,” he added, picking one out and handing it to me. “As to Master Grenville and young Haughton, ’twill not be hard to fit them. But, I pray you, look to the matter while I make the round of our guns and see that they be in good order. ’Tis as well that we make all ready while there is time, for I have ever held that the man who is prepared hath already won half the battle.”

He left the lighted lantern in our midst, and Grenville and I at once set to the work of equipping ourselves in soldier fashion, helped by Pimpernel’s mate, who, having been in the wars, was better acquainted with such matters than we. So much occupied were we that neither, for some minutes, noticed the absence of Sidney Haughton. I went into the cabin in search of him, but saw only Cicely lying sound asleep. Returning to the deck, I searched yet further, and was becoming alarmed lest,

perchance, he had fallen overboard through the lurching of the ship, when at last I found him stretched at full length across a coil of ropes in the bow, moaning as if in pain.

"My lord," I said, bending over him, "what ails you?"

"In mercy throw me overboard, Markham," he cried piteously, "or else put your rapier through me! I am so ill, I know not where to rest my head." And then he groaned again.

"'Tis but the sea-sickness come upon you," said I. "Get you below into the cabin. Cicely will nurse you; for she hath been full oft upon the sea, and is not affected by the ship's rocking."

But he refused to stir, so I drew his cloak about him and covered him with some sailcloth, and there he lay throughout the night and until well into the next day, eating naught save a few crumbs of dry biscuit, and greeting all who came near him with a surly growl. But on the second evening the wind rose to a gale, rain fell heavily, and the waves fell over the decks in floods of foam; and then at last he moved away to the cabin, looking a pitiful object with his sad, haggard face, his long lank hair, and his wet and bedraggled clothes. Methinks he had already had more than enough of the sea.

As to Roland Grenville, he was in his glory. He trod the deck with all the ease of an experienced seafarer, and the more the vessel rocked and pitched on the great rolling

waves the more joyous did he become. He took his turn at the tiller, he helped to haul the ropes, and knew as well as old Pimpernel himself when it was wise to take in a reef or to bend the sails to another tack. It seemed that the salt of the sea had entered his blood, and it was not easy for me to reconcile his present adventurous spirit with the thought of him as a student in the cloistered quiet of an Oxford college.

In the course of our voyage across the Channel, we saw no sign or token of the Armada. A Dutch galleon and a few fishing-craft were all the vessels that came within sight, and at one time we were even tempted to believe that the flashing of the beacon signals along the English coast had been but a false alarm. As on the third day we neared the low-lying shores of Flanders, we kept up a constant watchfulness, hoping to meet with Seymour's squadron. We sighted the tall tower of Dunkirk, but of ships there were none, saving only the Prince of Parma's transports that lay close inshore, as they had lain for many months, awaiting the coming of the Armada. We sailed past these boats, as though not intending to make a landing, and so near to them did we steer, that we could count their number, and make a rough estimate of how many men and horses they might carry across to England. Their masts were all lowered, and their decks deserted. It was clear that no word had yet arrived touching the advance of the Spanish fleet.

As we passed yet farther eastward along the coast, we came within sight of the encampment on the sand dunes. Vast crowds of the Papal soldiers were there, but they were not at drill. The faint strains of music that we heard told of what merry entertainment was afoot.

Doubtless, if our sloop was observed by the pickets, she was taken for a trading vessel bound eastward for Ostend, for we carried no colours, and only tacked outward once more, as though the sight of the encampment were in no wise new to us. But when dusk fell we made west again, and, creeping unseen into the midst of the transports, dropped our anchor.

And now I went below to don my body-armour and secure my despatches.

"I am ready to go ashore with you," said Cicely, appearing from the inner cabin with her cloak already covering her, and with her bundle in hand. And, turning to my lord, she added, "Farewell, Lord Sidney; we have enjoyed but little of each other's company, but it may be that we shall meet once more when you have beaten the Spaniards, and I return to England."

But I took the hand that she had held out to him.

"Wait, my good sister," I said. "It were not well that you should venture upon a strange shore ere we know that all is safe for you. I must land without you at first, and see that the way is clear. Also I must engage an honest

horseman from the *Lion Rouge* who will convey you safely to Bruges."

The girl threw off her cloak with no more ado.

"As you will," said she; "and I am not sorry to remain longer on board, for now that Lord Sidney hath recovered his good spirits it may be that we shall improve our acquaintance."

"With all my heart," returned my lord, with a gallant salute; and he led her to the settle, and arranged the cushions that she might sit beside him in comfort.

"Go you ashore alone?" asked Grenville.

"Not if you will accompany me," I answered, "for there may be danger in the path with the foe so near, and two swords be better than one."

"Gladly will I go with you," said he; and he girded on his rapier, and threw his cloak over his shoulder.

"These also may be good companions in case of need," said Will Pimpernel, handing me a brace of pistols and a bag of ammunition.

I took the weapons, and, followed by Grenville, mounted the ladder. Two seamen had already launched one of the deck-boats through the opened gangway, and were at the oars. We dropped down into the sternsheets and pushed off, Grenville taking the tiller.

"We will land to the west of the town, Roland," said I.

"And wherefore not in the midst of the town?" asked

he. "Did not I hear you say that you go to the sign of the *Lion Rouge*?"

"Ay, that is so."

"Then 'twere of little avail to make a landing where you propose," said he; "for by that way you must needs make a two-mile walk ere you get entrance to the town. You will run the risk of being waylaid by Parma's outposts, and you will gain nothing in the end; while if you steer straight into the jetty and boldly step ashore as if you had come off from one of the transports, you will, with care, escape all question, and have but a few score paces to take from the boat to the very door of the house you seek."

"Then you know where that house stands?" I questioned, surprised at the lad's knowledge of the place.

"Marry, sir!" quoth he, "'twas at that self-same house that I had lodging four years ago, when my father was Commissioner at Dover Haven, and brought me over here to learn how the Netherlanders make their canals. Well do I know the house; and so you put yourself in my hands, I will take you to it as straight as an arrow's flight."

As he spoke he steered the boat round by the windward of the transports, and then, when we had crossed the intervening water, brought us in at the steps of the mole with such precision that anyone watching our approach must surely have judged that we were in no sense strangers.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLACK MANTLE.



RENVILLE went before me up the long flight of steps. To my great dismay, I heard the guard accost him. Fearing that the lad might blurt out some betrayal of our identity, I hurried to his side.

But he was equal to the occasion, answering the challenge, as it seemed, to the men's satisfaction, for we were permitted to pass on. I know not what he had said that thus enabled us to escape a more particular scrutiny or questioning, but I suspect that the young rascal had made out that we were of the Prince of Parma's following.

He led the way by certain dark and intricate alleys into a long and narrow street that was quiet as the grave.

"I warrant me you would not have found the *Lion Rouge* so easily as I shall now take you," said he. "'Tis but a turn to the left at this street's end. But ere we go

farther, tell me, I pray you, who and what are we? Be we Spaniards or Frenchmen, Flemish sailors, or simple English Jesuits?"

"Heaven forbid that we should be any of those!" said I. "Wherefore pretend that we are aught else than what we in truth are — honest servants of Queen Elizabeth?"

"Marry!" cried he, "but that would never do. 'Twere risk enough to say that we were English, but to admit that we are Protestant and on the Queen's side! Odds, man, would you have yourself set upon as a spy?"

"I am for speaking the truth so long as it will serve me," said I.

"Then I will engage that it will not serve you beyond the end of this street," said he. "Wait but till we come face to face with this man who is approaching us. Be he Spaniard or Netherlander, he will surely accost us, for we carry no torch as he does, and that were in itself suspicious. Quick, man! What are we?"

"Why, then," said I, seeing reason in assuming a disguise, "let us say that we are Spaniards, newly come over from England."

"Ay, where we have been to spy upon the Earl of Leicester and his doings at Tilbury. 'Tis agreed! Speak we now in our choicest Castilian."

We strode on. The man drew nearer, and now we could see that he was followed by some half-dozen soldiers.

As he approached yet closer, he held his lighted link aloft, so that the shadow of his wide hat concealed his face. He wore a great black mantle that came down nigh to his feet, and was drawn closely about his tall, lithe form. Presently, slackening his pace, he lowered his link, revealing by its frame a somewhat youthful-looking countenance with a short red beard trimmed to a point in the newest fashion. Suddenly he came to a standstill, his men doing likewise, ranking themselves at his back.

“Whence come ye, strangers?” he demanded, in faltering Spanish, as he peered into our faces.

“From off the sea, señor,” answered Grenville, in the same tongue, as we drew to a halt. “Prithee, are we on the right way to the sign of the *Lion Rouge*?”

“From off the sea?” echoed he of the mantle, not heeding the lad’s question. “That much had I already guessed. But that much is not enough. From what land come ye?”

“From your own land, señor,” said I; for by the accent of his voice, and by the fairness of his skin and the blue of his eyes I had guessed him to be an Englishman. My answer, however, seemed to imply that I had taken him for a Spaniard. “But,” I added, “we have newly landed from England.”

“Ah, then,” said he, “you doubtless can give us news of the doings of the heretics.”

“The heretics?” I repeated. But the word had scarce

left my lips ere I felt Roland Grenville's hand upon my arm, forcing me to silence.

"Little news is there to tell, señor," said the lad, in a loud voice that drowned my own, "save that there hath been a disbanding of many ships' crews. 'Twould seem (before we embarked) that there was but little thought of the invasion over there."

"Good!" exclaimed the stranger. "Then we still may expect to take them by surprise?"

"That would depend," said Grenville, "upon what time the Prince's forces are prepared to cross over."

"Of what avail were it for us to think of crossing ere the Armada be here to protect us?" said the stranger.

So, then, it was not indeed known in Dunkirk that the Armada was so near? I took new courage in this thought.

"And when the Duke of Medina at length appears," I said, "will the Prince then be ready?"

He looked at me closely ere making his reply, holding his link low down, so that its rays flashed in my face.

"Assuredly," he said, apparently satisfied with his scrutiny. "In twelve days' time, or three weeks at the most, all will be prepared."

Twelve days! Here was news! The Armada already in the Channel, and Parma's infantry not yet prepared! Could I but get this news across to England, or to Lord Howard on board the *Ark*, all might yet be well—nay, more than well, for ere those twelve days were passed,

the vaunted Armada might be broken and destroyed! I saw also the satisfaction in Roland Grenville's eyes. But he was cooler than I, and, instead of following up the subject, and, mayhap, betraying our feelings, he quietly turned to the stranger and said—

“ I pray you, señor, can you say if we might hope to find a pair of good horses in this town ? ”

“ Horses ? ”

“ Ay, such as would carry us to Bruges. ”

“ Oh, then, ” cried the stranger, “ you are bent upon an audience with the Prince of Parma himself ? ”

In truth we had not known that the Prince was not at this moment in Dunkirk. But neither spoke, and the stranger simply added, “ It may be that you will find what you seek at the *Lion Rouge* ; but if not, come you to the camp at daybreak, and there you will find horses in plenty at the service of all true adherents of the Holy Faith. Give you good-night, señors, and the saints be with you. ”

“ Certes ! ” cried Grenville, when the man was out of hearing, “ saw you the clasp-brooch that he wore ? ”

“ Not I. What of it ? ”

“ Why, it bore the self-same emblem that Lord Sidney Haughton hath got engraven over his bookshelf at Oxford ! ”

“ The Dersingham crest ? Impossible, Roland ! ”

“ 'Tis true, I protest ; for I read the motto inscribed on

it,—“*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*,”—the same that Sidney is so proud of! The man is English too, as you might have known by his imperfect rendering of the Spanish.”

“Ay, some renegade rascal, I doubt,” said I; “a pirate or a cut-purse, maybe, who hath joined what he takes to be the stronger side, hoping for advancement when King Philip sits on the English throne.”

We were soon at the street's end, when, turning along a narrow dark alley, we came within the light of the *Lion Rouge*. A crowd of noisy roisterers stood about the door, but we passed through without let or hindrance, and presently found ourselves in the lighted hall.

Discovering the innkeeper, I drew him aside. He was a sober, honest-looking Netherlander. I spoke to him in French, which he readily understood.

“Lives there a certain Monsieur Gourdain here, good mine host?” I asked.

“Ay, in sooth,” he answered in a half-whisper, as if fearing to be overheard, “although 'tis not by that name he passes among our guests of Spain. He was here even a seven-days since; but the place became overhot for him, as for many another worthy Protestant, and he hath ridden off, with bag and baggage, to Calais.”

“Alas!” I sighed. “Said he naught touching messengers from—from across the water?”

“Hush!” cautioned the innkeeper. “Speak not so

loudly. Messengers, say you? Ay, whom do ye serve? Might it chance to be the Earl of Leicester?"

"The same," said I.

"Good!" said he. "Then I have instructions to send you on to Calais, where monsieur will be found at the house of the Mayor. And you are to lose no time, for there be matters of grave import stirring."

I then remembered how I was to send my sister inland to Bruges, and so, seeing that he was well favoured towards our cause, proposed to him that he should provide horses and servants to attend her. But to my annoyance he refused point blank, and all my persuasions were of no avail. While I was still engaged with him, I suddenly heard Roland Grenville at the door, calling upon me excitedly.

"Hist! Markham! Quick! we are betrayed! To the boat for your life!"

At the same moment there arose a loud murmur of voices from without, above which I could clearly hear the words, "Spies! heretics! traitorous Englishmen! Death to them both!" Then there was a rush of feet across the hall without, and the clang of naked steel.

"This way, my masters!" cried the innkeeper, dragging me back; and he opened a side door, through which he thrust me, Grenville following at my heels.

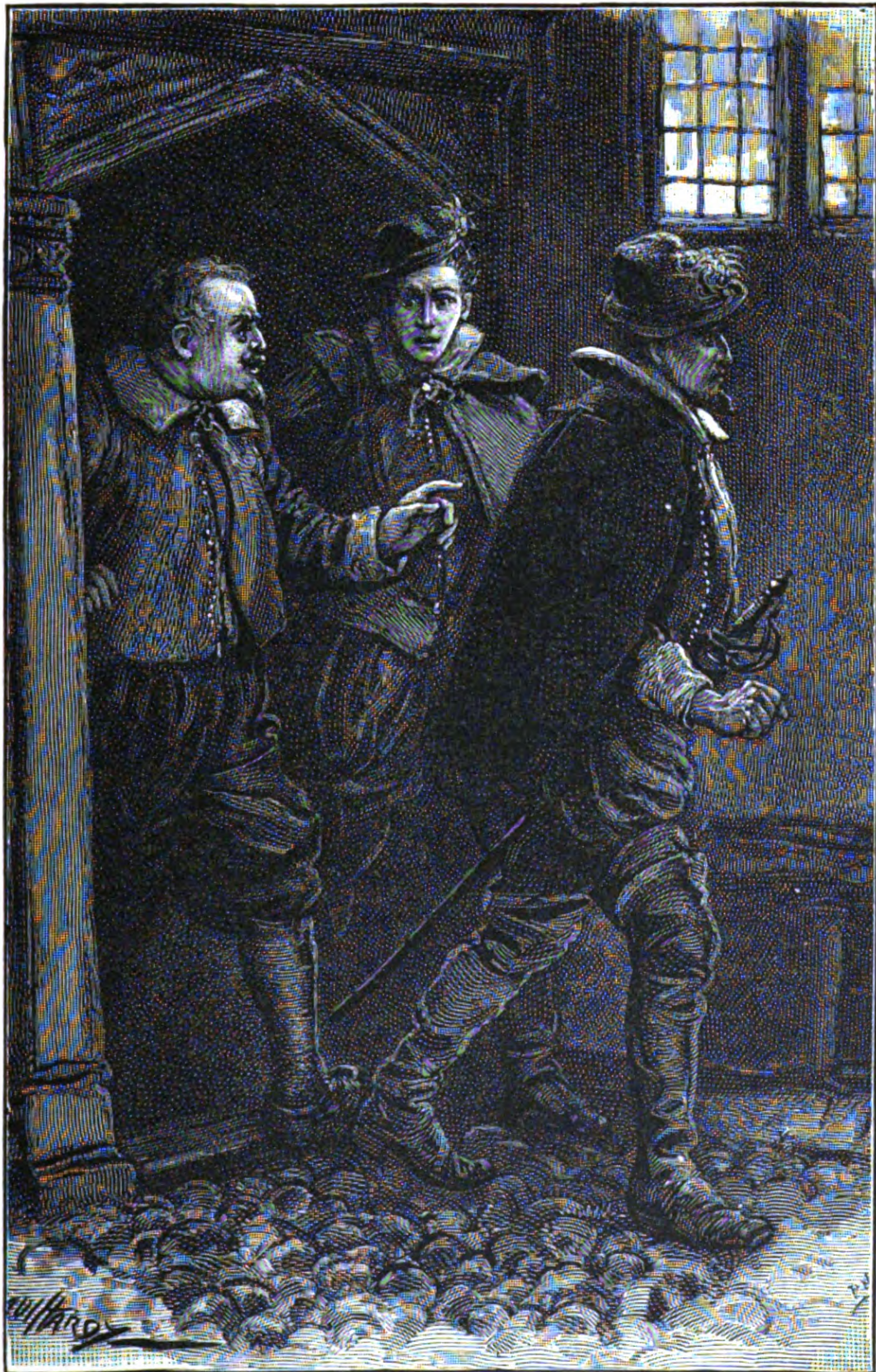
We found ourselves in the open air with the rain drizzling upon us. So soon as our eyes grew accustomed

to the black darkness, we saw that the narrow passage into which the man had thrust us led out into the street. Drawing our rapiers and taking each one of the loaded pistols, we crept out towards the open. As we came to the street I paused for a moment, not knowing which way to turn. In that moment I saw the tall figure of our stranger of the black mantle, standing at the verge of the excited crowd.

“This way! Follow me!” cried Grenville; and, darting out, he set off at a run in the direction of the sea.

But the Black Mantle had seen us. He called to his men, and at once gave chase. We heard the yelping of the crowd behind us. The lights carried by the pursuing mob cast our long shadows upon the wet causeway in front of us. The clamour of voices seemed to draw nearer at our backs. But so quickly did we run, few could keep pace with us, and presently, glancing over my shoulder, I saw, to my relief, that our nearer pursuers were reduced to two men, one of whom was he of the black mantle.

Suddenly Grenville stopped, pointing in advance of us. “Behold! we are circumvented!” he cried; and I beheld some half a dozen torchmen approaching to arrest our further escape. In a moment, as it seemed, we were surrounded. Grenville stepped to my side quietly, drawing his pistol and adjusting the flint. “Now stand we back to back,” he added, and we stood thus awaiting



“THE NARROW PASSAGE INTO WHICH HE HAD THRUST US LED INTO
THE STREET.”



the onset. As our foes closed round us, Grenville fired his piece, and I heard a cry of pain. I followed his example, aiming at the Black Mantle. My shot missed its intended mark, but the man behind him fell to the ground.

“And now let cold steel do its work,” murmured Grenville, and I heard the clink of his rapier striking against the weapon of the man who had encountered him.

“Spies! heretics! Have at you!” roared he of the black mantle, speaking now in English. He had wrapped the wing of his cloak about his left arm, Spanish fashion, and he assumed the stooping attitude of the third ward, with his heels together, his rapier hand between his parted knees, his point raised upward towards my face. I saw his intentions, for I had learned the art of fence from an excellent good master,—Vincent Saviolo, to wit,—and I knew all the tricky feints, the alert parries, and the unexpected passadoes and stoccatas that had of late come into vogue. We closed without ceremony; there was a clash of steel. My adversary made a dexterous pass, but I warded it, giving him a quick *riversa*. I let no advantage slip, but kept ever keen-eyed and watchful, knowing that death awaited a slip of the foot or a wrong turn of the wrist. For an instant we seemed equally matched, and I feared that it would go ill with me. But at last I delivered him the long *stoccata* full at his right ribs. He staggered, dropped his weapon, and, tripping over it, broke it by the hilt with the weight of his fall.

And there he lay in the mire, whether wounded or not I could not tell.

By this time two of Grenville's opponents had fallen, and other three were upon him.

"Your help, Markham, as you love me!" he called aloud, and I leapt to his aid. The three drew back, and ere we had well crossed blades with them one of their number fell. Their comrades then turned tail, flung down their torches, and fled in the direction whence they had come. We followed them, pursued in our turn by the men who had been clamouring at the doors of the *Lion Rouge*, and at the end of the street we came out once more upon the quays.

"To the boat!" I cried, and we made our way along the mole.

As it chanced, the guards, who had stood at the head of the steps, were absent now, but our two men were in the boat where we had left them half an hour before. We stepped on board and pushed off, only in time to escape the furious mob that had followed on our trail.

"Bend your backs to it, my lads!" urged Grenville, and he stood at the thwart to help the stroke oarsman, leaving me at the tiller.

As we met the waves of the outer harbour we saw the lights of links and lanterns flitting about from end to end of the mole. Shot after shot was fired at us from pistol and arquebus, and presently, on glancing behind, I espied

a pinnace, crowded with armed men, dart out from behind the landing-place and bear down in pursuit of us.

Urging our rowers to their utmost, we soon out-distanced the pinnace. Shots were fired at us from a small piece of ordnance in her bow, but they fell wide. The sea was running so high that even the best marksman could not have taken true aim from an unsteady boat.

Much difficulty had I in distinguishing the *Pride of Wapping* from among the dark crowd of transports that tossed at their moorings in the outer harbour. But at last I descried her, lying at a discreet distance apart from the other craft, with her mainsail half raised as if she were already preparing to make off from so dangerous an anchorage. We hailed her decks, and Pimpernel presently displayed a lighted lantern over her taffrail. By this guide we made our way alongside of her, and, although with infinite trouble, we all four climbed up to her deck, helped thereto by Sidney Haughton, who presently appeared.

There was much ado in hoisting the boat on board in such boisterous weather, and in heaving the anchor; but this business being at last accomplished we began to drift outward with the current of the tide. Scarcely had our sails been trimmed, however, when we again espied the pinnace creeping up close astern of us. Those on board of her—whether Spaniards or, like the man of the black mantle, English Jesuits—were, as it seemed, determined

to overhaul us, for they had now stepped their mast and hoisted a lugsail. They had been wiser for their own part if they had not made themselves so conspicuous by carrying lighted lanterns in their bow. But they doubtless considered all such caution unneedful.

"They are loading the brass gun at their bow!" said Sidney Haughton, as he watched them. "What men are they? and what seek they?"

"They are Spaniards, seeking our lives," answered Grenville. "Would that we might discharge one of our own guns into their midst!"

"And wherefore not, Master Grenville?" cried Will Pimpernel from his post at the helm. "You can at least try your hand at it. Give them a shot from number three. She's loaded, and doth need but a pinch of powder from your flask for the priming. Steady now; while that I bring round on t'other tack!"

The torches and lanterns in the bow of the pinnace made an excellent good mark for Roland's aim. With the help of the mate he raised the gun to the required elevation, saw to the priming, lighted a fuse of tarred string at the lamp, and waited until the sloop should come round to the wind and bring the cannon's mouth in a line with the enemy's boat. And then, ere I had thought he had well taken aim, he held forth his hand and applied the fuse. There was a flash of light and a thunderous crash. The sloop trembled and shook from stem to stern. Peer-

ing through the darkness, we saw the sail of the pinnace fall, and at the same moment the lights in her bow went out.

“Bravo!” cried old Pimpernel.

“Well done, Roland!” cried my lord, clapping Grenville on the back.

“It struck her mast,” said Roland, as he quietly turned away, “but I had meant to take her in the hull.”

Whatever his intention, his shot had at least the effect of putting an end to the pursuit, and, no longer molested by dangers from human enemies, we stood out to sea to encounter the not less formidable dangers of the storm-swept Straits.

CHAPTER VI.

IN CALAIS ROADS.



ETWEEN Dunkirk and Calais there are but a few miles of sea, and a swift-sailing sloop such as the *Pride of Wapping* might with a favourable breeze cover the distance in a single day. But that memorable summer of 1588 was one of almost ceaseless storms, and our passage, although so very short in point of distance, was, in its accomplishment, long and tedious, and not without peril. Such backing and filling, such veering and tacking, such rolling and pitching, such helpless labouring against the head winds and the mountainous waves, I wish not to see again. When both tide and winds were like to drive us back out of our course, we would lie-to for a space under bare poles. Then when the tide turned in our favour we would up anchor again and try to beat westward for a few miles, but with little success. So great

were the seas that struck us, oftentimes it seemed that our stout bulwarks must be staved in, or else that we must founder. The decks, and even the cabin, were deluged with water, and there was never a dry jerkin or a moment's comfort for either crew or passengers. We were so buffeted about withal that our limbs were all bruised and our shins bleeding, and all movable things were turned topsy-turvy.

Roland Grenville—born seaman that he was—affected to make light of the matter and even to take pleasure in remaining on deck and helping the men with their difficult work. But the rest of us kept to the questionable security of the cabin. Lord Sidney, to whom the experience was new, and in whose mind the dread of shipwreck was ever foremost, lay in his bunk for hours together with his now pallid face half buried in his pillow, smiling never at all, neither eating nor speaking, save only when Cicely Markham went to his side and ministered to him with womanly tenderness and sympathy. And in truth the girl was a constant example to us all of cheerful fortitude and helpfulness. Her sweet companionship was the one bright light that shone amid the darkness and misery that else might have driven us to despair.

I think that even Captain Pimpernel was at times apprehensive as to our safety. More than once when the tempest was at its height, and the wild waves threatened to engulf us, he drew me aside and proposed that he

should 'bout ship, and make a dash for the Medway. Often enough I was sorely tempted to yield to his persuasions. But I answered him always that I had the fullest confidence in his seamanship, and that let the wind blow never so hard it must soon exhaust its force.

And so we held on, ever trusting in the Almighty's providence.

It was on the second night of August that we left Dunkirk, but it was not until the evening of the fourth day afterwards (to wit, the sixth of the month) that we dropped anchor in Calais Roads. That last day had been, in its early hours, somewhat more boisterous even than those that had gone before; but towards noon a change in the wind's direction had enabled us to make more headway than we had yet made since leaving Flanders.

I remember that about the time of sunset, ere yet we had sighted land, I was aft at the stern with Will Pimpernel, leaning over the windward gunwale and looking upon a vast black bank of cloud that had suddenly gathered in the west and seemed to be sweeping towards us.

Lord Sidney and Roland Grenville stood at our backs, also watching the cloud.

"'Tis yet another tempest preparing," said my lord, speaking to Pimpernel. "Heard you the thunder just now?"

But the old mariner shook his head.

“Well did I hear it, Master Sidney,” said he, “but ’tis a tempest that cometh not o’ God’s sending, mark you; ’tis a tempest brought on by man’s devices, and it can only end in England’s downfall or else in the establishing of her great and everlasting glory.” He paused and listened once again to the murmurous sounds that floated over the grey stretch of sea; and I observed that his limbs trembled beneath him as they had done when we saw the beacon lights flashing along the English coast. “The thunder that you hear,” he added, in a solemn voice, “is the thunder of ship’s guns—the battling of Howard’s fleet against the great Armada!”

“Alas, then!” cried Lord Sidney Haughton, a flush of eager patriotism bringing the colour to his cheeks and the fire into his eyes; “alas! we are too late. I had given my birthright to be present at that fight!”

“Ay, and I would have given the last drop of blood in my veins for the same sweet privilege,” added Roland Grenville, with a manly boldness that was beautiful to behold.

“Patience, my masters,” said Pimpernel; “the fight is not yet over, and, perchance, we shall yet be in good time to witness the end of Spain’s great glory on the seas!”

With the evening’s close there came a strange silence over the waters. The wind veered round to the southward, and with our sails full set we sped onward merrily upon our course.

It was night when we came off the port of Calais, and here, as we entered the roadstead, we saw, to our no small amazement, a vast number of great ships of war lying at anchor. How many vessels there were in all it was not possible to tell in the deep darkness; neither was it possible to say to what nation they belonged, nor how they came to be lying in this place. But that they were a part of the fleets which we had heard engaged in battle earlier in the day we could not doubt. Will Pimpernel's eyesight was not so keen as to tell him of a certainty that they were ships of English build, and his men could express only vague conjectures.

Roland Grenville and Lord Sidney, however, had looked upon the dark high hulls but a few moments when they both most positively declared that it was Lord Harry Seymour's squadron that we had thus so fortunately discovered. Believing that Grenville, at the least, could not easily be in error, I breathed freely, fearing no danger, and at once prepared to go ashore with Cicely, and to deliver my letters to Monsieur Gourdain, if, perchance, he might be found.

When our anchor was down, our two boats were launched over the side; Pimpernel, a man named Tom Lane, Cicely, and I got into the one, while my lord and Grenville took the other. I was somewhat annoyed at Lord Sidney's wilfulness in venturing to go out among the ships in the darkness; but the lad was bent upon dis-

covering the *Fearless*, and my cautions were unavailing. So the two, having bidden farewell to Cicely, put off in advance of us, and we saw them rowing away.

Scarce had we ourselves pushed off from the sloop when, for one brief moment, the moon broke through the heavy clouds. By its feeble light I could now see the ships more clearly. To my great astonishment, I discerned that there were two distinct squadrons, instead of only one, as we had at first imagined. They lay about a mile's distance apart, and it was clearly obvious that they were enemies one to the other. But which were the English and which the Spanish Armada? The one fleet, which seemed to me more formidable in the size of its ships, was between us and the shore; the other lay out to the windward, like a pack of hounds watching their prey.

I noticed all this in that momentary glimpse of the moonlight, but, saying naught as yet concerning my discovery, I steered in the far wake of the other boat, following her into the midst of the nearer ships, never doubting that we were among friends.

Presently, as we passed astern of a great towering war-ship that rose high as a castle above the water, a sudden thrill of dread passed through me. I heard a man on board of her giving some command. He spoke in Spanish! and only then did I realise the terrible mistake that we had made. I had not time to communicate my

fears to Pimpernel ere we heard a loud cry of terror and alarm, followed by the sharp crack as of a pistol shot.

"Help! help!" the voice cried. It was the voice of Lord Sidney Haughton.

We pulled round to the farther side of the great galleon (for such she indeed was), and in the ray of light that streamed out from one of her ports we saw the steps of a gang-ladder, upon which were our two lads, each struggling in the grasp of a couple of armed Spaniards. Even as we looked upon them, we saw them being forcibly dragged on board the galleon.

"To their rescue!" I cried aloud, springing to my feet; and with all haste we pulled alongside. I gripped a step of the ladder; but scarce had I done so when at the gangway a Spaniard appeared. He held a heavy weight aloft in his hands. It was a cannon ball, and with no more ado he dropped it into our boat. It struck our man at the bow oar, and crashed clean through the boat's planks. The boat reared and plunged beneath the blow, and a wave broke over her.

"God help us!" cried Pimpernel, "we're sinking! Look you to the girl, Master Markham!"

Little need had I of the old mariner's recommendation that I should look to my sister's safety. Indeed, on finding that the boat was sinking beneath us, my earliest thought was of Cicely. Still gripping the great ship's ladder with my left hand, I caught the girl in my right

arm and swung her bodily round, so that she alighted on the ladder's lowest rung without so much as wetting her feet. At the same moment I felt the water surging around me, for the boat had gone down, carrying with it poor Tom Lane, who, I believe, must already have been killed by the weight that had fallen upon his back.

While I still struggled to gain a stronger purchase upon the ladder, my foot was frantically seized by Will Pimpernel, and we both must surely have been drowned but for the timely help of Cicely, who, from her place of security, bent down and dragged me towards her. By her aid I succeeded in getting my two hands upon the step, and then the rest was easy. In a few minutes' time we had all three mounted to the little platform that stood out from the galleon's closed gangway.

Farther than this we dared not for the present venture, even though the gangway had been open, nor dared we raise our voices, lest the Spaniards should discover us. Yet I knew that we must be discovered at last, for our boat had been destroyed, and the one in which Grenville and Lord Sidney had been rowing was nowhere to be seen, so that there was no possible means of escape for us.

I know not how long we crouched there shivering in our wet clothes, the cold west wind blowing upon us cuttingly, but it seemed like many hours. Once or twice, when the darkness was at its deepest, and all was quiet save for the regular tread of the watch on deck, I stood

up and looked over the bulwarks. I could see the outline of a large gun that glanced under the light of an oil lamp near by, and on the towering poop the dark figures of the sentries passed to and fro, backward and forward, in ceaseless regularity.

Once while I stood thus I felt Cicely's hand drawing me back. I bent down to her, and she pointed westward through the darkness across the sea. The glamour of the lantern light was still in my eyes, and for a few moments I could distinguish nothing unusual. But presently I discovered that the galleon had swung round with the turning tide, and that it was now possible for us to see the dark hulls of the English fleet as they lay at their anchorage a mile to the windward. As I looked upon them it seemed to me that I could dimly discern a movement in their midst, as if certain of the ships had raised their anchors and were slowly drifting towards where the Spanish galleons lay thickest. We counted eight vessels that had thus detached themselves from the main fleet.

"Keep your eyes fixed upon them," I whispered to Cicely, "and mark their every movement. It may be that they mean to renew the battle, even in the darkness."

I had scarcely spoken when I was conscious that the bolts of the gangway door were being cautiously drawn, and I put my hand to my rapier. Then, very slowly, and almost noiselessly, the door swung open, and a dark figure revealed itself, creeping upon hands and knees.

We all three held in our breath and drew closer together. In the silence I heard a subdued whisper from behind.

“Now, go you first, Sidney,” it said. And I knew that it was Roland Grenville who spoke.

“My lord,” I whispered, stretching forth my hand and touching him as he crept nearer.

Lord Sidney drew back, startled, but no cry escaped him. He seemed to understand that we had come to the rescue, for I heard him say, as he turned to his companion—

“God be thanked! we are saved. Haste you, Roland. Markham is here with the other boat!”

“Nay, go back!” I cried below my breath. “Our boat hath been sunk, and we are here in the same plight as yourselves. ’Tis but death to go down this ladder, and we must throw ourselves upon the mercy of our enemies.”

“Nay, I go not back!” said he, creeping out upon the platform. “Death by drowning were better than to owe our lives to the Spaniards.”

I descended a couple of steps to afford him room, and then Roland Grenville appeared in the opening of the gangway, and silently closed the heavy door behind him. There we remained, the five of us, huddled together so closely that every movement threatened to precipitate us into the black waters below. Hurriedly I told Roland Grenville how our boat had been destroyed, and as

hurriedly he recounted the adventure that had brought him and my lord into the hands of the Spaniards.

"This accursed galleon is the *San Martin*," said he. "'Tis the flag-ship of King Philip's Lord Admiral. But in the darkness, and thinking that we were among the English fleet, we took her to be the *Ark Raleigh*."

"Simpletons!" broke in Will Pimpernel. "Knew ye not that the Spaniards do build all their ships higher in the hull than do the English? 'Tis a pretty pass you have brought us to, my masters. How, forsooth, are we to get out of it?"

"Let me tell you, first, how it all befell," continued Grenville. "We meant not to board her ere we made certain of our safety in doing so. But, coming nigh to the foot of the ladder, we were hailed by a man who spoke in English, and we drew alongside. Scarce had we done so when four armed Spaniards ran down and seized us. We fought against them, firing into their midst, but they overpowered us, sent our boat adrift, and dragged us on board. It all happened so swiftly, and we were so little prepared, that we could do naught but cry to you for help. It seemeth now that we were taken for spies, and that the guards had watched us putting off from the sloop."

I was about to put sundry questions to him, touching the treatment they had received on board, and as to how it happened that, being suspected as spies, they were

yet at liberty to regain the gangway, when once again Cicely drew my attention to the English ships. They had drifted nearer now—eight small brigs, as it seemed—and they had shot suddenly into light. Long tongues of flame burst from their decks and leapt up among their ruddy sails in a lurid blaze of fire. On and on they came with the wind and tide, making direct for the Armada. The air was quickly filled with a dense black smoke, smelling of burning tar and smouldering hemp.

“See you what it all means?” asked Will Pimpernel, with sudden interest.

I confessed that I could not understand how the ships should be on fire.

“Why,” said he, “’tis a cunning trick of Francis Drake’s—such a trick as a boy might employ in seeking to drive a fox from her lair. Look but at the positions of the two fleets. Here be the galleons of the Armada, anchored close on the edge of the shoal water, where ’tis impossible to attack them; and yonder lie our brave ships of England, with Howard and Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher, Sheffield and Seymour, aboard of ’em, and with the fate of England in their hands. Now I warrant me that the battle we heard going on this past day hath been the death of many a gallant man and the destruction of many a stout ship. But the end is not yet come, mark you, or we had not seen the two fleets at such close quarters as they are now. I make it out that the

Spaniards, sore pressed by our English admirals, have taken refuge here in Calais Roads, and that to drive them out, or else to set fire to them and burn them up, Howard hath resolved upon sending these eight fire-ships into their midst. Sure, 'tis a sorry spectacle to see so many good craft thus sacrificed! But I warrant me——”

“Silence your tongue!” cried Roland Grenville, giving the old man a thrust with his elbow. “Silence, and listen!”

“Tut!” returned Pimpernel, “'tis but the alarm we hear—the Spaniards calling their men to quarters.”

“Nay,” said Roland, “'tis not that I mean; I had heard that before. I mean the sound of oars below us here, at the foot of the ladder where we now are.”

“'Tis a pinnace,” said Lord Sidney, leaning over and looking along the galleon's bulging wales—“'tis a pinnace coming alongside. And—Heaven help us now—her men are coming on board!”

Realising that we must at once be discovered, I pushed open the gangway door, and, bidding my companions rise to their feet, I thrust them in one by one upon the galleon's main deck.

“Hide yourselves where you can,” I said; “there is no other course open to us. But let us not forget that we are in God's hands.” And they passed in like so many black sheep, and disappeared among the shadows of the guns.

I was about to follow them, when a light flitted along the deck. I drew back, closing the door in good time to escape the eyes of a crowd of seamen who scrambled aft from the forecastle. Then a loud voice from below me hailed the watch, and I felt the throb of footsteps on the ladder. The door was flung open, and an officer, wearing the full body-armour of a Spanish soldier, and holding a lighted lantern in his hand, stood in the breach. He came so near to me that he must almost have felt the warmth of my breath upon his face. He challenged the men of the pinnace, but, not hearing their answer amid the noise that had suddenly arisen on the deck, he stepped out upon the projecting platform, holding the lantern above his head. His back was towards me, and, taking advantage of the opportunity thus afforded, I slipped quickly by him, and, passing the corner of the thick bulwark, escaped into the shadow of the nearest gun.

There I stood for some moments, concealing myself as best I could from the officer at the gangway and the soldiers and seamen who were constantly passing to and fro. I heard the officer speaking with the men who had arrived in the pinnace. Their leader was demanding, in somewhat faulty Spanish, to be taken at once to His Excellency the Duke of Medina Sidonia. Something in the tone of his voice struck upon my ear with a familiar ring. He stepped upon the deck with an air of confident superiority, and I judged him to be a very important

personage. His men followed him on board, the gangway was closed and barred, and (alas for our hopes of escape!) the ladder was hauled up and stowed in its place outside the upper bulwarks.

But I scarcely noticed these little matters at the time. My attention was absorbed in contemplation of the newly-arrived stranger. Where had I seen him before? and why did I instinctively feel that he was my personal enemy? I watched him as he turned to go aft towards the poop; and then the light from one of the lanterns fell upon his face. In a moment I recognised him as our man of the black mantle—the man whom I had crossed swords with and left for dead in the narrow street of Dunkirk.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRE-SHIPS.



TILL keeping within the dark shadow of the bulwarks, I went down on my hands and knees, and, craning forward beyond the gun-carriage, searched with eager eyes for my four companions.

Naught could I see of any one of them, and I could only judge that, like myself, they had taken refuge beside one of the deck guns. For the present, at least, they were no doubt safe; but I dared not think of what might befall them when the daylight should reveal them to our enemies.

Our position was indeed most uneviable, and not without grave danger. Here were we, thrown into the very midst of our country's deadliest foes, with no hope of rescue and no obvious way of escape.

The galleon, upon which a strange mischance had

brought us, was the flag-ship of the Duke of Medina, the chosen leader of the Armada, and, as such, it must become (as it doubtless already had been) the mark at which every gunner in our English fleet would make it his chief work to aim, the prize which our admirals would most glory in winning, the vessel at whose destruction all England would heartily rejoice. Our personal fate must, therefore, depend upon the final result of this great naval expedition, and who could tell what that result might be?

As I thought of Cicely, in her weak and helpless girlhood, I could almost have hoped that the ultimate victory should be with Spain, or at least that this one particular ship might escape destruction at the hands of our friends in the opposing fleet. But my patriotism quickly told me that while the glory of England was in danger, and while our homes and our religion were threatened by the hostility of these fanatical Papists of Spain, even my loved sister's life must be considered of small account. I would protect her from all dangers that could possibly be averted, and I would deem my own life as the smallest sacrifice if it might be paid as the price of the girl's safe return to England; but I inwardly resolved that, whatever necessity should seem to compel me, I would stir never a finger to help the Spaniards or their cause—nay, that I would even do all in my power to aid in their defeat.

I had wished to remain in my concealment beside the

gun, but the main deck became presently so thronged with men that I ventured into their midst, trusting that in their excitement at the near approach of the English fire-ships they would fail to recognise me as a stranger. And in this I was right. There seemed to be but little discipline or order in their movements. Suddenly aroused from their hammocks, their confusion amounted almost to a panic. Even the officers on the poop-royal appeared to be beside themselves with consternation; for the ships of fire were approaching dangerously near, and very soon their flames must be communicated to the rigging and spars of the galleons.

But the Spaniards feared more than this. Already agitated by the strange and unexpected tricks of their foes, they imagined that the eight hulks were floating mines, like those which had wrought such destruction and blown to pieces so many thousands of men at the siege of Antwerp, and they momentarily expected a terrific explosion. The ships, however, were no more than they seemed. Their spars, ropes, and sails had been steeped in pitch, and their hulls filled with any useless material that would contribute to the blaze; and they had crews on board to direct their course, who retreated to their boats when it was no longer possible to withstand the heat and smoke.

It seemed to me, as I watched the burning hulks steadily approaching, that a cool commander might very

wisely have ordered out his launches to tow them clear. But the Duke of Medina was neither cool nor wise, as was presently proved.

By the bright glare of the flames, which now illumined the whole Armada, I could see him as he stood at the rail of the poop-deck, surrounded by his officers. He looked to be a man of about forty years of age, short in stature, and with broad shoulders; but I could not see him well from where I was, and I only judged him to be indeed the Duke by reason of the ceremonious deference that was paid to him. His face was deadly pale, and his restless movements bespoke the agitation within him. He glanced from side to side, as I have seen a rat glance when seeking for a means of escape. Not long did he hesitate, however. I saw his officers disperse, and then the order was passed forward for a gun to be fired as a signal for all the ships of the Armada to get instantly under way.

The galleons were each riding with two anchors, and in the hurry and alarm there was no time to weigh; so (as I afterwards learned) the cables were cut or slipped. Several seamen, who had stood near me at the foot of the mainmast, now leapt into the shrouds and ran aloft to shake out the sails. At the same time the soldiers were marshalled into ranks. And now, fearing to be discovered, I crossed to the lee bulwarks, creeping along the deck, intending to make my way towards the fore-

castle. But not far had I gone when I heard my name called from out the darkness—

“Hist! Markham!”

It was Lord Sidney Haughton’s voice. I stopped, and, searching for him in the darkness, saw the glint of his morion and the white edge of his ruff as he thrust forth his head from under the muzzle of a cannon.

“We had feared that you were lost overboard,” said he, as I approached him; “and your sister here is in grievous distress concerning you. See! she is here, lying snug and safe under the muzzle of this great gun.”

I bent down and took Cicely’s hand, which she held out to me.

“Have no fear,” I said, trying to comfort her.

“Nay, I am not afraid,” said she, “now that I know you are with us. For we shall surely be allowed to go ashore when daylight comes.”

Even as she spoke I felt the galleon heel over to the leeward. The anchor cables had been cut, the wind was swelling the sails, and we were moving slowly outward to the deeper waters, with the other vessels of the Armada in our wake. The danger from the English fire-ships had been averted, but the stratagem of the English admirals had succeeded; for the Spaniards had been dislodged from the position in which they had taken refuge, and were thus compelled to make for the open sea.

I saw that our escape was now even less probable

than it had seemed before, but I sought to disguise my fears.

“What of the others — Grenville and Pimpernel? Know you where they are?” I asked, turning to Lord Sidney.

“They are both but a few feet away from where you now stand,” said he, and he gently pushed me towards the next gun. There I found Roland Grenville, seated with his back against one of the stout oak stanchions, his feet stretched out before him in the scuppers. Will Pimpernel sat at the other side of the stanchion, his head resting in his two hands, his whole body trembling with the cold of his wet clothing. He looked up as I touched his shoulder.

“Ah, my master! you are safe, then?” said he. “’Tis a sore mishap that these two youngsters have brought us into! Would that I had stayed on board my own ship, or else that I had never started on this most luckless journey! Much do I fear that I shall never again set foot upon the quays of Wapping! But there! ’tis too late to think of what might have been. The matter now is, Master Markham, what is to be done?”

I shook my head in perplexity.

“Done?” exclaimed Grenville; “why, we must e’en make the best of it. We three can at the least pass ourselves off as Spaniards; and as to Sidney Haughton and Cicely Markham, no harm need come to them. The

Duke of Medina is surely a gentleman, and will behave as one when we appeal to him and beseech him to put us ashore. Though for myself," he added, "I had rather be here and see some good fighting, than be ashore and see none."

"Methinks you will have seen your fill of such sights ere another day be past," muttered Will Pimpernel, rising to his feet and looking out over the high bulwarks. He stood there in silence for a long while, watching the movements of the ships. At last he turned to me and said, "Stay you here, my master, while that I go forward and make friends with some of the crew. And if, perchance, any rascally Spaniard accost you, let it not be known that we are English. And you, Master Grenville, stand guard over young Haughton and Mistress Markham, and bid them lie close in the darkness." And so saying he left us, and passed like a flitting shadow towards the fore part of the ship.

Now that the fire-ships had been left behind at a safe distance, all was black night again, and there was but little danger of our being discovered. As the galleon leaned over under stress of the strong wind, I could see the tops of the waves over her lee bulwarks, and a vast number of ships beating outward between us and the light of the fires. It seemed to me that not all of the Armada had escaped, but that some of the English ships had advanced, and were making an effort to cut off the

retreat of the galleons that had lagged behind. But so great was the confusion of masts and sails and high black hulls that I could scarce distinguish the English vessels from those of Spain.

Suddenly the *San Martin* was hove round to the wind, her sails were clewed up, and the third anchor was dropped. We were now about a couple of miles outside of Calais bar; and here, as I judged, the Duke of Medina had determined to lie-to until morning, intending either to return to his former position and recover his anchors, or, perhaps, to wait until his other galleons should join him and form his array of battle anew. I observed several large vessels being brought-to very near to us; but many others, which were evidently not provided with a third anchor, swept past and drifted farther out to sea.

I was watching these manœuvres, and thinking how well the English admirals had contrived to break the compact force of the Armada, when I became conscious that a man's figure was hovering very close to me on the deck. He passed several times backward and forward, coming ever nearer with each turn, and glancing into my face. He wore an arquebusier's morion and corselet, and under his arm he carried a small bundle. I feared at first that he was the same man who had wrecked our boat, for in the darkness he looked equally villainous. But presently he darted towards me, thrust the bundle into my hands, and whispered in very clear English—

“Here is food for your young friends, my master. Give it them, and then follow me.”

“At whose bidding are you here?” I asked.

“At the bidding of Miles Mason,” said he.

I knew not the name, and who Miles Mason might be was a mystery. But I took the food, and gave it into the hands of Roland Grenville, and then turned to follow the man whithersoever he might lead me.

“Speak not to any man,” said he, stopping as we turned the corner of one of the bulkheads, “unless it be in the Spanish; and if so be we pass near to a priest, then cross yourself as do the Papists, and mutter some holy words.”

He led me through many dark and ill-smelling passages, and then down a flight of narrow stairs that gave entrance to a very spacious room or cabin, which was lighted here and there by dim, yellow lamps. As I glanced within I drew back, horror-stricken at the sight that met my gaze and the sounds that fell upon my ears. Along either side of the great room, and in a double line through the middle, there lay I know not how many wounded, groaning men. Close to the door two seamen were lifting a man upon a stretcher; the poor fellow’s leg was off, and he was dead. About a score of robed priests knelt or stood, crucifixes in hand, at the sides of those who, as it seemed, most needed their holy offices. I looked about for the surgeons, but saw only three.

“Come!” said my strange conductor, seeing that I

hesitated, "'tis but the cockpit ;" and he led me through to the farther end, crossing himself with assumed devoutness as he passed within sight of the priests.

Beyond the cockpit we passed through what appeared to be a veritable Augean stable. Here were great numbers of horses, asses, and mules—the animals upon which the Spanish officers were to ride when, having landed upon the English coast, they were to make their intended descent upon London.

We were entering yet another large room when, under the light that was above the doorway, I came face to face with Will Pimpernel and an aged man with whom he appeared to be already upon most friendly terms.

"Left you the youngsters safe under the gun, Master Markham ?" he asked.

"Yes," said I ; "but wherefore am I brought down here ?"

"Because here we may be out of harm's way," said he. "'Twere not wise for over many of us to hang about upon the decks, while here, although in sooth the air is less pure, we are at least among friends. 'Tis not the first time, mark you, that I have been on board a Spanish galleon, and well did I know that, if none of our countrymen were to be found among her crew, I should for a certainty find one or two among her slaves."

"Her slaves ?" I echoed.

"Ay, marry," said he ; "for, be you Turk or Italian,

Frenchman or Fleming, Hollander or Briton, you shall surely find one of your own nation among King Philip's galley-slaves. Scarce had I been below here the fourth part of an hour ere I fell in with Miles Mason, a Bristol man born, who was messmate with me years gone by."

"Ay," added Miles Mason, in a feeble, tremulous voice, "and pulled the same oar together aboard Don Andrea Doria's galley in the Mediterranean, didn't we, Will?"

"And fed on poll-parrots and monkeys among the cannibals of Peru, didn't we, Miles?" said Will Pimpernel.

"That we did!" said Miles. "And touching feeding, haply your friend would relish an onion and a biscuit, eh?" He turned and glanced at me inquiringly, and added, "What say you, my master?"

"For the biscuit I will thank you," said I; "but as to onions, I will, so please you, leave such Spaniard's food for those who have a better appetite."

The old man thrust his hand into the front of his jerkin, and pulled out a hard brown biscuit, offering it to me. I took it, and broke it over my knee; but scarce had I taken a mouthful ere I regretted that I had not preferred the onion. The biscuit, indeed, was well-nigh alive with weevils. Noticing my slow eating, Miles Mason said—

"Ah! it is dry food, sir, for those that have been used to good English fare. Would that I might offer you a

draught of red wine to help it down ! But slaves are allowed but little of that luxury, unless bilge-water merit the name."

"And are you, then, a slave even now ?" I asked.

"Marry !" said he ; "how else would I come to be sailing under the flag of England's foes ?"

"But you wear no slave's chains," said I.

"True," said he ; "but 'tis only seven days since they were knocked off. The Duke hath released us all from our irons, d'you see, on the condition that we earn our liberty by fighting for Spain."

"I marvel," said I, "that any Englishman would accept his freedom on such terms."

The old man laughed grimly, and gave a meaning glance at Will Pimpernel.

"'Tis plain to see," he said, "that you know not the stuff that an English seaman is made of, my master. But had you been in the Armada five nights since, you might have learned how we accept our freedom and fulfil its terms." And then, drawing me into the deeper shadow of the passage in which we stood, he continued, "There was an Englishman on board Oquendo's galleon, the *Señora de la Rosa* ; his name, Martin Barlow. I saw him in Cadiz and again in Lisbon before the expedition started, and said he to me, 'If these here ships be going to fight against the English,' he said, 'I warrant you the one that I shall sail in will do no great harm.'

So when the Armada was sailing up Channel, chased by Howard and Drake and the rest of 'em, I watched the *Señora de la Rosa*. Naught happened to her until after we'd passed Plymouth; but on a certain dark night the air was shaken and the sky was lighted by an explosion in the centre of the Spanish fleet. The *Señora* was blown up, and two hundred Spaniards, dead and wounded, were hurled into the sea. Martin Barlow had gone below and thrown a burning linstock into the powder magazine, and sprang out through a porthole before the powder caught fire. 'Twas thus that he fought for Spain."

I thought that Miles Mason was romancing, and I shook my head in incredulity. "How can you say that this was the act of Martin Barlow?" I asked. "It may have been but an accident."

"How do I know?" he echoed. "Why, because this galleon we are now on was hove-to, and picked up those that were yet alive out of the sea. Barlow was one of the first that were saved, and he is now aboard of us. What is more, he is the self-same man that brought you down here just now. And I will not say but what, if we be in the way of beating the English to-morrow, he will not do the same by the *San Martin* as he did five nights since by the *Señora de la Rosa*."

"Heaven forfend!" I cried, thinking of my sister Cicely and of young Lord Sidney Haughton.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OPPOSING FLEETS.



WHILE the galleons lay at anchor that night outside of Calais Roads, I ventured no more on deck, but remained below, listening to the talk between Will Pimpernel and his new-found friend, Miles Mason.

At frequent intervals the man Martin Barlow came to me with word that Cicely was asleep, and that my lord and Roland Grenville were in no need of help. I suspect that the two lads were, on the whole, not ill-content at the result of their escapade, and at the promise it gave of adventure to come.

I cannot attempt to recount all that the two old mariners said as I sat with them in that dark gangway below decks. They spoke mostly of the Armada, however, and from what I heard I was enabled to understand much of what had otherwise been obscure to me concern-

ing the condition of the Spanish ships and the relative positions of the two opposing fleets at the time of our coming on board the *San Martin*.

In the first place, I discovered that the entire strength of the Spanish Armada was vastly greater than had been at first supposed by those who had for so long expected its arrival in English waters. It numbered no fewer than one hundred and thirty ships of war, including many great towering galleons, such as the *San Martin*, of fourteen or fifteen hundred tons; several hulking galleasses, such as Monçada's *Capitana*, that could either carry sails or be propelled by the oars of three hundred slaves; galleys almost as formidable, and other vessels of divers descriptions—the best appointed that Spain and Italy could produce. Some of the galleons carried a hundred guns; the galleasses and galleys about half that number.

I had already been struck by the enormous size of the *San Martin*, and I was in no wise surprised when Mason remarked that she was accounted the largest and most splendid war-ship in all Europe. He also stated that among the English fleet, which numbered in all something like a hundred and seventy-five sail, there was scarce a ship, excepting the *Ark Raleigh*, the *Triumph*, the *Elizabeth Jonas*, the *Bear*, and the *Victory*, larger than the smallest of Medina's galleons.

Pimpernel was anxious to know if the Spanish ships

were as fully and as well-manned as rumour had reported ; and Mason replied that on starting out of Lisbon the Armada carried fully nine thousand seamen, seasoned mariners who had served in all parts of the world, together with seventeen thousand soldiers and two thousand galley-slaves. Besides these, he said, there were some fourteen hundred officers, nobles, gentlemen, and priests.

“Ah, I warrant me there be priests in plenty,” said Pimpernel.

“There be a hundred and eighty, all told,” returned Mason.

“And how many surgeons ?” I asked.

“There be eighty of them, reckoning their assistants,” said Mason.

“Only eighty surgeons among nigh thirty thousand men !” I cried. “Eighty surgeons and a hundred and eighty priests ! The numbers, methinks, might have been reversed with advantage.”

“Thirty thousand men, say you, Master Markham ?” remarked Pimpernel. “Certes, what stores must have been put on board for so many !”

“Stores !” echoed Miles Mason ; “speak not of that, my friend. Why, there’s not a vessel in the whole Armada with food enough to serve for another week ; and what there is of it is scarce fit for human food. Before we started out of Lisbon the water had been on board for

four months; a dog would not drink it! And as to the salt meat, cheese, and biscuits, they were half putrid before they were opened. You may be sure they have not improved by keeping. I know not how it may be on the other ships, but on the *San Martin*, at least, half of the crew and soldiers are ill."

"Ah," sighed Pimpernel, nudging me with his shoulder, "I reckon we'd best have stayed aboard the *Pride of Wapping!*"

Having told us much concerning the victualling of the Armada, Mason spoke of the officers who had been chosen by King Philip, and of the ships that they had been appointed to command. In his opinion, Don Juan Martinez de Recalde was the most skilful warrior in the whole fleet. Recalde's ship was named the *Gran Grin*. Next to him for boldness came Miguel de Oquendo, who sailed in the *San Juan*; and Don Alonzo de Leyva, of the *Rata Coronada*. Many others did he mention, but their names have slipped my memory. There was but one commander in the Armada, he said, who was entirely ignorant of his duties, and he, unfortunately for Spain, was the commander-in-chief himself, to wit, Don Alonzo de Guzman, Duke of Medina Sidonia, who, although the wealthiest peer in Spain, was certainly the least fitted of all men to be trusted with the conduct of so critical an undertaking.

I gathered that the Armada, after many delays and

one false start, had finally sailed from Spain on Friday, the 22nd of July. Friday was surely an unlucky day upon which to set forth upon such a crusade, and ill-luck pursued the ships from the very first. Even before they entered the English Channel, some two score of the galleys had been separated from the main body of the fleet, and the *Santa Aña* had run aground on the coast of France. On Friday, the 30th of the month, the Lizard was sighted, and the ships were put into fighting order.

They were in three divisions. The Duke of Medina was in the centre with the main battle, Alonzo de Leyva led the advance, and the rear was under Martinez de Recalde. The formation was that of a half moon, Recalde and De Leyva being at the two horns. In this order they sailed slowly into the Channel. They were themselves seen before they saw anything of Howard or Drake, and on that same evening the alarm beacons were flashed along the English coast. Early on the Sunday morning following, the first shots were exchanged between the two fleets. England and Spain had met in mortal combat.

Miles Mason had himself witnessed the opening of hostilities. He was among the first who saw Lord Howard's eleven ships to the leeward of the *San Martin*; and Drake, with the *Revenge* and his own squadron of forty privateers, hove in sight between the Armada and the

land, to the west of Plymouth Sound. What astonished the Spaniards more than all else was the ease with which Howard passed round to windward and joined Drake. The united English squadrons stood out to sea behind the whole Armada, firing heavily into Recalde and the rearward Spanish squadron as they passed. Then the *Ark Raleigh* and three other English ships, whose names Mason did not know, ran along the entire



HOWARD'S SHIPS FOLLOWING THE ARMADA.

rear line of the Spaniards, firing their larboard guns successively into each galleon, and raking her from stern to stem; then wearing round and returning over the same course, emptying their starboard guns in like manner.

Never had the Spaniards seen ships so skilfully handled or guns so surely aimed! In vain did they try to bring the English ships into close quarters, for they well knew that their own better chances lay in a hand-to-hand encounter, wherein they might exercise their superior

skill in the use of small arms and musketry. "But, if the Spaniards be superior to us as soldiers," said Mason, "so are we superior to them as seamen and as gunners; and those few little ships under Howard and Drake seized their own great advantage, firing with their heavy guns at long range into the Armada's hulls. Mile by mile they drove the Armada farther into the Channel, now sinking a great galleon, and now taking one as a prize. For nigh upon a whole week they thus assailed their foes, who could do but little damage in return; and at last the Duke took refuge here in Calais Roads.

"'Twas but late last evening that Lord Henry Seymour and Hawkins brought their squadrons from the eastward and joined with Admiral Howard; and they had not been anchored to windward of us more than an hour when the fire-ships were sent drifting down upon us."

So much, and more, did I learn of how the great fight had prospered up to this the time of our coming on board of the *San Martin* galleon. But hitherto the victory was not decisive; Drake and Howard had but plucked a few feathers from the Spaniards' wings. But more was to follow of a far more fearful sort, as you shall presently hear.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAWN OF BATTLE.



HE murmur of Miles Mason's rasping voice was still in my ears when the first faint peep of dawn pierced through the open porthole near which we sat.

The old man was giving us his opinion of the two chief commanders in the opposing fleets—our own Lord Howard and the Spanish Duke of Medina Sidonia; the one timid as a cur, the other bold as a lion. And in illustration of their respective characters he gave two very apt examples of their conduct during the fight in the Channel.

Firstly, he spoke of Howard.

It was on the Thursday, he said, and the fleets were engaged in close battle off the Isle of Wight. There was but little wind, and the great galleons of the Armada moved so slowly that the English ships played about

them at will, now bearing down upon them and raking them with their tremendous broadsides, now retiring to recover for another charge. At one time the *Ark Raleigh*, with Lord Howard on board, led straight down upon the *San Martin*, running into her hull with such force that her own rudder was unshipped. Despite this unlooked-for accident, Howard opened a furious fire from his lower ports. The four feet of timber wherewith the *San Martin's* hull was built was no defence against the English shot, which ripped through the stout oak and sent splinters flying upon all hands, killing many men and wounding many more.

The Spanish flag-ship was like to become a total wreck, so sorely did Howard assail her. But Oquendo, seeing his chief so hard pressed, bore down to his support in the *San Juan*, together with Recalde on the *Gran Grin*. Howard was thus assailed in his turn by the three largest galleons in the Armada. His own friends were at the moment too far off to help him. Very soon he was completely surrounded by Spanish ships.

To make matters worse, the wind at this juncture dropped altogether, and the *Ark*, with her sails lying flat against her masts, stood apparently at the mercy of her many foes. Yet Howard was equal to the occasion. Suddenly eleven boats dropped over his vessel's sides, scores of brave English seamen sprang into them, seized their oars, and took the *Ark* in tow, regardless of the

storm of musketry that was rattling upon them. She was already moving when the breeze again rose and filled her sails. Away she flew, dragging her own boats, and left the swiftest of the pursuing galleons behind, as if they had been at anchor.

“’Tis by such readiness of resource,” said Mason, “that our English captains do ever show their superiority.” And then he told us, by way of contrast, how the Duke of Medina behaved at a moment when a similar readiness might have saved one of his own ships.

It chanced that a very large galleon, the *Capitana*, of the Andalusian squadron, had been disabled. Her foremast and bowsprit had been wrecked by Admiral Southwell’s guns, and she was unmanageable. She lay midway between the Armada and the pursuing ships of the English fleet; but the *San Martin* was nevertheless so near to her that she might easily have fallen back to her rescue and drawn her out of the enemy’s range. The *Capitana* had five hundred men on board, and a large part of the treasure which had been sent for the use of the fleet. To desert such a vessel would be an act of cowardice and dishonour unworthy of a Spanish nobleman. But to the astonishment of everyone—the Spaniards no less than the English—the Duke ran up a signal with the order that the fleet was not to stop, but that the *Capitana* must be left to her fate. So the good ship was deserted, soon to be overtaken, and of course captured.

From this second anecdote I formed but a poor estimate of the famous Duke of Medina Sidonia. But I was presently to know more of the man whom the King of Spain had chosen to be the commander of his great crusade.

I had already lingered below decks longer than I had wished, and I was anxious concerning Cicely and Lord Sidney. So when I observed that the growing light was making all things clear about me, I bade Mason tell me how I might return to my friends with the least danger of being arrested by the watch. He took me through the slaves' quarters, and pointed out a narrow staircase, by which I mounted.

The fresh morning air that met me as I emerged from the depths was like a sweet breath from heaven after the stifling closeness which I had endured for the past three hours. I was on the spacious main deck, at the foot of the companion-stairs that led up to the towering poop. The first person my eyes rested upon was Lord Sidney Haughton. His back was towards me, and he had at that moment accosted no less a person than the Duke of Medina himself.

"Your Excellency!" I heard him say, with a boldness that surprised me.

The Duke drew his great sea-cloak about his broad shoulders, and turned his sickly, sallow face to see who it was that thus addressed him.

“Who and what are you?” he demanded, speaking in very pure Castilian. “And how dare you speak to me?”

“I understand not the Spanish,” my lord answered dubiously; “I am English, and I seek your help.”

“*English?*” cried the Duke, speaking now in our own tongue. “Then how came you to be on board this ship?”

“By an unfortunate mischance, señor,” said the lad; and then he began to explain how the matter had befallen. “But ’tis not for myself that I would ask help,” he added, “but for one who is weaker than I; and I beseech your lordship to let her be sent ashore. For a war-ship in time of battle is surely no fit place for a helpless girl.”

Surprised that my lord should thus intercede on my sister’s behalf, I was about to step forward and add my petition. But the Duke turned his dull black eyes upon the lad and said—

“True; ’tis no place for any but brave men. She shall be sent ashore as soon as we return to our anchorage at Calais, whence your countrymen have so unceremoniously driven us by their mischievous squibs.” He paused, and then said in a tone of inquiry, “You are, of course, faithful servants of the Holy Mother Church?”

“No!” was my lord’s quick reply, “that we indeed are not. We are Protestant, and, with God’s help, we shall remain so!”

“So?” cried the Duke, seemingly astonished at the

lad's boldness, "and yet you dare to ask my help? Away with you! I can give no help to heretics. Away with you, I say; and let me not see you again, or, by the saints, you shall be dropped over the side, with a shot at your heels!" And, so saying, he mounted the stairs to the poop-royal.

It was only at this moment that Lord Sidney discovered me. His face was flushed with sudden anger.

"I might have known that 'twas useless to ask a favour of a Papist!" said he, glancing with flashing eyes at the retreating figure of the Spanish commander.

"Be of good courage, my lord," said I, taking him by the hand. "Better far were death itself than life and liberty bought at the price of denying our faith. And now, how fares Mistress Cicely?"

"But ill," said he. "She is hungered; for the food you brought us a few hours ago was scarce fit for pigs to eat, and we cast it overboard."

"I fear me that there is little better to be got," said I; "for if what I have heard be true, the whole Armada hath fallen short of both food and drink."

"That need little concern us, however," said he. "If I understand the movements of the ships aright, we shall presently be back where we were yesternight, and it will go hard if we cannot make shift to get on board one of our English vessels."

As he spoke there was a commotion on the main deck.

Some three or four priests and friars had come from the fore part of the galleon, followed by about a score of boys who were clothed in white vestments. Marching in solemn and silent procession, they approached the mid-deck, and then formed a circle about the foot of the main-mast. Then the boys, tramping round and round, sang the *Buenos Dias*, although in no very cheerful fashion. And, indeed, for many of them it was destined to be but a sad "good-morrow."

While this matter was passing, I slipped along by the bulwarks to the cannon under which Cicely had spent the larger part of that night. I went near to her; but, lest my position should betray her presence to the Spaniards, I made pretence to be looking out by the porthole through which the cannon's muzzle pointed. There was ample excuse for my standing thus, for between us and the shores of Calais there was that to be seen which might well engage the attention of any man.

"Give you good-morrow, Cicely," I said, moving in front of her. "Prithee, have you slept?"

"Nay, how could I sleep?" said she. "The cold wind that hath been blowing upon me, and the hardness of this seat, have made sleep impossible; and I have been ever fearful lest I should be discovered by some of these evil-looking strangers. Would that I might stand upon my feet for a few moments! My limbs be so stiff through my crouching in here that I scarce can move without

pain. Once, when the night was darkest, I did indeed stand up and take three steps along the deck, shielded by Lord Sidney's cloak, which he hath forced upon me; but I well-nigh fell with weakness. And then the rain came on, and as I sat here the water poured upon me from off the cannon and trickled down my neck. Do but look at my ruff! The starch hath all been washed out of it, and my ribbons too!"

I turned and glanced at her. She indeed presented a sorry spectacle, her pretty dark hair, that before had crowned her white forehead with silky curls, now hung down about her face in long lank wisps, her ruff was limp and bedraggled, and her frock was wet and crushed out of all semblance of its former daintiness.

"You are looking ill," I said. "I will see if I can get you some food; and now that daylight is come, we must move away from this place. If the galleon returns into the harbour where she was anchored yesternight, we may yet contrive to make our way upon shore or on board of one of our English ships."

But even as I spoke we heard the sound of guns firing in the distance. At the same moment, too, several of the Spanish seamen passed close to us, and climbed the rigging to set the sails. I looked out once again through the porthole. Far to the leeward of us, between us and the rising sun, there were some seventy of the Spanish galleons that had drifted thither during the night. They

seemed to be trying to beat up against the wind to join the main body of the Armada, and so return to the roadstead. But the wind had drawn to the north-west, and it was clear that this intention could not be fulfilled.

The *San Martin* wore round slightly as the wind caught her unfurled sails, and now I could better see what was passing between us and the shore. The burnt-out hulks of the eight fire-ships lay like abandoned wrecks in the shoal water. A monstrous galleasse (it was that of Don Hugo de Monçada) had run aground on Calais bar. The tide had forced her ashore within shot of the French batteries at the back of the sandbank which forms the harbour. The tide had ebbed, and she had fallen over on her side. I could distinguish crowds of men on board of her, soldiers, seamen, and slaves, who were defending themselves against the boats of six English ships, one of them Howard's *Ark*, that lay near her in the deeper water. There was a continuous rattle of musket shots. Presently the English boats drew alongside of her, and our men swarmed up over her bulwarks, taking possession of her. The slaves jumped overboard, some swimming, some wading ashore, and the troops and sailors followed their example.

Then the French battery opened fire upon the galleasse, and the English had to scramble back into their boats, carrying with them such plunder as they could seize.

By this time the anchor of the *San Martin* had been

weighed, her sails swelled out, and she began slowly to move, not towards Calais, however, but eastward, along the coast. And now we stood on the windward side, and I could see what I had not guessed before, that a squadron of the English ships, some fifty in number, had put out in pursuit of us. The purpose of our English admirals was apparent. They had, by means of their fire-ships, removed the Armada from Calais roadstead, and were determined that not a galleon should return to pick up her anchors that had been so hastily slipped.

The great Spanish fleet was parted. Seventy galleons were scattered to leeward, and were being driven before the rising wind over a large surface of sea off Gravelines. Forty ships alone were at hand to defend the sacred banner of Castile. That banner was now flying over our heads from the mainmast of the *San Martin*.

I am now aware that among those forty ships there still remained the largest and best equipped of the Armada, and that the men who commanded them were the bravest and most experienced in the Spanish service.

Here was the gallant Oquendo, ever foremost where hardest blows were going,—the man who for many years had been the terror of the Mediterranean corsairs,—an excellent seaman, who managed his ship, the *San Juan*, as easily as a horse. Here, in his great galleon, the *Rata Coronada*, was Alonzo de Leyva, the champion and favourite of all, named by King Philip to succeed Medina



**“THE GREAT SPANISH FLEET WAS PARTED, AND DRIVEN BEFORE
THE RISING WIND.”**



Sidonia in case of misadventure. With him, and under his special charge, were most of the high-born adventurous youths who had volunteered for the crusade. It was said that there were more gentlemen on board his vessel than in all the Armada besides. Here, too, was Juan Martinez de Recalde, an old battered sea-warrior, who had fought and served in every ocean where Spanish ships had sailed, one of the very few of our foes who knew the English Channel; his ship, the *Gran Grin*, a galleon of eleven hundred tons. Here, too, were Bretandona and Cuellar and Diego de Pimentel, and I know not what others; every man of them (saving only the Duke, their commander) well worthy to enter battle against the best of Queen Elizabeth's well-tried admirals.

Their ships were indeed cumbrous, and had been sorely shattered by the English guns; but they were yet able, if properly handled, to hold their own against the smaller vessels of the English fleet. As to their men, the Spanish soldiers were the finest in all Europe; their seamen were all trained hands, who had learnt their trade, and learnt it well, under that most distinguished of Sir Francis Drake's past adversaries, the Marques de Santa Cruz.

I have said that, apart from the galleons now lying six miles to our leeward, the Armada was reduced to about forty battle-ships. This number, so far as I could calculate, was almost exactly the same as that of the English squadron now sailing in our wake.

From where I stood I could see most of the vessels of both sides, for the *San Martin* was leading her consorts, and both friends and foes were behind us. I observed that the Spanish ships stood very high above the water, their poops and forecastles rising like tall castles, tier above tier; their bows were very blunt, seeming to press through the water with difficulty, and their sides bulged out to an almost perfect roundness. As the wind filled their sails, they heeled over to leeward, as though threatening to fall on their beam ends. This, I doubt not, was due to their great top weight, and to the fact that their draught was proportionately small.

Our English ships showed favourably by comparison. They seemed like Arab steeds by the side of Flemish drays. They were of finer build, and somewhat deeper in the water, and had not the very high castles fore and aft to overbalance them; their length was greater in proportion, and their beam lesser; they could carry more canvas, and could sail within five points of the wind. In tacking and bearing round they were immeasurably superior to the cumbrous galleons of Spain, and their speed was so much greater, that, as I afterwards discovered, they could keep at any distance which they pleased from their enemy.

This was a great advantage, for their long, heavy guns fired weightier shot, which carried much farther than any in the Spanish ships; and they could pour their broadsides into the galleons at leisure, and at a distance beyond range

of the feeble Spanish artillery. Tacking, wearing, making sternway where there was no room to turn, they could baffle every attack by the swiftness of their movements, and clear their own way out of the throng.

If the soldiers of the Armada were the finest in Europe, the English gunners were as certainly superior to those of Spain. True it is that our crews were made up of men not permanently in the service of the Crown, but never, surely, in all our history were a body of sailors gathered together more skilled in the sailing of ships, more daring in fight, more regardless of personal danger. It was for England and the Protestant religion that they had volunteered to fight. Their cause was a noble one, and they fought well.

CHAPTER X.

'TWIXT FRIEND AND FOE.



LOOK you, Markham!" cried Roland Grenville, coming to my side in a great flurry of excitement, "we are putting out to seaward. 'Tis not back to Calais that we go. Your papers for Monsieur Gourdain will never now be delivered. See yon gallant squadron of ships behind us! 'Tis the *Revenge* that is leading them—the *Revenge*, with Sir Francis Drake and my father on board! Certes, how she rushes through the water! Ah! 'tis a valiant fight that we shall witness this day. But, alas! we are on the wrong side, and what is to be done?"

He glanced about him anxiously. Already the main deck was crowded with men, in whose midst moved the quarter-masters, sergeants of marine, boatswains, and master gunners, giving their orders in loud voices of command, sending musketeers aloft to the tops, ranking

pike-men and arquebusiers in their lines, and stationing artillery-men at the guns, and despatching the ship's boys below to fetch powder.

The light of the rising sun shone on the soldiers' morions and body-armor, and glittered upon their swords. Many wore bright crimson or blue sashes about their waists, and some wore yellow trunks, some brown, some damask, some green. The officers were very splendidly attired, with burnished corselets and tassets, newly-starched ruffs, hose of divers gay colours, and rich velvet doublets covered with gold or silver lace. It was a most brilliant scene, the like of which I had never before beheld for warlike bravery and martial display.

"Whatsoever we do," I said, in answer to Grenville, "'tis certain that Cicely can no longer remain here where we now are, exposed to the accidents of battle; and yet whither to take her for greater safety I know not."

Even as I spoke three dark-visaged Spaniards approached the cannon, and drew the piece inboard over the rolling platform, preparing to charge it.

"So, ho!" cried one, as his eyes fell upon Cicely, "what have we here? By Santiago and the angels, a little girl!"

"Come, Cicely," said I, taking her by the hand and drawing her away.

A tall man—an officer, he seemed to be—stood near us, dressed in a very fine suit of dark-blue velvet and gold

lace. His back-piece was so bright that I could see our reflections in it. He stood looking at the line of arquebusiers before him, his left hand resting on the handle of his long rapier. In his right hand he held a stalk of dates. Roland Grenville, stepping forward in advance of me, went to his side and touched him on his shoulder.

“I pray you,” said he, in Spanish, as he doffed his cap, “I pray you, señor, spare but a few of those dates you hold in your hand, for this girl here is very hungry, and stands much in need of such food——”

“What, sirrah!” the man exclaimed, wheeling quickly round; “a girl, say you?” And then he caught sight of Cicely. “Marry, come up!” he cried, in amaze. “And the pretty miss is hungry, eh? Here, then, give her the dates, and bid her break not her teeth on the hard stones.”

He spoke, much to my astonishment, in clearest English. I glanced into his face, and at once recognised it as that of my adversary in the dark street of Dunkirk—the man of the black mantle. I drew back in alarm. His eyes met mine, and he knew me. He dropped his hand that had been holding forth the fruit for Cicely to take.

“No, no,” said he, with a mocking laugh, “she shall not have them. Rather will I throw them over to the fishes!” and, reserving two of the largest from the bunch, he flung the rest over into the sea. Turning then upon me, he stood for a few moments glaring angrily into my

face. "Traitor!" he cried. "And so your knavish tricks have brought you even here, eh? Prithee, what got you by all your spying in Dunkirk? You see I know you again, Master Markham. And touching your late visit to Dunkirk, methinks there was a piece of business between you and me at that place which hath not yet been ended."

"I am ready to end it whensoever you list," said I, knowing full well that he referred to our encounter. "But ere we cross weapons again, I would ask yet one favour of you."

"A favour, quotha! Come, I like that," said he. "A favour to a Lutheran, forsooth! By our Lady, but you are bold, my master."

"My need gives me boldness," I retorted. "Look but at this girl. Think you that this deck is the place for such as she—this deck that will presently come under the fire of the English guns?"

"You should e'en have thought of the danger ere you brought the child on board," said he. "What matters it to me if she get hurt? 'Tis your own affair, methinks, not mine."

Enraged at his words, I went nearer to him. "You are in some sort of authority on this ship," I said, "and you can save the girl's life if you will. Is there no place below decks where I may take her?"

"Get you gone from me!" he cried impatiently. "Think you that I have naught else to do than look to

the safety of such Lutheran heretics as you? Away from me, I say, lest I run you through," and he made a movement as if to draw his rapier.

Cicely took my sleeve in her fingers and tried to drag me away; but the booming of the English guns was growing every moment louder and more near, and I knew that very soon the *San Martin* herself would presently be brought into the thick of the fight. I shook the girl off and caught the man by his sword arm, yet suppressing my rising anger.

"Be we Lutheran or Papist," I said, "we are yet English; and I had thought that you, who are English also, might have had some remnant of compassion left in your heart for a defenceless girl. Pardon me, sir, for my mistake; but by your favour and apparel I had judged you to be a gentleman. I had forgotten that no gentleman, and much less an English one, would ever demean himself by fighting on the side of his country's enemies."

The colour mounted to his cheeks and brow at my rebuke, and, without attempting to answer me, he turned away towards the poop, where the Duke of Medina Sidonia and his nautical adviser, Admiral Diego de Valdez, stood among their officers watching the movements of Sir Francis Drake, and dreading, no doubt, the moment when he should be near enough to open fire upon the *San Martin*.

I took Cicely by the hand and led her forward along the

crowded deck, heedless of the remarks that were made concerning us as we passed. Roland Grenville accompanied us some short distance, but, meeting Will Pimpernel, Miles Mason, and the man Martin Barlow, he turned back with them, not willing, as it seemed, to miss aught of the fighting.

For some time I had lost sight of my Lord Sidney, but, as we turned in at the entrance to the forecastle, we found him behind one of the bulkheads, busily engaged in piercing a new hole in one of the straps of his corselet.

“What, do you mean to fight, then?” I asked.

“And wherefore not?” quoth he. “Roland and I have made it all up how we shall act. We shall wait our chance until one of our own ships comes alongside to board this galleon, and then, peradventure, we may leap over her bulwarks and so join our friends.”

“And how when our friends take you for a Spaniard, and bar your way with their pikes and swords?” I asked. “You will then be betwixt friend and foe, and I warn you ’twill not be an easy matter.”

“You do ever look upon the blackest side of things, Markham,” said he, with a smile such as he had not worn since the day of our leaving Chatham. “Our friends will know us readily enough; for we will cry aloud with our lustiest voices, ‘Down with the Spaniards! Have at them, my merry men all!’ And then, once with our feet upon

an English deck, we shall turn and fight for our dear Queen and country."

"Far be it from me to damp your ardour, my lord," said I; "but if the English continue to do as they have been doing these seven days past, they will assail the galleons from a distance with their heavy guns rather than attempt to board at close quarters. Nevertheless, 'tis every man for himself. Do as you will, and God give you help."

"And yourself?" said he. "Will not you also make the attempt with us?"

"I leave not this ship, even to save my life," said I, "if Cicely be not with me."

At this my lord's eyes turned upon Cicely. His hands ceased to work at the strap.

"Thoughtless that I was not to remember!" said he, with soft tenderness. And then he added, "And neither shall I go unless she be with us."

"My lord," said Cicely, standing before him, and looking straight into his face with her clear blue eyes, "you shall make no such needless resolve. 'Tis wrong in you. What am I that you should thus think of further endangering your life and liberty for my sake? You are noble born, and there may be great things in store for you. Therefore, I pray you, look to yourself and save yourself, if so be you may, and think not of me."

Her voice was at this moment drowned in the noise of a

terrible crash of breaking timbers above our heads. A cannon ball from one of the English ships had burst through the galleon's bulwarks. Then the galleon rocked and trembled under the discharge of her own guns. The air was filled with the smell of burnt gunpowder.

I sent Cicely before me through the narrow passage which we had entered. Lord Sidney followed at my heels.

"Where go you?" he asked, when the thunderous roar of the guns had for a moment ceased. And then I told him my plan concerning my sister, which was that I should leave her in the care of one of the priests that I had seen the night before down in the cockpit. For here, I thought, the girl would be safe so long as the ship should continue to float, and she might also be of some Christian service in carrying water to moisten the lips of the sick and the wounded. I suggested that Lord Sidney should also remain below; but he shook his head with such ready decision that I did not attempt to persuade him.

At the entrance to the cockpit we encountered a very venerable and kindly-faced friar. For once (may my duplicity be forgiven!) I made pretence of being a Catholic, and with such effect that he took Cicely into his charge, never dreaming but that she, too, was a devout servant of the Church of Rome.

It went much against my feelings to leave the girl in such an awful place of horror and suffering; but I knew

how brave she was, and how tender withal when it was a question of giving help to those who were in pain. The sight of blood did not appal her, and, young though she was, she was ever ready and skilful at cooling a fevered brow, applying a bandage, or easing an agony. So there we left her, content in the belief that no harm would befall her.

When we returned on deck, the first sight that met us was Roland Grenville, standing as confident as you please behind one of the brass cannons, glancing along its shining barrel and taking aim. Pimpernel, Mason, and Barlow stood near him, each engaged in some work connected with the firing of the gun.

“Odds life!” cried my lord; “why, ’tis upon the English ships that he is firing. Surely some strange madness hath seized him! See! ’tis Drake’s own *Revenge* that he is aiming at—and his own father on board!”

Before we could step forward to prevent him, Roland had applied his lighted fuse. There was a puff of smoke at the touch-hole, and then the cannon shot forth its deadly fire.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIGHT IN THE NARROW SEAS.



HE watched the cloud of white smoke clearing slowly away, and then again we saw the *Revenge* sailing on uninjured.

“Heaven be thanked! your shot hath missed,” said Lord Sidney.

But Grenville, who heard him, turned upon him with a cautioning frown.

“How so?” he muttered. “Think you that I aimed at the *Revenge*? What of yon galleon behind her? See you not that I have taken her foremast by the board?” Then, turning to the three Englishmen beside him, he cried aloud in Spanish, “Another charge, my brave comrades all, and when yon frigate comes nearer, let us show the dragon what Portugal guns can do.”

So, when the piece was cool enough, she was charged once more and primed. This time it was Martin Barlow

who aimed, and, to my surprise, he so raised the gun that it pointed full at the hull of a great galleon that was passing between us and the English ships.

“Not yet!” commanded Grenville, in a low voice that none of the Spaniards could hear; “it is not safe. Wait, as I told you, until two are together; and then so bring round your piece that, while seeming to aim at the English ship, you shall hit the galleon!” He glanced at Miles Mason and asked, “What craft is this, bearing athwart the *Vanguard's* course?”

“’Tis the *Rosary* galleon of Biscay,” answered the old man.

“Then shall the *Rosary's* beads be told by Neptune himself,” muttered Barlow; “for I shall sink her, so sure as I am Plymouth born.”

The *Rosary*, if that was indeed her name, was to leeward of us, and she was so borne over by the strong wind that was blowing that we could well-nigh see her bilge-streaks. She opened fire from her lee guns upon one of the English ships, the *Vanguard*, as she crossed her bows, and then Barlow took aim and fired. I know not if his shot took effect, for the galleon sailed on, her lower planks still showing above the water; but never again did we see her, and I have since heard that she was among the galleons that went down on that same morning.

I was in mortal terror lest some of the Spanish officers should discover the tricks that were being played by

these my companions. Had it been known that they were thus using King Philip's powder and shot for firing upon King Philip's own galleons, most assuredly we should every one of us have been hanged at the *San Martin's* yard-arm. Twice I did indeed notice one of the Dons come near us and stand watching us; and then Roland Grenville, with all the boldness in the world, called aloud in his best Spanish for yet more powder, while Barlow, with equal effrontery, berated the ship's boys with round Andalusian oaths.

On the second occasion this same officer cried out to Grenville (believing him, of course, to be one of the Spanish gunners), that now was his chance, and pointed to an English frigate which had suddenly appeared from astern of us, and was tacking round to pour her broadside into the *San Martin*.

"By Saint Ives!" cried Roland (swearing by his native village), "'tis Lord Dersingham's *Fearless*, the self-same ship that took Don Paul de Avilia's galleons in the Indian seas!"

"Aim low!" cried the officer. "Aim low, and take her amidships!"

"God grant that she board us!" whispered my lord, his face growing suddenly white as his tattered ruffles. And then, gripping my arm as in a vice, he added, raising his voice, "Look, Markham! look to the poop-deck! There stands my father!"

"Hush, hush!" I said, treading upon his foot to silence him. Well was it that the Spanish officer had not overheard him, else had we all been undone; but at that moment Roland applied his fuse, and our ears were well-nigh deafened by the loud discharge.

"Santiago! you have missed!" cried the officer, stamping upon the deck in very rage.

"Alas, señor," returned Grenville, with much seeming disappointment, "we are too high, and my shot passed between her masts. Had we but been upon the lower tier, I warrant me we should——"

I know not what vain and ironical boast he was about to make, for the firing of the thirty starboard guns of the *Fearless* filled the air as with a peal of tropic thunder, and a heavy stone cannon ball burst through the bulwark near which we all stood, sending great splinters of timber flying about our heads and tearing up the planks of the deck. Recovering from the shock, I looked about me for Lord Sidney and Roland Grenville. They both rose from the scuppers where they had fallen, and I was rejoiced to see that they were unhurt, as also was Martin Barlow. Pimpernel had received an ugly wound across his face, however, and both Miles Mason and the Spanish officer lay at our feet, the one dying, the other already dead.

Poor old Mason! His life from earliest manhood to old age had been one of constant slavery and buffeting

at the hands of his enemies ; but his battles were over. Pimpernel and Grenville made an effort to lift him and take him down to the cockpit, but ere they raised him from the deck, he gave up the ghost, murmuring with his fleeting breath, "God bless Queen Elizabeth!" and then, as he saw the blood trickling down Pimpernel's face, "What, Will! Art wounded? Better step down below, old friend, and get a surgeon to patch thee up."

The smoke from Lord Dersingham's guns had by this time cleared away. The *Fearless* had been put about, and was now bearing down upon us as though intending to come to close quarters. I turned to seek Lord Sidney, and saw him running forward along the deck. He disappeared down the companion leading into the cockpit. I marvelled at his thus leaving the deck at the very moment when, as it seemed to me, he had the rarest possible chance of getting on board his own father's vessel ; but his reason afterwards came out. True to his word that he would not leave the *San Martin* unless Cicely Markham also should escape, he had hastened below to fetch the girl!

Martin Barlow stood at my side, and a sudden plan occurred to me. If by any means I might communicate with the Earl of Dersingham (whom I now saw standing at his post on the quarter-deck), and if I might let him know that his son was on board of this galleon, he would certainly remain alongside and make a bold effort at

rescue. I gripped Barlow by the arm, and, in as few words as possible, bade him, even at the risk of his life, make his way on board the *Fearless*, and tell this matter to her commander, who would doubtless reward him handsomely.

“Speak not of reward, my master,” said he. “With God’s help, I will do it or die!” And with that he glanced over the bulwarks at the approaching ship.

Never shall I forget the look of bold determination that came into the man’s eyes at that moment. Then, for the first time, did I in sooth believe that it was he who (as Mason had averred) had entered the powder-room of the *Señora de la Rosa* and flung the lighted lintlock into her magazine.

Full of his new purpose, he stood watching the *Fearless*. She bore down upon our lee side bow-on, as the mariners say, discharging her chase guns into the *San Martin’s* hull. In the smoke that followed the shots, little could be seen of her, saving her tall foremast with its bellying sails; but presently her bowsprit also appeared, the smoke rising above it into the windy air. Already Barlow had sprung upon the bulwark and worked his way along the gunwale to the main shrouds. He climbed some distance up the rigging, then, seeming to alter his plan, came down again. For a brief time my attention was drawn away from him by my hearing a great rattle of musketry fire on the farther side of the galleon’s deck,

and when I saw him next he was clinging to the mizzen-chains of the *Fearless*.

Just then the *San Martin* altered her course, bearing round to starboard, seemingly to avoid collision with one of the Spanish galleys which now came in between her and the *Fearless*, forcing the latter vessel astern, and so destroying the hope which a few moments before had filled our hearts. But another chance of escape was yet at hand.

The musketry fire that I had heard was directed, as I presently discovered, upon one of the English ships which had come upon the *San Martin's* windward quarter; and now a most terrible battle began, for that English ship was none else than Sir Francis Drake's *Revenge*.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOUR OF TRIUMPH.



O dense were the clouds of smoke, and so great was the confusion of ships withal, that it was not easy to see from the deck of the *San Martin* what was passing in other parts of the engagement.

On leaving the neighbourhood of Calais, the Duke of Medina had striven to collect his scattered forces, and to array his ships in order of battle. He had at first intended, as I have already said, to return to his former position in the Roads; but this was now impossible, for the wind, which was rising stormily from the north-west, was against him, and the English fleet moving outward in pursuit of him. His better plan, therefore, was to make eastward, and join the galleons and galleys that were now dispersed in the Narrow Seas off Gravelines. This, as it seemed, he had endeavoured to do. But, ere his plan

could be put into effect, the English ships were upon his skirts.

Lord Howard, with some few of the Queen's larger frigates, had loitered behind over Monçada's galleasse, and did not join in the main battle until noon. Lord Henry Seymour, with his squadron of the Straits, had, however, as early as eight o'clock in the morning, opened the action with a cluster of galleons on the Spaniards' extreme right, while Drake and Hawkins had made at once for the *San Martin*, whose flag naturally drew upon her the heaviest fire. Hitherto, the English had held off at long range; but now, when their strength was no longer unequal to that of the enemy, it was their purpose to close up, yard-arm to yard-arm—not indeed to make prizes of the galleons, but to disable, destroy, or sink them, reserving their fire until within a hundred and twenty yards.

Very soon the Spaniards were driven in upon their own centre, without order or plan of action, and they became a confused and helpless mass, a mere target for the English guns. The Duke of Medina gave no commands and displayed no signals; each captain fought his own galleon as best he could, bravely, undauntedly, skilfully, but also hopelessly; for the wretched sailing-powers of their cumbrous vessels put them at a disadvantage, for which skill and courage could not compensate. They saw their foes ever to the windward of them, hemming them

in at every turn; and the whole mass of the Armada was being slowly but certainly driven towards the shoals and banks on the Flanders coast.

So much did I vaguely understand; but for the most part I could only see that which was passing in the near neighbourhood of the *San Martin* herself, and of this alone can I confidently tell.

I have said that Lord Dersingham's ship had been forced astern by an intervening galley. Her severance from us was the more easy since she was on our lee side and had lost the wind. She had dropped astern; but Martin Barlow had got on board of her, and I believed that what he had to tell to her gallant commander would soon bring her back. Meanwhile, the *Revenge*, one of the strongest of the Queen's ships, was come alongside of us, with Sir Francis Drake standing bravely on her poop-deck directing the attack, and Captain Sir Richard Grenville at his elbow. I scarce realised it then, but, as I look back to that moment, it seems a wondrous strange circumstance that my two companions, Lord Sidney Haughton and Roland Grenville, should chance to be on board this galleon at the very time that their fathers were exerting their most desperate efforts to sink her. How little did either the Earl or Sir Richard dream that his shots were endangering the life of his own son!

It was Roland himself who first recognised that the

vessel on our starboard quarter was the *Revenge*, but not a muscle of his face changed. He was as cool as if he had been in the quadrangle of our college in Oxford.

“Be not over hurried, Markham,” said he, edging near me. “Watch well your chance, and when the grappling irons are made fast, then shall we win our way on board, unnoticed in the crowd. Where hath Sidney got to, and Mistress Cicely too? Where is she? We had best not move until we are all together. Know you if Pimpernel hath been badly hurt?”

“He hath gone down into the cockpit, where Cicely now is,” I answered. “As to Sidney, I know not where he may be found. But look to yourself, Roland. If so be you can make your way on board—and you are well used to climbing ropes—it may be that you will get the help of some of the English seamen to rescue us.”

“No!” said he; “I will not stir from hence until I know that all my friends be safe. Come; let us both go and fetch them up on deck. I warrant me the *Revenge* will not move away ere she hath achieved a final victory.”

We forced our passage forward through the crowds of soldiers that thronged the main deck, and scarce had we gained the entrance of the forecastle when a tremendous broadside from Drake’s ship crashed into the *San Martin*. The galleon staggered under the fearful shock. For many

minutes we were enveloped in a cloud of smoke. The breaking and falling of timbers and the heart-rending cries of the wounded sounded terrible in our ears. Then, as the smoke lifted, the sight that presented itself was more awful than pen can describe. Great gaps had opened in the stout bulwarks; three of the heavy brass cannons had been dislodged from their carriages and knocked in pieces. The whole wide deck was one writhing mass of horror. Well was it for us that we had moved away. The place where we had stood was completely cleared, and of the three or four hundred Spaniards who had crowded the open space abaft the mast, not a score remained uninjured amid the devastation.

A cheer from the decks of the *Revenge* greeted the result of this effective onslaught. And then above the tumult we heard the sonorous voice of Sir Francis Drake calling upon his ship's gunners to prepare another charge. His ship had retained her wind, and she now glided past us, firing her stern guns as she bore round on the other tack, to give the *San Martin* yet another broadside of crossbar shot discharged from her starboard tiers.

The Spaniards, who had been making ready their grapplings in expectation of coming to a hand-to-hand fight on their enemy's decks, now abandoned their purpose, for it was clear that Drake did not intend to afford them their coveted chance. Nevertheless, they kept up a constant fire of musket balls from the tops



“ A TREMENDOUS BROADSIDE FROM DRAKE'S SHIP CRASHED INTO
‘ THE SAN MARTIN.’ ”



and from behind the shelter of the bulwarks, while their gunners on the lower decks attempted a return of heavy shot, only firing their pieces, however, when the *Revenge* had passed beyond reach.

Already the word had gone through the *San Martin* that the ammunition was well-nigh expended, and this fact may have accounted in some measure for the slowness with which her artillery was worked. But of this the English suspected nothing. The Spanish gun practice had been always bad, and it was not surprising that the galleons could inflict so little injury in return for the terrible havoc dealt by the opposing side.

But, notwithstanding the many disadvantages under which they fought, the Spanish officers behaved with a desperate heroism, never for an instant flinching, although the blood was streaming out of the scuppers, and men were falling on every hand. They were out-matched in practical skill, but not in bravery; and they proved themselves worthy countrymen of Cortez and Santa Cruz. One man alone among them acted a coward's part on that tremendous day. That man was the very last who should have been guilty of showing the white feather—to wit, the Duke of Medina Sidonia.

I had seen him on the upper poop-deck at the time when the *Fearless* opened fire, but, when the *Revenge* came alongside, he escaped below into his cabin. His cabin, as I afterwards heard, was stuffed with wool-

packs, in the middle of which he himself lay during the rest of the fight. It was rumoured, too, that he commanded his sailing-master to take the galleon where the danger was least. If this be so, his orders were certainly disobeyed, for the *San Martin* was ever in the hottest part of the battle, receiving shot at close range which went through and through her double thick timbers with force enough to shatter to pieces a great rock.

Again and again the *Revenge* returned to the attack, now from one side, now from the other, never retreating beyond musket range, and never wasting a shot. Roland Grenville, who watched her every movement, was filled with such enthusiasm that more than once I had much ado to prevent him from running out upon the mid-deck and lustily cheering. And in truth Sir Francis Drake performed such valiant deeds on that occasion as surely no seaman has ever performed before or since. He had already killed or wounded fully one half of the *San Martin's* vast crew, and I believe he would have sunk the galleon altogether had not Oquendo and De Leyva dashed in and forced him to turn his guns upon themselves, and so enable the unhappy Duke to crawl away and see to the stopping of the leaks in his ship's hull by nailing sheets of lead over the shot-holes.

Until the *San Juan* and the *Rata Coronada* thus intervened, Roland Grenville and I had remained under

the shelter of a part of the forecastle, whence, turn by turn, we could watch all that was going on and still be ourselves unexposed to the greater dangers of the open deck, and where we might await the expected moment when Drake or some other daring admiral should board us.

Here we were not idle; far from that. Although we could not attempt to take any personal part in the battle, we could at the least, and without sacrifice of our patriotism, give our much-needed help to the wounded. And this we did; dressing their cuts, lopping off their shattered limbs, or fixing rough splints to an arm or a leg that seemed not too far gone to be of further use in the world. Such as were beyond our skill we sent down to be dealt with by the surgeons in the cockpit, and those who were past all recovery we handed over to the priests who moved in our midst, crucifix in hand, confessing and absolving the dying.

In one of the intervals of this work I went below in search of Cicely and Lord Sidney. I found them both engaged in carrying water for the wounded. It was foul-smelling, pestilential liquor, but welcome enough withal to the parched lips that drank it. I was appalled by the sickening sights that confronted me in the cockpit, and I could scarcely breathe in the close and fetid atmosphere. It was no place for either Cicely or Sidney Haughton. Such services as the two were performing

were, I thought, as urgently needed upstairs in the fore-castle; so I induced them both to accompany me thither. Will Pimpernel, too, who was but slightly wounded, and had had a bandage twisted about his head, came with us.

Thus we were once more brought all together, and were ready at any moment, should God's providence enable us, to escape on board one of our own country's ships.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ANGELUS BELL.



IT was about noon when the *San Martin* was temporarily withdrawn from the fight under the protection of some five or six galleons. Not Drake alone, but almost every well-known admiral in the English fleet—gallant Martin Frobisher in the *Triumph*, Hawkins in the *Victory*, and Seymour in the *Rainbow*—had had his turn at assailing her. Her hull was riddled with shot-holes, her sails were tattered, many of her spars had been broken, and her rigging was in a hopeless tangle.

For a time her crew were engaged in making such necessary repairs as might enable her to keep afloat and renew her defence; for her flag still flew from the peak of her mainmast, her remaining men were still game, and there was no thought among them of striking their colours.

But the lull did not last very long. It was broken by the approach of Howard's *Ark*, Dersingham's *Fearless*, and two other large ships, which Roland Grenville recognised as being the *Elizabeth Jonas* and the *Bear*.

They came down upon us at a great rate, for the wind had by this time increased to half a gale, and was threatening to become a storm. Each vessel chose her own adversary, or, it were more correct to say, she took the adversary which chanced to be in her course. Lord Howard sailed in between the *San Martin* and the *Rata Coronada*, discharging his broadsides as he passed, and himself receiving a more feeble fire.

I had not told my lord of the message I had endeavoured to send to his father through the medium of Martin Barlow, not wishing to inspire the lad with any false hopes; but I was in no wise astonished when I saw that the *Fearless* was making direct for the Duke of Medina's galleon. She bore down upon us on our leeward side, passing very close. She discharged her guns into the *San Juan* galleon, which was beyond us, but her larboard guns were dumb. I took this as a sign that Lord Dersingham shrank from firing upon the ship which bore his own son on board of her. Not till long afterwards did I learn that his larboard magazines were empty of ammunition.

My Lord Sidney, who stood at my side, was not slow to recognise the ship. He searched with quick eyes along

her decks, and as her quarter came on a level with where we stood he cried aloud—

“There! there on the poop! ’Tis my father! Lend me your back, Markham; lift me up high, high, so that he may see me and know that I am here!”

He leapt upon my shoulders, but in doing so he forgot that we were standing in the low doorway, and his bare head came in violent contact with the sharp edge of a heavy oaken beam. The pain that the blow caused him must have been very great, for, loosing his hold upon my shoulders, he fell to the deck moaning and holding his head as if it had indeed been broken, as he declared it to be.

I had myself seen the Earl on the after-bulwark of his quarter-deck. Martin Barlow was at his side, gesticulating wildly and pointing to the place where we stood. Dersingham saw me at the moment when his son was springing upon my back, and he raised his hand in seeming sign that he meant to rescue us.

My lord’s cry of recognition had been heard by all who stood near us; but if the Spaniards understood aught of its meaning they showed no interest. Only one man among them appeared to give the incident more than a casual attention. He was the officer in command of a small company of musketeers who were then aiming their pieces at divers parts of the crowded decks of the *Fearless*. A few minutes before, I had heard him order his men to

fire upon the officers on the poop. He glanced sharply round at hearing my lord's clear young voice, and there was a look of singular curiosity in his eyes. I recognised him as our nameless stranger of the black mantle. He moved as though about to approach us, then checked himself, and turned to see his order fulfilled, while I bent down to give what sympathy I could to Lord Sidney.

The lad bore his hurt very bravely. "'Tis cowardly in me to cry out about a knock when so many men here are bearing their death-wounds without a murmur," said he, and, making pretence of forgetting his injury, he stood up once more to watch the *Fearless*.

But by this time the vessel, having the full wind in her sails, had passed in advance of us, and we only saw the top of her poop-lantern and the end of her mizzen-boom as they disappeared behind the lift of the *San Martin's* forecastle. Eagerly, and with unceasing hope, we waited for her return, deeming it impossible that the Earl of Dersingham would fail to attempt our rescue. But the afternoon sped on, the fight continued, vessel after vessel of the English fleet assailed us in her turn, and our hopes seemed destined to be crushed.

"Oh, why comes not my father to our help?" cried my lord often and again as the evening wore towards its close.

"He will surely return ere long," whispered Cicely, with unwearying faith, in reply to each plaintive appeal.

And then she would point out some vessel looming forth through the clouds of smoke and ask him if this were not at last the *Fearless*, and my lord would watch the ship for a while as she bore down in our direction, crying at length, with renewed disappointment—

“No, no, Mistress Cicely; 'tis not the *Fearless*, but some other ship.”

Many of the ships came so close to us that their yard-arms almost touched those of the galleon, and at such times our hearts would bound with fresh expectancy. Now and indeed, we thought, the *Fearless* has come! But my lord would shake his head in grave despondency, and the ship would glide by, giving us only the unfriendly greeting of a few shots from her heavy guns.

Soon even such vague hopes as these became less frequent in their recurrence. One by one the English ships drew back to the rear; by slow degrees the firing lessened, gun after gun fell gradually silent, until at the last naught was to be heard but the howling of the wind, the dashing of the waves, and the harrowing cries of the wounded.

And now my lord's despondency changed to a sudden resentment. He abused his father, declaring that it had been easy enough for the Earl to bring his ship alongside and rescue us had he so chosen, that his failure to do so was nothing less than cowardly, and that his desertion of us was cruel and unpardonable.

Roland Grenville had been strangely silent for some time past; but now, on hearing these unfilial accusations, and evidently misliking them, he moved away, drawing me with him.

“Why do you not tell him?” he asked.

“Tell him?” I echoed. “What have I to tell?”

“Why, that the Earl of Dersingham is dead,” said he. “Saw you not how it all befell?”

“Nay, I knew naught of it,” I answered, astonished at his grave news.

“I had thought you were keeping it from Sidney out of mere kindness,” he went on. “But it pains me to hear the lad say these things of a brave man who is dead, and his own father too——”

“Tell me how it happened,” I urged. “Hath the *Fearless* been sunk?”

“Nay,” said he; “for aught I know, she is still in as good case as the rest of our English ships. The matter befell in this wise, and at the very moment when Lord Sidney hurt his head. You saw our adversary of Dunkirk standing among the musketeers; you heard him give them the order to fire upon the officers? Well, they were levelling their pieces when Sidney’s cry drew attention to my Lord of Dersingham. He whom you name the Black Mantle turned suddenly pale and cried to his men to lower their muskets. But he was too late. The pieces were fired all along the line. Dersingham was

then standing at the poop-bulwark; he had climbed up, holding on by the mizzen-shrouds, so that he might better see Lord Sidney. He was thus exposed when a musket ball struck him. I know not if 'twas through the movement of his ship as she discharged her larboard guns, but he lost his hold and fell over into the sea. The man Martin Barlow, who, as you know, stood near him, saw him fall, and in an instant he leapt upon the bulwark and dived after him. The *Fearless* sailed on, without any on board of her seeming to know that their commander was floating lifeless in her wake."

"How know you that he was lifeless, Roland?" I asked.

"Because," said he, "the musket ball struck him between the eyes, and he swam not a stroke, but floated for a moment and then sank. As to Martin Barlow, I saw him battling with the great waves, vainly searching for the man he had so bravely followed; but I warrant me that even his good swimming could not save him."

"God rest his soul!" I murmured; and then from the chapel under the galleon's poop we heard the solemn tinkling of the Angelus bell. The soldiers on the deck stopped in their work of removing the wounded, the weary priests fell upon their knees, three of the ship's boys, having donned their white vestments, walked round in melancholy procession. Roland touched my elbow,

and I turned to see the Black Mantle standing a few yards away from us. He, like all the other Catholics, had bared his head and was muttering the Latin words of the *Ave Maria*.

Thus the great fight of that day ended with a prayer.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CHALLENGE.



VERY different now was the condition of the *San Martin* from what it had been in the early morning. Then the decks had been spotlessly clean and orderly, the guns brightly polished, every rope in its place. Now there was not a foot square of the planks that was not darkly stained with blood; the guns lay dismounted and shattered side by side with the dead bodies of the men who had fired them; the thick bulwarks were wrecked and riven; the rigging hung loose from the splintered masts and the broken yards; the sails were torn and tattered. Where-soever we turned our eyes we saw wreckage and devastation. And among it all the Spanish seamen and soldiers moved about like the ghosts of their former selves, their pale, wan faces begrimed with powder, their rent clothing bespattered with blood.

It was not the fighting alone that had thus changed the men and made them look so haggard and worn. Hunger and thirst and want of sleep had also done much to weaken them. They had been kept hard at work on the day before—cleaning the guns, mending the broken spars, stopping up leaks in the hull, and making all things straight and ship-shape after the many encounters that had been endured in the voyage up Channel. Through some accident or mismanagement, they had been deprived of their evening meal. The English fire-ships had destroyed their night's rest, and during this long day's desperate fighting there had been no leisure for the serving out of food.

Like brave men, which they certainly were, they had stood at their posts through thick and thin, as their diminished numbers fully proved; and now that there was a lull in the conflict, now that the excitement was relaxed, their bold strength had given way, and dismay and fear had fastened on their hearts.

This I observed while, as the sun was setting stormily in the west, we stood in the midst of the priests and soldiers on the main deck, listening to their mournful and spiritless chanting of the *Ave Maria*. That vesper prayer sounded in our ears like a dirge, and its concluding words, *nunc et in hora mortis nostrae*, seemed to have a strangely appropriate meaning, seeing that so many poor wounded Spaniards were now, indeed, in the hour of their death.

My wondering glance rested upon one who lay upon his back at my feet. His glassy eyes stared into the cloudy sky; I fancied that his lips moved. Something in his livid face was familiar to me. Not until afterwards did I remember that this was the same man who had dropped the heavy cannon ball into Will Pimpernel's boat.

When the brief vesper ceremony came to its close, I turned with Roland Grenville to go back into the fore-castle where we had left our companions, but, ere we had moved a couple of steps, our nameless enemy of the black mantle stood in front of us, barring our way.

"Permit me," I said, brushing past him. But he held me back.

"Need I remind you," he said, "that we have not yet settled our little business that was left undone in the streets of Dunkirk?"

"Would that it had been finished three days ago," I retorted, "and that I had left you indeed dead as I thought you were. 'Tis seemly conduct, surely, that an Englishman born should do as you, sir, have been doing this day!"

"'Tis no affair of yours what I may choose to do," quoth he; "and I know not by what right you claim so to dictate to me. Lutheran and spy that you are, you may thank your good stars that you are not at this

moment dangling from the yard-arm of this ship! You owe it to the mere fact that you are my own countryman that I have not betrayed you to His Excellency the Duke of Medina."

"Indeed, sir, I thank you for your courtesy," I said. "I had not thought that such a claim could have any effect upon one who had stooped to take arms against both his Queen and his countrymen. I am happy in being so signal an exception."

"If I have not betrayed you," said he, "'tis but that I wish to give my good rapier the work that the rope should have had. You have escaped a hanging, Master Markham; but, by the saints, you shall not so easily escape the punishment that I owe you on my own account."

He spoke these words with slow deliberation, looking straight into my face the while. I was conscious that he was one of the handsomest men I had ever beheld. Tall he was and of good proportions, with an ample chest and broad shoulders. He had taken off his metal corselet now that there was no need for its protection, and his tight-fitting doublet of dark blue velvet and gold lace suited him excellent well. At his shoulder, fastening his short cape, he wore the brooch of which Grenville had told me; but it was partly concealed, and I could not read the legend upon it. 'Twas his eyes that I most admired. They were very clear blue, the whites of them exceeding pure,

betokening good descent. Saving only the eyes of Lord Sidney Haughton, they were the finest I had ever seen in the face of mortal man. His skin, too, was of delicate texture, white as ivory at his forehead, and with the rosy bloom as of a ripe peach on the cheeks. The trimming of his pointed beard showed that he was one who gave no small attention to the preserving of his personal comeliness. There was less of bravado about him than I had at first supposed. As I looked upon him, I felt in some sort a regret that a man so entirely English in favour and comeliness should have demeaned himself by siding with our foes.

“If it be that you wish to cross weapons with me,” I answered, in response to his last words, “I am at your service; and I will fight you the more willingly since I have now an additional cause of enmity against you.”

“Ha!” he exclaimed, “and prithee wherein lies my offence?”

“In that it was you who ordered the musketeers to fire upon my good friend and patron, the Earl of Dersingham,” I answered. “’Twas by your evil work that he came to his death.”

The man drew back; his face suddenly paled, and he bit hard upon his lip.

“Dersingham?” he repeated; “the Earl of Dersingham, say you? Ah, then ’twas he indeed who stood upon the poop of yon ship that we fired upon?”

"Ay, and well you knew it!" cried Roland Grenville, "else had you not now turned so white i' the face at mention of his name! You knew him as he stood there on the deck, and you bade your men shoot at him. You're nothing less than his murderer!"

"These be strong words to fling at a soldier, young man," said the Black Mantle; but he hung his head as though the reproach had stung him. "In warfare we are no respecters of persons," he added, "and those of high rank must e'en take their chances along with the humblest. In ordering the men to shoot I did but my duty."

"Duty, forsooth!" cried I. "Sure, 'tis a pretty sense of duty that leads a man to fight under the flag of his country's foes!"

"Religion is more than country," retorted the Black Mantle. "'Tis for the Holy Mother Church that I fight, and against all heretics and Lutherans, no matter what be their nationality." He glanced at me quickly, as if suddenly remembering the occasion of our encounter. "And now, sir," said he, "a truce to this foolish parleying. You felled me in the street of Dunkirk, and such an insult I cannot brook with impunity."

"Have at you, then," said I, putting my hand on my rapier.

"No, no," said he, "not here and now, but to-night; at midnight, on the deck of the forecastle. There I will meet

you ;” and with that he turned on his heels and strode aft towards the poop.

“Marry !” said Roland Grenville, “but he is a strange mixture of humanity. At one moment he is as an English gentleman, all modesty and quiet dignity ; at another he is as a swaggering Spaniard, with all the Spaniard’s bluster and false pride. You will fight with him, Markham ?”

“Of a certainty, since he hath challenged me,” I answered. “Hath he not been the death of Lord Sidney’s father ? ’Tis cause enough for me, and methinks it were well to prevent him doing further mischief of a like kind when the battle is renewed on the morrow.”

We mounted the flight of stairs leading upon the fore-castle deck, for now we could move at our will about the galleon, the Spandiards being too much absorbed in their own affairs to give heed to us.

“There is one matter touching the death of the Earl of Dersingham that I had not thought upon until this moment,” remarked Roland, as we moved forward to the prow. “It is that Lord Sidney Haughton will now succeed to the title and estates of Dersingham.”

“There you mistake,” said I. “Sidney is but the second son. His brother, who is some six years his senior, now becomes the Earl of Dersingham. For aught that I know, that brother may be wedded and have sons of his own, in which case the death of his father will make no change in Lord Sidney’s name.”

“And where is that brother at this present time?” asked Roland. “I had never even heard of him.”

“’Tis not strange that you knew nothing concerning him,” I answered, “for he is but seldom spoken of by any of the family. There was a grave disagreement some years ago, and the elder son went off in high dudgeon, declaring that he would never return to Dersingham Castle while his father was alive. He was then a student at Cambridge University, where his talents as a scholar had gained him many honours. But since that time little hath been heard of him.”

“And what was the cause of the quarrel?”

“Nay, I know not—some private matter that is never now touched upon by any members of the family.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Grenville, looking out over the galleon’s bulwarks, “now can we see more of what this day’s battling hath done! What think you now of King Philip’s invincible Armada?”

“Certes!” I cried, “what wreckage!”

Never shall I forget the sight that presented itself before us in the dusk of that evening.

The wind, which had shifted to the north-west, had whipped the sea into great foaming waves that hissed and surged about the galleons with a force that threatened at every moment to smash their hulls to pieces. The crippled ships were being driven in a confused mass to the leeward, where the seas were breaking on the endless shoals which

fringe the low-lying coast above Dunkirk. There was not a vessel among them that did not bear some visible sign of the injuries she had received under the terrible fire of the English guns. Some were wholly dismantled and were lying helpless, with a tangle of torn sails and cordage and broken spars bearing them down, and the angry waves sweeping over their exposed decks. Some had their rudders shot away; others their bowsprits and topmasts. Every hull was besprinkled with shot-holes from prow to poop, and the great streams of water that were being pumped out through the scuppers showed that they were leaking in all directions.

Even as we watched there, in the deepening dusk, we saw one of them settle down by the stern and then suddenly sink with all hands; and I doubt not that many another met with a like fate during the night. Here and there on the galleons that were close at hand we saw the men throwing the dead overboard. The surging of the sea was their only requiem. It was a requiem which was murmured over the bodies of four thousand Spaniards on that evening—such being the full number of the slain in that fight in the narrow seas.

The condition to which the Armada was reduced could have been imperfectly known by the English, whose ships lay a mile or so to our windward. But to us it was clear that the Spanish crews would not be easily induced to face Drake again. Not only was nearly every galleon and

galley disabled, but so great had been the demand for powder and shot that the whole fleet had already exhausted its ammunition. The Spaniards had stood to their guns until their magazines were empty, and no powder was to be got except from the sweepings of the floors. There was scarcely enough round shot left to load each gun in the fleet for a single discharge.

Happily for Medina Sidonia, the English were in no better case than himself. Lord Howard's fleet had started out of Plymouth but ill equipped. Queen Elizabeth's rigid economy had not afforded him more ammunition than was barely sufficient to carry him through one vigorous engagement, and, had it not been that the deficiencies were in part supplied from his own private purse and from other independent sources, he would certainly have fared very badly. Even as matters stood, he was compelled to give up his work ere it was completely finished. If his attack had continued for the two hours of daylight that remained, the Spanish galleons must all have sunk or surrendered, for they were utterly powerless to resist longer.

At the very moment when the Spaniards were giving themselves up for lost, however, Howard had drawn off and left them to bring their vessels to the wind, throw their dead overboard, see to the hurts of their wounded, clear their decks, patch up their leaking hulls, and do what little could be done towards mending their tattered sails

and rigging. And in such matters as these the whole of that night was miserably passed.

“Come,” said Grenville, when we had gazed for a long time upon the widespread destruction that had been wrought, “my vitals are weak with hunger. Not a bite hath passed my lips throughout this whole day. Let us wend below and see if we can find some food. Bad though it be, I will make shift to eat some of it.”

“And I too,” I said, “for, saving a mouldy biscuit that poor Mason gave me yesternight, I have eaten naught since we left the cabin of the *Pride of Wapping*.”

We went below decks, and after much troublous searching found our companions. They had quitted the place where we had left them, and Will Pimpernel had taken them into a quiet corner abaft the cockpit, in the cabin of one of the petty officers with whom he had made friends. We discovered the old mariner seated on the floor with his back resting against a large oak chest. Cicely and my lord lay in his arms sound asleep. Will had found them some food—a handful of dry grapes, some biscuits, and a flask of Spanish wine—and had done all in his power to make them comfortable, as, indeed, they appeared to be.

“There be a taste of the wine left for you, my masters,” he whispered, as we entered, “and a few biscuits that Mistress Cicely bade me save for you. They are hidden

under her cloak, look you. Take them. I may not move lest I waken these two, my children."

We took the biscuits, but, deeming the wine too precious to be wantonly squandered, we left it for Cicely's future use, and went out to where we had seen one of the Spaniards serving water from one of the large water butts at the foot of the foremast. Here, while munching our dry biscuits, we awaited our turn for the use of the pannikin. Many of the men grumbled at the small quantity of water that was allowed them, but the man who served it explained the reason. The fresh water which had been brought from Corunna had been stowed on deck. The casks had been shot through in the action, and most of them were now empty.

For my own part, I think the men might have complained much more at its quality than at the small amount that was doled out to them. Roland Grenville would have none of it, declaring that he would sooner drink of the waters of a certain frog pond that had an ill reputation on his father's farm at Stowe.

"Touch it not, Markham," he said; "'twill give thee some disease as foul as itself."

But already I had drunken of what had been given me, emptying the vessel to its last drop, so thirsty was I and so faint withal.

We had meant a return to the cockpit, and offer our help with the wounded; but we found that there was little

need for us, the priests and soldiers being already of equal number with those whom they were attending. So we went back to Will Pimpernel, and, having offered up a prayer of thanks to God for our safety, and of supplication for His future care of us in our trouble, we lay down and tried to snatch a few hours of sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SISTER CONFESSOR.



NOT long was Roland Grenville in finding the sleep that he sought, but for myself the attempt was vain. The water that I had drunk caused me such pains that I could scarce close my eyes; my hands trembled as with a palsy, and my head was like to split itself asunder with the ache that was in it. Truly I was in a sorry condition for fighting a duel.

The night wore on, and still I grew no better. I was fain to go to one of the surgeons and bid him bleed me, but dared not do so lest he should detain me over long, and so cause me to fail in my appointment with my adversary.

At last I heard the ship's bell tolling midnight. I awakened Roland Grenville, and together we mounted to the forecastle deck. I told him of my condition, blaming

the water, and he offered to take my place in the coming encounter; but to this I, of course, would not listen.

As we reached the deck the fresh strong air revived me somewhat. I glanced around, but at first could see no one for the glare of a large lantern that stood upon the deck in front of the mast. But presently two men appeared from out the shadow and seized me. They handled me roughly, and I anticipated some serious trouble. I tried to free myself, but in my weakness resistance was useless. They dragged me forward for several yards, and then Grenville caught hold of one of them by his shoulders and flung him bodily backward.

“Is it thus that you keep an appointment of honour, señor?” I heard him demand. I did not see to whom he spoke, but the answer came very quickly from beside one of the forward guns—

“When heard you ever of giving honour to a rascally spy?” and then our man of the black mantle stood before me with his rapier drawn. One who looked like an Italian rather than a Spaniard was at his elbow—a tall, evil-visaged man wearing a soldier’s buff leather jerkin. I observed that this person kept his eyes fixed steadily upon Roland Grenville; but he turned once to the Black Mantle, addressing him by the name of Don Francisco. I whispered to Roland to be wary, for that I suspected treachery. Nor was I wrong.

“Master Markham,” said Don Francisco (by which name

I may call him for the nonce, since I then knew none other), and, standing his long rapier with its point on the planks of the deck, he rested his two hands on its hilt in front of him, so that at an instant's warning he might be ready to use the weapon against me. "Master Markham, you are in possession of certain papers of State which, had your plans not been happily frustrated, you were to have delivered into the hands of Elizabeth Tudor's agents in Flanders. You will please to hand those papers over to me."

"What!" I cried, amazed at his bold demand; "and so you have entrapped me hither for this?"

A grim Jesuitical smile came into his handsome countenance, but in a moment it was changed to a look of yet more grim severity.

"Come!" he demanded in a stern voice, which was in strange contrast with his former gentleness. "Come! the papers—and no prevarication, sirrah! They are concealed within your doublet. Let me have them with no more ado, or else I must needs take them from you when you are lying dead upon this deck."

I deemed it prudent to preserve a calm front, albeit my anger was rising within me.

"The papers you speak of can be no manner of service to you or to anyone else on board this ship," I said.

"That is a matter for others to judge," he returned.

“You, who I am well sure have not dared to open them, can know naught of their contents.”

“Then, since you judge them to be of so great importance, I too will so regard them,” I said, “and I shall protect them even with my life.”

He drew back a step, gripping his weapon in his right hand. Turning to the two men who had laid hold of me, he spoke to them in glib French, bidding them stand on guard at the head of the stairs. They left my side and obeyed. At the same instant his evil-visaged companion drew his rapier and confronted Roland Grenville. Roland had all the while been on the alert, and was in no wise taken by surprise at the suddenness of the man’s attack. Their blades clashed, and then, almost before I had stood on guard, I heard a heavy fall and a prolonged groan.

“*Sancta Maria!*” muttered Don Francisco, and he made at me with a vigour compared with which his former onslaught in the dark street of Dunkirk was as child’s play.

I was weak from want of food, and the pains within me, caused by the drinking of the foul water, gave me no little uneasiness. My hands trembled so that my grip on my rapier was perilously insecure. The galleon, too, was rolling prodigiously on the high waves, so that it was by no means easy for one to stand upright. But I warded my adversary’s thrusts with such skill that I gathered

new courage. He bore me backward, but, by a well-judged traverse, I managed to bring him into the full light of the lantern. I knew that if it came to a matter of endurance he would certainly have the advantage of me. My life depended upon a speedy exercise of my best skill. I made a feint. His parry took him off his guard, and I delivered a quick forward-thrust with all the force that I could put into it. Whether his foot slipped on the blood-wet planks, or whether the lurching of the ship caused him to lose his balance, I know not. Howbeit, he fell heavily forward, my blade penetrating his body. He staggered, trying to regain his foothold; but again the ship, struck by a huge wave, gave a sudden lurch and he rolled over, upsetting the lantern and extinguishing the light. He called aloud for help, and the two guards, leaving their post, ran to his side.

Very speedily the deck was crowded with the dark figures of men who had been attracted thither by the simultaneous going out of the light and the loud call for help. In the dimness I looked about for Roland Grenville, not knowing if he were dead or alive. Some of the soldiers were bending over a dark human form that lay prone and motionless on the deck. I went into their midst, but could not get near enough to see if it were the body of Roland.

“Light me the lantern!” commanded one, who by his tone seemed to stand in authority; and, as a soldier

moved to obey him, he added, "'Tis a duel that hath been afoot, and, by Santiago! the man who hath done this deed will surely be punished when brought before His Excellency. Let him be arrested, whosoever he be!"

"Holy Mother!" cried one who was bending over the body, "here lieth Pedro de Santo, the skilfullest fencer in all the Armada! I know him by the token that he hath but three fingers on the left hand. For the love of Heaven bring me a priest, that he may be shriven ere he be cold!"

Then it was not Roland Grenville who had fallen! Where, then, was Roland? I thought that, peradventure, he had escaped below, and, knowing that the lighted lantern must soon be brought back, to my certain disadvantage, I made my way slowly through the crowd and escaped by the way we had come.

I returned in safety to the place where we had left our companions, but on entering the little cabin I discovered that they were all three gone. An officer (the same, I suppose, who had shown such friendship to Will Pimpernel) lay dozing on the top of the oak chest. My entrance awoke him.

"You will find your friends below in the cockpit, señor," said he, and thither I went. But as I passed down the stairs a strange faintness overcame me. I crept down step by step, holding on by the rail, and staggered to the entrance of the great room where so many wounded

men lay moaning and writhing in their agony. The place seemed to be swirling round and round. I felt a loud singing in my ears, I gasped for breath, and then I fell, almost overturning a white-robed friar who put out his blood-stained hands to catch me.

I know not what followed ; but when at length I came to my senses I found myself lying upon the floor of the cockpit with my own doublet for a pillow, my arms bare (the left one bandaged where one of the surgeons had bled me), and a sort of turban of cold wet cloth about my aching head. The ship was rocking fearfully, and through the open shaft of the stairway a stream of grey daylight poured in.

Someone was speaking very near to me. The words, which were in English, sounded like softest music in my ears. I turned noiselessly on my pillow to see who the speaker might be. It was my sister Cicely. She was kneeling at the side of one of the wounded soldiers. Her back was towards me.

“No,” she was saying, “I am not of the Romish Church. I worship God, as do all my kindred, in our homely English fashion, and not as do the Catholics, who bow down before graven images and painted altars, and who think that they are pleasing Almighty God by the burning of candles and the offering of incense. When I pray, 'tis not in learned Latin that I hold commune with the Lord, but in the simple words that my dear mother taught me at her knee when I was a little child.”

There was a deep-drawn sigh from the lips of the man she was speaking with—a sigh that was half of bodily pain and, as it seemed to me, half of worldly regret.

“I like not to think,” the girl went on, “that all these priests and friars who are about us in this fearful place of suffering do presume to take upon themselves the privilege of absolving these dying men of their earthly sins. True absolution cannot be given by mortal man. We must look for forgiveness to God alone——”

“Ah!” sighed the man in a low, murmuring voice, “but it is hard to die unconfessed and unshriven.”

“Confession may indeed relieve the dying Christian’s mind of the conscious burden of sin,” said Cicely, “for it doth imply repentance; but to confess to a worldly priest, and to expect that his hollow words will entirely absolve us, is but a mockery of God.”

There was a long pause, during which Cicely continued kneeling at the dying soldier’s side. At last he spoke, with fuller strength in his voice, which, to my no small surprise, I now recognised as the voice of Don Francisco.

“Come yet nearer to me, my pretty child,” said he. “And now say me one of those simple prayers that you learnt at your mother’s knee; for I feel that my last hour hath come.”

“And will you say it with me?” she asked.

“Ay, an’ my voice let me,” he answered gently.

Then Cicely bent her head and, clasping her hands together in front of her, murmured the holy words—

“Our Father which art in heaven.”

He repeated them slowly and brokenly. “Our Father—
—which art—in heaven.”

“Hallowed be Thy name.”

“Hallowed be Thy name.” He echoed the words with a fervour that showed he felt their full meaning. And so they went on to the end, their two voices mingling, hers clear and sweet, his rough and quivering. And when the solemn “Amen” had been pronounced, it seemed that the girl opened her eyes and looked upon him, for she said—

“Why, thou’rt crying!”

“The prayer hath touched me as it never did before,” said he. “Sure ’tis sweeter far in the English than in any Latin Pater Noster, although the meaning be the same. It may be that ’tis your gentle voice that hath given them so great sacredness. ’Tis as the voice of an angel sent down from heaven, and it taketh me back to my own childhood’s days, when that I too did lisp them at my mother’s knee.”

“And were you not always of the Romish Church?” she questioned.

But he made no answer. Presently, however, he said—

“I had but now been thinking to ask you to bring one of the priests to my side, that I might confess to him;

but, after all, methinks it were of equal avail if I confessed to you. Wilt be my sister confessor, my pretty one?"

"I will hear aught that you have to say," said Cicely; "but rest you for a while. Over much speaking may weaken you."

I heard no more for some time. It was Cicely who next spoke.

"Prithee," said she, "what may be the meaning of these words that I see inscribed on the brooch that you wear—'*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*'?"

I saw his hand clench itself, and he turned uneasily.

"What mean they?" he murmured. "Ah, had I but attended to their meaning, I had not now been here dying on board a Spanish ship. They mean, my child, that it is sweet and honourable to die for one's country."

"But you are English," cried Cicely, "and 'tis surely not for England that you now die!"

"Alas! no," said he. "I die in the service of the King of Spain, and 'twas by the hand of an English gentleman that I got my death-wound; wherefore my death can be neither honourable nor sweet. But listen, Mistress Cicely—for that is your name, methinks you said—listen, and I will tell you how it befell that I first forswore my Protestant faith and then deserted my country——"

I pressed nearer that I too might listen, but as I moved a hand was laid upon me. I turned and saw that Lord

Sidney Haughton was at my other side—that he had been there even before I had awakened. I know not if he had overheard aught of Cicely's converse with Don Francisco, but in any case he showed no manner of interest in it, and when I put my finger to my lip, cautioning him to silence, he drew back and transferred his attention to a poor maimed old warrior who lay moaning at no great distance away.

Don Francisco told of his happy childhood with his brothers and sisters, and of the goodness of his parents, whose estates were in the county of Norfolk, and then of how he had been sent to college. His life, he said, until he was at the age of one-and-twenty, had been one of great joy. But then he had fallen into companionship with certain Jesuits, who had converted him to their Catholic faith. They had besought him to go with them to Italy and there take orders as a priest of Rome. He had consented, albeit at the sacrifice of his father's good will. Once turned a Papist, he had looked upon every Protestant as his natural enemy; and when King Philip of Spain called for an army to invade England and so exterminate the English Protestants, Francisco had listed to fight for a cause that was dearer to his heart than parents or country.

He had gone with the Prince of Parma into the Netherlands, there to await the coming of the Armada. Hearing in Dunkirk that the Duke of Medina Sidonia had anchored

in Calais Roads, he had taken horse and ridden to Calais with messages from the Prince. Thus he had come on board the *San Martin*.

At length he told of how he had ordered his musketeers to fire upon the officers of the *Fearless*, and of how one of them—their commander—had been shot dead.

“The *Fearless!*” echoed Cicely, in a louder voice. “Why, then, it must surely be the Earl of Dersingham who hath been thus killed!”

At this my Lord Sidney pressed nearer, and, touching me on the arm, asked with bated breath—

“What said your sister of the Earl of Dersingham?”

I made pretence not to hear him. Don Francisco went on—

“Yes,” said he, “the Earl of Dersingham—my own father—the dear father with whom as a youth I parted in anger. I knew not that he was on that ship. I did not know him until it was too late. May God forgive me!”

“What do I hear?” cried Lord Sidney, his face suddenly blanching to a deathly whiteness. “The Earl of Dersingham dead!” And then he looked upon the dying man. “Frank! Frank!” he cried. “Oh, my brother! You here? *You!*”

For a moment their eyes met. The elder brother raised himself. “Sidney!” he murmured, stretching forth his hands. The next moment he had fallen back dead.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNDER ARREST.



It was passing strange that I had not before remarked the family resemblance between Don Francisco and my Lord Sidney. They had both the same fairness of complexion, the same ruddy brown hair, the same clear blue eyes; there was something in the cut of their patrician features that was alike; something, too, of the same mellow richness in their voices. I might have guessed, had I not been so dull-witted, that it was by no mere chance coincidence that my whilom adversary wore a brooch bearing the Haughton crest and motto.

But, never suspecting the relationship, I had given no thought as to whom our man of the black mantle might be. That he was a gentleman born I had not doubted, but from the fact that he was in the service of the King

of Spain, I had taken him for one of fallen fortunes—a needy adventurer—who had joined our foemen, perhaps, indeed, in genuine religious sympathy, but mainly, I had imagined, in the hope of gaining worldly furtherance at the hands of what he believed to be the stronger side; and all the time he was my lord's own elder brother, and the heir to one of the richest and most honoured earldoms in England.

Francis Haughton could not have foreseen that, in enlisting under the flag of England's great foe, he would bring himself into personal conflict with his own father; and I am well assured that, at the moment when he ordered his musketeers to fire upon the officers of the *Fearless*, he had not the faintest notion that it was the Earl of Dersingham who stood in the commander's place on the poop. Upon recognising his father, he had called to his men to lower their pieces; but too late. Lord Dersingham was killed, and his death was to be regarded as one of the ordinary misfortunes of war.

Touching his lordship's untimely death, I felt that I was myself in some degree accountable; for had I not sent Martin Barlow on board the *Fearless*, bidding him acquaint the Earl of our danger? It was doubtless with the thought of rescuing his son Sidney that he had returned to the fray, and in doing so he had lost his own life. I could not blame myself, however, much as I deplored the cruel destiny that had deprived my young

lord of so noble a father, and the English fleet of so brave an admiral. Far more was I personally to blame in that I had with my own hand slain this man who lay dead at our side in the *San Martin's* cockpit.

As I looked upon him, I reflected that for the few hours that had elapsed between his father's death and his own he had himself been the Earl of Dersingham, and that that honoured title had now descended by succession to my Lord Sidney.

"Know you aught of how he came by his death-wound?" asked my lord of Cicely, when he had stood for some minutes in silent contemplation of his dead brother.

"No," answered Cicely; "he but told me that he got it by the hand of an English gentleman."

I had risen to my feet, feeling better for the sleep that I had had; and now I drew my lord aside, so that Cicely might not hear what I had to say.

"'Twas I who killed your brother," I said.

"*You, Markham?*" he exclaimed. "Ah, then you must surely have known that it was he who caused my father's death, and you have taken vengeance!"

"I have taken no vengeance, my lord," I answered. "It was in fair fight that he fell, and in a duel to which he himself challenged me." And then I told of our encounter in Dunkirk and of all the other matters concerning his brother, ending with the duel and my escape

from the forecastle-deck, to all of which he listened with close attention.

“I do not blame you, Markham,” said he, “for you could not have known that this stranger was my father’s son ; and the fault was his and not yours. Even though he is dead, I can scarce bring myself to forgive him for having joined the Spaniards. It was bad enough that he should have become a Papist and a skulking Jesuit ; but that he should fight on the side of the enemies of England and against his Queen, ’tis the act of a low traitor, and unworthy of one whose family have ever counted it their highest glory to die for their country ! How, think you, can I tell this thing to my mother ? ’Twill break her heart !”

And at the thought of his mother he burst into tears, and I dared not to reproach him for his hard words concerning his brother, who, after all, had died repentant.

I quitted his side for a moment, and went to pick up my doublet from the floor where I had left it. Not until now did I remember the papers that I had so carefully defended. I searched for them, but they were nowhere to be found ! Who, then, had taken them ? I thought that it might be Roland Grenville, who, seeing danger of discovery, had secured them while I lay there unconscious.

“Prithee, hath Roland been here with you ?” I asked of Cicely.

The girl looked up in surprise at my agitation, and shook her head.

"No," she answered; "I have not seen him these many hours."

"Then who hath taken the papers that I had hidden under my doublet?" I questioned.

"The papers?" she echoed in alarm, springing to her feet. "Ah, now I know. It must surely be the priest who took them—the priest who carried you here when you fell fainting. I saw him unfastening your doublet. I did not at first know that it was you who had been brought in—not until I chanced to come near to you, and then you lay as you were when you awoke."

"And you are certain that Roland came not to my side—neither Roland nor Captain Pimpernel?"

"Alas!" said she, "it were not easy for Captain Pimpernel to be here, seeing what hath befallen him. Not long had you gone from us when certain Spaniards fell upon him. I know not what they said, but they caused him to bare his arms and ankles where the marks of his chains of slavery could be seen. He cried out, 'I am undone! Look to the girl, Master Haughton!' and then the Spaniards carried him off."

"Alas!" I cried, "they take him for one of the slaves, and have doubtless put him in chains."

For the space of about half an hour after this, my lord and I were engaged in attending to the burying of Francis

Haughton. My lord took possession of some few valuables that had belonged to him, and then we saw the body carried up into the ship's waist, and cast, with curt ceremony, into the sea, with many others of the men who had died during the night.

We were thus occupied when a large galleasse was rowed alongside. It was the *Rata Coronada*, commanded by Don Alonzo de Leyva, who, with several other important commanders of the Armada, now came on board. They made their way to the poop-deck, where the Duke of Medina Sidonia stood to receive them.

When the side gangway was opened for these officers to pass on board from their boats, we could see the other ships of the Spanish fleet labouring helplessly on the main. A wild storm from the north-west was blowing, and the sea was running high, driving the crippled galleons before it as though they were so many small cock-boats. To our leeward we could see a long line of yellow foam breaking upon the outlying sandbanks of the Flanders coast.

A terrible danger confronted us. Wounded as the galleons were, their masts could not bear the weight of canvas sufficient to draw them off from the threatening shoals. To tack was impossible. There was indeed room to wear round, but to do so must only mean falling into the hands of the English, or to venture another engagement, for which the Spaniards seemed doggedly disinclined.

The English ships were but a mile distant on the weather quarter, hanging upon the skirts of the Armada, as if inviting the Duke to renew the battle.

We did not then know that both Drake and Howard's magazines were almost empty, and that this bold front that our friends had put on was mere brag intended to frighten the Spaniards.

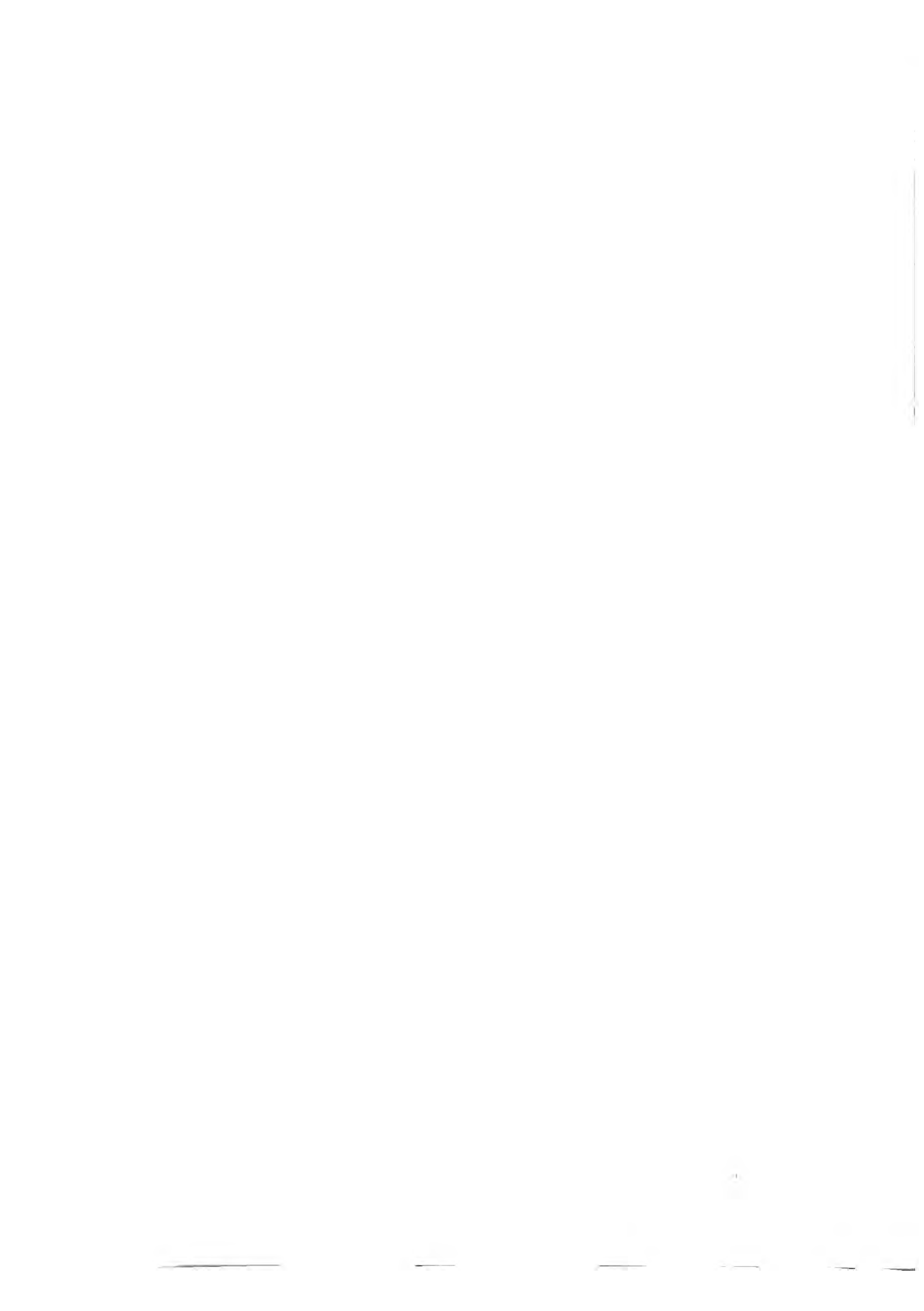
It was a ruse which succeeded excellent well; for Medina and Diego Florez, the Castilian admiral, had already lost heart and nerve, their men generally were sick with despondency, and the sight of the English fleet bearing down, as if it had just come out of port fully equipped, spread terror throughout the whole Armada. With death staring them in the face, and themselves utterly helpless, men and officers alike betook themselves to prayer as the only refuge left.

We were standing at the foot of the forecastle stairs while thus looking out upon the sea; but suddenly my lord caught at my arm, drawing my attention to a priest and some half-dozen armed men who were approaching us.

"What want they?" he questioned; but he had scarce spoken ere the priest (who was the same that had attended to me in my sickness of the night before) ordered the men to seize us. We had not time, even had we deemed it prudent, to resist; and we were marched aft towards the poop.



"THE PRIEST ORDERED THE MEN TO SEIZE US."
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As we went through a long, wide passage, leading off from the main deck, we had glimpses into the well-furnished state-rooms of the officers. They were fitted out like the apartments of an Oriental palace, with such splendour and luxury as might satisfy the Sultan himself. In one of them we saw a large table loaded with fruit and wines. Negroes, with great gold rings in their ears, moved here and there, carrying trenchers of savoury viands. The doors and port holes were hung with rich curtains of damask silk; the couches were of soft velvet and gold brocade. All was beautiful to behold.

“To think that all this grandeur and comfort is made for a few proud Spaniard officers,” sighed my lord, “while your sister is forced to remain in the sickening air of the cockpit!”

The priest went before us leading the way, until he came to a flight of stairs. These he ascended, and we presently found ourselves upon the quarter-deck, where the Duke of Medina Sidonia sat in the midst of some ten officers—Alonzo de Leyva, the young Miguel de Oquendo, Martinez de Recalde, Diego Florez, and others whose names I know not. They all watched us as we were brought in front of them.

CHAPTER XVII.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.



THESE be the two English spies, your Excellency," said the priest.

The Duke continued for a time to read over some papers that lay open on his knee. My heart leapt into my mouth as I recognised them as the papers I had lost. At last he raised his heavy eyes, and looked at us from head to foot. I observed that the colour of his skin was even more livid and ghastly than before. There were deep lines of care about his haggard face. He was as a man who had given up all hope.

"Ah," he said, as he folded up the papers and thrust them into his belt; "and these be the men who fought the duel yesternight?"

The priest answered, "Yes, your Excellency," and, bowing, retired to the back part of the deck, leaving us standing together unguarded.

“All duelling on His Majesty’s ships hath been strictly forbidden,” murmured the Duke in Spanish, as he turned to De Leyva; “but methinks that in this case the offenders may be of more service alive than hanging dead at the yard-arm, for I judge by the contents of these papers, which have been found upon them, that they are in possession of important and valuable knowledge”—He checked himself, and then turned with a quick, nervous glance towards us. “You speak not the Spanish?” he added.

Then answered my lord, pressing his foot upon my toes, “An English tongue will carry us all the world over, and what need have we of the Spanish?”

The Duke then proceeded to question us concerning the English forces that were gathered near London, under the Earl of Leicester. I was content that my lord should act as spokesman, knowing that he could reveal no great secrets; and I allowed him to answer the questions, which he did to the best of his knowledge, the Duke interpreting it all to his officers, as he went on.

But De Leyva, in especial, became most impatient at his chief’s endeavours to gain needless information.

“A truce to all this, your Excellency!” he broke in, at length. “What avails it how many men are to bar our way in England? Let us be getting at something that will serve us in our present difficulty. In another hour we may all be stranded on yonder banks, or else sunk by Drake’s guns.”

“Ay,” cried Oquendo, “’tis but waste of precious time, this beating about the bush. Did I know how to speak to the rascals in their own outlandish tongue, by St. Laurence, I should soon know all that they can tell us. Let your Excellency question them concerning the English ships. Ask how much powder and shot they have left in their lockers!”

The Duke, somewhat ruffled at this interference, then turned to me and said—

“What know you touching the present state of your country’s ships? be they well provisioned with ammunition?”

I maintained a discreet silence, shaking my head, as if I were stupid; but my lord, without hesitation, answered, as he glanced in the direction of Drake’s squadron—

“Your Excellency has but a poor opinion of Queen Elizabeth if you think that Her Majesty would let our ships put out to sea imperfectly supplied with every necessary of war. Look at the gallant vessels now sailing on your windward quarter. They are the ships of Sir Francis Drake—the same which yesterday gave you such a trouncing. Do they seem in any wise the worse for all the firing of your feeble pop-guns? Why, your Excellency, there is scarce a hull among them that bears a mark of your shots! Look at their spars and sails, and compare them with your own disabled wrecks, your broken yards, your splintered masts, your tattered sails!”

The Duke frowned angrily.

“I want none of your comparisons,” said he. “Tell me what you know of their resources. Have they still a mind to fight?”

“Ay, to the very end!” answered my lord. “And as to powder and shot, I warrant me they have enough to last for another week to come, for they can scarce have spent the fourth part of what they sailed out with. Your Excellency need not expect that a man like Drake will rest content ere he hath sunk every vessel in your fleet. And surely he hath already proved to you that your Armada is by no means invincible.”

I pulled the lad’s sleeve, misliking his boastfulness. But the Duke was visibly disturbed in mind by what he had heard.

“Enough!” he muttered, waving us aside with a sweep of his long thin hand.

“What says the lad?” inquired Diego Florez, in a tone that betrayed his deep anxiety.

“He says,” interpreted the Duke, “that the English ships have yet powder and shot sufficient to last for a full week’s fighting.”

“The saints protect us!” cried Florez; “then we are lost!”

“Ay, lost in very deed,” muttered the Duke, “if none of you can suggest a way out of our distress.”

“And wherefore not turn about and surrender to our

enemies?" said Diego Florez. "There can be no shame in striking our flag now that we are thus driven to the last extremity. We have suffered enough, in all conscience, with thirty of our good ships gone to the bottom since we first entered the Channel, and a full half of our best soldiers killed or wounded. Bid me lower a boat, your Excellency, and I will myself engage to go off to the Lord Howard and make terms."

"What!" cried Oquendo, with a fierce oath. "You would speak of making terms? No, no, Señor Diego; you will stay where you are, so please you—unless, indeed, you had rather that I were to fling you overboard for an arrant coward!"

Abashed at this reproof, Diego Florez strode slowly out of the group, while Oquendo, more alert than his companion officers, glanced over the sea towards the English ships, noting, as no one else seemed to have done, that their movements betokened a change of attitude. The vessels in Drake's squadron were one and all bracing about their head-yards and tacking as though they were about to make for the North Sea, or else to circumvent the Armada by surrounding the galleons in a circle and driving them upon the sandbanks.

"That man, whoever he may be," said my lord, indicating Oquendo, "is the only one among these Spaniards who, as it seems to me, hath his wits about him. He alone hath seen that the wind is changing. 'Tis dropping

round to the southward, look you. And now, if they have aught of seamanship in them, they might give those menacing sandbanks a wide berth and slip out into the North Sea, where there would be room to move at will."

The Duke of Medina, whose fear of impending disaster was greater even than that of his timid naval adviser, Diego Florez, seemed to be beside himself with indecision. He stood up, looking now with fear-stricken glances to the lee shore towards which his broken fleet was being rapidly driven, and now over his weather quarter to where Drake and Howard were arraying their ships in order of battle.

"Oh, Señor Oquendo," he exclaimed piteously, desperately, "what are we to do? We are lost, we are lost! what are we to do?" and he clung to Oquendo's right arm, gripping it with frantic eagerness. There was an imploring look in his dark eyes that would have been laughable had it not been so contemptible.

Miguel de Oquendo gave such an answer as might have been expected of a brave man. "Let Diego Florez talk of being lost," said he, "but let your Excellency bid me order up the powder-bags and prepare for action."

"Powder-bags?" echoed the Duke; "but there are none!"

"Then let us meet our fate like brave men," returned Oquendo; "for an honourable death is surely better than a scandalous surrender!" He glanced aloft at the flapping sails, and then a light came into his eyes. "The wind is beating round to the south," he said; "we may now at

least get clear of the shoal water." He then passed some instructions forward, and with eased sheets the *San Martin* was brought round with her head pointing northward. The other galleons presently followed her example.

The Armada was now drawn out into the deep water, the enemy following, still keeping at the same distance as before, and for the time showing no disposition to meddle. We were before the wind, running right up to the North Sea; but there was yet sore discomfort among the Spanish admirals. Their ships were leaking; half the seamen and half the artillery-men were dead or helplessly wounded. The Prince of Parma was not ready, and it had been found by dear-bought experience that Spanish galleons were no match for English frigates in fighting. What was to be done?

This question occupied Medina Sidonia and his counsellors for the greater part of that morning. To enter more battles without ammunition was an impossibility, and, since the English refused to come to close hand-to-hand fighting, there was no hope of overpowering Drake at the point of the sword. The Duke's own opinion seemed to be that they should make haste back to Spain, and, by the sea-route, round the north of Scotland and Ireland.

"And why not return as we came, through the Straits?" asked one of the Dons; to which it was explained that such a course only implied more battles, and that in the battered condition of the galleons it was doubtful whether

they could work their way as the wind stood, even if the enemy chose to let them pass unmolested.

Each of the commanders was asked his advice in turn. De Leyva, whose ship would hardly float, admitted that the English were too strong for them. They had done their best, he said, and it had availed them nothing. Oquendo insisted that at all risks they must recover Calais Roads, and wait there until Parma should be ready to cross with them to England. The chances of war had been against them hitherto, but would not be against them always; and if the English fleet could go down Channel, why should not Spanish ships do likewise? If they were to return home to Spain with their purpose unaccomplished, then the Channel was the nearest way, as also the boldest.

Recalde and Bobadilla supported Oquendo, but in the end, as it seemed, they were overruled; for although the northern seas were unknown, and might hold unlooked-for dangers, yet terror of the English fleet was more real than the unsubstantial perils of an untried sea; and so it was agreed to abandon the way of courage and take to the way of imagined safety.

It was a strange chance that had enabled us to be present at these deliberations, and I listened to them with eagerness, while seeming to pay no regard to what was going on. Much of what was said escaped me, and there was much that I did not fully comprehend. My lord,

understanding still less, would have drawn me away ; but afterwards, when I told him all that I had overheard, his contempt of the Duke of Medina Sidonia and his great admirals was supreme over all other thoughts.

“The cowards!” he cried. “And so they mean to take flight! And so the proud Castilian spirit, which boasted of its power to overcome the whole world, is but a broken reed, and the great Armada acknowledges itself defeated. Flight, forsooth! Why do they not turn about and face their foes like men?”

Flight it indeed was—flight after but a week's conflict. The Spanish Armada, which was to have made an end of the European Reformation and driven Queen Elizabeth from her throne, had endured to be torn to pieces by cannon shot—and that was all. The great warriors of Spain—old sailors, who had weathered many a storm, and fought in many a battle—had entered the English Channel with high expectations and loud prayers and boastings, believing themselves to be under the special protection of Heaven. And they were retreating—retreating ignominiously—without so much as having sunk or captured a single English ship, or killing more than a hundred men.

Forlorn and miserable, the great Armada, invincible only in name, was now set upon its course for the Orkneys, from thence to bear away to the west of Ireland, and so round to Spain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AMONG THE GALLEY SLAVES.



It was little enough that the Duke could gather from us in the way of information — so little, indeed, that in the eyes of his counsellors he must have appeared almost ridiculous for having summoned us before him. It may well be, however, that the papers that had been purloined from me had given him an exaggerated opinion of our importance.

I had expected him to mete me out some punishment for my share in the duel, and that he was only awaiting the end of his consultation with the commanders before ordering me to be hanged, or else at the least confined in chains. If this was indeed his intention, he certainly forgot all about it in his nervous concern for the safety of his fleet; for when the company dispersed, my lord and I were abandoned upon the deck to find our own way back to the quarters which we had left.

We descended to the main deck by the companion, and were passing forward to the forecastle, when our way was temporarily barred by a number of slaves who had been brought up from between decks, and were being conducted on board a large launch that was towing alongside. They were a motley lot of men of all complexions and countries—Turks, Moors, Negroes, Greeks, Italians, and perhaps also English. It was difficult to understand why they should be thus leaving the *San Martin*. They were not in chains, and for a time I imagined that they were being liberated; but we afterwards learned that they were being drafted on board one of the galleys to work at the oars in place of the slaves who had been killed in the recent action.

The gangway through which they passed was closed again, the boat had been pushed off, and we were continuing our way into the forecastle when we encountered a person wearing the habit of a Franciscan friar—a great hooded cloak of coarse brown cloth, bound round at the waist with a rope. Something familiar in the priestly figure caused me to look at the face that was half-concealed by the hood drawn over the bowed head. It was a pale face, but so extremely young that it seemed to be that of a mere boy, with eyes as clear and blue and large that they gave a winsomeness to the whole countenance not altogether in keeping with sober priesthood.

The friar stopped in front of us, and thrust a crumpled piece of paper into my hand, saying at the same time in sweetest English—

“This is for you, my brother.”

“Certes!” cried my lord, drawing back in amaze. “Why, ’tis Mistress Cicely herself!”

And indeed it was so, although at the first I could scarce believe it. She had so put on the large cloak that it completely hid her girl’s gown beneath, and the hood in like manner concealed her long black hair. For a moment I felt a wave of anger pass over me. I believed that some Papist priest had been beguiling her.

“What means this mummary, my sister?” I cried hotly, gripping her wrist in my hand, and forcing her back into the deeper shadow of the doorway.

“Nay, chide her not,” said my lord, hastening to her defence. “Surely ’tis very comely apparel; and, indeed, Mistress Cicely doth make a wondrous pretty priest withal. What matters it so her heart hath not changed with her dress?”

Her face, that had before been so pale and wan, now became crimson under her confusion.

“Be not angry with me,” she pleaded. “But you know not how I have suffered, being the only woman on this ship, and among so many men. And I have taken this robe thinking that it will give me more freedom to move unnoticed and unchallenged.”

“In that you are quite right, and have done wisely,” I said, fully understanding the difficulties she must have been placed in. “But, prithee, where got you the priest’s cloak?”

“From a certain friar who died yesternight of a shot wound,” said she. And then she added, quickly and excitedly, “But I pray you read what is writ on the paper I have given you. ’Tis from Roland Grenville, who sent it to me by the hand of one of the ship’s boys. Much do I fear that Roland is in some such trouble as hath befallen Captain Pimpernel.”

I opened the paper. There were several lines of writing upon it, inscribed, as though with difficulty, by means of some cumbrous or awkward instrument. Roland’s name was scrawled at the foot in plain English characters, but the other words were in the Greek—a language in the use of which young Grenville was well skilled. The letter was to the following purport—

“WELL-BELOVED FRIEND,—I know not if this will ever reach your hand, for I am by no means certain whether you vanquished the Black Mantle, or were yourself overcome by him. But since I found you not when I went back to the deck, I judge that you are at the least in better case than I now am. I was arrested while searching for you by a rascally Spaniard, who declared that I had taken the life of the boldest swordsman in the Armada (one whom

he named Pedro de Santo), and am now languishing in the slaves' quarters—a place that is surely more fearful than the Stygian pit itself for horror and discomfort and all uncleanness. Alack! I can see no more of how the fighting will fare, and shall be deprived of the great joy of seeing the Spaniards haul down their colours. I earnestly pray that Drake will put a speedy end to the Armada, and that, ere he sendeth this battered hull to the bottom, he will have the good grace to rescue so great a scholar as yourself, so sweet a maiden as your sister Cicely, and so promising a young nobleman as Sidney Haughton. So that you three be saved, I care not what else may befall the *San Martin*. And in order that you may all three preserve your fitness, I beg you to drink no more of the filthy stuff misnamed water.

“ Since I writ the foregoing (which hath been done by no better instrument than a leaden musket ball that a negro beside me found embedded in the calf of his leg), word hath gone round among the slaves that some of the more healthy of us are to be sent on board of De Leyva's galleasse, to work at the oars. I am among those so chosen, but you may warrant that I shall not willingly go with them. Haste to my help!

“ Thine, ROLAND.”

To his help? Alas! I was already too late. I ran to the bulwarks and looked over at the boat which had taken

away the slaves. She was labouring on the rolling waves midway between the *San Martin* and the *Rata Coronada*, and in her bow, held down by two burly soldiers, was Roland himself. He seemed to be struggling to free himself, and I doubt not that had he succeeded he would have jumped overboard and swam back to us.

“What means it all?” asked my lord at my elbow, and I told him. “Ah,” said he, when he had singled out our unfortunate companion; “but ’tis not only Roland that we have lost. Look to the man behind him—the one with the white bandage about his head. ’Tis none other than Will Pimpernel!”

Thus was our company robbed of two of its most useful members. Many days were to pass, and many dire perils and hardships to be faced, ere we should see them again; for although the English guns were now silenced, and the battles of ships at an end, yet the wild tempests of the northern seas had still their terrible work to do.

Thus also was I left alone with my lord and Cicely, their sole earthly protector. Nor was my duty a light one. Cicely, notwithstanding that she now wore a man’s attire, had neither a man’s bold courage nor a man’s strength to bear up against the rough life on board ship; and as to my lord, I felt that my responsibility concerning him was even greater than before, for he was now the Earl of Dersingham, the head of a great and noble family, and it behoved me to look well to his personal safety.

CHAPTER XIX.

A TEMPORARY REFUGE.



THE great fight off Gravelines, which resulted in so much disaster to the Armada and so much glory to our English admirals, took place on a Monday. The whole of the next day was occupied by the Spaniards in repairing their wrecked spars, plugging up their leaks, and clearing their decks, and, at the same time, in making what haste they could into the North Sea.

The English ships followed in pursuit, firing an occasional gun into the counter of any galleon that dropped behind, making no attempt at a general action, but expecting, no doubt, that at any moment the Duke might bear up and engage. Drake and Howard, ignorant of the condition to which their enemy had been reduced, could not have conceived that Spain's great cause could be so lightly abandoned, or believe that the proud

Castilians could yield so easily and go back to their own country with dishonour and shame.

On the Wednesday Drake approached within closer range, and had almost taken Recalde, whose disabled ship was lagging behind. The Duke did not dare to desert a second admiral. He shortened sail, waiting for Recalde to come up; and the English did not interfere. Indeed, they could have done but little, for their magazines were as empty as those of the Armada. Had Medina guessed the reason why so few guns were now being fired upon him, he might have turned back and made his way through the midst of his foes unhindered and unharmed. The bravest course would, after all, have proved the safest for him. But he believed that the English were fully prepared to renew the conflict, and, frightened by their persistent pursuit of him, he held on his way northward.

The wind, which still blew from the south-west, was in his favour; but it increased in strength with every hour, and, as the sea rose, the distressed condition of the galleons became more apparent. More than one poor crippled craft dropped behind as her masts snapped and fell under the stress of the wind, or the water made its way through her wounded seams. No effort was made to save them. Their consorts passed on, leaving them to founder.

On the Friday we passed the mouth of the Firth of Forth. Thus far Howard had pursued us, but now he turned, firing a few last shots—barking, as it were, like a

vigilant watch-dog that continues to bark long after the midnight traveller hath passed out of harm's way.

Relieved of his alarming presence, and speeding northward with a leading wind, the Spaniards were able to examine into their condition, and prepare for a voyage which must stretch over several weeks.

The Duke of Medina Sidonia was well-nigh broken-hearted. From the day on which he had left Lisbon an inexorable fatality had pursued him; one misfortune after another had overtaken him. He had discovered, to his great cost, that he was incapable of fulfilling the charge that his royal master had imposed upon him, and now, sullen and dejected, he shut himself up in his state-room, refusing to see or speak with anyone. His admirals and captains, more skilful than himself, ridiculed his inefficiency, and blamed him as the sole cause of all their distresses. Discipline became lax. The soldiers, finding that they outnumbered the seamen, snatched the control, chose their own course, and forced the pilots to steer as they pleased.

But more alarming than the want of a strong commander, more immediately disconcerting than torn sails and splintered masts and leaking hulls, was the news that the food supply was wholly inadequate. The stores had been injured by the salt water, which had made its way through the shot-holes, the salt meat and fish were gone or spoilt, and the rations were perforce reduced to mouldy

biscuits. The state of the water supply was worse than all, for the casks had nearly all been broached by the English guns, and what was left was scarce better than might have been got out of the bilge.

In many of the galleons the wine as well as the water casks had been pierced, and it was found necessary to reduce the allowance throughout the fleet. Half a pound of biscuit, half a pint of wine, and a pint of water were all that could be allowed for the daily portion of each person. Men and officers fared alike. On this miserable diet, and with only such thin clothing as had served them in their own sunny lands, the crews of the Armada were about to face the bitter storms of the far northern seas.

The wounded began to fail rapidly. They were dying by scores; and every day there was the sad ceremony of flinging the dead into the sea. Many men who had escaped hurt in the battles now fell sick from want and cold; scurvy and dysentery began to manifest themselves. Neglected by the surgeons (who were themselves exhausted by much work), with insufficient nourishment, and but little medicine, the poor invalids suffered terribly, and their numbers were being daily increased. Apart from those who were ill, the men who could still attend to their duties and the working of the ships were wasting to mere shadows.

I have already mentioned that the Spaniards had

brought with them many hundreds of horses and mules. These were no longer of any use, since the projected journey from the Kentish coast to London was now a past dream. They might have been killed and eaten. Many a famine has been mitigated by worse food than horse-flesh. But this was not thought of. It was seen that no water could be spared for brute beasts while there was so great scarcity for man; so, to save the water, the wretched animals were thrown overboard, and the ships in the wake sailed on through floating carcasses—a grim token of the general wreck.

But I must return to my personal narrative.

Seeing that there was no possibility of our rescuing Grenville and Pimpernel, we returned with Cicely into the forecastle. She led us into the little cabin in which, on the night before, Will Pimpernel had found her a place of refuge. The officer to whom this cabin belonged was a Spaniard of Valentia, whom Will had known in years gone by. He was not a very devout Catholic, and he deemed a difference in religious belief but small cause for breaking a friendship. Pimpernel, it seemed, had done him some good turn,—had saved his life, I believe,—and he had not lost all sense of gratitude. He was in his cabin when we entered, and he greeted Cicely and my lord with a kindly smile.

“So, señorita, thou hast turned from doctor to priest, eh? Truly, I know not which I had rather choose, to be

cured or confessed by you. But as I am in no present need of either, I will e'en be content to admire your pretty face. Haply 'twill do me as much good as your physic or your absolutions."

But Cicely shook her head, not understanding his Spanish. He then turned to my lord and held up his hand, as though refusing admission.

"You cannot come in here, young man," he said; "neither you nor your companion spy."

"In what have we offended you, señor?" I asked, acting as spokesman.

"Nay," said he, "I am in nowise offended personally; but I will not risk the displeasure of my superiors, nor my position as an officer of this ship, by harbouring men who are condemned."

"Condemned?" I echoed. "Prithee, explain."

"Why," said he, "you are both condemned to be hanged at the yard-arm for spies. 'Tis by His Excellency's own orders, and, were I found sheltering you in my cabin, I should assuredly dance a saraband with you in mid-air to-night."

I shrank back. Both Cicely and my lord saw my consternation. 'Twas not for my own life that I cared; but the thought of my sister being left alone was terrible—as terrible, almost, as the thought of the young Earl of Dersingham being doomed to die the death of a common criminal.

“But this boy is guiltless,” I said.

The officer shook his head and smiled.

“Guiltless or guilty,” said he, “’tis enough for His Excellency that the boy is English.”

“What, prithee, is your argument?” asked my lord, not dreaming of its serious import. I briefly informed him of what I had just heard, and, to my surprise, he betrayed no alarm.

“’Twill be a dead boy that they will hang then,” said he, “for they shall never take me alive.”

The ship’s bell sounded at this moment and the officer left us, saying that Cicely might make what use she listed of his cabin, but that my lord and I must expect to be put under arrest by the officer whose duty it was to carry out His Excellency’s orders.

When he had gone, Cicely stood for a while in silence, looking the very picture of a serious, deep-thinking friar.

“You must both be hidden away,” she said at length, drawing us after her along the dark gangway that led into the fore part of the ship. “I know of a place where you may lie in concealment at least for many hours without being discovered. As to myself, no one will harm me; and with this priestly robe as my disguise I may move about unhindered and bring you such nourishment as I can find. Come! follow me; but let none see whither I take you. And, when you are there, lie low, and speak not a word above a whisper——”

My lord held her back.

"No, Mistress Cicely," said he. "I, for my own part, cannot bear that you should run any risks for my sake. I cannot lie hidden away, knowing that at any moment Drake may sink this ship, and you be left helpless. I can swim, and perchance I might save your life if I were near you."

"Fear not for me, my lord," said she; "and remember that the ship will not sink in one brief instant, but by slow degrees, as did the galleon that went down as we watched her yesternight. If Drake, or any other of our friends, should so fire upon us as to imperil the ship, I will come to you at once, and then, if God wills it, you may save me and yourself at the same time."

"Nay," said he, with a gallant bow; "so I save you alone, Mistress Cicely, 'tis all that I desire."

"You are over modest, my lord," said she; "my poor life is as naught beside yours. You are now the Earl of Dersingham, and the owner of vast estates. So now let me put you in safe hiding."

"Well, a woman will aye have her own way," said he, with a playful toss of his brown curly head and a smile on his lips. "Lead us then to the dungeon. And if by good fortune you help us to cheat the hangman, then may you never yourself be cheated out of the great reward that you will deserve."

I know not how the girl had chanced to discover the

place, but she led us on through the upper floor of the fore-castle, and then down the ladder of a little hatchway to a yet lower deck. Here, in the round part of the ship's bow, she pointed to a square trap-door that was set in the planks. I was about to bend down and open it when she stayed me.

"Wait!" she said. And then three Spanish seamen, whom I had not before observed, came into the fuller light of the hatchway, carrying some coils of new hempen rope. As they passed my sister they bent their heads, believing her to be a priest.

"Pax Vobiscum!" said she, simulating a priestly intonation, and the seamen climbed the ladder and disappeared.

"Now, get you below quickly," she commanded, herself opening the trap. "I will come to you in three hours' time, and you shall know that it is I by my giving four taps with my foot on the deck above you. God be with you!"

My lord had jested when he made mention of a dungeon, but it was no unfitting name to give to the dark chamber into which we presently descended. When Cicely closed the trap-door we were in utter darkness, saving only for a shaft of broken light that came through a shot-hole in the bow timbers. The floor was piled high with chains and ropes, and we found in the farther corner a great bundle of sailcloth, upon which we lay down.

It had been needless for Cicely to caution us against speaking above a whisper. No whisper could have been heard in the thunderous noise made by the breaking of the sea against the outer timbers, and, as the ship plunged into the valley of the waves, a great jet of water spurted in with a hissing sound through the shot-hole. With each plunge she took, too, we could here a gurgling rush of the bilge-water, and then a loud explosion like that made by the tide dashing into a rocky cave.

“Commend me to a woman,” said my lord, when we were alone together. “We had spoken before-time of protecting your sister; but now it seems ’tis we who are under Mistress Cicely’s protection! To think of the girl discovering such a hiding-place as this! And to think, too, of her dressing herself up as a priest! Mark you how she pronounced the *Pax Vobiscum* to the three Spaniards who passed us? Why, ’twas done to the life; and I warrant me none would take her for aught else than what she seems in that friar’s robe. Ah, had she been with us at Christ’s College what time the Queen was there, what a pretty boy she must have made in the play we enacted before Her Majesty!”

“No prettier a boy than you were as a girl, Sidney,” said I. “Do you mind how well pleased the Queen was with your playing the part of the Lady Amelia gathering flowers in the garden?”

“Well do I mind it. ’Twas the proudest moment of

my life when Her Majesty called me to her side, and asked my name, and gave me eight angels for my performance. Certes, what a glorious summer day that was! and how beauteous the college gardens were in the bright sunshine, with all their sweet roses and gaily-coloured stocks, and the green lawn so closely cropped. I warrant me Queen Elizabeth saw naught fairer at Kenilworth or Hatfield. Wouldst be there now, Markham, an you could?"

"Ah, would I not!" I sighed, thinking of the quiet quadrangle into which I had so often gazed from my room window. "But much do I fear that we shall never again set eyes upon the houses of Oxford."

"Listen!" cried my lord, after a long interval of silence. "Hear you not the guns firing? 'Tis our English ships renewing the fight. But they are yet afar off."

Afar off they certainly were, and they continued so throughout that day. As to the *San Martin*, never did we hear one of her guns fired again, nor did she again receive any more cannon balls in her battered hull.

Shortly after eight bells in the evening, we heard Cicely's knocking on the deck above us. She opened the trap-door, but it was too dark for us to see her. She handed down a pipkin of wine, together with a kerchief full of broken biscuit, bidding us keep up our good cheer, for that, although search had been made for us, yet none had guessed our hiding-place. She told us that the wind

still held from the south, and that the Armada was holding on the same course into the North Sea, with the English fleet following beyond range in the wake. Then she gave us good-night.

In the darkness we gave no thought to the weevils in our biscuit. It was dry food, but the wine gave it relish ; and when we had eaten to our satisfaction, we curled ourselves up on the sailcloth, and slept the soundest sleep we had enjoyed since our quitting Will Pimpernel's sloop.

CHAPTER XX.

A PERILOUS ESCAPE.



HE next day was to us uneventful. We counted the bells, we listened to the faint intermittent firing of the English guns, and we whiled away the time by reciting verses out of Homer and Virgil. This latter exercise I encouraged for my lord's especial benefit, making him construe the verses line by line. I fear it was but sorry entertainment for him, for he was ever a backward scholar in both the Latin and the Greek. But it kept his mind from brooding over the death of his father, and the time, methinks, was not wholly lost.

For news concerning the Armada, and our chances of winning our way on board of one of our own country's ships, we depended upon Cicely, who was our trusty messenger. At regular intervals, of about eight hours,

she came to us, bringing us food, and telling us in what positions the opposing fleets stood towards each other; of how Drake was now assailing the galleons that were lagging behind, of how Seymour's squadron had now fallen back to take up his old post in defence of the Downs, of how the Duke of Medina Sidonia still kept to his state-room, and of how the Spaniards, themselves being reduced to shadows from want of food and good water, were throwing the horses and mules into the sea.

On a certain day—the fourth after our imprisonment—we were greatly alarmed by the fact that Cicely for the first time omitted to come to us. She had brought us a good supply of biscuits and two onions on the night before, and we were not surprised that she did not come at the usual time in the morning; but when mid-day passed, and yet she had not come, we began to suspect that some accident had befallen her, or else that she had been seized with some sickness.

Our uneasiness concerning her grew apace, and at seven bells in the afternoon we held a serious consultation, which ended in my lord declaring that he would make his way upon the deck in search of her. We resolved, however, to wait until dusk, so that my lord might move among the Spaniards with less chance of being arrested.

The weather, as we judged by the more easy movements of the galleon, was now somewhat calmer than it had been for three days past, and in the greater quiet we

could hear the tramping of men's feet upon the decks above us, mingled with much shouting and giving of orders. Listening, with my ear close to the trap-door, which was slightly raised for the admission of fresh air, I distinctly heard one of the officers give the command for the grapplings to be got ready.

Suddenly there was a stealthy step along the planks, quite near to me. I dropped down upon the chains and retreated into the darkest corner of the locker. The trap-door was quickly opened.

"Heaven protect us!" whispered my lord, "we are discovered," and he drew a heavy piece of sailcloth over us. Then, just as we were giving ourselves up for lost, there came a voice from above, uttered in hurried, imperative tones. To our great relief we recognised it as Cicely's voice, and we inwardly thanked God for her safety.

"Godfrey! my lord! quick, quick!" she cried. "There is a great ship come alongside, and if you hasten we may escape on board of her!"

"At last!" cried my lord, as he leapt towards the ladder. "'Tis Drake himself come to our rescue!"

"Our good fortune is scarce so great as that," returned Cicely, "the English ships are now passed out of sight. Nevertheless, we must escape from this galleon, and that speedily; for, if I can understand aught of what is going on, you are both being even at this moment sought for, to

the end that you may be punished as many others have been this day. But come, follow me, quickly and silently!"

We were already at her side, and I was about to scale the stairs leading to the higher deck, when she drew me back, pointing aft to one of the large square portholes on the larboard side, where one of the brass cannons lay dismounted and broken. The porthole was wide open, and, following Cicely towards it, we peered through and saw the timbers of a ship's hull at the distance of about four feet apart from those of the *San Martin*. This was the ship which, as my sister had told us, had newly been brought alongside.

"Quick!" cried Cicely. "Think you we can get on board of her?"

I went down on my knees and crept outward to the brink of the deck. So close were the two galleons together that when one vessel, rising on the swell of the sea, heeled slightly over, her bulging bends scraped against those of her neighbour. The stranger was somewhat lower than the *San Martin*, and we were now on a level with her upper tier of guns. By stretching out my hand I could have touched her fore-chains. I saw that it was possible with very little effort for even Cicely to get on board of her. And there were two ways open to us; the one by climbing up from the chains into the rigging, and so over her gunwale, and the other by lowering one's self

down hand under hand, and swinging bodily in at an open porthole that was immediately below. But the first was the safer method, and I pointed it out to my two companions.

Scarcely had I drawn back when Cicely took my place, for we had quickly decided that she was to be the first to escape. She hesitated for but a moment, and then flung herself forward, gripping the rigging just above the dead-eyes with her two hands, and clambering upward till her feet rested on the chess-trees. I watched her, my heart beating quickly as I realised her full danger. One false move—a slip of the foot, or an infirm grip upon the rigging by which she held herself suspended—and she must have fallen between the two ships to certain death. As I looked at her, the wind, coming in a sudden gust, blew back the friar's hood that she had drawn closely over her head, and her dark, long hair fell down over her back. The same gust of wind must have caught the *San Martin's* sails, for the great vessel trembled and then plunged forward, gliding past her neighbour so that Cicely could no longer be seen.

“God protect the girl!” I cried aloud, and, craning forward through the porthole, I saw that the two vessels had now drifted many yards apart, and in such a manner that I could now see no more of the stranger than the upper portion of her prow, with the figure-head of Saint

Peter, while a third craft—a large pinnace—had been brought in between.

I was calculating how we could best follow Cicely, when I heard a sharp cry of alarm from behind me—

“Markham! save yourself.”

I turned and saw my lord struggling in the arms of two Spaniards. They had seized him and thrown him down. Instinctively I drew my rapier, and should have run one of his assailants through had I not myself been seized from behind by three fellows who sprang upon me from out the darker corners of the apartment.

Disarmed and overpowered, we were dragged out upon the open main deck.

“You shall not again escape us,” said one of the Spaniards; “and when we lay hands upon your girl-companion who hath been masquerading as a priest these three days past, she shall come to a like fate with yourselves!”

Abaft the mainmast we saw a number of gentlemen and officers, with Don Diego Florez, sitting in judgment upon certain commanders, who, as I afterwards learned, were to be punished for having lost their anchors at Calais, and having, as was alleged, failed to support the Duke in the great action off Gravelines. These men were accused of cowardice, and Florez, acting as the Duke's deputy, was now holding a court-martial. Twenty of

them had already been condemned to be executed, and Don Martinez de Recalde was now pleading that death might be exchanged for degradation and imprisonment. His pleading, it seemed, was successful; but an exception was made in the case of two of the commanders—Captain Cuellar, of the *Santa Barbara*, and Captain Christobal de Avila, of the *San Pedro*—whom the Duke would on no account pardon, and who were to be forthwith hanged.

Many of the admirals of the court-martial had come on board the *San Martin* from their own vessels, and I noticed that the gangway on the larboard side of the main deck stood open. It so chanced that our captors halted very near to this gangway, and, leaving us unguarded for a few moments, they pressed nearer into the crowd that they might hear what was going on. They had scarcely turned their attention off us, when my lord nudged my elbow. I glanced round and saw that he was very intently fixing his eyes upon the side ladder of a galleon that was visible through the open gangway.

“Now is our chance!” he whispered, and he noiselessly glided to the gangway. I followed. I saw him turn the corner of the bulwark, and, ere I reached the platform at the head of the ladder, he had run down to the lowest rung and dived into the sea.

Scarcely remembering that I was but a very poor swimmer, I ran down the flight of stairs and dived after

him. When I came to the surface I saw him swimming at his fullest speed towards the farther galleon, making for her side ladder. The distance between the two hulls was some twenty yards, and the water was rough. In my calm moments I should never have dreamed of attempting such a swim; but now I had no fear of drowning. I thought only of escape from a yet more terrible death, and I struck out with all the vigour that was in me.

I heard some shouting behind me; no doubt the men in the pinnace had raised an alarm. And now a new terror seized me, for I expected at every moment to be fired upon. I had covered but half the distance when I felt my strength give way. Want of proper food and our imprisonment in the chain locker had weakened me. My lord had already gained a foothold on the galleon's ladder. I saw him turn to watch my progress, and then I sank, the water gurgling over me. As I came once again to the surface, something like the crack of a musket shot sounded in my ears. I looked to the ladder, but my lord was not where he had stood a few short instants before.

Again I made a few feeble strokes, but again I sank. I struggled in the grip of something other than sea-water—the grip of my lord's strong arm. The brave lad, seeing that I was helpless to save myself, had dived in to my rescue. And now, partly by my own efforts, but more by

his help, I managed at last to reach the ladder. As I raised my left hand out of the water to take a hold of one of the lower rungs, I saw that it was bleeding. A shot had struck me. But I paid little heed to the hurt, thinking only of gaining the galleon's deck.

We were in nowise too soon in making this escape, for we had barely secured a firm foothold on the ladder when we felt the galleon swing round with the wind. Had we delayed another minute we must have been lost, but now by good fortune we were brought beyond sight of the *San Martin*, and secure from the aim of her muskets.

Immediately above our heads there was an open porthole, with the lips of a brass cannon showing through. My lord went a couple of steps up the ladder and peeped in.

"The way is clear, Markham!" he said, and, throwing his arms round the muzzle of the cannon, he hoisted himself up, swung his legs within the porthole, and disappeared. I followed him, but with much difficulty, for my wounded hand was becoming so painful that I could not use it. But at last I succeeded in placing my knees firmly upon the inner timbers of the port, and the rest was easy.

Looking back for a moment upon the tumbling waters, I saw the pinnace drifting past with the body of Don Christobal de Avila hanging by a rope from her crosstrees. My old sickness came over me. I turned from the sight

to follow my lord, but my limbs refused to support me. I reeled and fell, and then all was oblivion.

When I recovered consciousness I found myself lying on my back upon a hard floor; my wounded hand was bandaged and tied against my breast, and my clothes were perfectly dry. All was black darkness about me. I spoke, but no one answered. Nevertheless, I knew that some friendly hand had lately been attending to me, for my lips were moist with wine. Presently, as I lay with my eyes open, I saw the flickering of a shaft of light. It widened and became more bright. I heard light footsteps drawing nearer and nearer. And then the light itself appeared—a lantern held aloft by a person wearing the garb of a Franciscan friar. I closed my eyes, not wishing to be questioned. But a voice, soft as sweetest music, sounded in my ears—

“Ah! you are better now! God be thanked for His great mercy!”

With a start of surprise I looked up and saw my sister Cicely. The light shining upon her fair young face amid the surrounding darkness gave her the semblance of a pictured saint.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTAIN CUELLAR.



Y the light of Cicely's lantern I could dimly distinguish the forms of some half a dozen men lying asleep about the floor of the large room or cabin, and here and there the glittering trunk of a brass cannon.

"What place is this we are in?" I asked, "and how long time have I been lying here?"

"'Tis the 'tween decks of the *San Pedro* galleon," Cicely answered, as she knelt beside me and fondled my free hand; "and you have been here nigh upon a day and a half."

"The *San Pedro*?" I repeated. "Ah, then 'tis the same vessel upon which you escaped; for I mind seeing the figure-head of Saint Peter on her prow. But how got you on board?"

"I climbed into the rigging, and so got over upon her

deck, and with very little trouble. My friar's cloak protected me from observation or question for a time, but the Spaniards soon discovered that I was no true priest. Nevertheless, I was permitted to move about the ship in freedom, and I have busied myself in nursing the sick. I was much disturbed in mind when I found that you and Lord Dersingham did not follow me, although I knew that 'twas impossible after the two ships drifted apart. When I came below decks I watched the *San Martin*, feeling sure that you both would try your utmost to join me. Nor was I disappointed, for I saw my lord run down the gangway stairs, with you after him. I saw you both swimming for your lives. I could do naught to help you, but I was watching you as you got upon the ladder, and, when you at last crept through the porthole, I marked the place and ran down that I might meet you."

"Then I doubt not that 'twas you who bound up my wounded hand?" I said.

"Yes," said she; "but 'twas Sidney who had the work of cutting off your two shattered fingers."

"What!" I cried. "Is it then so bad as that?"

"It might e'en have been worse," said she, "for 'tis only your left hand, and you may yet hold the pen with the other."

"True," said I, admiring her foresight. "And now, what of Sidney?"

“He is asleep but a few yards away from where we now are—at the other side of Captain Cuellar.”

“Captain Cuellar? And who is he?” I asked.

“He is our very good friend,” said she, “notwithstanding that he is a Spaniard and a Papist. Listen, and I will tell you of him.” She bent down lower, placing her soft, warm hand under my head. “You must know, then,” she went on, “that he is a prisoner, put under arrest by order of His Excellency the Duke of Medina, who would even have had him hanged, but that Don Francisco de Bobadilla interceded, and so saved his life. Captain Cuellar, from what he hath himself told me (for he speaketh the English passing well), is as brave a man as any in the Armada. He lately commanded a galleon named the *Santa Barbara*. He was in every fight since the Spaniards entered the Channel, and did his duty right well, never sleeping for an instant during ten whole days and nights. His ship was cut up by our English guns, and because he took her out in advance of the *San Martin*, and lay-to to repair her broken timbers, he was accused of cowardice. He hath now been degraded, his ship taken from him, and he is little more than a common galley-slave. Nevertheless, the men on board of this ship do regard him with great honour, and have refused to enchain him. They bring him the best food that they have, and he, pitying us in his turn, hath shared it with us, and shown us every kindness.”

The murmur of Cicely's voice awakened some of the sleepers who were near us, and among them the young Earl of Dersingham, who now rose and came to my side.

"You're better, then, Markham?" said he. "'Tis Cicely you must thank for your recovery. She hath been your guardian angel, and hath scarce left you a moment since the time of our coming on board the *San Pedro*."

"I thank her from my heart," I said, "and you also, my lord; for, without your help, I must have been drowned or else shot through the head."

"Tush!" said he; "a truce to your thanks, and tell me how fares your broken hand. Is't paining you? Wilt have it dressed with new bandages?"

"Nay, leave it," I answered, "and let me know in what part of the world we now are."

"That is what a goodly number of the Spaniards would gladly know," said he; "but from what I can gather we are now in the near neighbourhood of the Orkney Islands, with a heavy sea running, and the wind on our larboard quarter."

"And what of the other galleons?" I asked. "Know ye aught of the *Rata Coronada*—the one on which Roland Grenville and Will Pimpernel are aboard?"

"Alas!" said he, "I cannot tell her apart from the rest, nor have I heard aught concerning her. But you, who can speak the Spanish, may presently be more successful.

Rest you a while until morning breaks, and then we shall go up on the deck."

I tried to sleep, but so great was now the rocking of the ship, and so loud the breaking of the sea against her windward bulwarks, that the attempt was vain. But at last the pale grey light of dawn stole in through the open doorway, and I struggled to my feet. My body was very weak, and the tumbling of the ship made my steps unsteady. I was creeping along towards the door when a friendly hand caught my arm. I turned, and saw a tall and handsome young Spanish officer at my side, with Cicely behind him.

"Let me give you my poor help, Master Markham," said he, in halting English.

"You are Captain Cuellar, of whom my sister hath spoken?" said I.

"I am plain Philip de Cuellar," said he; "no longer a captain, but I trust still a Castilian gentleman." He turned to Cicely and added, "Now go you back, Señorita Cicelia, and take the rest that you so much need. Leave your brother in my care, and no harm will befall him."

He led me through a short passage and up a flight of stairs, saying that the fresher air would do me more good than all the physic in the world. We had reached the head of the stairs when the galleon, struck by a mountainous wave, gave a tremendous lurch, a great sea of

white foam swept across her mid-deck. I lost my balance, and was falling when Cuellar caught me in his arms as easily as if I had been a child. At the same time my lord came running towards us, splashing through the foam.

"Give you good-morrow, Markham," the lad cried, "and *buenos dias*, Señor Cuellar."

"*Buenos dias, amigo mio*," returned the Spaniard. And then the two led me aft to a higher deck, whence we could survey the wide stretch of turbulent sea that surged about the ship on all sides.

The *San Pedro*, which was a small galleon, scarcely larger than Drake's *Revenge*, was sailing under close-reefed topsails, labouring heavily in the wild seas. I observed that there were very few men on board of her, but Cuellar informed me that a full half of her company had been killed in action, while another fourth had died of sickness. Those that were left were reduced to mere skeletons. Their thin, pallid faces were fearful to behold, and it was easy to see that they had abandoned all hope of again basking in the orange groves of Seville. Nevertheless, they seemed to go about their work with some show of bravery. They were excellent seamen. They had navigated ships no stronger than this one among the hurricanes of the West Indies and through the tempests at Cape Horn, and they were not altogether daunted by the sight of a westerly gale off the Orkneys.

The air was moist with salt spray, dense leaden clouds drifted across the sky, hanging so low that they seemed almost to touch our masts. There was a ceaseless roar of breaking waves. In the misty distance to our leeward I could faintly see the lumbering forms of some four or five galleons tossing and rolling helplessly, with shreds of tattered canvas flying wild about their spars; and as they rose from out the depths and lifted their trembling hulls for another plunge, great snowy streams of seawater poured out at their scuppers and through the gaping seams of their side timbers. Two other galleons were in sight on our weather beam, and to their northward there loomed the dark high cliffs of one of the Orkney Islands, looking cold and grim and menacing.

The keen cold wind did me wondrous good, and with every moment I felt a fuller strength in my limbs; but I was thinly clothed, and would fain have gone below to the greater warmth between decks. Captain Cuellar was silent and gloomy, and there was but sorry entertainment in watching the miserable seamen as they struggled to keep the ship on her difficult course.

I was about to move, when a stout little man, with a crisp grey beard approached us. He was wrapped from head to foot in a great sea-cloak. As he came to a halt in front of us, Captain Cuellar saluted him, giving him a good-morning, and addressing him as Don Carlos de Avila. I afterwards learned that he was brother of the

Don Christobal de Avila, who had so lately been put to death by order of the Duke of Medina, and that he had now been promoted to the command of his brother's ship.

"I pray you, Señor Cuellar, give me your advice," said he. "What are we to do? Our ship is leaking, this storm is waxing every moment more furious, and we have not a man on board who hath ever been in these dangerous seas before."

"'Tis not for me to give you advice," answered Cuellar, as he idly twirled his long moustachios; "I am your prisoner, señor, and not your sailing-master."

"What!" cried De Avila, "and would you—one of Spain's most skilful seamen — let yourself be made prisoner by such a man as the Duke of Medina? A plague take him! Why, he had no more right to order your arrest than he had to hang my dear brother Christobal. Take your liberty while you may, my friend. Take your liberty, and with it the control of this ship; for you're a better seaman than I. And so you bring us safely home to Spain, I shall be content to take a second place and obey your advice in all things."

"There is but one man whom you are to obey," returned Cuellar, "and that is His Excellency the Duke of Medina Sidonia."

"Too much have we all obeyed him already," cried De Avila, "and to that obedience alone do we owe all our disasters. By Santiago! I know not what His



“ TOSSING AND ROLLING HELPLESSLY.”
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Majesty was dreaming of when he entrusted the command of the Armada to such an arrant fool. A pretty mess hath His Excellency made of his command. Better had it been for us all, methinks, if he had stayed at home with his saucy duchess. Had Alonzo de Leyva been our chief, I warrant me we should have made a speedy end of the English fleet, and been at this moment regaling ourselves in London town instead of tossing about, crippled and helpless, in these tumultuous seas !”

“Nevertheless,” returned Cuellar, “you are still bound in duty to obey His Excellency, and to abide by your sailing-orders, which are, that you follow in the wake of the *San Martin* whithersoever she may lead you.”

“A fig for my sailing orders and the *San Martin* !” cried De Avila. “I am bound direct for Spain, let His Excellency go where he will. And to that end I beseech you give me what help you can. Take the command of the ship if you will, but in mercy steer us clear of these accursed coasts.”

Captain Cuellar seemed scarce able to believe in the offer that was made to him, but in the end he yielded to De Avila’s earnest pleading, and consented to assume the command. It then became a question as to what course should be taken to avoid the threatening dangers of the rocky coasts of the Orkneys. It was evident that the other galleons, as well as the *San Pedro*, were no longer following as before in the immediate wake of the flag-

ship. Each captain seemed to be taking his own independent course. The direction of the wind still made it necessary to hold to the northward, and this circumstance gave an appearance of united aim; but it was clearly to be seen that none of the commanders cared what became of his neighbour so long as he himself might be safe from wreck.

This unexpected promotion of Cuellar from captive to captain was to our own great advantage. For a time the two Spaniards were engaged in private conversation, while my lord and I stood apart under shelter of the windward bulwark. Presently Cuellar strode towards us, while Don Carlos de Avila went aft to the poop-cabin.

"I have spoken of you to Captain de Avila," said Cuellar, "and he hath agreed at my request that you shall be quartered in one of the vacant cabins, and receive the same rations as are portioned out to all others on board. It seems that the ship's company hath been reduced to but three-and-thirty souls. One half of these are sick, and it is feared that the sickness will spread. Therefore, 'tis important that all who are able-bodied should lend their aid in the working of the ship." He took me by my arm. "I pray you both come aft with me," he added, and he led us on to the poop.

I noticed as we left the deck that a thick white fog was creeping over the sea, veiling the galleons that a few minutes before had been in sight.

We were taken into a large and simply-furnished cabin, where battered portholes looked out upon one of the quarter-galleries. The place bore many signs of the past battles. Here and there the side panels and doors were broken into splinters, a great oaken beam—one of the supports of the upper deck—held, even now, a cannon ball that had buried itself in the hard wood; the planks of the floor were torn up in places, leaving gaping holes, through which we could hear the gurgling sound of the bilge-water down below. Two of the stern-posts had been knocked into one, and the sea splashed in upon us like heavy rain.

Captain de Avila looked up as we entered. He had thrown off his sea-cloak, revealing his costume of black velvet and gold braid—a costume which seemed strangely out of keeping with a ship's cabin on a day of storm. And now I saw that he was by no means so portly as I had at first taken him to be. He stood beside a large open chest that was filled almost to overflowing with gold ducats and other treasure.

“No,” he said, glancing towards Cuellar, “I can find nothing that will aid us. There is a chart here of the English Channel, but it goes no farther east than the banks of Holland, and no higher north than the mouth of the Thames.”

Captain Cuellar turned to me as though a bright thought had struck him.

"It may be that you, Master Markham, can give us some help in this matter. I have heard from your sister that you are a scholar. Does your scholarship extend to a knowledge of the islands that lie to the north of Scotland?"

"I know that the isles of Orkney come first," said I, "and that to the north of them come the Shetlands. But as to their exact position, methinks my companion, the Earl of Dersingham, can inform you better than I."

Now my lord, although but little skilled in practical seamanship, had been drilled by his father in the theory of navigation. The lad had also picked up much out-of-the-way knowledge of geography, and I remembered that on a certain evening, when I surprised him in his rooms at Oxford, I found him contemplating a map of the British Islands that he had copied with his own hand. I now reminded him of that same map.

"Not only do I remember it," said he, "but if 'twill be of any manner of service, I will e'en undertake to make a chart from memory. I shall not say that it will be correct, mind you; nevertheless, it may roughly serve."

We were standing at the captain's table of polished oak. My lord glanced at the smooth surface and drew his dagger. With the point of the weapon he made a scratch on the centre of the table. "Let this be the northernmost point of Scotland," said he. "We passed there yesternight. Early this morning we were abreast of the

Pentland Skerries." He moved the dagger about an inch farther up and dug it into the wood, saying, "They are here, and the land we saw but a few minutes ago is one of the Orkneys. The Orkneys lie in a vast cluster thus,"—he went on making a number of circles,—“and, if I remember aright, the fifty-ninth parallel of latitude crosses through their midst——”

“Wait,” interrupted Cuellar. “Come they so far to the eastward?”

“Assuredly,” answered my lord, “and if you would avoid them you will bear well to the leeward.”

“And how far north do they continue?” asked Cuellar.

“A matter of fifty miles,” said the lad, “and then you will have a clear sea-way until you come to the Shetlands, lying some sixty or seventy miles beyond, north by east, thus”—and he made another cluster of circles. “Should the wind serve, you may make a course between the two groups, and bear northward into the Atlantic Ocean until you——”

“And wherefore not south to Spain?” inquired Captain de Avila gloomily.

“Because,” said my lord, “if the wind still remain in the west, you will have the rocky coasts of Scotland on your lee, to say naught of the north and west of Ireland. Whereas, if you hold a northerly course as far, let us say, as the sixty-second parallel, you may then make south-

ward and weather the Irish coast at such a distance that you will be clear of danger."

"Good!" said Cuellar. "By Saint Laurence, young man, you have the makings of a most excellent seaman in you! We might do worse than make you our sailing-master. Prithee, how long time have you been upon the sea?"

"Since the day on which your Armada entered the English Channel," answered my lord, as he proceeded to scratch an outline of the west coasts of Scotland and Ireland.

"Ah!" sighed Cuellar, "now can I well believe what I have oft heard, that a knowledge and love of the sea comes to your countrymen even in their cradles. 'Tis in your blood."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE ORCADIAN SEAS.



WHEN we again went on deck we found that the fog had thickened, a heavy cold rain was falling, and naught could be seen of the other galleons.

Cuellar had the *San Pedro's* course altered, letting her go free before the wind. There was danger in the change, for the pursuing waves now broke against her counter, flooding the poop-cabins and threatening to swamp her. She was a very bad sailer, and, being but shallow in the water, she rolled and pitched most terribly, now lying over on her beam ends with a rush of foam about her lee scuppers, now lifting her prow high in air, now burying it deep in the slope of a great wave. No man could keep his feet, and as to going aloft to trim the sails, this was impossible. Her mizzen-mast had been shot away in the battle, as had also her

foretopmast. She now carried but two sails—her fore and main courses—which were both torn, and threatened at every moment to be carried away altogether.

We had been upon deck about half an hour, when suddenly a great dark object loomed through the fog on our larboard bow. It was one of the Armada galleys. As we watched her she heeled over, broadside to the gale. Instead of righting herself, she rolled yet farther over. The sea broke over her, and then, with a slow heave, she turned keel uppermost, gave a sudden plunge, and sank out of sight.

“She hath foundered!” cried my lord excitedly. “’Bout ship, Señor Cuellar, and save her crew!”

“Impossible!” returned Cuellar. “In such a sea as this we cannot turn.” Nevertheless, he went himself to the helm and made the attempt. He called to the seamen to make ready to lower a boat. But the men did not or would not hear him. He put the helm down, but the galleon did not at once turn. When she at length began to move round it was very slowly. She fell off the wind for a moment, and then swerved suddenly back again, forced forward by a great wave. Her foretopsail filled; there was a loud crack as of a peal of thunder, and we saw the whole body of the canvas flying away from the yard as if it had been a child’s kite.

By this time we had been carried far beyond the place where the galley had foundered, and the thick white fog that enveloped us made it useless to attempt a rescue.

As the morning wore on the gale increased. I was of no service on deck, and, feeling that my wounded hand was growing worse, I went below in search of Cicely. I found her, as I had expected, among the sick and wounded, and while she dressed my hand she told me that five of the men lying near her were dead, and that three new patients had come to take their place. I let her know that she was to have the use of one of the poop state-rooms, and thither I presently took her, that she might see what manner of place it was.

As we entered the larger cabin we found Captain de Avila lying on the floor. His face was very pale, and he seemed to be suffering great pain. I questioned him, and learned that he had been drinking water from a cask that had been newly broached. It had poisoned him.

Here was a new calamity; for it was clear that he would no longer be able to fulfil any duty on the ship, and, apart from Captain Cuellar, there was no other capable officer on board. Disease and famine were rapidly doing their fell work; and, to make matters worse, there was not a single surgeon in the ship's company to give advice or to administer such medicines as were required. Cicely and an aged priest comprised the complete nursing staff, and of medical skill they had none beyond what they had gathered during the few days that had passed since our leaving the English Channel.

How Cicely herself contrived to keep clear of the

prevailing sickness I do not know. She was endowed with rare good health by nature, however, and she carefully avoided drinking any of the bad water that had played such havoc among the Spaniards. Her only food was hard ship's biscuits steeped in olive oil, with her daily pint of wine. Much may also have been due to her cleanly habits, for, despite the great difficulties in her way, she contrived to wash herself every day and to breathe as much fresh air as was possible; while the Spaniards continued to eat the putrid fish and salt pork and to drink the filthy water, while they never even cleaned the powder smoke from off their grimy faces, and were content to breathe the foul atmosphere of the 'tween decks rather than encounter the cold, pure wind.

It was well that, in obedience to Lord Dersingham's suggestion, Captain Cuellar altered our course, else had we assuredly been stranded, as many of the galleons were in that same gale. Towards dusk, which came very early in these latitudes, the fog lifted, and we could see the rocky coasts of the Orkneys on our weather quarter. So near were they that, had we continued on our former course, we must certainly have run against them in the fog. Indeed, even as it was, we had the greatest difficulty in weathering them, and only succeeded by virtue of Cuellar's skilful seamanship.

On the same evening we came within sight of the *San Martin*. She crossed our bows at very close quarters,

although not so close that we could hail her. Two of the smaller galleons were sailing in her wake. Cuellar, as in duty bound, bore round and followed, giving them the weather-gage, and throughout the whole night he kept within view of the Duke's poop-lantern. But in the morning the fog again enclosed us in its white veil, and we dropped behind.

Not until the next afternoon did we once more sight the flag-ship. We had been beating about all the day on the tempestuous seas, making very little headway, for the wind was so strong, and our masts were so shaky, that we could carry scarcely any canvas. Captain de Avila was able to come up on deck at about four o'clock, and I stood by his side contemplating the storm. We could not hear each other speaking for the surging of the waves and the wild howling of the wind; but at one moment he touched my arm and signed to me to look at Cuellar and my lord, who were aft beside the steersman. My lord was beckoning to me, and I made my way towards him under shelter of the windward bulwarks. When I got to his side he shouted in my ear—

“'Tis the *San Martin*.”

I looked in the direction in which he pointed, and beheld a line of high black cliffs stretching from north to south for the distance of a mile. At the northern point of the island (for such it was) I saw a tongue of jagged rocks half buried in snowy foam. The waves broke over

them with a continuous roar as of the firing of cannons, and in the midst of the surf lay the *San Martin*, a hopeless wreck. The tattered flag of Castile still fluttered from her mainmast, but her sails were all torn to shreds, and her foremast and bowsprit were broken off by the board. She lay over on her starboard side, grinding her hull upon the rocks; for as each wave dashed against her she swayed to and fro as if struggling to break free. Her decks were exposed to our view, but there were no men visible upon them; and, indeed, if there had been, they could not have remained there long, for even as we watched her a great sea broke over her, sweeping along her higher side, and dealing more havoc than all Drake's guns could have done in the time.

When the boiling surf subsided for a moment we saw that her great mainmast had gone and that her upper poop-deck had been washed bodily away. The great wave had, as it seemed, dislodged the galleon from the rock on which she had struck, for she righted herself; but only for a few brief moments. Another sea, stronger even than the last, caught her as it were in its embrace, and flung her with tremendous force against the face of the granite cliff. We could hear a crunching, breaking sound, that was loud even above the roar of the sea. A great cloud of snow-like spray rose high in the air, and when it fell we could see no more sign of the galleon.

Such was the end of the *San Martin*, the pride of King

Philip, the boast of all Spain. She had started out of Lisbon crowded with men whose hearts were filled with the hope of conquest. She had borne the brunt of the English guns, but her expected victories had only ended in ignominious defeat; and now, instead of returning to Spain, to be crowned with glory, she had been dashed to pieces upon a desolate rock in the Orcadian seas!

There seemed to be but small probability that any lives could be saved from so disastrous a wreck. Nevertheless, Captain Cuellar braced round, and bore down to within even a dangerous nearness to the rocks. He lay-to under the lee of the island, and launched one of the stoutest boats. Six Spaniards dropped into her, and rowed towards the wreck. We watched them with bated breath as they approached the breakers. A rain-mist veiled them for a few minutes from our sight, and when they appeared again they were in the middle of a sea of white foam. They had ceased rowing, and two of their number were leaning over the boat's stern disentangling something from a floating spar. My lord, whose eyesight was singularly keen, made out the object to be a man.

"They have him!" he cried aloud, and presently the men recommenced their rowing. They went closer still under the cliffs, hoping, as I afterwards learned, to pick up some of the valuable treasure with which the lost galleon had been stored. But the surf was too strong for them, and they soon retreated.

Their return was quicker than their going, for wind and tide were now in their favour. They laboured hard at their oars, and many times it seemed as if they were swamped; but they were only hidden in the valleys of the high waves. At last they came within hailing distance, and one of them called aloud that they had rescued but one person.

They came round under the *San Pedro's* counter, and with infinite difficulty brought their boat under the lee quarter. To get them all on board again was no easy task; but at length it was accomplished. The boat, however, could not be hoisted up on deck, for she had had one of her planks split on the rocks and was already half full of water. As the last of the seven men left her she settled down and rapidly sank.

And now I turned to look at the man who had been rescued. His clothing had been torn off him, all but his trunks and his shirt, and it was difficult to tell whether he were soldier or seaman, gentleman or plebeian. But as I looked into his face methought I had seen it before under a priest's hood. My recollection was confirmed when, as he turned his back to me, I saw the round tonsure shaven on the crown of his head. And then I knew him. I knew him to be the same priest who had purloined my papers from me and betrayed me to His Excellency.

I felt that the man was my enemy, and I instinctively suspected that his presence among us would turn to our great disadvantage.

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNDER THE BAN OF HERESY.



THE little island upon which the *San Martin* was wrecked was the last land that we sighted during our northward voyage. Our course was continued through the wide channel of sea lying betwixt the Orkneys and the Shetlands, and thence in a north-westerly direction into the wild Atlantic Ocean.

For three days and as many nights the storm raged with unabated fury, still holding in the same quarter. During that time the Spanish seamen were kept constantly at the pumps, for the battered galleon was leaking like a sieve, and the seas she shipped must assuredly have sunk her had not all her hatches been battened down and her ports and doorways been kept tightly closed.

Dark leaden clouds hung lowering in the sky, casting a shadow of deep gloom over all the sea. Rain fell in

frequent heavy showers, accompanied very often by hailstones. Everything about the vessel was wet and cold and clammy,—the clothes we wore, the hammocks we slept upon,—and our discomforts were terrible to endure. But there are few miseries in this life that have not their counter advantages. Sharing the same troubles and the same dangers, foes became friends, and national enmity and religious differences were forgotten in mutual helpfulness. Even the deluging rain was not without benefit, for by this means we were able to procure some water which it was possible to drink without risk of disease.

There was one difficulty, however, which it was not humanly possible to overcome. Skilful navigation might save the ship, the storm must sooner or later abate its anger, but no skill and no earnest yearning could produce food from empty skies and desolate seas. With every day that passed famine became more and more imminent; gnawing hunger and bitter cold and helpless sickness were reducing the Spaniards to gaunt, unsightly skeletons, disabling them for work, stripping them of all energy, and depriving them of all hope.

On the noon of the fourth day after our passing the Orkneys the clouds lifted, there was a faint gleam of sunlight, and the misty horizon retreated to a wider circumference, disclosing a dreary waste of grey sea that was less tumultuous now than it had been since the time of our escape from the *San Martin*. Far away on our

weather beam we descried a sail. She was bearing due west on the larboard tack. We steered in her direction, the wind having by this time shifted a few points to the northward, and we presently made her out to be a Spanish galleasse.

“’Tis surely the *Rata Coronada!*” cried Captain Cuellar.

“I pray God it may, indeed, be she!” exclaimed my lord. And I inwardly echoed his prayer, remembering that our friends Grenville and Pimpernel were on board of her.

“If it be Alonzo de Leyva’s ship, as I suspect,” added Cuellar, “we may still hope to see our homes once more; for now that the Duke of Medina is lost, De Leyva becomes our leader, and I will engage that, under his skilful guidance, we shall drop anchor in Spanish waters ere another week be past. Would to Heaven that he had been our leader from the first!”

“You mistake, señor, if you imagine that the Duke of Medina is dead,” said a voice from behind me. I turned and saw that the speaker was Juan de Escovedo—the priest who had been rescued from the wreck of the *San Martin*.

“What!” cried Cuellar. “How know you that he is still alive? Is it possible that we have left him upon the barren rock where his ship was wrecked?”

The priest shook his head.

“His Excellency is at this moment aboard the vessel we are now looking upon,” said he. “’Tis the *San Matteo* galleasse, which hath followed near him ever since the English fleet fell back, and was ready to rescue him when the *San Martin* went to pieces on the rocks. There was but one boat-load of gentlemen saved, together with three chests of gold. The boat could not again return, owing to the heavy sea that was running, and the rest of us were left to save ourselves as best we might. Some swam ashore, others tried to swim out to the *San Matteo*, while I—I knew full well that the Holy Mother would not permit me to perish, and I clung to the floating spar upon which your men found me.” He went nearer to Cuellar, and added, as he lowered his voice, “Run up your signals, señor captain, and bid her lie-to, so that you may board her and deliver these two English heretics into the hands of His Excellency. They are Lutheran spies, and they should long ago have been hanged at the yard-arm.”

There was a glance of crafty evil in the man’s eyes as he spoke. He drew the captain aside so that I might not listen; but by his attitude I guessed that he was telling of how he had purloined the papers from me. Doubtless he painted our characters in very black colours, and it may even be that he added much that was not true. Certain it is that from that time onward there was a marked difference in Captain Cuellar’s behaviour towards us. He seemed to regard us with grave mistrust, and he no longer

spoke with us on such friendly terms as formerly. I noticed, however, that he made no attempt to board the *San Matteo*, and we remained unmolested.

Three hours later on the same day some six other vessels hove in sight, and before dusk their number was increased to fourteen. The captains had received instructions to hold northward to the sixtieth parallel, and then, if the wind should suit, to bear west by south, and thus escape the dangers of the Irish coasts.

For about two days these galleons remained within sight of us, and when the wind shifted to a favourable quarter a gun was fired from the *San Matteo* as a signal to her consorts to alter their course and steer southward for Spain.

During those two days, Cicely, my lord, and I ventured up on deck only upon very rare occasions. We were prisoners on parole. So well had Juan de Escovedo succeeded in maligning us throughout the whole ship that there was not a Spaniard on board who would risk his soul's salvation by speaking with any one of us. It was as much as they dared do to give us our daily portion of mouldy biscuit and sour wine. We were heretics, and no Catholic who hoped for absolution was permitted to recognise us. Even Cicely, who had done so much for the sick and wounded, did not escape the ill-will of every scurvy Spaniard who came near her. There were many on board who owed their lives to her careful nursing; but this no

longer counted in her favour. The wily Juan de Escovedo presumed to declare that, instead of endeavouring to restore the sick men to health, the girl was secretly poisoning them. How else, he asked, did so many die ?

For a time I could not attribute this enmity against Cicely to any other reason than the very simple one that the girl chose to conceal her sex under a friar's robe. I bade her alter the garment, and she removed the priestly cowl and replaced the robe girdle with a sash of brilliant crimson silk. This change in her apparel, however, made no difference in Juan de Escovedo's enmity, and at last I learned that he accused the girl of acting by my own instructions, and of poisoning the soldiers and sailors to the end that the ship's company might be reduced to so small a number that the three of us could overpower them and take possession of the galleon and all the gold and silver treasure wherewith the vessel was freighted.

Cicely had hitherto been giving especial care to the sick Captain de Avila, who was rapidly mending under her ministrations. But now she was roughly informed that her attentions must cease, not only with regard to De Avila, but also to the dying men in the cockpit.

I know not if Cicely's removal had ought to do with it, but certain it is that so soon as she absented herself from the ship's hospital the sick men began to get rapidly worse, and the proportion of deaths daily increased. But, for my own part, I was not ill-pleased that my sister was thus

relieved of a duty which, as I could plainly see, was gradually wearing away her own strength and injuring her health. Already her cheeks had become pale and hollow, the lustre had faded from her eyes, and a strange despairing sadness had clouded her joyous spirit.

Not until now, when I had more of her companionship, did I fully understand how much she had sacrificed and endured for the sake of our thankless enemies. Want of sleep, as well as want of food, the sight of so much suffering, together with the noxious air of the 'tween decks, had combined to weaken her so much, that she herself stood in need of nursing. And, indeed, when the strain of her endurance was removed, she suddenly broke down, utterly exhausted in both mind and body. Her fatigue was so great that she could not sleep, she was so famished that she scarce could eat, and she spent hours together in piteous spells of weeping.

It was now for the first time that I noticed a change in the young Earl of Dersingham's demeanour towards my sister. He had always, since the day of their meeting in Chatham, shown a chivalrous regard for her. In the midst of the battle off Gravelines he had been most anxious concerning the girl's personal safety. When he led me down the side ladder of the *San Martin*, and swam, under the fire of the Spanish muskets, across to the *San Pedro*, it was, I believe, as much with the thought of being on board the same ship with Cicely—of being near her in the case of

danger—as in the hope of himself escaping the hanging to which we had been condemned. In the storm off the Orkneys his consideration for our girl-companion had stood far higher with him than any thought of his own comfort or his own safety.

This readiness to help her seemed to me to be prompted by the chivalry that was a part of the lad's nature. It was but to be expected that one who had been brought up as a gentleman should show a desire to protect a helpless girl thrown by strange chance among rough men, and placed as Cicely was amid all the perils of battle and of storm. But now that Cicely was ill and required more than a mere passing attention, my lord's natural goodness showed itself in a thousand beautiful ways, and I could see by his tender care of her that she had become very dear to him. He was ready to serve her in all things, and to obey her smallest wish he would have risked even his life.

Once when I lay dozing in the little state-room that he and I occupied, I heard him rise and go to the door of Cicely's cabin. He stood there listening for a while, and presently, amid the noises of the ship, the sound of Cicely's voice reached me.

“Oh, if I could have but one drop of sweet, pure water!” she cried, never thinking that she was overheard.

My lord glided silently past me and disappeared into the outer passage. I knew full well that he could get no water that was fit to drink. Indeed, by this time, every water

cask on board the galleon had been emptied of all but a slimy sediment, and even the wine had been reduced to so small a quantity that our daily portion was but the fourth part of a pint for each person. Captain Cuellar had hoped to obtain further supplies from one of the other ships, but, on coming to closer quarters, he had seen that every vessel within sight was flying signals similar to his own. All were in equal need.

Sidney had been absent about half an hour, when, listening for his return, I heard the sound of scuffling feet, and then a heavy fall. I hastened to the cabin door. The lad rushed past me holding in one hand his drawn rapier, and in the other an orange. At the far end of the passage, near to Captain de Avila's state-room, Juan de Escoveda lay groaning upon the floor. I went to his side, and helped him to rise to his feet. He was bleeding from a small wound on his arm. I took him into the state-room, and led him to a bench close to the captain's bed. Turning to the captain, he began to denounce Lord Dersingham as a thief, declaring that the lad had crept into the state-room and stolen an orange—the last orange that remained on board.

“I demand that you have the thief punished, señor,” said he. “Let him be hanged at the yard-arm. 'Tis but folly that these heretics should be allowed to live among us, eating our scant food, and poisoning our crew.”

But Captain de Avila made no answer. I looked into

his face and saw that it was white as marble. I touched his thin hand, and found it cold.

"The captain is dead, señor priest," I said.

"Dead!" cried the priest; "Holy Mother, and he hath not been confessed!"

I left the priest praying over the dead body of the captain, and went back to our own cabin. I found Lord Dersingham sitting at Cicely's side, feeding her with licks of the orange, while he himself was nibbling pieces of the juicy rind. As I entered he offered me a share of it.

"There is worse food than orange peel," said he. "Take you this that I have kept for you, Markham."

"But you have stolen it," I objected.

"Ay, from a dead man," said he. "Had Captain de Avila been still alive I should not have touched the fruit. I went in to beseech him to spare the fruit for Cicely, but, finding him dead, I took it. Yon priest would have taken it from me and eaten it himself, but I told him 'twas no more his than mine, and he tried to snatch it from me. To my surprise he drew a dagger from under his gown and stabbed at me. But I was more alert than he, and, drawing my rapier, I confronted him, determined not to give up the orange. But, Papist though the man is, I would not strike a priest, and when he made for me I tripped him up, and he fell upon the deck, cutting his arm with his own dagger."

"I am glad that it was not you who wounded him," said I, turning to the porthole and looking out over the tempestuous sea.

During the night before, the wind had again gone back to the westward, and the great Atlantic rollers had risen as if by magic into high towering waves, which now broke against our weather quarter with thunderous blows that threatened to stave in the stout planks. The galleon was by this time in such a leaky condition, and her hold was so full of water, that she laboured heavily, not rising, as before, upon the breasts of the waves, but rolling lazily.

In the early morning I had gone up to the poop-royal. Standing at the taffrail I had noticed that there were only two galleons in sight. The men at the helm near me were discussing our position, and I overheard one of them state that we were about a hundred miles to the westward of the north of Ireland. On returning to the cabin I had told this news to Lord Dersingham, and he had declared, with a doubtful shake of the head, that in his own opinion Ireland was not so far off as the officers supposed.

As I stood looking out to leeward through the cabin porthole, he came to my side. So much did the ship lean over that for a time we could see naught but the frothy slopes of the passing waves, and the rain of spray that splashed against our faces. But once the vessel

rose by her stern, trembling on the summit of a mountainous roller.

"Look! Markham, look!" cried my lord, gazing outward across the tops of the waves. "What means that dark blue line along the horizon?"

Supporting myself by holding on to one of the stanchions, I followed the direction of his gaze. For a moment only I saw the dark line of which he spoke, and then the ship sank down again, groaning and creaking, into the trough.

"'Twas but a bank of cloud," I answered.

"A cloud?" he echoed. "No, no, 'twas no cloud; it was land. Did you not make out the shape of a range of high hills? Come with me up on deck and you shall see if I am not right."

He turned to look at Cicely, saw that she had closed her eyes and was trying to sleep, and then drew me with him out of the cabin. "Sleep is the best physic she can have," he said, as he closed the door behind us.

To gain the poop-deck we had to pass by Captain de Avila's state-room, and in doing so I looked within and saw Juan de Escovedo. He was no longer praying over the dead captain, but stood beside one of the open treasure chests, busily filling his wallet with gold coins. At sight of us he slammed the lid of the chest as though conscious that his guilt was observed. I might have turned back and accused him of his theft, but Sidney beckoned me on, and we went up on deck.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON A DEAD LEE SHORE.



As we stepped out upon the unsheltered poop, a wild gust of wind met us with such force that we could scarce stand upright against it. The air was full of briny spray. The ship's timbers creaked and groaned, the loose cordage rattled against the masts, the waves thumped about the outer hull, and, breaking over the bulwarks, sent a flood of snowy foam across the decks. These sounds, mingled together, were like the wailing and moaning of the lost spirits of the deep. There was something in it all that filled the heart with awe.

We crept forward to the rail, and looked down upon the main deck. The lee scuppers were piled high with a mass of confused wreckage—dismantled cannons, broken spars, shreds of sailcloth, and snake-like coils of rope—and in its midst, washed by the sea-water that had not yet escaped, were the ghastly forms of three dead

Spaniards that had been brought up from the cockpit and flung there until calmer weather should admit of a more decent burial.

Suddenly Lord Dersingham gripped my arm and pointed outward over the galleon's weather bow. I peered into the misty air, and saw that it was a long line of jagged cliffs that stood directly athwart our course.

"Said I not that it was land?" he cried aloud, during a momentary lull of the wind's fury. And then he glanced back to the poop-royal to see if any of the officers had yet noticed the threatening danger.

That we were indeed in danger there was no possibility of doubt. The wind was on our starboard quarter, and this rocky coast lay full in our lee. We were being driven upon it by a force so inexorable that the best seamanship in the world must have been of no avail to save us from a speedy wreck.

Two seamen were at the helm, struggling to keep the galleon before the wind, and near to them stood Captain Cuellar. He had seen my lord pointing to leeward, and now he made his difficult way forward along the sloping deck. As he bent over the rail and glanced quickly round the horizon, I saw him start in sudden alarm. He called out some order to the two helmsmen and then beckoned us to him, coming down the stairs to the lower poop to meet us.

"Señors," he said, "I beg you to give me what

help you can, for we are in grave danger of running upon yonder rocks, and there is not a single officer left to me."

"What would you have us do?" inquired Lord Dersingham.

Cuellar turned to the lad and told him that the only course open to us was that of lying-to until the wind should change; but that he had doubt of even this plan succeeding, because there was only one anchor on board, the other two having been lost at Calais. Still, he intended to make the attempt, and if it should fail then we could but throw ourselves upon the mercy of God.

All hands were speedily summoned on deck. To my surprise, I discovered that the ship's company had been terribly reduced in numbers during the past three days. There were but seven gaunt, sallow-looking seamen, three crippled soldiers, the priest De Escovedo, the captain, Lord Dersingham, and myself. These, with Cicely, who could not be counted, were all who remained able to do a stroke of work. In the cockpit there were some five-and-twenty sick and wounded Spaniards who were, of course, utterly useless.

The anchor, unfortunately, was stowed below, and it occupied the seamen fully an hour in hoisting it up on to the forecastle deck. During this operation one seaman was washed overboard and another had his arm broke. Meanwhile, Captain Cuellar and Lord Dersingham were busy taking soundings. The lead showed twelve and

a half fathoms at the first cast, but ere the anchor had been cleared, the water had shoaled to eight fathoms. Notwithstanding that the galleon now carried no sails, she was being rapidly borne landward by the strong current, and her high poop offered such resistance to the driving wind that it acted as a sort of sail.

It was already nearing the time of sunset, and a dusky veil was spreading over the turbulent sea, but the high black cliffs were distinctly visible on our lee bow, and we could hear the booming of the surging waves against a rocky foreland that trended outward across our course. Could we have weathered this foreland all might still have been well, but we were in the midst of a wide bay, from which, while the wind continued to blow from the westward, there was not the faintest chance of our escaping.

It was almost full dusk before the anchor was at last dropped over the bow. It took off some twenty fathoms of stout cable, but it held firm, and when the ship swung round with her head to the tempest, Captain Cuellar declared that there was nothing more to be done, except to bring the sick and wounded up from the cockpit, so that they might be ready at hand in case the cable parted and made it necessary for us to take to the boats. These poor suffering creatures were accordingly brought up on the main deck and laid along under the weather bulwarks, where they were protected from the cold and the spray by stretches of old canvas and such clothing

as had been taken from their dead comrades. We were helped in this work by Cicely, who, after a long and refreshing sleep, was almost entirely well again. Her recovery was indeed most fortunate at this time of peril, since the continuance of her illness must have lessened the possibility of our rescuing her.

When at length we returned to the shelter of our cabin, we all three knelt down and prayed to God that He would deliver us out of the dire disasters that threatened us. The prayers brought solace to our desolate hearts, and strengthened us to meet with Christian resignation whatsoever destiny should be held in store for us. We dared not hope that we should live through this night of storm, for there was but small prospect of the ship being saved from the rocks.

Through the darker hours of the long night the galleon rode at her anchor with such seeming security that we began to congratulate ourselves upon the chance of our weathering the storm. At intervals, as we lay listening to the howling of the wind and the beating of the waves, we saw the reflections of lighted lanterns passing to and fro along the gangway outside our door. Once or twice Lord Dersingham looked out and saw that Juan de Escovedo and certain of the seamen were removing the treasure chests from Captain de Avila's state-room. So full were the chests that the gold and silver coins were spilled from them as they were carried, and the pieces

of bright metal lay scattered upon the planks in an unbroken track.

I had already been told that each of the galleons of the Armada was richly stored with treasure. In addition to the money and the precious gold jars and candlesticks sent out for defraying the expenses of the expedition, every seaman and soldier on board had received his pay, and as the men died the contents of their pockets were taken and thrown into the common store. It was but natural that the men on board the *San Pedro*, on seeing the danger in which the ship stood, should be anxious to save as much as possible of these riches. They were now, as we guessed, removing them to the boats.

Towards midnight we were conscious that the ship was pulling with increased force at her anchor. She rocked with greater violence, and not now, as formerly, from stem to stern, but from side to side, as though she was swinging round broadside to the storm. We became alarmed, and more than once Lord Dersingham rose with the intention of going on deck.

We were on the lee side of the ship, and the porthole of our cabin was open, but it was of no avail to look out, for there was nothing to be seen but black darkness, or, at most, the ghostly white top of a curling wave. At one moment, however, it seemed to me that I could make out, although dimly, the moving reflection of a lighted lantern flitting across the cabin ceiling. I sprang up and

strode across to the porthole. Looking out, I saw that the light came from outside of the galleon, as though the side gangway had been lowered and someone were standing upon its steps. I listened and heard voices. They spoke sharply and shortly, as though prompted by great haste or imminent danger. One of them was the voice of Juan de Escovedo. He was hailing the deck, calling up to someone to lower himself down by the rope. And then I understood.

“My lord! Cicely!” I cried, turning to my companions, and ushering them before me out of the cabin; “come! They are putting out the boat.”

In a panic of terror we rushed out. There was no light to guide us, but we knew our way to the main deck. When at last we issued into the open air, we discovered Captain Cuellar standing on the platform of the side gangway, leaning over as if speaking to the men in the boat. I heard him command them to wait. And then came the priest’s answer from below.

“What!” he said, “and would you save a parcel of heretics? Come! There is no time to waste. Come down yourself, and leave the Lutheran hounds to their fate.”

“They are God’s creatures,” returned Cuellar, “and I care not to what faith they belong, I shall not leave this ship until they go before me.”

He was thus speaking when we came to his side.

“Quick!” he cried, seizing Cicely in his arms. The ship gave a heavy lurch, and he drew back. As he did so

I looked through the open space in the bulwark and saw that the boat had been pushed off. The seamen, apparently obeying the priest's commands, were pulling in the direction of the land.

Calling after them with a fierce Spanish oath, Cuellar set down Cicely upon her feet, and made his way aft towards the poop, beckoning to us to follow him.

So dark was the night that we could scarcely distinguish his shadowy form, and the galleon was tossing and rolling so furiously that we were forced to creep along the deck on our hands and knees. It was evident from her peculiar motion that the anchor rope had parted. She was drifting stern foremost towards the land. As we neared the stairs of the poop-deck she swerved round, trembling in every plank. A heavy sea struck her on the weather quarter, she did not rise to it, and the surging water swept over us in a flood that would have carried us overboard had we not clung with all our strength to the rail. There was a momentary lull, and then we heard the tremendous thunder of a heavy wave tumbling and roaring over the mid-deck. The great ship was lifted high ; for an instant she was poised on the summit of a mountainous breaker, and then flung bodily forward. There was a deafening crash of breaking timbers. It was as if the whole fabric of the galleon had been split into a thousand fragments.

"God have mercy upon us!" cried Cicely; "we have struck against a sunken rock!"

CHAPTER XXV.

CAST UP BY THE SEA.



THAT blow upon the sunken rock must have utterly demolished any ship less stoutly built than the *San Pedro*. In the black darkness we could not see the extent of the damage that had been done. We only realised that the part of the hull upon which we lay huddled together was still above water. The angry waves swept round it, leaping up as though eager to engulf us ; and with each successive onslaught the fabric swayed over, crunching and grinding upon the jagged rocks.

Wet to the skin, shivering with cold, and utterly miserable, we clung to each other, praying to God for help. As the weary hours went by, hunger seized upon us, and our weakened limbs, cramped with the effort of holding on to save ourselves from slipping into the sea, threatened at every moment to give way.

My own wounded hand was bleeding from a knock that I had given it, and was paining me almost beyond endurance. But, trusting in God's providence, I held on without complaint, and tried to cheer my two young companions, and for their sakes maintained a hopeful heart. It would be daylight very soon, I said ; and I told them that, bad as our situation seemed to be, yet it was better than if we had been carried off to Spain, and perhaps subjected to the tortures of the Inquisition.

We turned our faces to the east, and wearily watched for the coming of dawn. The whiteness of the surf about the wreck gave an uncertain appearance of daylight in our near neighbourhood, and as it seethed up and swept along the deck below us, we could faintly discern the gaunt black timbers of the broken bulwarks ; but the whole of the fore part of the ship, from the mainmast to the prow, was under water ; while the poop, which was our refuge, was raised high in air, supported by the rock upon which it had struck. At one moment we were filled with a new alarm by a sudden collapse amidships. The mainmast fell with a resounding crash, the waves leapt up, and broke over us in a deluge. We felt the doomed hulk subsiding beneath us, and we gave ourselves up for lost.

At about this time Cicely pointed towards the east, bidding us look. We saw the black outline of a high mountain, and above it a bank of light grey clouds that seemed every moment to be growing lighter. By slow

degrees all objects about us became clearer. We could make out the forms of the waves, and beyond them, at a distance of about half a mile, a ridge of black rocks, upon which the tide was breaking in creamy surf.

The light increased ; we could faintly see each other's faces. Cicely's face was pale and thin and haggard ; her loose, wet hair hung about her shoulders in long, black coils, giving her a most woeful appearance, and her teeth chattered with cold. Lord Dersingham presented a no less pitiful sight. He was bare-headed, and his clothes, that had been so fine on the day when Cicely had first met him at Chatham, were torn and tattered, and saturated with salt water. The sleeve of his left arm had been torn off at the shoulder ; he had lost his boots and hose, and his legs were naked to the knees. It was difficult to believe that this ragged and hungry-looking lad was the same whom I had known at college, or that he was by virtue, if not yet in fact, a peer of the realm, the possessor of one of the richest earldoms in all England.

"Wilt trust your life to me, Mistress Cicely?" said he, turning to my sister after a long interval of watching. "Methinks I can see a way to reach the line of rocks that lie between us and the shore. 'Tis a long swim in such a sea as this, but I will adventure it if you will let me take you."

"What of my brother?" asked Cicely. "He cannot now swim with his wounded hand."

"Nay, do not think of me," I said. "Go, both of you, and may God aid you. As for me, although I cannot swim, it may be that I shall find some floating spar that will help me."

"There is one that I see down below us even now," said Cicely, and she pointed to the foot of the stairs, where a large beam that had formed a part of the doorway of the poop was tossing about upon the waves. My lord crept down, and, lowering himself into the water, swam towards it. When, after much struggling, he brought it to the stairs, he bade Cicely step down and hold it. He then returned to the upper deck, and searched for a while until he found a coil of rope. Fastening one end of the line around his waist, he attached the other end to the beam.

"Now," said he, when he had done, "it will go ill with us if we cannot all three be saved. Get you astride the beam, Markham. It will serve as a raft. Cicely will cling to its farther end, while I will swim in advance, towing you along by the rope. You have but to hold tight, and see that your heads are above water, and all will be well."

We followed his instructions, albeit with great difficulty, and at last we succeeded in getting free from the wreckage and the tangle of rigging that was about the bulwarks. My lord plunged into the waves and struck out bravely. Fortunately, the tide was flowing inshore, and there was promise that our perilous voyage would be brief. But the distance to the land was greater than we

had supposed, and my lord's strength was well-nigh exhausted ere we had drifted but half a cable's length from the wreck. Finding himself in danger of drowning, he swam back to the beam, and held on to it while he rested, being supported by Cicely, who leaned over and put her arm about him.

"You are too weak," said she, "to undertake so much. Let the tide carry us to the shore, and climb you up beside us."

"Nay, I am but a little tired," said he, "and when I have rested but a few minutes I will at it again. But," he added, glancing over the tops of the waves, "what is that I see floating near us? Raise yourself up, Markham, and see if you can make it out."

I followed his glance, and saw that the thing was an immense spar of wood.

"'Tis the galleon's mainmast," I said, "and—yes, I can see the form of a man clinging to it. Ah! he sees us; he is hailing us. 'Tis Captain Cuellar himself!"

The lad disengaged himself from Cicely's hold, and making his way to the farther end of the beam, gripped it with his two hands, and, turning upon his back with his head above water, commenced to swim thus with his legs; while I, still sitting astride of the raft, helped him by paddling with my feet. In the space of about a quarter of an hour we had brought ourselves alongside of the floating mast.

"So, then, you were not washed off the deck, as we thought?" I said, addressing the Spanish captain.

"Yes," said he, "I was; but I held on by the rudder-chains until I heard the mast fall, and, as the spar floated past me, I boarded it, and have been here ever since. Give me your hand, Señorita, and I will help you up beside me."

We all three managed with much difficulty to climb upon the mast, and with this larger support beneath us we felt ourselves more secure. The gallery of the maintop was still in its place, and, sitting under its shelter, clinging to the loose rigging, we could allow the waves to break over us without danger of being swept off.

"See you aught of the boat and her crew?" asked Captain Cuellar.

Lord Dersingham climbed up, and, standing against the crosstrees, scanned the stretch of sea that intervened between us and the cliffs.

"I see no boat," said he; "but there are men upon the beach."

"What number?" asked Cuellar.

My lord counted. "There be over a score," said he; "wild-looking men they are. And I doubt not that they are waiting till the tide falls, that they may plunder the wreck. Often have I heard that the Irish are but little better than savages."

"The Irish?" echoed Cuellar.

“Ay, surely; for 'tis the coast of Ireland that lies before us,” returned Sidney. As he spoke, he turned and glanced back over the sea. His eyes rested for a long time in one direction, and there was in them a look of suppressed excitement.

“What is it that you see?” I asked.

“A ship,” said he, —“one of the Armada galleons. She is but a couple of miles to our windward, and is being driven, as we were, towards the rocks.”

Captain Cuellar groaned. “Alas for Spain!” said he, and then his lips continued to move in prayer, and he crossed himself.

We had by this time drifted into the shoal water, under the lee of a ridge of black rocks, and presently the spar grounded and rolled over, flinging us into the surf. I sank under the seething foam, but soon touched the bottom.

When I gained my feet and stood up, I found that my head and shoulders were above the surface. I looked about for my companions, and saw Lord Dersingham making his way through the breakers, carrying Cicely in his arms. Captain Cuellar soon made his appearance from the other side of the stranded spar, and we all four at last trod upon firm ground. Never shall I forget the strange feelings that came over me as we stood in dripping clothes upon that wind-swept strand. I half expected that the solid earth would heave and rock and sway to and fro with the motion to which my limbs had been for

so long accustomed, and it was difficult to realise that we were once again upon dry land.

As we walked up the beach towards a grassy knoll that appeared through a gap in the cliffs, I noticed that Captain Cuellar was very lame. His leg had been badly cut in his fall from the galleon's deck. Drenched, ragged, and bleeding as he was, he looked a miserable figure.

I was helping him along when we espied a party of the Irish standing in a group at no great distance away from us. They seemed to be very strong men and tall, with long black hair, which they wore low over their eyes. Many of them were covered with mantles, and others had short jackets, made of goatskins. We could hear their voices, but they spoke in a language which I could not understand. At their feet lay the dead bodies of some seven men—Spaniards, doubtless, who had been washed ashore from the wreck. These they had stripped and plundered. As we passed within their sight three of their number ran towards us, flourishing heavy sticks. We halted, thrusting Cicely behind us, so that, if need were, we might defend her.

Our ragged and forlorn appearance seemed, however, to offer no promise of booty, for the men stopped when they were within a few yards of us. One of them pointed out to the wreck, and made a motion with his arms, as if he wanted to know whether we had swam ashore. We nodded, and then signed to him that we were in want of food.

We were trying to make him understand, when there was a loud cry from the men down by the water side. The three Irish then left us, beckoning to us to follow them. One of their companions, searching among the rocks left bare by the now ebbing tide, had discovered the *San Pedro's* boat. It had been capsized, and, when we joined the excited group of natives, they had just succeeded in turning the wrecked craft over on to her keel.

Lord Dersingham, with the curiosity of youth, climbed over the rocks to look on. We sat down upon the beach and waited for him. When he returned we asked him if he had chanced to find any food, deeming it probable that the Spaniards, on quitting the doomed galleon, had at least taken a few biscuits in the boat with them. But he shook his head sadly.

"No," said he, "there is no food there, but only a half-dozen dead men and some bags and chests of gold. The Irishmen have but now lifted one of the treasure chests from off the body of one drowned man. I saw the man's face. It was the face of Juan de Escovedo. His priest's hood and his wallet were stuffed with gold coins."

"Ah," sighed Cuellar, "much good hath his avarice done him!"

For fully two hours the men were occupied in plundering the dead Spaniards and in quarrelling over the spoil. We saw no hope of getting food here, so we crept back up the sloping beach, and wandered along until we came to

a sheltered stretch of grass. Captain Cuellar, half dead from cold and hunger, lay down and very quickly fell asleep. Cicely, equally weary, presently followed his example.

“Stay you here and keep a watch over them both,” said Lord Dersingham, “while I make my way over the hill at our back. If there be food to be had, I shall not return without some.”

The dusk of evening was falling when he came back with three oatcakes spread with butter, together with an earthen jar of milk. On seeing him coming from afar, I awoke Cuellar and Cicely. So famished were we that at the sight of the food we wept for joy. Laying the cakes upon Cicely's knee, my lord then offered the girl the first drink of the milk. She but moistened her parched lips with the precious liquid, and then paused.

“Unworthy that I am,” said she, “to drink even one little drop ere we have thanked God for His mercy.”

“Nay, drink first and thank God afterwards,” urged Cuellar, snatching at one of the oatcakes and beginning to devour it with wolf-like eagerness. He had well-nigh eaten it all ere Cicely had ended her prayer and raised the milk a second time to her lips.

She drank but sparingly, and passed on the jar to the captain, he being the oldest of our little company. Then, handing one of the remaining cakes to me, she took the other herself.

“And am not I also to have some?” quietly inquired Lord Dersingham.

“What!” I cried, “and is it possible that you have not already broken your fast?”

“I have eaten nothing,” said he, “for two days and two nights. How could you think that I would eat of the cakes or drink of the milk before Mistress Cicely had been satisfied?”

“You are too good to me by far, my lord,” murmured Cicely, her face growing crimson in self-reproach; and she divided the two cakes into three equal portions, while Cuellar, having taken a good draught from the milk, curled himself up once more, and presently fell into a deep sleep.

Exposed though we were to the wind, our refuge was certainly more comfortable than our cabin on the *San Pedro* had been, and we hoped that on the next morning we should be able to move inland, and perhaps even reach some village or settlement where we might remain until some change in our fortunes should present the means of winning our way across to England.

In the middle of the night we were awakened by Cicely. She had been disturbed by some wild animal sniffing at her cheek. We discovered that the animal was a wolf, and, in chasing it away, we found that many others of his kind had come down to the beach, attracted by the dead bodies of the Spaniards, which they had begun to devour, helped thereto by a flock of carrion crows.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN A TRACK OF MOONLIGHT.



IN the next morning we all four walked over a little hill to the place where Lord Dersingham had procured the oatcakes and milk.

It was a settlement of some twelve huts built of rough stones and mud. The people living in them were very poor, and none of them could speak English ; but they understood our needs, and, tempted by some English gold that we offered them, they provided us with lodging in one of their unoccupied huts, and gave us a small store of simple food.

Captain Cuellar was too lame to walk any farther, and was in need of nursing. We owed him great gratitude for many kindnesses that he had done to us on board the galleon, and it was not in our nature to leave him alone among foreigners ; so we left Cicely with him that day,

for the ship that we had seen bearing towards the rocks some few miles to the eastward had seemed to Lord Dersingham to resemble the *Rata Coronada*, and we were anxious to know if she had been wrecked and if our two friends had been saved.

My lord and I had walked but a mile's distance away from the huts when we were met by a troop of horsemen. They halted in front of us, and their leader, seeing, no doubt, that we were ship-broken men, demanded to know if we were Spaniards. He spoke in the English, and the sound of his voice was as sweetest music to our ears.

"No," said I, in answer, "we are not Spaniards, but servants of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth." And then I briefly told him how it had come about that we had been wrecked in the *San Pedro*. He listened with patience, albeit with a look of doubt in his eyes. "And now, I pray you tell us," I added, "in what part of the world are we?"

"You have landed upon the shores of the Bay of Donegal," said he, "and you may count yourself fortunate that you have thus far escaped. Be advised by a fellow-countryman and have naught to do with the Spaniards, nor yet with these dogs of Irish peasants. Make your way eastward along the coast to the garrison of Bundoran,—'tis but ten Irish miles from hence,—and there you will be among friends." And so saying he put spurs to his horse and rode on, followed by his companions.

Now we were divided in our minds as to whether we should turn back for Cicely and Captain Cuellar; but remembering that the latter might be in some personal danger if brought among English soldiers, we decided to go on for a few miles and pursue our search for information concerning the fate of De Leyva's galleon.

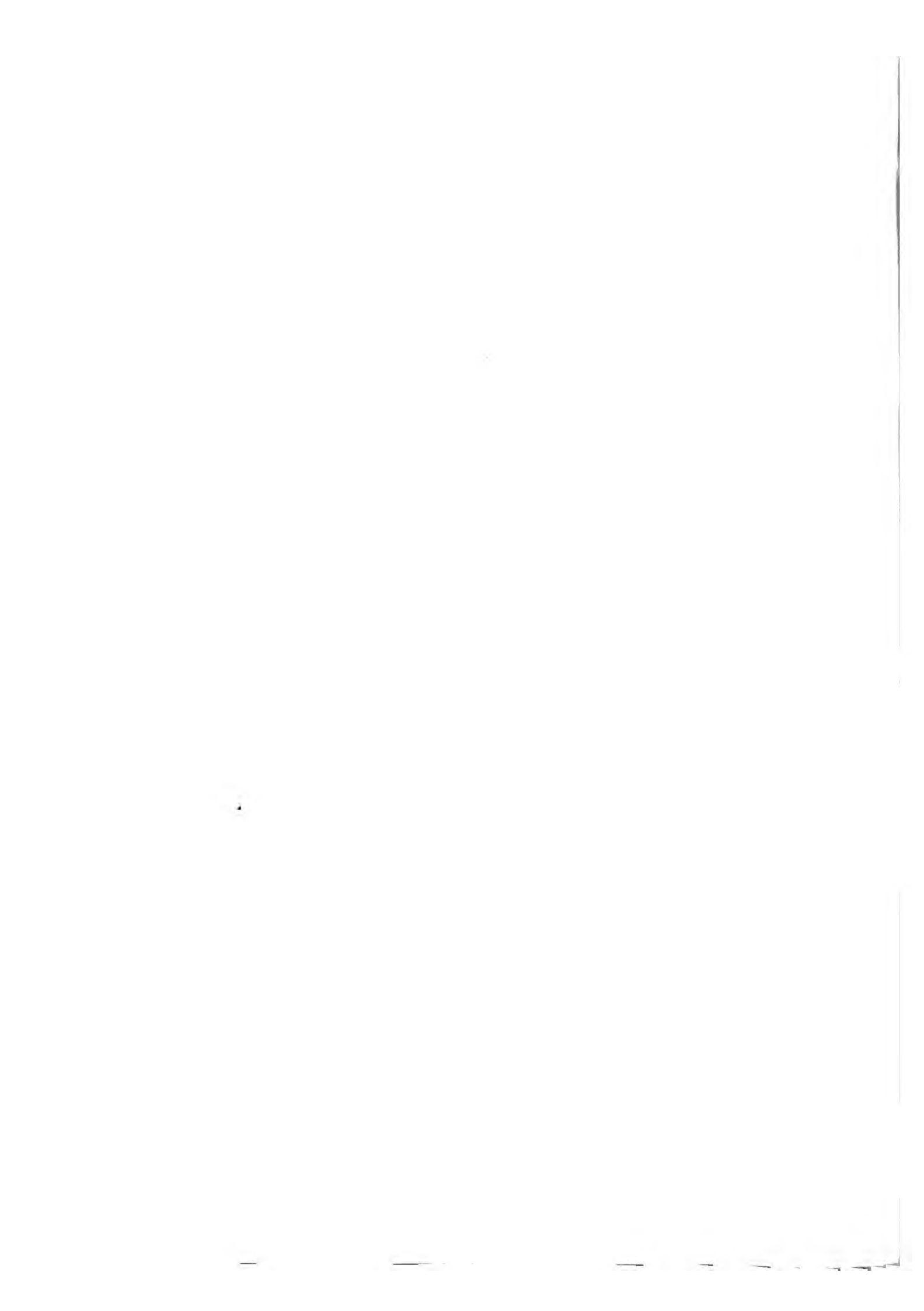
We had reached the brow of a hill overlooking the sea. The air was clear, although the storm had not yet abated its fury. Glancing eastward along the serried line of the coast, we were astonished to observe that the whole beach, for miles beyond where the *San Pedro* had gone aground, was strewn with wreckage. It was the wreckage, not of a single ship, but of many. Indeed, from where we stood we could make out not fewer than five stranded hulks.

We hastened downward to the place where we had slept on the night before. The *San Pedro* was no longer to be seen. She had been broken to pieces, and only a few timbers that had drifted ashore remained to tell the tale.

Beyond the next foreland we came upon a wreck which we believed to be that of the *Rata Coronada*. She had grounded upon the open shingle and now lay high and dry, but broken into two halves. We counted a hundred and twenty-seven dead bodies along the beach near at hand. All of them had been stripped naked, and some bore signs that they had been thrown upon the shore alive, for they had been knocked upon the head and



“ HE LISTENED WITH PATIENCE, ALBEIT WITH A LOOK OF DOUBT.”



afterwards plundered by the wild Irish. Officers and seamen had fared alike.

It was the same all along the coast for a distance of between five and six miles. I know not how many of the galleons had gone ashore in this one wide bay of Donegal, but, to judge by the amount of wreckage that we saw, it seemed that at least one half of the Armada had met with a fate similar to that of the *San Pedro*. The Spaniards in their haste to get home to their own country had not allowed themselves a sufficient offing, or perhaps had not known how the coasts of Sligo and Mayo trend outward into the Atlantic. Many of the galleons, it is true, must have weathered the extreme western capes, for it is now known that of the hundred and thirty that set out in the beginning, some fifty succeeded in returning into the Spanish ports. But on that one morning, as we walked eastward along the beach, we looked upon no fewer than eleven hundred dead Spaniards, and I doubt not that the like was to be seen in other places.

In vain did we seek for Roland Grenville and Will Pimpernel, or for any living Spaniard who could tell us aught of Don Alonzo de Leyva's ship. Sickened at the horrible sights that we had seen, we made our way up to the higher land, and, turning westward, once more tramped back to the huts where we had left Cicely and Cuellar. To our utter amazement, and no less to our dismay, we found that they had both gone.

In terror lest some great ill had befallen them, we went into one of the neighbouring huts, and inquired of a young man whom we saw there if he could tell us aught. Alas! he could not speak a word of English. Having already discovered that these peasants were Catholics, and that they were in the habit of hearing prayers spoken in the Latin, I plied the man in that tongue, and, to our great satisfaction, he understood. After much trouble we got from him the information that a troop of English soldiers had halted in the village a few hours before; that Captain Cuellar, fearing to be made prisoner by them and shot or hanged, had made his escape; and that the soldiers had carried Cicely away with them to the fort of Bundoran, where, as they explained, her two friends had already gone.

To Bundoran, therefore, we wended our way, arriving at the gate, footsore and weary, at about an hour after sundown.

We were met at the door of the guardroom by Sir William Fitzwilliam, the officer who had accosted us in the early morning, and he presently took us into a room in his own quarters where, to our no small joy, we found Cicely lying asleep on a couch before an ample fire. She was scarcely to be recognised at first, for her hair had been combed and frizzed, her cheeks had a rosy bloom upon them. There was a clean white ruffle about her neck, and, instead of the sober friar's gown, she now

wore a simple frock of dove-coloured silk, with a pair of red velvet slippers that peeped out from among the skirts.

A kindly-looking lady, who had been sitting near her, rose at our entrance, and curtsied low as Sir William introduced us. He gave Sidney's full title, the Earl of Dersingham; and my lord, despite his tatterdemalion appearance, bowed to her with all the grace of an accomplished courtier.

"Your lordship will not remember me," said she; "but when I tell you that I am the daughter of Lord Grey of Wilton, you will know that I am not unacquainted with your own family." And then she told of how, since her early girlhood, she had been the friend of my lord's mother, the Countess of Dersingham, ending by bidding us make ourselves at home in her household, for that we should want for nothing.

Thus by strange circumstance did we find ourselves among friends. Sir William furnished us with decent apparel, and for seven days we remained his guests at the fort, riding out with him each morning to frustrate the robbery of wreckage by the peasantry, and making prisoners of such Spaniards as were cast alive upon the coast. Many of the more important of these prisoners were held to ransom, and ultimately sent to Dublin to be dealt with by the Lord Deputy; others, I regret to record, were straightway shot or hanged, while the

treasure wherewith they had stuffed their pockets was reserved as the property of Queen Elizabeth, and duly conveyed to London.

During our sojourn at Bundoran, our health was wondrously improved. Cicely regained her wonted strength; Lord Dersingham showed not the slightest trace of the hardships he had passed through; and my own poor crippled hand, skilfully dressed by the garrison surgeon, was brought into a fair way of mending. We soon began to think of how we might contrive to get a crossing to England. But there was still the uncertainty as to the fate of Roland Grenville.

Sir William Fitzwilliam made full inquiries concerning all the galleons wrecked along the coasts between the north of Donegal and the south of Galway. He made out a list of their names. Many there were which we recognised as the names of vessels that had taken active part in the sea-fight in the Straits of Dover, but the *Rata Coronada* was not among them, neither was the *San Matteo*. We concluded, therefore, that both the Duke of Medina Sidonia and Don Alonzo de Leyva had made their way south to Spain.

At the end of the week Sir William announced his intention of riding north to the town of Derry on some military business. He also informed us that there was an English privateer lying in the Foyle. We therefore resolved to accompany him; and, on a certain morning

in early November, we set forth upon our journey, Cicely riding with Sir William, my lord and I behind them, and a small troop of soldiers following in the rear.

We met with no adventures by the way. The country of the O'Neils, through which we passed, was wild, mountainous, and inhospitable; and such of the peasantry who saw us fled in terror at our approach. They were not kindly disposed towards Queen Elizabeth's soldiery.

On the afternoon of the third day we entered Derry, when Sir William made inquiries concerning the English ship. We learned that she was lying at the mouth of the river, that she belonged to a certain London merchant adventurer, and that her name was the *Marigold*. So, in the evening, leaving my friends for the time, I went out through the town, and made my way to the water side. The stormy weather had abated, and the young moon was rising over Lough Foyle. In its glistening track upon the water, I saw the dark outline of the brig, and between her and where I stood there was a small boat, making for the shore. There was but one man in her, and he was pulling at the oars in true seaman fashion.

"Give you good-e'en," said I, as he brought the boat to the beach. "Pray, can you tell me if the brig out yonder be the *Marigold* of London?"

He shipped his oars and leapt over into the shallow water, hauling the boat with him. I now saw that he

wore a priest's robe, and I drew back hoping that he had not heard my question.

"I know not what her name may be," said he in a husky voice, that sounded as though it came from out the grave, "nor do I at this moment care. Tell me, I pray you, where can I get some food, for I am well-nigh famished?"

As he spoke he looked into my face. I saw that his own face was as white and thin as that of a dead man. He started violently, as if in affright, and then he leapt upon me, throwing his arms about my neck.

"Markham! Markham!" he cried. "How came you here? Surely, surely God Himself hath sent you to me!"

"What!" I exclaimed, thrusting him from me so that the moonlight shone in his face. "Is it indeed *you*?" But I had no need to ask this question, for I now saw that, altered though he was by famine and hardship, there was no mistaking him for any other than Roland Grenville.

I was about to draw him away and take him to the town, when he stopped me.

"Wait," said he in a feeble voice; "I go not without Will Pimpernel. I pray you help me to lift the poor fellow out of the bottom of the boat."

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOMeward BOUND.



IN the dim light I had not noticed that Roland Grenville had not been alone in the boat, and I had not dared to question him concerning Captain Pimpernel, fearing that the latter had lost his life during the late storm. But now I looked into the shadows of the sternsheets, and saw what appeared to be a shapeless bundle of rags.

“Art asleep, Will?” said Roland, stepping over the gunwale and bending down. “Come, rouse yourself! We are at our journey’s end—we have reached port—and here is Master Godfrey Markham to welcome us and give us food.”

“A truce to your fictions, boy,” murmured Pimpernel; “you but ply me with them so that I may not lose heart. But I see through them, and will no longer

believe you! Markham is dead this long while past—ay, and Master Haughton and Mistress Cicely along with him. We two are all that are left out of the whole Armada.”

“Nay, Will; 'tis true that I am here,” said I, leaning over and taking him by the arm. “We are in the port of Derry, where there are many of our countrymen who will help you. Come, let me lift you up!”

He put his arm about my neck, and as I lifted him a shower of golden doubloons fell from his pockets. He had strength enough left to turn and make an effort to pick them up.

“Nay, leave them—leave them where they are,” said Grenville. “Wherefore need we think of saving such dross, when we have found what is surely better than all the gold in the world—a friend?”

I took my two strangely-found companions up through the town, and in about an hour's time had the satisfaction of seeing them both enjoying the first good meal that they had taken since the hour when I had seen them being carried off as slaves to De Leyva's galleon. As they ate, Lord Dersingham told them of all the adventures we had encountered since that time of parting; and when the meal was at an end, and we had provided the two wanderers with clothes, Cicely entered the mess-room where we were, and we listened to what Roland had to tell touching what had befallen himself and Will Pimpernel.

They had endured great hardships; for the *Rata Coronada*, like all other vessels of the Spanish fleet, had been ill-provisioned, and famine and disease had done their fell work. Don Alonzo de Leyva, however, was a man of great wisdom and a most skilful sailor withal, and he contrived to make the best of his resources, and to preserve good fellowship among his crew. His ship was separated from the main body of the Armada in the storm off the Orkneys, and he had thence taken a northward course beyond Shetland. Bearing southward then, he had weathered the western islands of Scotland, with the intention of running down the Irish sea, and so to Spain. But renewed storms had driven him upon the north coast of Ireland, and, during the same dark night which had seen the wreck of the *San Pedro*, he had run aground at a place which Roland named the Giant's Causeway.

Now, De Leyva, who was the favourite among all the Spanish admirals, had attracted to his flag a very large number of the richest and noblest gentlemen of Spain, each one of whom had brought with him great store of gold. The *Rata* was consequently the most valuable treasure ship in King Philip's fleet.

When she ran ashore, there were still some three hundred gentlemen and officers on board. They had made for land in their boats, leaving the treasure to be recovered at daylight. But their boats had one and

all been swamped, and not a single Spaniard survived. Grenville and Pimpernel, together with some thirty of the seamen and soldiers, had been left upon deck, and at daybreak the larger number of them jumped over into the sea, in the hope of swimming to shore. Roland and Will went off last of all, and on gaining the land were surprised to find that they were alone.

They discovered a large cave among the rocks, and here they lived for nine days, subsisting on seaweeds, shellfish, and such other food as they could pick up. They recovered one of the boats, and they also gathered a store of gold doubloons from the pockets of the drowned Spaniards.

When the storm abated they thought they would put out to the wreck, but on a certain morning they saw a large ship bearing in. They made her out to be one of the Armada galleons. Her boats were launched, and for many hours her men were engaged in carrying away the treasure. Having done this, they set fire to the hulk, came ashore and buried the dead bodies, and then set out to sea.

It was not until this time that the wreck was discovered by the Irish peasantry, who now came down in crowds and completed the destruction of the wreck and the robbery of the remaining treasure. From one of these Irish, who could speak English, Roland Grenville learned that the port of Derry was but a few miles to the

westward, at the head of Lough Foyle, and, taking the boat, he had rowed round the coast, carrying with him the weak and ailing Will Pimpernel.

A beneficent Providence had ordained that he should bring his boat to the shores of Lough Foyle at the very moment when I myself had gone thither to make inquiries concerning the English privateer; and thus was our original company of five unfortunate adventurers brought together again. Devoutly thankful were we all that we had been spared for this glad meeting.

On the following morning, Roland, Lord Dersingham, and I went down to the beach and sought out the captain of the good ship *Marigold*. His name was Warburton, and he was homeward bound from Newfoundland to the Thames, having put in at Derry to refit after the storm. His voyage had been a failure, and he expressed his resolve to sell his ship outright and retire from the sea.

On hearing this, my lord stepped forward and declared that he would buy the ship at the owner's own valuation, paying him within three days of our arrival in the Thames. The bargain was struck, we laid in stores for the voyage, and, bidding farewell to Sir William Fitzwilliam, went on board and set sail with Roland Grenville as our commander.

The wind held good for our passage round the north of Ireland. When we were off the coast of Antrim,

Roland Grenville pointed out the spot where the *Rata Coronada* had been wrecked; but there was now no trace of her, but only a wide stretch of desolate rocks.

We entered the Irish Sea without adventure, and took our course southward under all sail. Good food and the sense of freedom, together with the hope of a speedy return to our homes, brought us all into glowing health, and we began once more to look upon life with pleasure. It is true that we were not wholly free from cares. Will Pimpernel did not cease to deplore the fact that he had lost his sloop. There was a chance that the *Pride of Wapping* had been taken safely back to England, but it was a very vague one. Then, too, Lord Dersingham had to mourn the death of his gallant father; while, for myself, I was still suffering from my wounded hand. There was, however, one great joy that was ever present in our hearts—namely, that the great Spanish Armada had been beaten by the English fleet, and that Drake's victory over the galleons had been completed by the storms of the northern seas. The maritime supremacy of Spain had been broken, England had been saved from the tyranny of her Catholic enemies, and our Protestant faith remained firm and unshaken.

On a certain forenoon when we were sailing bravely onward past the west of the Island of Man one of our foretop men reported a sail in sight. Grenville scaled the mast, and, on coming down again, ordered the men

to clap on more sail and give chase, and run out the guns.

Lord Dersingham noticed the change in our course when next he came up on deck. "What may be the meaning of this?" said he, turning to Grenville. "And for what reason do you swerve from our direct course?"

"Your lordship may think me rash," answered Grenville, "but the vessel on our windward is one of the Armada galleons, and I deemed it my duty to bear down upon her, and, if need be, show fight."

"But she is larger than we," objected my lord.

"All the more glory to us if we vanquish her," returned Grenville; and he passed the order forward to prepare for action.

Now the *Marigold* was a most excellent sailer, being built according to the new lines introduced by Hawkins. She was deep in the water and long in the hull, and, carrying a great spread of canvas, she could sail exceeding close to the wind. She was mounted with twenty-two twelve-pounders and one large swivel gun forward. Our crew, all told, numbered forty able-bodied Englishmen, thirty of whom were well trained in gunnery and in the use of small arms. We had to reflect that the galleon, whatever her nominal strength might be, had probably suffered greatly in both battle and storm, and that we had thus an advantage on our side.

In about two hours' time we had come within long

range of her. We flew our English colours, and she hoisted the flag of Spain. Looking upon her from his post on the poop deck, Roland Grenville declared that she was the self-same vessel which had taken away the treasure from the wrecked *Rata Coronada*. Her name, he said, was the *Santa Catarina*. She was a very large and mighty ship, carrying three tier of ordnance on a side, and eleven pieces in every tier. She had lost her fore and mizzen-topmasts, and there were shot-holes in her every sail, but her hull seemed to be still sound.

As we passed close astern of her we opened fire from our larboard guns, discharging them full into her counter. She luffed up, and replied by giving us a broadside from her lower starboard tier; but so feeble was the discharge that we guessed at once that she was short of powder. One of her shots passed through our maintop sail, but the others fell into the water, not having enough force behind them to carry them half a cable's length beyond the cannon's mouth.

We bore up to windward of her, and shortened sail. So slowly and heavily did she move that we might have sailed round and round her. We could play with her as a cat plays with a mouse. Putting about, and returning under her lee, we made ready to give her the full fire of our reloaded guns. As we approached, her chase ports were opened and she veered round, bow on, firing one of

her chase guns into us, but doing no damage, for the shot, striking against our larboard bow, fell off without so much as splintering an inch of timber. Then Grenville gave the order to fire, and our broadside cannons sent forth their shot, raking the galleon from stem to stern.

Again and again we returned to the charge, but the Spaniards' guns were now silent, and even the musketeers in the tops ceased to fire at us. It was evident that their last handful of powder had been spent.

Roland Grenville had a mind to continue his game, and to batter the vessel about until her colours should be hauled down. But my lord said, "No; give the poor wretches a chance. Their powder lockers are empty. If you would take the galleon as a prize, then let the thing be done fairly. Come to close quarters and board her."

"As you will," said Grenville, and he gave the order to heave-to and bear alongside. The small arms were served out—muskets, and pikes, and swords—and we sailed down upon the galleon, yard-arm to yard-arm, on her windward side. But so high were her bulwarks and so great was the bulge of her hull that our men could not easily board her. When the grapplings were thrown out a score of Spaniards, armed with pistols and swords, clambered over her gunwales and leapt down upon our decks. Lord Dersingham, who assumed command of our musketeers, ordered the men to fire, and many of the enemy fell;

while Roland Grenville, Captain Pimpernel, and Captain Warburton ran forward and encountered others at the point of their swords. There was a smart hand-to-hand conflict, during which Captain Warburton fell wounded.

Calling to four of our seamen to join me, I entered into the fight. My left hand was in a sling, but my weapon hand stood me in good stead. The Spaniards were gaunt, sallow-faced fellows, weakened by illness and want of food. They fought gallantly, even savagely, for they attributed all their woes to the English, and were eager for revenge. Grenville and my lord, both of whom had regained their wonted health and vigour, stood up manfully, and gained an easy victory. Our deck was speedily cleared of our foemen, and then, rallying his men, Grenville called upon them to follow him.

With his naked sword gripped between his teeth, he climbed up into our main shrouds, leapt over into the galleon's chains, and led the men over upon the Spaniards' decks. I could not follow them, but I went aft to the poop-rail and watched them, one of our ship's boys helping me by loading my pistols, with which I picked off some three or four of the Castilian officers.

The fight on the *Santa Catarina's* main deck was even less brief than that which had just taken place on our own. Grenville carried all before him, until there were but a half-dozen live Spaniards left. These fled into the shelter of the poop, all but one officer, who, after a sharp conflict

with my lord, fell upon his knees and implored for mercy. His action, rather than his words, told the lad what he meant. At that moment Will Pimpernel went to my lord's side.

“He cries for mercy,” said he.

“And mercy he shall have,” returned my lord. “Bid him strike his colours, Will.”

The Spaniard picked up his fallen sword and handed it to his young conqueror. Then, rising, he walked to the mast, and, unfastening the halliards, hauled down his flag, which was afterwards replaced by the good flag of England.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AFTER MANY YEARS.



OUR loss in this action was three men killed and seven wounded. The loss on the other side was fifteen killed and nineteen wounded. The galleon had been short-handed, and her crew, as well as officers,

had been hopeless from the first.

On taking possession of her we gave the three remaining officers their parole as prisoners of war, treating them with all consideration, and providing them with good quarters and abundance of the best food. In the cockpit we found some two score of wounded and diseased Spaniards, and them we nursed into health. We had fifty prisoners in all to take with us to England, whence Her Majesty—disdaining to put them to death, and scorning either to detain or entertain them—sent them back again to their native country to recount the achievements of their invincible Armada.

The *Santa Catarina* proved to be a most valuable prize, not alone for her hull, which required but a month's work to make it fit and sound for the sea again, but also on account of the vast store of treasure wherewith she had been freighted. Her after-cabins were filled with all manner of costly ornaments, of gold and silver and precious stones, to the value of many thousand pounds. Here were many chests filled to the brim with doubloons, together with heavy bars of the precious metals, gold and silver plates, and little bags of diamonds. For the cabins of the *Rata Coronada* had been ransacked, and nearly the whole of the treasure brought out from Spain by Don Alonzo de Leyva and his gentlemen adventurers had been carried away from the wreck.

Much of this treasure was forfeit to the Queen and her Government, as was but right and just, seeing that it was for the glory of England that it had been won ; but there was, nevertheless, a plenteous store of prize-money to be divided among our ship's company, each man receiving his fair portion according to the position he held on board.

Roland Grenville, to whose intrepidity our good fortune in this matter was wholly due, received, as he deserved, the largest share, and it enabled him afterwards to build for himself a goodly fleet of privateers. Thus it was that he laid the foundation of his successful career as a navigator of the high seas, as a merchant adventurer, and finally as a distinguished admiral. He was never so

great a warrior as his father, Sir Richard Grenville, who, in the memorable sea-fight off the Azores, in 1591, took his one little ship, the *Revenge*, into the midst of fifty-three great galleons of Spain, and battled with them for the space of fifteen hours, thus winning for himself undying renown. But Roland hath, nevertheless, proved himself to be second only to his father for dauntless courage, and a seaman well worthy the high honours bestowed upon him by his sovereign.

Of Roland Grenville's adventures in his later life I have oftentimes heard from the lips of old Will Pimpernel, who sailed with him on many voyages to the Indies, and retired only when advancing age and rheumatic limbs warned him that a quiet home on my lord of Dersingham's estate might offer a more enviable resting-place than the captain's cabin of a comfortless ship. But these matters belong not to the present tale, and need not to be dwelt upon.

It was not until the early days of December that our voyage came to an end, for the *Santa Catarina* was so cumbrous and so heavy with the weight of water that had entered her hold through the shot-holes in her hull, that we had much ado to drag her along in our wake. But at last we came to an anchorage in the Thames. The sight of our prize created unwonted interest among those who saw her being towed behind us up the river, and our arrival in London was hailed with general excitement.

Prolonged though our passage round from Ireland had been, we were yet among the first to confirm the vague rumours touching the fate of King Philip's Armada, and people from all parts flocked to hear our news of how the galleons had met with disaster amid the storms of the northern seas.

Among those who thus listened to our story was Sir Francis Drake himself, who, when he heard that the Spaniards had wasted all their powder and shot ere they had passed out of sight of the English fleet, swore a great seaman's oath, and declared that, had he known of this at the time, nothing should have prevented him from completing his victory.

"Howsoever," said he, "God hath vanquished our enemies in such wise that we rest content; and I warrant me that the proud Dons will never again attempt an invasion of Old England. In this matter, at the least, we may take pride to ourselves that the Spaniards, with all their great and terrible ostentation, did not, in all their sailing round about England, so much as sink or take one ship, bark, pinnace, or cockboat of ours, or ever burnt so much as one sheepcote of this land."

We tarried for many days in London, as guests of my lord at his town house in the Strand. His mother, the Countess of Dersingham, was there present, and, taking a great fondness for Cicely, she would have the girl stay with her, that she might be taught the ways of the

nobility, and be presented at Court. The young Earl of Dersingham, too, had need to remain in town for the meeting of Parliament, that he might take his seat in the House of Lords as a peer of the realm.

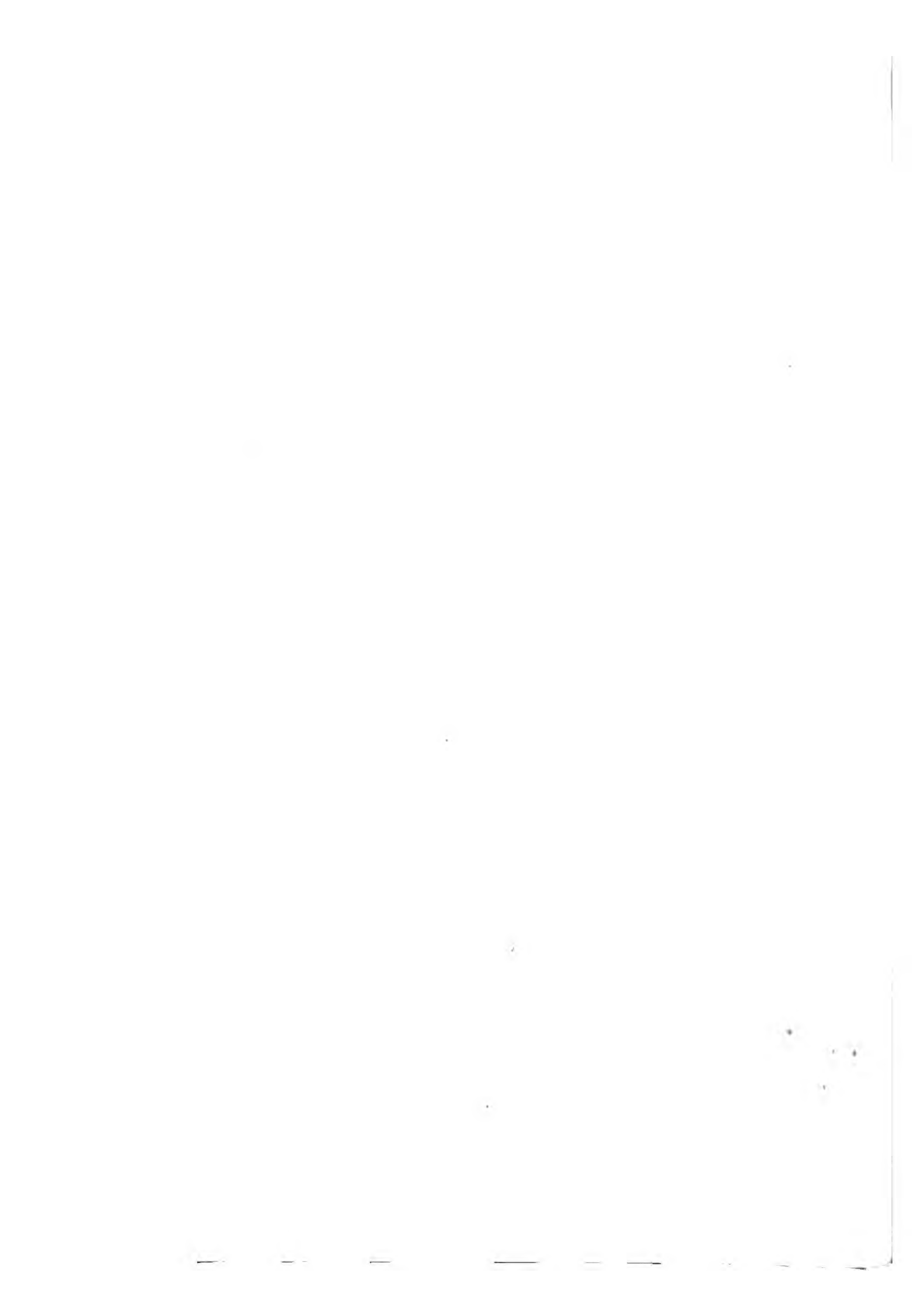
Seeing that matters were going thus well with my friends, and being anxious to return to my duties at college, I quitted London, Roland Grenville accompanying me as far as Oxford, on his way home to Cornwall. We left Will Pimpernel in command of the *Marigold*, instructing him to sail over to Ostend, and bring home my father from the town of Bruges, which duty he fulfilled in due time.

For many months thereafter I was engaged in quiet study at Christ Church, taking my degree of Master of Arts in the following summer. I had thought of entering holy orders even from my earliest boyhood, and now I was on the outlook for a curacy. Scarce had I taken my degree when I had a letter from his lordship, appointing me to the living of the parish of Dersingham, and offering me a life-long home upon his estate. Such good fortune was more than I had expected or even hoped for, and I forthwith accepted the preferment.

My presence at Dersingham made it but natural that Cicely should spend much of her time there also, and I began to notice that my lord and she took the habit of riding out together to the hawking or to fox-hunting. Often as I took my walks abroad I came upon them,



“‘WE ARE TO BE WEDDED, SHE AND I,’ HE SAID.”



wandering side by side, gathering spring flowers, or seeking birds' nests in some lonely coppice. At our Maypole festivals, or whenever there was a country-dance at the Hall, these two seemed ever to come together as partners. I gave but little thought to the circumstance, deeming it but the natural friendliness of boy and girl; but on a certain winter's morning I learned that there was more in it than I had supposed.

My lord came into my study, hanging his head as one who expected some reproof.

"Markham," said he, and he put forth his hand and closed the book that I was reading, "I pray you leave your dusty books for a while, and listen to what I have now to say."

"What is your trouble, my lord?" said I.

"Trouble?" said he. "Nay, speak not of trouble, for 'tis joyful news that I have to tell. It is that Mistress Cicely Markham, after much persuasion and wooing, hath at length agreed to become my wife. We are to be wedded, she and I, for without her sweet companionship I cannot live."

"But, my lord," I cried, springing up from my chair in astonishment, "you surely forget that my sister is of lowly birth, while you—you are of the noblest and highest in the land!"

"Give me no buts," said he. "'Tis what I have hoped for these many years; ay, even since that summer day

long ago when we first met at the sign of the Saracen's Head in Chatham. And now, since Cicely hath seen the matter with mine own eyes, there is no gainsaying it."

"Then may God's blessing be upon you both," said I; for I well knew that when the young earl had made up his mind, no arguments of mine could have power to turn him from his purpose.

Many joyous years have passed since that time, and there is not a happier home in all England than this of Dersingham. My little nephews are growing up into brave lads, and are following in godly ways. They have so often besought me to tell them how it came about that I lost the two fingers of my left hand, that I resolved at length to set the matter down in writing, that they might learn how it befell that their father and mother came into the hands of the Spaniards, and of how, with honest Will Pimpernel and brave Roland Grenville, we all five went through the battle of the Armada, and passed through peril and privation under the shadow of the Foeman's Flag.

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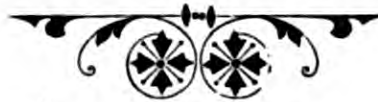
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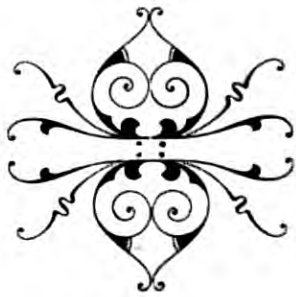
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