The ISLE of the WINDS

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Sir Jamese Stansfeld, of New Milns, in company with his grandson, young Philip, meets in an inn-house his son Philip and his son's paramour, Janet Mark. They quarrel—Sir James goes home, taking along his grandson. That night he is murdered by his dissolute son and Janet Mark. They take his body outside and lay it on an ice floe in the effort to fasten the crime upon other shoulders. But the boy Philip has witnessed the crime. He tells his grandfather's chief tenant, Umphrey Spurway, and Spurway succeeds in having the real murderer brought to justice. He is sentenced to be hanged, his woman accomplice to be transported. Mysteriously Philip Stansfeld escapes the gallows, seeks out his wife, finds her in the company of Spurway and tries to murder her, but does not quite succeed. She is taken away to Abercairn for cure, leaving her son, young Philip, in charge of Spurway and in the company of little Anna Mark, from whom he learns that in some ways girls are worth quite as much as boys. For example, in the time of the cattle dearing, when Mincer Spurway bought his winter beast in the "mart." Anna beat Philip in helping to cut them out. Still they are excellent friends, even though she beats him at her studies in the school to which they go together. John Stansfeld, Philip's lawyer-uncle, brings in a new teacher, Dominie Ringrose, a small man with wonderful eyes. Shortly after his coming, the countryside is shocked and thrilled with a number of bloody and mysterious murders, evidently for the sake of robbery. Business calls Umphrey Spurway from home. In his absence a big packing case, purporting to be full of fine Spanish wool, is delivered to Will Bowman, Umphrey's clerk. He puts it in the weaving shed. That night Philip playing about it, sees shining through the gauze of the packing case a pair of eyes. He calls Will Bowman, who counts three, then stabs the packing case with a small sword. Blood flows; they open the case and find Dominie Ringrose inside, apparently dead. Shortly after, the house is attacked by robbers, whom Ringrose had meant to let in. They are beaten off, but afterwards Philip's mother refuses to let him spend the holidays at New Milns. Returning from a day's visit to New Milns, Philip falls in with Saul Mark, Anna's gypsy father, who, under pretense of showing him Sir Harry Morgan's treasure, makes him a prisoner. Anna finds out his plight, and leads Umphrey Spurway on his track. By the help of his silent partner, Provost Gregory Partan, Saul Mark, supercargo of the ship Corramantee, impresses both Anna and Spurway, robbing Spurway of much money and a portrait of Philip's mother. Philip the elder, who is in league with Saul Mark, takes the portrait and sends young Philip away. Leaving Spurway imprisoned, Philip Stansfeld, the elder, goes out in Spurway's cloak to his wife's house, and by threats induces her to go aboard the Corramantee. In the island Anna and Philip make friends with Eborra, the son of a Needoe woman. He shows them the secrets of the island, and particularly the hiding place of Morgan's treasure, a lake of pitch in the crater of an extinct volcano, where it is guarded by legions of the deadly ter-de-lance.

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CHAPTER XXVIII—Continued.

It was on a fine bright evening after a day of light following breezes that I got my first glimpse of that tropic pearl that I was afterward to know so intimately as the Isle of the Winds.

The clouds seemed to have concentrated themselves in a dense bar of royal crimson which overhung the whole western horizon. Beneath, the sun gathered about him little floating wisps of golden brightness, as if he had been weaving himself a fiery shroud, as he sank into the sea like a broad shield of dull scarlet, the line of the horizon not cut truly across. An irregular black blotch, serrated and, as it seemed, delicately plumed, was streaked across his disk.

The sailors, too, were all clustered forward as at the chase. They stood with hands on each other's shoulders and gazed, talking all the while in low whispers. On the quarterdeck the officers of the watch paced regularly, and Captain Stansfeld stood alone by himself, as was his custom.

The sun dropped, as it were, pulling the daylight under after him. And I had seen my first tropic island.

All night the Corramantee, excellently hermaphrodite, between brig and schooner, stood off and on waiting for the light, that she might thread the difficult and dangerous shoals which still separated her from the Isle of Winds. As may be supposed I was on deck early. And my little Anna Mark, who slept in my mother's cabin, joined me soon after I came up. With eager hearts we watched the great wash of keen green light in the east where the sun would rise, but mostly our thoughts were on the island ahead of us, and the mysterious life we would lead there.

Strangely enough, the blank horror and apprehension with which we had started on our journey had largely disappeared. For though the men were rough enough and desperate enough, yet none had said an uncivil word to us. Moreover, we had great anticipations of wonders to be found under those palms and on the beaches of shining sand, which, in the eye of our imagination, glinted more brightly than if every grain had been a diamond cut and polished.

The bright blueness of the sea, the glistening white rocks which showed their heads here and there, the deep sapphire channels through which Saul Mark skillfully piloted the Corramantee, all caused us to thrill and clasp each other's hands as we stood forward among the eager sailors. I clutched a stay as the vessel caught in the little calm belt between the trades behind her and the inshore land wind in front, rose on the long, oily rollers and heaved her bowsprit into the hot and coppery sky.

"Philip," said Anna, "I wonder what will happen to us on that island."

I turned to her. I know not what prompted the words. I had not the least thought or intent of them the moment before. But now they sprang from my lips as if I had settled on speaking them years before.

"If you love me, Anna," I said, "I care not what happens. Do you love me?" I was still holding her hand, and as she told me long afterward, almost squeezing her fingers into a jelly.

She turned upon me in great surprise. "I do not know what you mean," she said, in a low, intense voice. Then, as if afraid that some of the sailors who stood around might overhear, "Think shame, Philip!" she added.

"Yes, you do know, Anna," I went on, with quick impulse; "you know what it means to Umphray Spurway that he loves my poor mother. You said so yourself, and if you knaw that, you know also what it is for me to love you. So do not pretend!"

She was silent for awhile, watching the flying fish gleaming dark purple against the saffron of the sky as they rose and fell.

Then she said more softly: "I do know what it is to love, but I think I am too young to know what you mean by it. Nay, I am sure that you are too young yourself to know!"

"Anna," I answered, very low, for I saw her father lean over and motion to a seaman, who moved up nearer to us as if to listen. "I do know what it is to love. My heart is aching for love of you. I love you far more than I love my mother!"

"Why, of course you do!" she cried, quite loud, so that I put my hand to her mouth to stay her; for the seaman was very near now.

"And why of course? But pray do not speak so loud!" said I.

"I always knew you liked me best of every one. Of course you could not help that!" she said.

"Yet you say I do not know what love is?"

"I said only that I deemed you too young to know," she made answer. Then, in a moment, "Look, look," she cried, "there are the palms! How beautiful to see their tall feathers wave in the wind, all blowing one way. And there are the roofs of the houses. I wonder why some are thatched and some all scarlet and purple?"

For she wished to change the subject—or, perhaps, wished me to think she did.

But I was not to be put off in this manner. So I said—without even taking my eyes from the cheek, of which I could see only the pretty curve, clean and firm like a boy's, not plump like a girl's—"Anna, tell me if you do not love me a little, or if you think that you will ever be able to love me as—as Umphray Spurway loves my mother?"

She laughed a curious laugh, willful, but pleased, too. I could hear the eager pleasure in it.

"Ah, Philip," she said, "I will never love you as Umphray Spurway loves your mother."

"And why?" I asked.

"Because I know you too well, Philip," she said. "I will not worship any man—least of all one whom I can beat at the stonethrowing!"

Whereat I was indignant, for, indeed, the boast was quite a vain one.

"You cannot," I cried. "I will throw you all day at a bottle, and beat you soundly. But that is not the question. A man has a right to an answer from a girl!"

For I would not let the word drop. She had called me a man, and she must take the consequences. I was not going to let her go back on that great word.

"You shall have an answer, then," she said. "I love you as much as your mother loves your father."

Then, being hurt at the heart that she should so slight me, and also (as I thought) make light of my mother, I withdrew my hand from hers and went and stood at the other side of the deck. But somehow the purple had turned to gray, the crimson to smoky yellow. The blue had gone out of the sky and the fresh sea tang out of the breathing air. I stood awhile by myself, and never so much as looked toward Anna Mark.

But I was conscious that she looked every now and then at me. And I think she smiled.

By and by, however, she came over frankly and said: "Philip, do not be angry with me. What have I done that you should ill-use me so?"

Then said I: "Anna, I have never ill-used you. I have only told you that I loved you. And you flouted me unkindly for it."

"Well, did you expect me to fall at your feet?" she said, a flash leaping up in her eye, as it had a way of doing at all such times. "I will if you say so. I will kiss your shoe! See here!"

And I declare the madcap would have done it there before all the sailormen and the captain, and her own father looking down upon us.

We were now running close in, and the spits of yellow sand were stretching out to meet and enclose us. We had at last caught the land wind, and with Saul Mark directing the helmsman, and now and then taking the wheel himself, while a crowd of shiny skinned mulattoes and negroes ran along the shore, we glided toward a harbor mouth, the water hissing from our stem, and the whole ship lying away a little gracefully from the wind.

"Anna, give me a word to hearten me!" I said. "This is a pirate island. We may never get off it alive. Say a word to comfort me, and on my honor I will not trouble you any more."

"Well, I am in the same case," she said, "and yet I do not ask a word from Will Bowman as to whether he loves me or not!"

I was turning away sick at heart to be so flouted, but she caught me quickly by the arm.

"You see, I do not love Will Bowman!" she said; "that is why I do not want him to tell me. I love to have you tell me that you love me!"

And that was all I could get out of her. Yet from her—enough.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Yellow Jack.

Now there are those who laugh at the love of boy and girl, and, indeed, oftimes it vanishes, leaving no more trace than the sea levels keep of the keels that pass over them toward the harbor. Yet I think many of those who, with their mouths laugh loud at calf love, keep secret an under feeling of sacredness—a reverence for their own first loves. They may have written other names more permanently upon the slate of their heart, but I charge them to own if they have ever known nobler, more unselfish devotion than they felt for their first loves.

But if they deny the faith, and say that they never had any such—why, then, God pity them! That is all. They may have filled their hands with the red haws of life. But they have missed the white hawthorn. The winter fruit may be theirs. They share it with every chattering sparrow. But the sweet scent of the flower of May shall never visit their nostrils.

But all this concerns not my tale (save that I know the world and would anticipate its laughter). Yet I write it down here that on this pirate isle I thought more of little Anna Mark's words than I did of our chances of escaping safe and sound, of even of dangling my legs over the mill lade at the back of Umphray's house and listening to the singing of the Kirkconnel water taking its last leap downward to join the Esk.

Yellow Jack Town on the isle of the Winds was a curious place, and at first I was greatly astonished at it. But afterward I came to understand that it was the necessary product of their traffic. It is a condition of the existence of all sea freebooters that they should have some port to call at, where they can clean and lighten their ship, provision her from some secret depot of stores, give the men a run ashore, and otherwise temper them into some semblance of humanity.

For in an ordinary port the sailors who sail under the Jolly Roger, or the red flag of privateering (which is no better and no worse), cannot be allowed freeshore liberty like the men of law-abiding ships, who have notihng worse than a visit from the civic excisement to fear from blabbing tongues.

Women there are in every seaport town who live by worming out of sailor men, and even out of petty officers, the secrets of their ship and cruise. These they convey to the officers of justice, who are not slow to act upon information received. And a pirate ship has been captured in harbor before now under the disguise of an honest merchantman, through information obtained in this way.

Yet shore liberty of some sort must men have, or they would become fiends incarnate.

So here, in the Isle of Winds stood this curious settlement, its roofs all aflame with the purple and scarlet of the running creepers, and a host of brown-skinned pickaninnies running wild as the goats and clamorous as the sea fowl.

Here it was that so many of the sailors of the Corramantee as had won the privilege by courage and obedience, had permission to marry. And the place being not far from more populous lands, it happened that most had carried off either a Spanish half-breed maiden from their Southern settlements, or a Carib woman from one of the neighboring islands. Those who had not been thus brave or fortunate, had taken to them the nearest white-toothed, woolly-haired negress, and it was about their cabins that the pickaninnies swarmed the thickest.

I cannot tell what arguments the men brought to bear in order to induce the women to live with them, nor what of force had been in the first instance applied. But this I do know, that the women were in general both buxom and happy, and there were fewer quarrels and less ill-blood than in an ordinary Scottish village or New England settlement of the same size.

This, in part, was owing to my father, in prodigious awe of whom went every man and woman in the place. As was not uncommon among them, they had chosen him as their captain, though he was no seaman. "For," they said, "there be many who can steer, and some who can set a course. But we must have a king!"

And a king they had—with Saul Mark for his prime minister, and the Tillicoultry Scot for his sword of justice.

For the first week we saw the island and the village mostly from the deck of the ship, but after that we had soon many opportunities of closer inspection. For we were taken on shore and permitted to assist at the building of a couple of new cottages, which Captain Stansfield and Will Bowman and I were severally to inhabit. The larger and more permanent dwelling which my father had occupied during his previous residences on the island was given up to my mother, who kept Anna with her, in spite of the ill-concealed displeasure of Saul Mark. A couple of well-favored negro women, in bright dresses, waited upon her, and kept up a constant chatter over the low fences with their friends in the neighboring enclosures, and even with passers-by upon the beach.

The houses we built were much simpler affairs. They were raised from the earth upon stout posts about 18 inches high. Then came a flooring of split trees, the split surface roughly planed. The uprights were of the same timber and seven feet high, the walls of rawn planking, and the roof of plantain leaves bound with the strong island withe which grows on the margin of the swamps.

One of these was assigned to Will Bowman and myself, and in the other Captain Stansfield swung his hammock.

All the dwellings were on the sickle sweep of the beach, which, almost like a lagoon in shape, curved round in a couple of horns, leaving only one narrow and difficult entrance. Inside it was always as still as a lake, though the roaring of the trade surf on the outer reefs was never out of our ears.

Looking from our door this is what Will and I saw. First, a green strip of herbage, which in the distance looked almost like high grass, a few scattered guava bushes, then the glittering crescent of sand, the lagoon, with the herons moping in the sun. Then, if we went a little up the bank behind, or clambered on the roof, we could see the white crests and blue-back hollows of the restless Carib sea.

Behind were gardens or yam patches, than loose scrub; beyond were the High woods, as the privateers called the virgin forest, and the blue mountains crowning all. For, like most of the private shelters, our refuge was not a mere sand bank, sweltering under a shadeless sun, nor yet a fever-stricken mangrove swamp—though, as I found out afterward, the isle of the Winds was far from being immune from either plague.

One morning the ship was gone, and the bay in front empty of all save the dreamy, watchful herons in their livery of black and white, and the diving seabirds that flashed and fell out of the zenith.

Anna brought word that the entire crew had gone on board at midnight, with the exception of those whose turn it was to take a holiday on shore. Anchor had been weighed at daybreak and the Corramantee, with her cargo of white slaves, sailed northward for the Carolinian plantations.

Then it was that a still more fictitious peace settled over the isle of the Winds. I have always thought it curious, but after all, natural, that in our native Scotland, and in the countries which men count civilized, we had undergone many and desperate adventures. But here, in this wild, pirate island, and among men whose profession was one of spoliation and robbery, these first months passed as peacefully as an infant's cradle-time.

AS SOON AS WE REACHED THE VERGE OF THAT GREAT PRIMEVAL FOREST A FEELING OF AWE CAME OVER US BOTH.

And to the very last, whatever we might pass through, my mother was never disturbed. Going out but little, occupying herself stilly and quietly upon her shaded veranda or in her cool and quiet room with needle-work and knitting, living in a dreamland of her own, she was shut off from the comings and goings of the island. The crynigs and ululations of the beach reached her ears as empty of meaning as the roar of the trade surf in the offing, or the yelling of the sea birde which darted down into our poultry yard and carried off the food which had been scattered for the Scottish barnyard fowl we had brought with us.

But Anna and I were not content to live in any such seclusion. The instinct of exploration, common to all healthy children of the mixed Saxon races, was specially strong in us. And whatever of the gypsy was in Anna aided and abetted this instinct of roving.

Will Bowman had begun to train a squad of young half-breeds, mostly boys about 15 in the rudiments of drill and the use of arms, according to the German manual and platoon exercise, which Umphray Spuraway had taught his weavers. And those of the privateer's men who were on shore off duty would condescend to come down to the exercise ground and smoke a pipe, watching with appreciation the evolution of the smart lads who took to soldiering in the civilized manner with all the avidity of Prussians, and who would stand and bake or march and sweat all day on the parade ground as if each had been paid the salary of a general.

So of Will for a time we saw not much, but he was ever ready to help us in everything, and in time of need proved himself a very stanch and trusty friend—as shall afterward appear.

It was a blessed relief to find my father gone and Saul Mark's cottage empty as well. For we could not help feeling that the small, beady eyes of Anna's father were ever upon us, and even now he had probably arranged with some satellite to keep track of our movements.

Anna, who was always scraping romantic acquaintance with every waif and stray, attached herself to a half-caste lad with one hand only, who answered to the name of Yellow Jack.

Yellow Jack was a lad extraordinarily active, both in mind and body. But from his behavior in the village no one would have suspected him of either. It was only in the bush, or when face to face with an emergency that his true character appeared.

Yellow Jack's right hand had been cut off at the wrist, he never revealed how, but I think by privateers or some former pirates of the isle, from the exceeding hatred he bore them all. So the lad had been allowed to grow up among the women and the liberty men, doing very much as he pleased. He carried water and scrubbed our pots and pannikins. He watched the fires at the sugar-boiling, and when he was bidden he went swiftly on errands, which he faithfully discharged. But to deceive his masters he preserved at all times a countenance which denoted only stupid and vacant mirth, for that is the best passport to the good will of sailormen of every kind. His mouth was ever on the grin. In the village Jeremy's laugh rolled out mellow as the maple syrup of the north, and Yellow Jack was the willing butt of half the jokes on the island.

But among the colored folk it was different. I never saw any of these come near Yellow Jack without a kind of involuntary shrinking into smaller space—the gesture, in fact, which every one makes on walking into a thicket of nettles.

Anna attached Yellow Jack to herself by a piece of kindness to an old bent negro woman who was painfully bringing in a bundle of herbs and roots from the high woods. She found her sitting exhausted and half blind upon the roots of a tree on the edge of the forest. The old woman was wizened and smoke-dried till she seemed about to shed her mortal tegument like a husk that falls of itself to the ground. But Anna talked brightly to her, at the same time shouldering her burden and helping her along the path.

Loud and long laughed the liberty men, who smoked and lounged about the creeper-grown porches and under the gray-beard streamers of the live oaks. But every negro woman, looking from a balcony or bobbing headdresses about the well, ran for her dearest gossip to tell her the news—how "old Mam Duppy, the Obeah woman, was walking past the white men's houses with the tall young buckra girl who lived in the captain's house."

And I think when Yellow Jack joined the pair near his mother's hut, and the whole three entered it together, none in the village expected to see Anna trip forth again from the threshold looking as fresh as a Moreham daisy with the morning dew on it.

But when it was seen that Anna did not die from such companionship, but, on the contrary, that she had always the best fruits, the finest flowers, the brightest skin, the clearest eye, it was recognized that a stronger Obeah warred for her, and she was besieged with attentions, as she walked about. Negro women brought her their chickens to overlook, and half-caste boys asked her to bless their lurcher dogs and charm them from snakebite. And Anna did it, too, and made no great mistakes, so that her fame waxed greater and greater in the land.

It is of two excursions to the woods in the company of Yellow Jack that I have now to tell, as they had an important influence on our future and were the means by which we were ultimately able to leave the isle of the Winds.

It was an excuse for us to get away that we were accustomed to shoot the wild pigeons which about sunrise passed overhead in great flocks, and returned towards evening with a mighty noise of rushing wings. The little yellow children of the village were set to watch the gardens, and scare them when they alighted anywhere near the settlement or they would soon have destroyed every green thing, besides depriving the swine which wandered everywhere like privileged scavengers, killing snakes and devouring rubbish of the staple of their meat.

Besides there were many other birds which Yellow Jack showed us how to take. He had a hook which he fastened to the stump of his right arm. He had made it himself out of an old bar of iron he had picked up, and he was able to do many wonderful things with it.

But, after all, it was his left hand and arm that were so astonishing. He could swing himself like a monkey from tree to tree, and by means of a rope round his waist and with the assistance of his hook he could walk up the stem of the tallest palm in the island almost as quickly as we could make our way along a plain road.

The morning was still awash with dewy freshness when I set out, carrying my provisions, a gun, and a bag with compartments for ammunition. Anna had stolen silently from her sleeping-room in my mother's hourse. She met me behind the hedge of prickly pear.

"All quiet?" she said. "Where is Yellow Jack?"

"He is waiting further on," I answered. For now the one-armed boy never walked with us along the green bank in front of the line of cottages. He thought his society would shame us, and for all his broad grins he was full of dignity.

But we had hardly passed the palisadoes of the gardens before he was at our sides, his usually social face now grave and quiet. Yet there came a look of pleasure into his eyes at sight of Anna. Me he tolerated chiefly because Anna and I were in a manner looked upon as each other's medicine. "We belonged," said the negresses, comprehensively. And the belief was my great safeguard.

Yellow Jack was laden with a spare cutlass, which he assured me I would need to use in the high woods. He also carried a knife of large size for Anna, for the virgin forest is no respecter of persons.

He had leathern leggings, too, for Anna, so that she could withstand the pricks of the bush thorns, and lime juice to mix with the water which we hoped to find in the woods.

When with us Yellow Jack spoke a curious and picturesque dialect of his own, quite different from the broken English he used with the white men down in the village. It was pleasant to listen to him, for he possessed a rich mellow voice, with a wild ring in its cadences as often as he became excited, or when he burst into little trills of song as naturally as a bird singing in the top of a tropic tree among the liana stems and the gorgeous trumpet flowers.

To me Yellow Jack always seemed to be translating from some notable barbarous tongue, and at times his ideas had a certain barbaric splendor of their own.

"King's son I," he would say, "in my own country, a prince of fighting men. There (he pointed down to the village) a slave. Yellow Jack—out yonder (he pointed over the sea from which the mist was lifting and melting as it lifted)—yonder, Eborra, a chief among chiefs!"

Then, as if he had perchance claimed more than his due, he turned quickly to Anna. "But always your friend!" he said.

And indeed the friendship of Yellow Jack proved to be by no means the least of the blessings assured to us by Anna Mark.

CHAPTER XXX.

The High Woods.

As soon as we reached the verge of that great primeval forest a feeling of awe and terror came over us both. Yet I think that I was more frightened than Anna, though she also drew in near to me, which I was pleased to note. The dark purple of decaying vegetation on which we moved, the sudden noises and the rushing hither and thither of unseen animals, the stealthy stirring of snakes in the cover of tawny grasses, the deep shadows, the fantastic rigging of aerial ropes, the huge trees which started upward, festooned with creepers, and presently lost themselves in a green haze before they had risen 30 feet—these all combined to produce on the mind of country-bred youth a feeling of comprehending awe.

Then the huge ants which followed each other interminably up the trunks of the trees, and made trodden ways of every branch, the yellow-banded wasps, great as bumble bees on the meadows of Moreham, which flew in our faces with a buzz of anger, the crawling crabs which waved their arms and challenged each other on every bare patch as we began to climb the mountain ridge—these and a thousand other wonders kept our hearts continually in our mouths as Yellow Jack led us deeper and deeper into the maze.

But Eborra never hesitated. In the village he was, as he said, Yellow Jack, a slow-moving, lazy young negro, whose misfortune alone shielded him from being compelled by the overseers to perform much more work. He was protected by the fears of all the colored and half-colored population. But here in the native jungle he moved swiftly as the monkey among the trees. He disappeared in towers of leaves and peeped out again to show us safer and easier ways. He was never once at a loss, though we plunged deeper and deeper into the wilderness.

After we had advanced slowly for an hour, we emerged with Yellow Jack into an opener glade.

"In what direction you find the village?" he called down to us.

I pointed behind us in the direction from which we had come. With a slight smile on his face, very different from the broad idiotic grin which, like a mask, he wore in the village, Yellow Jack led us to the brink of a tangled cliff overgrown with bright tropic plants. He pointed with his iron hook, and laughed a low laugh of irony and contempt, it ks that of one who has outwitted a powerful adversary.

For there, almost at our feet, lay the buccaneer village, every house distinct, and the doings of its inmates apparent, as if drawn upon a map. The women went and came to the well. The mulatto overseers directed the labor in the gardens. The pickaninnies played in the dust. Even such strangers as we were could make out many of the people by sight, and Yellow Jack, with his eagle eyes accustomed from childhood to distinguish dusky faces (which still looked mostly alike to us), knew every one of the scores who could be distinguished below at their various tasks.

"Do the white men know of this place?" I asked of Yellow Jack.

He shook his head with a grim satisfaction.

"Not so," he answered, "none knows save Eborra, his mother, and now you two. It is for her sake!" he added, as if to clear his conscience, and he nodded at Anna.

Yellow Jack pointed significantly to the large chief's house which was occupied by my mother. We could see the negro servitors moving about it inside the hedge of prickly pear and that curious plant which is called in Spanish the "figs of the Moor." The headdresses of these women were quite distinguishable in color and pattern in the keen air of morning. It seemed as if we could even hear the sound of their voices.

"Look more carefully—behind the hedge," said Yellow Jack, still pointing with his hook.

"I see nothing!" I said, nor did I, for immediately behind the broad prickly hedge began the deep green of the scrub, and behind that again the ordered lines and stone walls of the gardens.

"There," said our guide, "see, at the end of the chief's house! Look closely!"

"I do see," whispered Anna Mark, in great excitement. "I see two men standing talking together. They are dressed in white clothes and have hats on their heads."

I thought a little. These were men of the crew of the Corramantee. Could she have returned since we came into the forest? But that was impossible, for the inclosed bay was bare and burningly blue under the tropic sun, unstirred by any keel, and out beyond the Carib sea sparkled and danced empty of all life save the wheeling sea birds.

Yet here at our feet were two armed men of the crew—not liberty men, but men of the ship whom we knew well. They were armed also, and on guard. For presently, concluding their conversation, they separated and began to pace to and fro, one in front, and the other in rear of the house where my mother dwelt.

"So it is always!" said Yellow Jack, "night and day, always two men watch. Then one come and watch these two! Wait, in a moment you see him."

The two men on guard paced slowly up and down, each covering two sides of the cottage inclosure. We could see the sun shining on their musket barrels as they halted at the turn.

"Why do they watch my mother's house?" I said aloud.

"It is always so—ever since the chief of the Silver Ring took away the ship. They watch and they watch! Eborra watch, too! Here he comes!"

And with his finger he pointed to a hut which stood just beyond one of the garden walls. A man stood in the doorway. We could see his form but dimly in the dimness of the chamber. He came a little farther out so that the sunshine of the morning caught him. It was my father.

"He who watches the watchers," explained Yellow Jack.

This shook me greatly. And I had begun to feel so secure in his island that I quite resented it. The remembrance of Scotland had begun to lose its edge. All appeared so peaceful. The liberty men ate and grew fat in the society of their dusky wives. The shiny pickaninnies tumbled on the shore like young seals, or fled in riotous hand-linked groups from our approach. My mother abode in her beautiful cottage with the shore vine and frangipani aglow all about it. All was peaceful as the click of her knitting needles.

But here was my father, not gone away with the ship, but watching and setting others to watch my poor mother. What could his object be?

"Captain with golden coat stay," commented Yellow Jack; "captain with silver rings go with ship—sell boys, buy provisions, come back. Then all go find Spanish ship—town—plantation—kill, steal, make prisoner. When captain with silver rings return, it no good to be in village. You come with Eborra then. He take you to his town."

And smiling in his quiet fashion he let go the veil of green bush which he had drawn aside that we might look down upon the unconscious village. He took us a dozen steps from the cliff edge on which we had stood.

"You no find it now," he said again.

And, truly, no more we could. The curtain of green vegetation stirred in the morning breeze, but though we came near to falling from the cliff edge and got ourselves bitten by red ants in snatching heedlessly at likely branches, we could not again catch a glimpse of the village.

"Ah, do not touch!" cried Yellow Jack, suddenly; "that manchineal poison leaves cut hand, poison blood. Keep behind Eborra. Follow him!"

And so with faces wondrously lengthened we re-entered the virgin forest. Our guide went on ahead with his accustomed readiness. Continually he would reach back a hand to help Anna, while with a hook he attached himself to some tough lianasse which, like a great cable, bound together (as it were) the earth and sky. Then I, following humbly, would in turn be glad of Anna's hand to steady me. But the unknown world in which I found myself, and the veiled cruelty and treachery with which we appeared surrounded preyed on my spirit. I became a victim to the deepest melancholy. I felt a deep sense of depression which was half the sight of my father lurking on the island, when I had thought him far away, and half the hurried, and imperfect breakfast I had eaten.

Nothing comforted me so much as the touch of Anna's hand. And I think she let it stay longer in mine because she knew that my heart was troubled. Yellow Jack alone seemed not to feel the need of some cheering influence. After an hour's steady progression through the dim green aisles he pointed ahead.

It was dusky like a cavern where we stood, but before us, we saw two of the giant trees stand like gate posts of a brighter land, then, framed as in a picture, a stretch of bare hillside, and a saw-edged mountain above, golden against the blue-black sky.

"Here we eat!" Yellow Jack explained briefly.

And with that fresh youth in our veins which enables the young to set trouble aside (or at least to stop thinking about it till it grows more insistent) Anna and I went dancing over the glaring white rocks, laughing at the clattering land crabs which scuttled into their holes at our approach, or stood solemnly waving belligerent claws on the top of every rocky knoll.

Ebbora led the way over the shoulder of the ridge till we came to a shady spot, where some wild pines gave a more homely look to the tropic landscape. He pointed to a little spring which rose dimpling in a tiny cup of white limestone rock, overflowed and ran merrily away down the hillside.

"Bush water not good," he said; "this good!"

So on the flat stone he undid his pack, and we feasted luxuriously in the airy shade of the pines. The sea breeze, cool at this altitude, fanned our brows, prickly with perspiration and with the close breathless heaviness of the high woods.

I have rarely enjoyed a meal more or felt more refreshed by anything than by the cool fruit and sparkling water with which we washed it down. When we rose to look about us, our spirits had risen to their natural pitch again, and we were ready to follow our guide anywhere.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Fer-de-Lance.

Yellow Jack threw the remains of our feast into a crack in the wall with a gesture which I took to signify an oblation to the deities or devils of the place. Then he turned upon us with grave eyes, in which there was no trace of laughter.

"We have played," he said; "we have seen—taut, it is all nothing! If you are not afraid I will show you something—the real—the home of Obi, the hid treasure, the palace of the king! You are not afraid?"

Now, I myself had had quite enough of going to look for hidden treasure, but I could not show the white feather where Anna remained stanch.

"What is that?" I asked, as much to gain time as anything. Do you mean the treasure of Sir Harry Morgan?"

To my surprise Eborra nodded vehemently.

(To be continued.)

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