The ISLE of the WINDS

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Sir James Stansfield, of New Milns, in company with his grandson, young Philip, meets in an innhouse his son Philip and his son's paramour, Janet Mark. They quarrel. Sir James goes home, taking his grandson. That night he is murdered by his dissolute son and Janet Mark. They lay his body outside on an ice floe, in the effort to lay the crime to others. But the boy Philip has witnessed the crime. He tells his grandfather's chief tenant, Umphray Spurway, who succeeds in having the real murderers brought to justice. Philip is sentenced to be hanged, and his woman accomplice to be transported. Mysteriously he 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 in charge of Spurway and with little Anna Mark, who teaches him that in some ways girls are worth quite as much as boys. Still, they are excellent friends, even though she beats him at her studies in the school to which they go. John Stansfield, 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 by a number of bloody and mysterious murders, evidently for the sake of robbery. Business calls Umphray Spurway from home. In his absence a big packing case, purporting to be full of fine Spanish wool, is delivered to Will Bowman, Umphray's clerk, who puts it in the weaving shed. That night Philip, playing about it, sees shining through the gauze a pair of eyes. He calls Will Bowman, who counts three, then stabs the 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 Spurway on his track. By the help of his silent partner, Provost Gregory Partan, Saul Mark, supercargo of the ship Corramantee, imprisons both Anna and Spurway, robbing Spurway of much money and a portrait of Philip's mother. Philip the elder goes out in Spurway's cloak to his wife's house, and by threats induces her aboard the Corramantee. Anna and Philip make friends with Eborra. He shows them the secrets of the island, and where Sir Harry Morgan's treasure is, guarded by Fer-de-lance and his hosts. Eborra has scented a boat, in which he plans to escape with Anna, Philip, Mrs. Stansfield and his mother; also Will Bowman, who is in the clutches of the pirate. The pirates sail away with two or three ships. The boat starts, encounters other pirates, but is towed safely away by a monster devilfish. The boat reaches Puerto Rico in safety, and its inmates approach a convent seeking help. The convent takes in the women. The men go into a chain gang. It is making a road for the pleasure of the governor's wife. She chances to pass along, and Will Bowman and Philip discover her to be Janet Mark, little Anna's mother. Janet Mark, now the Lady Juanita Silveda, stands friend to her countrymen, but they soon find it is a perilous favor.

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CHAPTER XLI.—(Continued.)

Then Donna Juanita talked to us in English, or more often in the Moreham Scotch of the more vulgar sort, while her husband, not being able to understand a word, sat and fidgeted, or stood by the window kicking his heels and tangling his spurs in the hangings, not daring to say a word. Save that I thought on the chain gang and the Inquisition, I could have found it in my heart to be sorry for him.

Donna Juanita listened to the relation of our escape with the greatest interest, till, asking where the others of our party were, she suddenly bade her husband go back incontinent to the monastery and fetch all who had come with us in the boat.

"I saw a well-looking young lad at the nunnery wall. It is not fair that he should stay there to play bob-cherry over so many watering mouths!"

The commandante hesitated, as it were hanging in the wind for an excuse to stay.

"I shall send a messenger immediately," he said, "it is more fitting, and the heat of the day is great."

"I bade you go and bring them, Nicholas!" said Juanita, continuing her talk with Will.

The Governor shuffled toward the door. His eyes, full of fury, were turned on Will and myself. I wished that Juanita had not showed herself quite so friendly. In a few moments, however, we heard the rattle of horses' feet, and, looking through the curtains, I beheld this most luxurious Military Governor, with a single attendant, speeding away in the direction of the monastery of St. John of Brozas.

"I think," began Will, rising uneasily, "that I should go and meet—"

"Sit down!" cried the lady, quoting a Spanish proverb. "The only folly I cannot forgive is ingratitude, the only sin stupidity. Time enough to greet your folk when they arrive!"

So perforce we had to sit down again, and tell the lady many things to fill up the time. I spoke of my mother, but could not summon resolution to tell her of Anna. And indeed if any one will take the trouble to think on all the circumstances, I judge that he will not greatly blame me. So that, be it well believed, it was with a tremulous heart that I waited the advent of my mother and Little Anna Mark.

CHAPTER XLII.

Jezebel's Daughter.

Before her husband's return the lady had time to tell us all her adventures, now standing by Will's stool and playing with his hair, anon gazing out at the window. She spoke of Moreham. She queried concerning New Milns. Yet all the time she continued to inform us in the common accent of the vulgar that she only knew these places from having visited at the house of a noble family in the neighborhood.

"It was in her leddyship's time that I gaed maistly about Clay Pots," she said, with the careless hauteur born of high breeding, "aye, aye, fell fond o' me was her puir leddyship, an' tried hard to get up a match atween me an' her auldest son Hairry, that is noo my lord. But na—no for Leddy Johanna Mackinstry—that was mysel'. My maiden name we maun ken. I fairly scorned him. I juist couldna bear to look at him. And then a' things gaed wrang when the guid cause gaed to the war: an' at the last, me that was sae proud, was stown awa' frae my native land!"

Anon she would relapse into a number of Spanish proverbs, and the curious thing was that so soon as she ceased telling tales of her own invention and began to moralize after the manner of her adopted country, she spoke good enough English, relinquishing completely the common Scots' manner of speech.

"But there—I have come to a country where the slaves are the only free men, where I must put up with fools and knaves and sing 'Why left I my hame?' Yet God be thanked, I can make them serve me. If a dog barks at you, give him a bone; and death is the only sickness for which there is no remedy. But what keeps my husband? He has had time to have been there and back a score of times. What is your name, young lad?"

"Philip!" I said, without adding my surname.

"Ah!" she meditated, "once I kenned a Philip—but he did not favor you; far otherwise, indeed!" She looked me over a little disdainfully, and I blushed (I fear somewhat foolishly), knowing of whom she spoke. It was not vanity, God wot. For I know well I was never so tall or so well-favored as my father. But so long as Anna thought otherwise, I cared naught for the opinion of any other.

"Now, Philip, go and find my husband!" she said to me. "Tell him to make haste, for I am instant to see those who came from the pirate isle with you."

I started up and was at the door in a moment, but Will was before me.

But this the lady would in no wise permit. She thought more of Will's bodily presence than of mine, being older, I suppose—a thing that made me glad, and I resolved to vex Will afterward by casting up to him the lady's preference.

"Bide, Englishman," she said, "let young Abercairn go!"

At which Will had perforce to return against his will and I departed well content. But I was none so well pleased with the sight that met me outside of the town. For mounted on mules and cantering ponies I met a whole cavalcade. First came my mother on a steady pacing beast of a gray color. She had on a kind of nun's dres with a white band across the forehead, in which I hated to see her. A brown rosary was about her neck, and she looked as if she had spent all her life within convent walls, this owing not so much to piety as to the delicate purity of her complexion, of which she always took the greatest care.

Next came the old witch woman, carried in a sort of rude litter by two stalwart negroes, while Eborra ran beside her, ready to render any assistance which might be necessary.

But the last pair caused me the greatest astonishment of all. For Anna rode boy fashion on a fiery little steed with the Commandante beside her on his black. She was still dressed in the manner which some of the Spaniards have learned from the Indians; that is to say, in a youth's suit of dressed deerskin, fringed and beaded. A short tanned skirt of fine doeskin came a little below her knees. Crossgaritered hosen, little peaked Indian shoes and a feathered cap completed an attire pretty indeed to look upon, but one which, appearing in Moreham Kirk on a Sabbath morn, would have raised a revolution in all the parochin.

All the time the commandante was devouring Anna with his eyes, while as for the minx herself, as usual, she was eking out her broken Spanish with her eyelashes.

"No puede, senor!" she as saying, "no mas agua—"

What it was that the senor could not do, or why Anna wanted more water, I cannot tell. Most likely the whole was but an excuse to make play with her darkly roguish eyes. For it was about this time that Anna began to show a consciousness of her beauty wholly new, and I will admit that, though I misliked it at the time, afterwards it was pleasing to recall her little successes, and how she served this one and that other, knowing all the time that her heart was altogether mine.

Presently they all came within the inclosure of the castle. I helped my mother down from the saddle as from a castle wall, who, when she had disentangled herself, fell into my arms and wept over me. The first question she asked was whether Umphray Spurway had yet arrived. And when I told her "no"—"Ah, then," she murmured, "he is surely on his way!"

Over my mother's shoulder I could see the red-faced commandante, who had dismounted in puffing haste, holding out his arms to catch Anna in the free island manner.

But of this Anna would have nothing, for with a merry laugh, the little witch leaped nimbly down, resting only the tips of her fingers lightly on Don Nicholas' outstretched arm. Whereupon the gallant soldier of the most Catholic King bent him on one knee in the dust of the exercising yard, and kissed the small brown hand which Anna permitted him to retain.

"Why, what harm? I thought I was doing the best for all of us!" said my lass afterward, and gave not a fig for any doctrine or proof of mine. But all the same it had been better if she had chosen another spot for her ill-set tricks than immediately beneath the window of Mistress Juanita Silveda.

Will Bowman told me of it afterward.

"I was standing by the window sulky as a dog that you have kicked," said Master Will, "and I wished I had been one, too, For the woman came and leaned upon me—faugh—and pawed my hair and breathed upon my neck till I thought I would have burst, or it may be, clouted her on the ear. Had I not remembered that she was our only hope—indeed, but for your mother's sake and Anna's—I would let drive at the besom with my foot."

I said something here.

"Oh, that be hanged for a tale. (Will did not often swear.) I knew as soon as I clapped eyes on her that the trollop was no more of a lady than Tip, our cat, that rakes the roofs in the midnight! And as I say, if it had not been for your mother, I would have knifed her and thrown her over the window to the dogs, like that other besom in the Bible—Jezebel, was that not her name? I heard Miss John read about her in the kirk once. And a rare tale it was, too!

"Then, all suddenly, I had ease indeed," Will went on, "for it chanced that Jezebel looked out of the window over my shoulder and there upon the plaza she saw King Aham kneeling, if you please, on the hard mud to our Anna, decked out like a stripling from a play-acting booth, all fine with beads and tags and gauds. And she, well—looking down at him like the little vixen she is.

"Well—then I tell you, she was in a rare taking. My lady thought no more of breathing down my neck. By the head of Noll, will a cat lick her paws when she can lick cream? Jezebel stamped her foot and clenched her hands, looking as if she would have leaned down from the window upon the pair of them. She strode up and down like one of Lag's troopers in a covenanting house, and when at last the door opened I expected her every moment to fly at Anna as she came in.

"And she would, too—only that the Don came first, and the brunt of her anger fell on him. He quailed and stammered—as indeed you heard him. His own fine Castillian failed him in the hour of need as if it had been a foreign tongue.

"'Foul toad, spawn of a mud bank,' she cried, 'you would betray me to my face, and that with a silly ape-faced girl, the slave of a slave? By our lady, I will mar her. She shall no longer witch fools with her upward glances. I will pluck out her eyes—pyke them as corbies do—'

"At this, thinking that she would do even as she said, I came between. In a moment she had a dagger drawn on me, the which she stuck through my forearm. Then, plucking it out again, she flew like a fury upon Anna, and if you, Philip, had not gotten between them, I trow she would have had it in her heart."

Thus far, Will. I may as well tell the rest in my own plain tale. I did step between the two, for Anna kept her ground gallantly as the wife of the commandante rushed at her with dagger uplifted.

"Hold, Janet Mark!" I cried loudly, catching hold of her; "do not kill your own child.

She struggled wildly for a minute as I held her by the wrist.

"She is your own child, your little Anna Mark!" I repeated in a calmer tone.

And the second time the spoken words did not fail of their effect.

"Little Anna Mark!" she repeated after me, uncertainly, pausing between each word.

"Aye, Anna Mark, indeed,' I continued: "the babe you bade farewell to on the steps of Moreham kirk. I kenned you, Janet Mark, even as soon as I clapped eyes on you!"

I expected every moment that she would turn on me and order us all to the gallows, being in fear lest her husband should discover her for the thing she was. But I misjudged the woman. Sin like this woman's debases the heart, but it does not kill natural affection.

She looked at Anna long and keenly. The stiletto, or thin-bladed albacete knife dropped from her hand. She ran forward, caught her daughter by the shoulders and eagerly perused her features.

"It canna be—it canna—it canna," she cried aloud in country speech; "this is no my wee lass—my bonny we lase that I left sae far awa'!"

Anna stood mute, looking questioningly from one to the other of us.

"This is, indeed, Little Anna Mark," said my mother, speaking for the first time, "but Philip doats. You are not her mother. Her mother was an evil woman, a murderess. She was transported for her crime. She was sold for a slave in the plantations of Carolina."

Now, thought I, we are done for, indeed.

Recognizing a hostile voice, Janet Mark turned on my mother.

"Who are you?" she said with a suddenly whitened face.

"I am Philip Stansfield's wife," answered my mother calmly, "and this is my son."

Janet Mark lifted her hands and hid her face in them.

"Philip Stansfield's wife!" she murmured, and again, "Philip Stansfield's wife. God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Then she turned to where her husband, Don Nicholas, was standing open-mouthed, not understanding a word of our discourse, but following with hungry curiosity every gesture and action.

She held out a hand to him.

"Take me away," she said in Spanish.

She kept her eyes averted from Anna's pale face with its look of wondering innocence, in which was yet no fear.

"My little Anna Mark!" she repeated wistfully, like one in a dream.

And, as the door closed upon the commandante and his wife my mother sank down in a dead faint into Will Bowman's arms. Anna and I looked at each other, while Eborra's mother muttered incantation after incantation as if to appease an angry demon.

And truly all the demons of circumstance and misfortune seemed to dog our track, and for the first time in all our wanderings I began to despair.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Castaways.

And had I, with the doubtful second sight of Eborra's witch mother, been able to see that which was approaching the Isle of San Juan, I might well have said to myself that malignant demons were following our trail.

But as it was I could not discern a certain small boat far out to sea—a boat which seemed to drift here and there, yet which notwithstanding progressed nearer and ever nearer to our island.

There were two men in it, one of them lying at full length in the bottom with his face in the shadow of a thwart. He had his head turned away. The other sat with one hand in his bosom. The other was laid occasionally on the tiller, from which it would drop off again in a moment. For the dull, fiery glow from the slanting sun made the iron of the tiller bar as hot as the bars of a grate, falling at the same time upon the prostrate man and turning a pair of large silver earrings into hoops of burning copper.

The man at the tiller looked down as his companion turned his head and moaned. He slid his hand into a locker and drew from it a case bottle and a small cluster of bananas. Then he held the bottle up to the light, turning it upside down to see how much liquid remained in it. The wide neck was scarcely filled.

The next moment Captain Philip Stansfield, late of the Corramantee and of the Isle of the Winds, was supporting the head of Saul Mark on his knee and pouring the last drops of rum down his throat. He did not reserve so much as one drop for himself.

To all intents the man he now stooped to succor had been dead. The slight movements he made from time to time were no more than the spasm of imminent rigor. But the strong liquid penetrated to the springs of life. The heavy eyelids were slowly upraised, life looked out of the bloodshot eyeballs. The soul of the man awoke and showed a moment like an evil beast at the mouth of his lair. Saul Mark recognized the face that was bent over him, and the faint semblance of a grin twitched his mouth downward and to one side. "Still a sea-mile to windward of hell, Philip!" he murmured, and closed his eyes with a singular gleam of triumph in them.

Captain Stansfield sighed and went on trying to force a piece of crumbled banana between the clenched teeth.

"Not yet," he murmured; "not yet. Death alone shall release me from my bond. I will pay the price—yes, to the uttermost farthing I will pay!"

And lifting his eyes, he saw black across the crimson arc of the sinking sun, very far away, the sierra of the Isle of San Juan de Puerto Rico.

It was a week or two afterward that the lady Juanita Silveda, who had recovered from her brief indisposition, and now went out more than ever, ordered out her carriage that she might take the air. With her went Anna, by reason of the sudden favor which had descended upon her. Indeed, the senora could not be parted from the girl, scarcely for an hour. A bedroom had been hastily thrown into her suite of apartments in the commanderie, and the guards and cloaked gaunt officers from old Spain swore under their breaths that Donna Juanita had suddenly gone mad. For they said it was easy to see that Don Nicholas had fallen over head and ears ("and that last is a long fall," murmured Ramon Garcia, Lieutenant of Artillery) in love with the young English girl, whose eyes are like fire matches and whose skin like the rose leaves of the huerta of Arihuela.

"Carramba, senora," quoth Don Ramon, curling his moustachios, "it is a shame that one shiny-pated old commandante with a forehold on him like the port of Spain galleon should monopolize the only well-looking women in the plantation. Let them choose, sirs, let them choose. Trust a woman's eye for picking out a fire figure of a man."

And with his conclusion Don Ramon swung the end of his cloak over his shoulder and about his mouth, according to the fashion of the Murcians, who, being condemned to grill six months of the year in hell-fire heat, and to shiver the other six in an icy Gehenna, use their cloaks indifferently to moderate the rigors of either.

There was also much jeauousy among the officers concerning Will and myself. And many there were, racked with fever and disappointment, fingered their daggers when they found themselves passed over in favor of a pair of heretics fresh from the chain gang, whose only merit was that they knew something about the duties to which they had been appointed.

For ready to our hands (and somewhat readier to Will's than to mine), we found a weaving shed where Indians and half-breeds, negro slaves and mulatto freedmen, starving colonists and men too weak for the chain gang, wrought side by side 'n the weaving of the striped serapes, the thick-wefted ponchos, the gauzy mosquito nets and the comforting Mexican blankets.

By virtue of the commandante's favor Will was placed in charge of this, and having appointed me for his lieutenant, he set about reorganizing the whole after Umphray Spurway's model with his own quick decision.

Now in these new colonies there is no such thing as promotion by merit. Offices are given and taken with regard only to the amount of money or perquisite which is attached or attachable to them. So that a sea captain will manage a gold mine or superintend a mint, take charge of a government printing press or start a sugar plantation with equal readiness, being noways concerned at any ignorance of his duties, but having only a single eye to any plunder which might stick to his fingers.

So that when Will dispossessed the incapable superintendent of the Puerto Rico cloth weaving (a distinguished "sangrado" or island doctor), he naturally made a bitter enemy or rather many. For every holder of a comfortable sinecure feared that one or other of these pushing, irrepressible English would supersede him and divert the plunder from donnish breech-pockets to those of the King of Spain.

But Eborra and his mother, by using their great influence among the blacks and Indian half-breeds, kept us informed of the plots to assassinate us as we passed through the forest. So that when the masked bravos sprang from the bushes Albacete, knife in one hand, cloak wrapped about the other arm, we were ready for them with our swords bare in our hands and hastened towards our assailants with loud cries. These incontinently turned tail and vanished, even on one occasion plunging into thickets of prickly pear in their desperation.

A pistol shot out of the wood was a more dangerous incident, and they became almost a feature of our pilgrimages, till, consulting the commandante, we obtained two men as escort. So, with great bell-mouthed muskets loaded with slugs, we marched to and fro, the muzzle of each piece laid affectionately over the shoulder of a Spanish soldier. In this manner we had peace, and the weaving prospered in our hands. Every Sunday we went to the convent to see my mother and to do what offices of kindness we might to the poor fellows of the chain gang who had once been our comrades.

But I began to tell of Donna Juanita's excursion to take the air. Anna went with her, still wearing her fringed Indian hunting dress, which she found exceedingly convenient. And in beaded leggings, fringed skirt of tanned doeskin, quilled blouse, pearled with silver buttons of Potosi, and close-fitting cap, daintily feathered, who but Anna Mark "was a sight for sore eyes," as the saying is at Moreham? The soldiers at the fort watched for her, hollow-eyed with fever, and shook as they waited. The negroes worshiped her as though she had been a divinity. The commandante walked beside her, with his hat in his hand, and, marvel of marvels, the Lady Juanita seemed more fond of her than of any other, so much so that it was almost impossible to find them separate by night or day.

I know not what tale the Lady Juanita had told Anna to account for her own transportation across the seas. I have never asked Anna from that day to this. Probably it was some invention of capture by pirates at sea, or kidnaping at home, as would appear the more credible, in that it had been her own fate. At all events, Anna, willing, though not rejoiced, to be claimed as a daughter by this handsome and powerful lady, endured many caresses, in the hope that thus one day she might be able to bring us all safe back to our native land.

But this thought had to be severely concealed from the Lady Juanita, who, naturally enough, had no intention of revisiting Scotland.

"Two years, Anna," she would say, "and with our economies we will be able to return to old Spain! Nicholas has promised it. We shall see the glories of the king's court. I shall have my carriage repainted, and a new coat of arms blazoned. Nicholas will receive the order of the Golden Fleece. I have heard that the king himself has expressed a desire to see me. He likes fine women, so they say. You as my—my younger sister shall accompany me. We will marry you to a grandee of Spain. You shall have a Winter house in Madrid, a Summer villa on the mountains—at La Granja, where the court goes. Nicholas is rich. We have no children. All he has shall be yours and mine. If anything should happen to him—well, who knows—I may marry again. The Spanish rave about women of my complexion."

To all this Anna listened without remonstrance or making objection. For, as she said to me afterwards, when I spoke to her about marriage with a grandee of Spain:

"No, I did not refuse. For, you know well, Spain is so far on the road home, and if we can get a passage thither and means to make Umphray acquainted with our case, we shall all see the Miln house again and hear the water lashing over the weir."

For, as all may see, Anna had an old head on young shoulders, and no idea of bartering the shadow for the substance. So long therefore as the grandee abode in the background, she was quite willing that her mother should talk as much as she pleased about marriage in the abstract. All the same, I knew she had no idea of marrying any Spaniard, prince or beggar. About that I gave myself no concern whatsoever.

It was talking in this fashion that Anna and her mother rode forth towards the new road on which the gangs of half-naked men were at work, their chains glinting and tinkling while the cracking of the driver's whips resounded from one end of the busy antheap to the other.

As the carriage drove up in the red glow on the afternoon the outriders were suddenly stopped by some obstruction on the highway. Voices cried confusedly and whips smacked as the negro gangmasters strove to clear the road for the wife of the commandant. Juanita looked out of the belly of the coach. She was in a good humor. She had that moment married Anna to a prince of the blood and settled Don Nicholas under a marble monument as heavy as a church.

"Ah, a poor man fallen down! It is those accursed chains in the heat of the day. It is cruel indeed! But why people will not worship in the fashion of the country when they live in a country, I cannot understand. Stand out of the way there, fellow! Your hand, Anna. I will descend. I will descend! Bring the strong spirit with you; we will revive the poor man. Take your black haunches out of a lady's way, will you?"

And so with loud, humorsome authority she caused a way to be cleared. In a moment more Anna found herself looking at two men chained even as we had been—one was gray of head, the other black. One was elder and the other younger, but both were gaunt and haggard and naked even to the iron rings about their waists. The elder had the head of the younger on his knees at the moment when the two women came up. The younger opened his eyes.

"Let me go!" he murmured. "Why do you torment me? Let me go to my own place! You are a devil!"

And the elder answered him with a terrible grimace of hate. "I will never let you go. Death itself shall not release you. I will haunt you, follow you, live with you. You shall not die, but live on chained to the man you wronged, Philip Stansfield, my debt is not yet half paid!"

But the younger man had again fainted.

Then even as Lot's wife stood above the gate of Sodom, slowly chilling from warm throbbing flesh and blood into a pillar of salt, so stilled and stiffened to breathing stone stood the Lady Juanita. At the first opening of the press she had gazed with growing horror on that which lay before her. The silver rings in the ears of the gray-headed man fascinated her. She could not pluck her eyes from them.

Her lips moved or rather her jaw.

"What—what—what—what?" she gasped as if her voice had spoken of itself without impulse of her will.

The man with the silver rings lifted his head. The surprise must have been even greater to him than to the woman. Yet he manifested no smallest wonder. Not a quiver passed over his brown wrinkled countenance.

"Ah, Joe Janet!" was all he said.

And though the woman stood there richly dressed and the man before her was chained and well nigh naked, the tones were those of a master who speaks to a slave. Then he seemed to recall himself to the case of his companion.

"A happy reunion!" he said, while the crowd of blacks and soldiers stood and gaped, partly at the foreign tongue and partly at the ladies. "Philip must not miss this—I will wake him!"

And stooping down he bit his companion's ear till it bled, as calmly as a priest who gives the sign of absolution.

A whip cracked and the lash hissed across the naked back of the man with the silver rings. It was Eborra, who stood before them quivering with anger.

"Let the captain alone!" he cried, "let him alone, Saul Mark."

Saul Mark raised his head and looked at Eborra.

"Yellow Jack!" he said, calmly. "Well—the wheel has turned once—it may turn again. I shall not forget."

CHAPTER XLIV.

Saul Mark's Whisper.

But the savage reveille had been successful. Philip Stansfield slowly rose to a sitting posture. His eyes, glazed and sunken, gazed about—at first vaguely, then with growing terror and comprehension. The Lady Juanita stood still as if carved in marble, her hands gripping each other convulsively. Anna had passed an arm about her mother, and now half-supported the elder woman, looking like a tall young Indian in her hunting skirt of fringed and beaded skins.

Saul Mark watched his comrade's face with a certain grim and malicious pleasure, laughing a little as he did so.

"Janet—Janet Mark!" ejaculated the revivified man, panting and gasping in his turn even as the woman had done, and for the time could say no more, but sat up gazing wildly as though he had seen a specter.

"Journeys end in lovers' meeting!" the words seemed to burn and smoke like acid that is poured on copper. "Philip Stansfield and his paramour—kiss one another—embrace! Is all forgotten between you? Have ye found other mates? Fie—fie—thus to deny each other, who sinned together! Think of the blood shed for that cause! Consider—"

But he got no farther. For there in the midst stood forth the woman whom his presence had affected with such deadly terror. But now she was no longer the Lady Juanita Silveda. She was Janet Mark, the felon.

"Aye," she cried. "I bid you consider the blood shed—and who shed it! You, Saul Mark, drop by drop! The guilt may be mine and his. That I deny not. But before God the judge, the blood-shedding was yours first and last. By your suggestion and compelling I sinned and fell, I suffered for your crime. And he—he—"

She paused as if at a loss for words. Saul Mark laughed a low, cackling laugh, nodding his head at the same time. He had crossed his legs under him and sat upon his feet, the chains that were upon him stretched to their utmost, looking like some hideous malignant idol of the Orient.

"What of him—aye, what of him?" he chuckled. "Are Philip Stansfield's sins mine, too?"

"Aye, by God's great name, are they, Saul Mark!" she cried, "yours—yours—yours!"

"You are generous with other people's sins, Janet," said Saul Mark. "Pray keep one or two for yourself, lest you grow lonely in your old age!"

But she went on, her voice rising with every word till it rang out into a shriek as she pointed her finger at Saul Mark, the man who was still her husband. Then Captain Stansfield raised his head and said, speaking very quietly, "Janet, the greater sin is ours alone. Let us endure the rest! Be silent as I have been!"

There was a sudden commotion on the other side of the widening circle. Most of the men had shrunk away, fearing they knew not what. Perhaps the foreign tongue used in anger had a strange sound to them.

And there, through the gap, could be seen the abbot of San Juan de Brozas and the Grand Inquisitor, sitting upon their mules, listening—the abbot dark, stern and inscrutable as ever, the man of the holy office with his head inclined, birdlike, to catch every word.

"Your servant!" said the latter, bowing, "my lady, are these more friends of yours? You are most fortunate in friends. Providence is indeed kind to you."

He turned to Saul Mark.

"And you, my friend, are you also from Scotland and of the Scottish persuasion in religion?"

"I am indeed of Scotland," said Saul, rising to his feet respectfully, and speaking in admirable Spanish so that all might understand, "but I am a humble follower of the true and ancient faith. I claim your protection, most reverend fathers. In this cause I have suffered much."

"By what sign shall we know that you speak the truth, my son?" said the Grand Inquisitor, cunningly.

"By two infallible proofs," answered Saul with readiness; "by this that I shall show you in my hand, and by the word which I shall whisper in your ear."

He slid down his hand and fumbled in the dirty breech clout which alone clad him sparsely about the loins. Then he held up a rosary, at the end of which swung a cross and a small golden reliquary.

"This I have carried with me ever since at Rome, at the tombs of the apostles, the holy father himself delivered to me this blessed relic of St. James the martyr!"

He gave the chain and box into the abbot's hand, who received it with lowly reverence, crossing himself and commending himself to the saints and especially to St. James, the blessed proto martyr.

With trembling fingers he opened the box and glanced within. A folded letter lay on top, written upon a sheet of vellum fine as a butterfly's wing. The grand inquisitor almost snatched it in his eagerness.

"It is true! It is genuine!" he cried. "This is the holy father's own hand and rubication. I have seen it in the holy office at Madrid, commanding to greater diligence in the burning of heretics. Blessed—blessed—most blessed—the attestation in Latin and all most complete! How came you by this great marvel?"

"I am a rude and unlearned man," said Saul, with a low bow, "but it was my lot to receive it for a service I did the holy father. I have kept it till now. I have been in peril of great waters, in fear of my life among cruel pirates and deadly heretics. But now, most reverend fathers, I give you this blessed reliquary, that you may keep it in the church of your noble abbey. I am not worthy to be the custodian of such a treasure. It is yours."

The abbot fairly blushed with pleasure.

"It will make us as celebrated as Compostella," he said. "We shall have pilgrimages from all the world to this, my abbey of St. John of Brozas. We will rename it. St. James shall it be—the very completely to be venerated Santiago de Brozas!"

"So rare a relic would be wasted here," said the grand inquisitor, suavely, balancing the golden casket in his hand. "I will take it back to the King of Spain at Madrid, and for it he will make me abbot of Poblet. I have always desired that post, their priorato wine is so good. And for such a treasure even Poblet were not too much to bestow."

During this colloquy Anna had conveyed the Lady Juanita to her carriage, where now she sat pale and inert, leaning back among the cushions like one who had had a deadly stroke. At this moment the commandante rode up hastily. He had too long been out of sight of Juanita and Anna. So he came at the gallop, riding like one of the sons of Tehu.

He caught sight of the golden box and Saul Mark standing erect. The heads of the monks were very close together. In an instant he had grasped the situation, or at least a part of it. Treasure had been found on one of the castaways who last had recruited the chain gang. The black ravens of Brozas had swooped upon it. The Captain of Spain bore them no goodwill. The gold box was his—it contained jewels of price, most like. He would soon show these clerks who was master on the island of St. John of Puerto Rico—whether they or he, Nicholas Silveda, Commandante in the service of His Most Catholic Majesty, Ferdinand, King of all the Spains.

"Give it here," he cried; "all treasure is the prerogative of His Majesty King Ferdinand. I claim that which is found, whatever it may be, as his alone!"

"Excellency," said the inquisitor, with deference, "this is not found treasure. It is a gift to the holy church, being a box containing the blessed parings of the great toenails of a martyr. Such even the King himself could not claim, were he here in person!"

"The box is gold, I claim that!" cried the Commandanta, truculently.

"The box is the gift of the holy father, the successor of Peter," said the priest. "It cannot be separated from the blessed relics it enshrines!"

"Deliver it or I will take it by force!" cried the officer fiercely. For in his heart he hated and feared the rival authorities of the monastery. "Forward, there, men! Sieze him!"

The two priests put their hands to their sides swiftly as a horseman draws a pistol from his holster. And the next moment a crucifix was in each right hand. They held it toward the Commandante and his soldiers, who shrank back as they would not have done from the muzzles of hostile guns.

"Dare to lay a hand on the priests of the Lord," cried the abbot, towering above them all on his white mule, "and we will wither the blasphemous fingers and deliver to eternal fire the soul of the desecrator! By these relics of the blessed martyr, James, we swear it!"

And so for a space they remained thus, daring the powers military to come on. The Commandante was speechless with wrath, but, looking about, he saw well enough that his men would not obey him nor yet seize these headstrong sons of the church.

"I shall not forget this," he said, turning away.

"Do not," returned the inquisitor, gently. "I pray that you will remember. Let it be a lesson to you, my son."

The churchmen were riding off together when Saul Mark, seeing himself forsaken, cried out to them: "Have pity, deliver me. They will wreak their vengeance on me. Take me with you, reverend fathers in God. Do not forsake me, who did this thing for your sakes!"

But the abbot and the inquisitor seemed not to hear.

They had obtained all they cared about, and what mattered a naked man in the chain gang. The reliquary was a reliquary, authenticated by the holy father—or, at least, well enough documented for their purpose. But most like the man was a pirate, and got it as the sacking of some town of good Catholics, or mayhap from a plundered galleon laden with racks and thumbscrews and such like, blessed machinery for the propagation of the faith. Let him abide. If he were a just man, God would reward him. They would leave the matter to him.

Then Saul Mark, seeing himself deserted and growing afraid, cried aloud: "The secret—the secret! I have a secret that will make you and your church richer than Kings of Castile and Arragon—wealthier than the mines of Potosi. I swear it. Deliver me and I will reveal the secret."

They turned about and consulted. Saul cried aloud again with even greater vehemence.

"Save me—deliver me. I swear I have the secret—I and only I."

The abbot and the Jesuit came slowly back. Saul stood eagerly waiting, his eyes flaming and the perspiration running down from his finger-tips. They bent their ears and he whispered, long. The look of unbelief with which they began gradually merged into a growing surprise. Then awe took its place, and lastly, they cried out a simultaneous question: "Where is it? Tell us where."

Then a cunning look passed over the face of Saul Mark. He was not a second time going to give something for nothing.

"Only I can guide you thither," he said aloud.

. . . . . .

Then in a few moments they bade cast him loose, and he begged that the companion whom he loved and could not be separated from night or day might go with him. This also was allowed. As the two passed the carriage of the Governor's lady, Saul Mark spoke a word, loud enough to be heard within:

"Do not fear," he said; "I will not shorten my pleasure by revealing your secret. Our loving service to you, Janet! Sleep sound tonight. Old friends are near!"

To be continued.

WITH TREMBLING FINGERS HE OPENED THE BOX AND GLANCED WITHIN.

First Essential.

"I understand you hope to make a great musician of your son?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Whom have you selected to teach him?"

"Oh, we haven't advanced that far yet. At present he's giving all his time to the doctor, who guarantees to make his hair thick and luxuriant."—Catholic Standard and Times.