Henry Rider Haggard
MONTEZUMA'S DAUGHTER

NOTE

The more unpronounceable of the Aztec names are shortened in many instances out of consideration for the patience of the reader; thus 'Popocatapetl' becomes 'Popo,' 'Huitzelcoatl' becomes 'Huitzel,' &c. The prayer in Chapter XXVI. is freely rendered from Jourdanet's French translation of Fray Bernardino de Sahagun's History of New Spain, written shortly after the conquest of Mexico (Book VI, chap. v.), to which monumental work and to Prescott's admirable history the author of this romance is much indebted. The portents described as heralding the fall of the Aztec Empire, and many of the incidents and events written of in this story, such as the annual personation of the god Tezcatlipoca by a captive distinguished for his personal beauty, and destined to sacrifice, are in the main historical. The noble speech of the Emperor Guatemoc to the Prince of Tacuba uttered while they both were suffering beneath the hands of the Spaniards is also authentic.

DEDICATION

My dear Jebb,

Strange as were the adventures and escapes of Thomas Wingfield, once of this parish, whereof these pages tell, your own can almost equal them in these latter days, and, since a fellow feeling makes us kind, you at least they may move to a sigh of sympathy. Among many a distant land you know that in which he loved and fought, following vengeance and his fate, and by your side I saw its relics and its peoples, its volcans and its valleys. You know even where lies the treasure which, three centuries and more ago, he helped to bury, the countless treasure that an evil fortune held us back from seeking. Now the Indians have taken back their secret, and though many may search, none will lift the graven stone that seals it, nor shall the light of day shine again upon the golden head of Montezuma. So be it! The wealth which Cortes wept over, and his Spaniards sinned and died for, is for ever hidden yonder by the shores of the bitter lake whose waters gave up to you that ancient horror, the veritable and sleepless god of Sacrifice, of whom I would not rob you-and, for my part, I do not regret the loss.

What cannot be lost, what to me seem of more worth than the dead hero Guatemoc's gems and jars of

gold, are the memories of true friendship shown to us far away beneath the shadow of the Slumbering Woman,[1] and it is in gratitude for these that I ask permission to set your name within a book which were it not for you would never have been written.

I am, my dear Jebb,
Always sincerely yours,
H. RIDER HAGGARD.
DITCHINGHAM,
NORFOLK, October 5, 1892.
To J. Gladwyn Jebb, Esq.

NOTE

Worn out prematurely by a life of hardship and extraordinary adventure, Mr. Jebb passed away on March 18, 1893, taking with him the respect and affection of all who had the honour of his friendship. The author has learned with pleasure that the reading of this tale in proof and the fact of its dedication to himself afforded him some amusement and satisfaction in the intervals of his sufferings.

H. R. H.
March 22, 1893.

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[1] The volcano Izticcihuatl in Mexico.

CHAPTER I
WHY THOMAS WINGFIELD TELLS HIS TALE

Now glory be to God who has given us the victory! It is true, the strength of Spain is shattered, her ships are sunk or fled, the sea has swallowed her soldiers and her sailors by hundreds and by thousands, and England breathes again. They came to conquer, to bring us to the torture and the stake-to do to us free Englishmen as Cortes did by the Indians of Anahuac. Our manhood to the slave bench, our daughters to dishonour, our souls to the loving-kindness of the priest, our wealth to the Emperor and the Pope! God has answered them with his winds, Drake has answered them with his guns. They are gone, and with them the glory of Spain.

I, Thomas Wingfield, heard the news to-day on this very Thursday in the Bungay market-place, whither I went to gossip and to sell the apples which these dreadful gales have left me, as they hang upon my trees.

Before there had been rumours of this and of that, but here in Bungay was a man named Young, of the Youngs of Yarmouth, who had served in one of the Yarmouth ships in the fight at Gravelines, aye and

sailed north after the Spaniards till they were lost in the Scottish seas.

Little things lead to great, men say, but here great things lead to little, for because of these tidings it comes about that I, Thomas Wingfield, of the Lodge and the parish of Ditchingham in the county of Norfolk, being now of a great age and having only a short time to live, turn to pen and ink. Ten years ago, namely, in the year 1578, it pleased her Majesty, our gracious Queen Elizabeth, who at that date visited this county, that I should be brought before her at Norwich. There and then, saying that the fame of it had reached her, she commanded me to give her some particulars of the story of my life, or rather of those twenty years, more or less, which I spent among the Indians at that time when Cortes conquered their country of Anahuac, which is now known as Mexico. But almost before I could begin my tale, it was time for her to start for Cossey to hunt the deer, and she said it was her wish that I should write the story down that she might read it, and moreover that if it were but half as wonderful as it promised to be, I should end my days as Sir Thomas Wingfield. To this I answered her Majesty that pen and ink were tools I had no skill in, yet I would bear her command in mind. Then I made bold to give her a great emerald that once had hung upon the breast of Montezuma's daughter, and of many a princess before her, and at the sight of it her eyes glistened brightly as

the gem, for this Queen of ours loves such costly playthings. Indeed, had I so desired, I think that I might then and there have struck a bargain, and set the stone against a title; but I, who for many years had been the prince of a great tribe, had no wish to be a knight. So I kissed the royal hand, and so tightly did it grip the gem within that the knuckle joints shone white, and I went my ways, coming back home to this my house by the Waveney on that same day.

Now the Queen's wish that I should set down the story of my life remained in my mind, and for long I have desired to do it before life and story end together. The labour, indeed, is great to one unused to such tasks; but why should I fear labour who am so near to the holiday of death? I have seen things that no other Englishman has seen, which are worthy to be recorded; my life has been most strange, many a time it has pleased God to preserve it when all seemed lost, and this perchance He has done that the lesson of it might become known to others. For there is a lesson in it and in the things that I have seen, and it is that no wrong can ever bring about a right, that wrong will breed wrong at last, and be it in man or people, will fall upon the brain that thought it and the hand that wrought it.

Look now at the fate of Cortes-that great man whom I have known clothed with power like a god. Nearly forty years ago, so I have heard, he died poor and disgraced in Spain; he, the conqueror-yes, and I

have learned also that his son Don Martin has been put to the torture in that city which the father won with so great cruelties for Spain. Malinche, she whom the Spaniards named Marina, the chief and best beloved of all the women of this same Cortes, foretold it to him in her anguish when after all that had been, after she had so many times preserved him and his soldiers to look upon the sun, at the last he deserted her, giving her in marriage to Don Juan Xaramillo. Look again at the fate of Marina herself. Because she loved this man Cortes, or Malinche, as the Indians named him after her, she brought evil on her native land; for without her aid Tenoctitlan, or Mexico, as they call it now, had never bowed beneath the yoke of Spain-yes, she forgot her honour in her passion. And what was her reward, what right came to her of her wrongdoing? This was her reward at last: to be given away in marriage to another and a lesser man when her beauty waned, as a worn-out beast is sold to a poorer master.

Consider also the fate of those great peoples of the land of Anahuac. They did evil that good might come. They sacrificed the lives of thousands to their false gods, that their wealth might increase, and peace and prosperity be theirs throughout the generations. And now the true God has answered them. For wealth He has given them desolation, for peace the sword of the Spaniard, for prosperity the rack and the torment and the day of slavery. For this it was that they did

sacrifice, offering their own children on the altars of Huitzel and of Tezcat.

And the Spaniards themselves, who in the name of mercy have wrought cruelties greater than any that were done by the benighted Aztecs, who in the name of Christ daily violate His law to the uttermost extreme, say shall they prosper, shall their evil-doing bring them welfare? I am old and cannot live to see the question answered, though even now it is in the way of answering. Yet I know that their wickedness shall fall upon their own heads, and I seem to see them, the proudest of the peoples of the earth, bereft of fame and wealth and honour, a starveling remnant happy in nothing save their past. What Drake began at Gravelines God will finish in many another place and time, till at last Spain is of no more account and lies as low as the empire of Montezuma lies to-day.

Thus it is in these great instances of which all the world may know, and thus it is even in the life of so humble a man as I, Thomas Wingfield. Heaven indeed has been merciful to me, giving me time to repent my sins; yet my sins have been visited on my head, on me who took His prerogative of vengeance from the hand of the Most High. It is just, and because it is so I wish to set out the matter of my life's history that others may learn from it. For many years this has been in my mind, as I have said, though to speak truth it was her Majesty the Queen who first set the seed. But only on this day,

when I have heard for certain of the fate of the Armada, does it begin to grow, and who can say if ever it will come to flower? For this tidings has stirred me strangely, bringing back my youth and the deeds of love and war and wild adventure which I have been mingled in, fighting for my own hand and for Guatemoc and the people of the Otomie against these same Spaniards, as they have not been brought back for many years. Indeed, it seems to me, and this is no rare thing with the aged, as though there in the far past my true life lay, and all the rest were nothing but a dream.

From the window of the room wherein I write I can see the peaceful valley of the Waveney. Beyond its stream are the common lands golden with gorse, the ruined castle, and the red roofs of Bungay town gathered about the tower of St. Mary's Church. Yonder far away are the king's forests of Stowe and the fields of Flixton Abbey; to the right the steep bank is green with the Earsham oaks, to the left the fast marsh lands spotted with cattle stretch on to Beccles and Lowestoft, while behind me my gardens and orchards rise in terraces up the turfy hill that in old days was known as the Earl's Vineyard. All these are about me, and yet in this hour they are as though they were not. For the valley of the Waveney I see the vale of Tenoctitlan, for the slopes of Stowe the snowy shapes of the volcans Popo and Iztac, for the spire of Earsham and the towers of Ditchingham, of Bungay, and of Beccles, the soaring

pyramids of sacrifice gleaming with the sacred fires, and for the cattle in the meadows the horsemen of Cortes sweeping to war.

It comes back to me; that was life, the rest is but a dream. Once more I feel young, and, should I be spared so long, I will set down the story of my youth before I am laid in yonder churchyard and lost in the world of dreams. Long ago I had begun it, but it was only on last Christmas Day that my dear wife died, and while she lived I knew that this task was better left undone. Indeed, to be frank, it was thus with my wife: She loved me, I believe, as few men have the fortune to be loved, and there is much in my past that jarred upon this love of hers, moving her to a jealousy of the dead that was not the less deep because it was so gentle and so closely coupled with forgiveness. For she had a secret sorrow that ate her heart away, although she never spoke of it. But one child was born to us, and this child died in infancy, nor for all her prayers did it please God to give her another, and indeed remembering the words of Otomie I did not expect that it would be so. Now she knew well that yonder across the seas I had children whom I loved by another wife, and though they were long dead, must always love unalterably, and this thought wrung her heart. That I had been the husband of another woman she could forgive, but that this woman should have borne me children whose memory was still so dear, she could not forget if she forgave it,

she who was childless. Why it was so, being but a man, I cannot say; for who can know all the mystery of a loving woman's heart? But so it was. Once, indeed, we quarrelled on the matter; it was our only quarrel.

It chanced that when we had been married but two years, and our babe was some few days buried in the churchyard of this parish of Ditchingham, I dreamed a very vivid dream as I slept one night at my wife's side. I dreamed that my dead children, the four of them, for the tallest lad bore in his arms my firstborn, that infant who died in the great siege, came to me as they had often come when I ruled the people of the Otomie in the City of Pines, and talked with me, giving me flowers and kissing my hands. I looked upon their strength and beauty, and was proud at heart, and, in my dream, it seemed as though some great sorrow had been lifted from my mind; as though these dear ones had been lost and now were found again. Ah! what misery is there like to this misery of dreams, that can thus give us back our dead in mockery, and then departing, leave us with a keener woe?

Well, I dreamed on, talking with my children in my sleep and naming them by their beloved names, till at length I woke to look on emptiness, and knowing all my sorrow I sobbed aloud. Now it was early morning, and the light of the August sun streamed through the window, but I, deeming that my wife slept, still lay in the shadow of my dream as it were, and groaned,

murmuring the names of those whom I might never see again. It chanced, however, that she was awake, and had overheard those words which I spoke with the dead, while I was yet asleep and after; and though some of this talk was in the tongue of the Otomie, the most was English, and knowing the names of my children she guessed the purport of it all. Suddenly she sprang from the bed and stood over me, and there was such anger in her eyes as I had never seen before nor have seen since, nor did it last long then, for presently indeed it was quenched in tears.

'What is it, wife?' I asked astonished.

'It is hard,' she answered, 'that I must bear to listen to such talk from your lips, husband. Was it not enough that, when all men thought you dead, I wore my youth away faithful to your memory? though how faithful you were to mine you know best. Did I ever reproach you because you had forgotten me, and wedded a savage woman in a distant land?'

'Never, dear wife, nor had I forgotten you as you know well; but what I wonder at is that you should grow jealous now when all cause is done with.'

'Cannot we be jealous of the dead? With the living we may cope, but who can fight against the love which death has completed, sealing it for ever and making it immortal! Still, THAT I forgive you, for against this woman I can hold my own, seeing that you were mine before you became hers, and are mine after

it. But with the children it is otherwise. They are hers and yours alone. I have no part nor lot in them, and whether they be dead or living I know well you love them always, and will love them beyond the grave if you may find them there. Already I grow old, who waited twenty years and more before I was your wife, and I shall give you no other children. One I gave you, and God took it back lest I should be too happy; yet its name was not on your lips with those strange names. My dead babe is little to you, husband!'

Here she choked, bursting into tears; nor did I think it well to answer her that there was this difference in the matter, that whereas, with the exception of one infant, those sons whom I had lost were almost adolescent, the babe she bore lived but sixty days.

Now when the Queen first put it in my mind to write down the history of my life, I remembered this outbreak of my beloved wife; and seeing that I could write no true tale and leave out of it the story of her who was also my wife, Montezuma's daughter, Otomie, Princess of the Otomie, and of the children that she gave me, I let the matter lie. For I knew well, that though we spoke very rarely on the subject during all the many years we passed together, still it was always in Lily's mind; nor did her jealousy, being of the finer sort, abate at all with age, but rather gathered with the gathering days. That I should execute the task without the knowledge of my wife would not have been

possible, for till the very last she watched over my every act, and, as I verily believe, divined the most of my thoughts.

And so we grew old together, peacefully, and side by side, speaking seldom of that great gap in my life when we were lost to each other and of all that then befell. At length the end came. My wife died suddenly in her sleep in the eighty-seventh year of her age. I buried her on the south side of the church here, with sorrow indeed, but not with sorrow inconsolable, for I know that I must soon rejoin her, and those others whom I have loved.

There in that wide heaven are my mother and my sister and my sons; there are great Guatemoc my friend, last of the emperors, and many other companions in war who have preceded me to peace; there, too, though she doubted of it, is Otomie the beautiful and proud. In the heaven which I trust to reach, all the sins of my youth and the errors of my age notwithstanding, it is told us there is no marrying and giving in marriage; and this is well, for I do not know how my wives, Montezuma's daughter and the sweet English gentlewoman, would agree together were it otherwise.

And now to my task.

CHAPTER II
OF THE PARENTAGE OF THOMAS

WINGFIELD

I, Thomas Wingfield, was born here at Ditchingham, and in this very room where I write to-day. The house of my birth was built or added to early in the reign of the seventh Henry, but long before his time some kind of tenement stood here, which was lived in by the keeper of the vineyards, and known as Gardener's Lodge. Whether it chanced that the climate was more kindly in old times, or the skill of those who tended the fields was greater, I do not know, but this at the least is true, that the hillside beneath which the house nestles, and which once was the bank of an arm of the sea or of a great broad, was a vineyard in Earl Bigod's days. Long since it has ceased to grow grapes, though the name of the 'Earl's Vineyard' still clings to all that slope of land which lies between this house and a certain health-giving spring that bubbles from the bank the half of a mile away, in the waters of which sick folks come to bathe even from Norwich and Lowestoft. But sheltered as it is from the east winds, to this hour the place has the advantage that gardens planted here are earlier by fourteen days than any others in the country side, and that a man may sit in them coatless in the bitter month of May, when on the top of the hill, not two hundred paces hence, he must shiver in a jacket of otterskins.

The Lodge, for so it has always been named, in

its beginnings having been but a farmhouse, faces to the south-west, and is built so low that it might well be thought that the damp from the river Waveney, which runs through the marshes close by, would rise in it. But this is not so, for though in autumn the roke, as here in Norfolk we name ground fog, hangs about the house at nightfall, and in seasons of great flood the water has been known to pour into the stables at the back of it, yet being built on sand and gravel there is no healthier habitation in the parish. For the rest the building is of stud-work and red brick, quaint and mellow looking, with many corners and gables that in summer are half hidden in roses and other creeping plants, and with its outlook on the marshes and the common where the lights vary continually with the seasons and even with the hours of the day, on the red roofs of Bungay town, and on the wooded bank that stretches round the Earsham lands; though there are many larger, to my mind there is none pleasanter in these parts. Here in this house I was born, and here doubtless I shall die, and having spoken of it at some length, as we are wont to do of spots which long custom has endeared to us, I will go on to tell of my parentage.

First, then, I would set out with a certain pride-for who of us does not love an ancient name when we happen to be born to it?-that I am sprung from the family of the Wingfields of Wingfield Castle in Suffolk, that lies some two hours on horseback from

this place. Long ago the heiress of the Wingfields married a De la Pole, a family famous in our history, the last of whom, Edmund, Earl of Suffolk, lost his head for treason when I was young, and the castle passed to the De la Poles with her. But some offshoots of the old Wingfield stock lingered in the neighbourhood, perchance there was a bar sinister on their coat of arms, I know not and do not care to know; at the least my fathers and I are of this blood. My grandfather was a shrewd man, more of a yeoman than a squire, though his birth was gentle. He it was who bought this place with the lands round it, and gathered up some fortune, mostly by careful marrying and living, for though he had but one son he was twice married, and also by trading in cattle.

Now my grandfather was godly-minded even to superstition, and strange as it may seem, having only one son, nothing would satisfy him but that the boy should be made a priest. But my father had little leaning towards the priesthood and life in a monastery, though at all seasons my grandfather strove to reason it into him, sometimes with words and examples, at others with his thick cudgel of holly, that still hangs over the ingle in the smaller sitting-room. The end of it was that the lad was sent to the priory here in Bungay, where his conduct was of such nature that within a year the prior prayed his parents to take him back and set him in some way of secular life. Not only, so said the

prior, did my father cause scandal by his actions, breaking out of the priory at night and visiting drinking houses and other places; but, such was the sum of his wickedness, he did not scruple to question and make mock of the very doctrines of the Church, alleging even that there was nothing sacred in the image of the Virgin Mary which stood in the chancel, and shut its eyes in prayer before all the congregation when the priest elevated the Host. 'Therefore,' said the prior, 'I pray you take back your son, and let him find some other road to the stake than that which runs through the gates of Bungay Priory.'

Now at this story my grandfather was so enraged that he almost fell into a fit; then recovering, he bethought him of his cudgel of holly, and would have used it. But my father, who was now nineteen years of age and very stout and strong, twisted it from his hand and flung it full fifty yards, saying that no man should touch him more were he a hundred times his father. Then he walked away, leaving the prior and my grandfather staring at each other.

Now to shorten a long tale, the end of the matter was this. It was believed both by my grandfather and the prior that the true cause of my father's contumacy was a passion which he had conceived for a girl of humble birth, a miller's fair daughter who dwelt at Waingford Mills. Perhaps there was truth in this belief, or perhaps there was none. What does it matter, seeing

that the maid married a butcher at Beccles and died years since at the good age of ninety and five? But true or false, my grandfather believed the tale, and knowing well that absence is the surest cure for love, he entered into a plan with the prior that my father should be sent to a monastery at Seville in Spain, of which the prior's brother was abbot, and there learn to forget the miller's daughter and all other worldly things.

When this was told to my father he fell into it readily enough, being a young man of spirit and having a great desire to see the world, otherwise, however, than through the gratings of a monastery window. So the end of it was that he went to foreign parts in the care of a party of Spanish monks, who had journeyed here to Norfolk on a pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady of Walsingham.

It is said that my grandfather wept when he parted with his son, feeling that he should see him no more; yet so strong was his religion, or rather his superstition, that he did not hesitate to send him away, though for no reason save that he would mortify his own love and flesh, offering his son for a sacrifice as Abraham would have offered Isaac. But though my father appeared to consent to the sacrifice, as did Isaac, yet his mind was not altogether set on altars and faggots; in short, as he himself told me in after years, his plans were already laid.

Thus it chanced that when he had sailed from

Yarmouth a year and six months, there came a letter from the abbot of the monastery in Seville to his brother, the prior of St. Mary's at Bungay, saying that my father had fled from the monastery, leaving no trace of where he had gone. My grandfather was grieved at this tidings, but said little about it.

Two more years passed away, and there came other news, namely, that my father had been captured, that he had been handed over to the power of the Holy Office, as the accursed Inquisition was then named, and tortured to death at Seville. When my grandfather heard this he wept, and bemoaned himself that his folly in forcing one into the Church who had no liking for that path, had brought about the shameful end of his only son. After that date also he broke his friendship with the prior of St. Mary's at Bungay, and ceased his offerings to the priory. Still he did not believe that my father was dead in truth, since on the last day of his own life, that ended two years later, he spoke of him as a living man, and left messages to him as to the management of the lands which now were his.

And in the end it became clear that this belief was not ill-founded, for one day three years after the old man's death, there landed at the port of Yarmouth none other than my father, who had been absent some eight years in all. Nor did he come alone, for with him he brought a wife, a young and very lovely lady, who afterwards was my mother. She was a Spaniard of

noble family, having been born at Seville, and her maiden name was Donna Luisa de Garcia.

Now of all that befell my father during his eight years of wandering I cannot speak certainly, for he was very silent on the matter, though I may have need to touch on some of his adventures. But I know it is true that he fell under the power of the Holy Office, for once when as a little lad I bathed with him in the Elbow Pool, where the river Waveney bends some three hundred yards above this house, I saw that his breast and arms were scored with long white scars, and asked him what had caused them. I remember well how his face changed as I spoke, from kindliness to the hue of blackest hate, and how he answered speaking to himself rather than to me.

'Devils,' he said, 'devils set on their work by the chief of all devils that live upon the earth and shall reign in hell. Hark you, my son Thomas, there is a country called Spain where your mother was born, and there these devils abide who torture men and women, aye, and burn them living in the name of Christ. I was betrayed into their hands by him whom I name the chief of the devils, though he is younger than I am by three years, and their pincers and hot irons left these marks upon me. Aye, and they would have burnt me alive also, only I escaped, thanks to your mother-but such tales are not for a little lad's hearing; and see you never speak of them, Thomas, for the Holy Office has a long

arm. You are half a Spaniard, Thomas, your skin and eyes tell their own tale, but whatever skin and eyes may tell, let your heart give them the lie. Keep your heart English, Thomas; let no foreign devilments enter there. Hate all Spaniards except your mother, and be watchful lest her blood should master mine within you.'

I was a child then, and scarcely understood his words or what he meant by them. Afterwards I learned to understand them but too well. As for my father's counsel, that I should conquer my Spanish blood, would that I could always have followed it, for I know that from this blood springs the most of such evil as is in me. Hence come my fixedness of purpose or rather obstinacy, and my powers of unchristian hatred that are not small towards those who have wronged me. Well, I have done what I might to overcome these and other faults, but strive as we may, that which is bred in the bone will out in the flesh, as I have seen in many signal instances.

There were three of us children, Geoffrey my elder brother, myself, and my sister Mary, who was one year my junior, the sweetest child and the most beautiful that I have ever known. We were very happy children, and our beauty was the pride of our father and mother, and the envy of other parents. I was the darkest of the three, dark indeed to swarthiness, but in Mary the Spanish blood showed only in her rich eyes of velvet hue, and in the glow upon her cheek that was like the

blush on a ripe fruit. My mother used to call me her little Spaniard, because of my swarthiness, that is when my father was not near, for such names angered him. She never learned to speak English very well, but he would suffer her to talk in no other tongue before him. Still, when he was not there she spoke in Spanish, of which language, however, I alone of the family became a master-and that more because of certain volumes of old Spanish romances which she had by her, than for any other reason. From my earliest childhood I was fond of such tales, and it was by bribing me with the promise that I should read them that she persuaded me to learn Spanish. For my mother's heart still yearned towards her old sunny home, and often she would talk of it with us children, more especially in the winter season, which she hated as I do. Once I asked her if she wished to go back to Spain. She shivered and answered no, for there dwelt one who was her enemy and would kill her; also her heart was with us children and our father. I wondered if this man who sought to kill my mother was the same as he of whom my father had spoken as 'the chief of the devils,' but I only answered that no man could wish to kill one so good and beautiful.

'Ah! my boy,' she said, 'it is just because I am, or rather have been, beautiful that he hates me. Others would have wedded me besides your dear father, Thomas.' And her face grew troubled as though with

fear.

Now when I was eighteen and a half years old, on a certain evening in the month of May it happened that a friend of my father's, Squire Bozard, late of the Hall in this parish, called at the Lodge on his road from Yarmouth, and in the course of his talk let it fall that a Spanish ship was at anchor in the Roads, laden with merchandise. My father pricked up his ears at this, and asked who her captain might be. Squire Bozard answered that he did not know his name, but that he had seen him in the market-place, a tall and stately man, richly dressed, with a handsome face and a scar upon his temple.

At this news my mother turned pale beneath her olive skin, and muttered in Spanish:

'Holy Mother! grant that it be not he.'

My father also looked frightened, and questioned the squire closely as to the man's appearance, but without learning anything more. Then he bade him adieu with little ceremony, and taking horse rode away for Yarmouth.

That night my mother never slept, but sat all through it in her nursing chair, brooding over I know not what. As I left her when I went to my bed, so I found her when I came from it at dawn. I can remember well pushing the door ajar to see her face glimmering white in the twilight of the May morning, as she sat, her large eyes fixed upon the lattice.

'You have risen early, mother,' I said.

'I have never lain down, Thomas,' she answered.

'Why not? What do you fear?'

'I fear the past and the future, my son. Would that your father were back.'

About ten o'clock of that morning, as I was making ready to walk into Bungay to the house of that physician under whom I was learning the art of healing, my father rode up. My mother, who was watching at the lattice, ran out to meet him.

Springing from his horse he embraced her, saying, 'Be of good cheer, sweet, it cannot be he. This man has another name.'

'But did you see him?' she asked.

'No, he was out at his ship for the night, and I hurried home to tell you, knowing your fears.'

'It were surer if you had seen him, husband. He may well have taken another name.'

'I never thought of that, sweet,' my father answered; 'but have no fear. Should it be he, and should he dare to set foot in the parish of Ditchingham, there are those who will know how to deal with him. But I am sure that it is not he.'

'Thanks be to Jesu then!' she said, and they began talking in a low voice.

Now, seeing that I was not wanted, I took my cudgel and started down the bridle-path towards the common footbridge, when suddenly my mother called

me back.

'Kiss me before you go, Thomas,' she said. 'You must wonder what all this may mean. One day your father will tell you. It has to do with a shadow which has hung over my life for many years, but that is, I trust, gone for ever.'

'If it be a man who flings it, he had best keep out of reach of this,' I said, laughing, and shaking my thick stick.

'It is a man,' she answered, 'but one to be dealt with otherwise than by blows, Thomas, should you ever chance to meet him.'

'May be, mother, but might is the best argument at the last, for the most cunning have a life to lose.'

'You are too ready to use your strength, son,' she said, smiling and kissing me. 'Remember the old Spanish proverb: "He strikes hardest who strikes last."'

'And remember the other proverb, mother: "Strike before thou art stricken,"' I answered, and went.

When I had gone some ten paces something prompted me to look back, I know not what. My mother was standing by the open door, her stately shape framed as it were in the flowers of a white creeping shrub that grew upon the wall of the old house. As was her custom, she wore a mantilla of white lace upon her head, the ends of which were wound beneath her chin, and the arrangement of it was such that at this distance for one moment it put me in mind of the wrappings

which are placed about the dead. I started at the thought and looked at her face. She was watching me with sad and earnest eyes that seemed to be filled with the spirit of farewell.

I never saw her again till she was dead.

CHAPTER III
THE COMING OF THE SPANIARD

And now I must go back and speak of my own matters. As I have told, it was my father's wish that I should be a physician, and since I came back from my schooling at Norwich, that was when I had entered on my sixteenth year, I had studied medicine under the doctor who practised his art in the neighbourhood of Bungay. He was a very learned man and an honest, Grimstone by name, and as I had some liking for the business I made good progress under him. Indeed I had learned almost all that he could teach me, and my father purposed to send me to London, there to push on my studies, so soon as I should attain my twentieth year, that is within some five months of the date of the coming of the Spaniard.

But it was not fated that I should go to London.

Medicine was not the only thing that I studied in those days, however. Squire Bozard of Ditchingham, the same who told my father of the coming of the Spanish ship, had two living children, a son and a

daughter, though his wife had borne him many more who died in infancy. The daughter was named Lily and of my own age, having been born three weeks after me in the same year. Now the Bozards are gone from these parts, for my great-niece, the granddaughter and sole heiress of this son, has married and has issue of another name. But this is by the way.

From our earliest days we children, Bozards and Wingfields, lived almost as brothers and sisters, for day by day we met and played together in the snow or in the flowers. Thus it would be hard for me to say when I began to love Lily or when she began to love me; but I know that when first I went to school at Norwich I grieved more at losing sight of her than because I must part from my mother and the rest. In all our games she was ever my partner, and I would search the country round for days to find such flowers as she chanced to love. When I came back from school it was the same, though by degrees Lily grew shyer, and I also grew suddenly shy, perceiving that from a child she had become a woman. Still we met often, and though neither said anything of it, it was sweet to us to meet.

Thus things went on till this day of my mother's death. But before I go further I must tell that Squire Bozard looked with no favour on the friendship between his daughter and myself-and this, not because he disliked me, but rather because he would have seen Lily wedded to my elder brother Geoffrey, my father's

heir, and not to a younger son. So hard did he grow about the matter at last that we two might scarcely meet except by seeming accident, whereas my brother was ever welcome at the Hall. And on this account some bitterness arose between us two brothers, as is apt to be the case when a woman comes between friends however close. For it must be known that my brother Geoffrey also loved Lily, as all men would have loved her, and with a better right perhaps than I had-for he was my elder by three years and born to possessions. It may seem indeed that I was somewhat hasty to fall into this state, seeing that at the time of which I write I was not yet of age; but young blood is nimble, and moreover mine was half Spanish, and made a man of me when many a pure-bred Englishman is still nothing but a boy. For the blood and the sun that ripens it have much to do with such matters, as I have seen often enough among the Indian peoples of Anahuac, who at the age of fifteen will take to themselves a bride of twelve. At the least it is certain that when I was eighteen years of age I was old enough to fall in love after such fashion that I never fell out of it again altogether, although the history of my life may seem to give me the lie when I say so. But I take it that a man may love several women and yet love one of them the best of all, being true in the spirit to the law which he breaks in the letter.

Now when I had attained nineteen years I was a

man full grown, and writing as I do in extreme old age, I may say it without false shame, a very handsome youth to boot. I was not over tall, indeed, measuring but five feet nine inches and a half in height, but my limbs were well made, and I was both deep and broad in the chest. In colour I was, and my white hair notwithstanding, am still extraordinarily dark hued, my eyes also were large and dark, and my hair, which was wavy, was coal black. In my deportment I was reserved and grave to sadness, in speech I was slow and temperate, and more apt at listening than in talking. I weighed matters well before I made up my mind upon them, but being made up, nothing could turn me from that mind short of death itself, whether it were set on good or evil, on folly or wisdom. In those days also I had little religion, since, partly because of my father's secret teaching and partly through the workings of my own reason, I had learned to doubt the doctrines of the Church as they used to be set out. Youth is prone to reason by large leaps as it were, and to hold that all things are false because some are proved false; and thus at times in those days I thought that there was no God, because the priest said that the image of the Virgin at Bungay wept and did other things which I knew that it did not do. Now I know well that there is a God, for my own story proves it to my heart. In truth, what man can look back across a long life and say that there is no God, when he can see the shadow of His hand lying

deep upon his tale of years?

On this sad day of which I write I knew that Lily, whom I loved, would be walking alone beneath the great pollard oaks in the park of Ditchingham Hall. Here, in Grubswell as the spot is called, grew, and indeed still grow, certain hawthorn trees that are the earliest to blow of any in these parts, and when we had met at the church door on the Sunday, Lily said that there would be bloom upon them by the Wednesday, and on that afternoon she should go to cut it. It may well be that she spoke thus with design, for love will breed cunning in the heart of the most guileless and truthful maid. Moreover, I noticed that though she said it before her father and the rest of us, yet she waited to speak till my brother Geoffrey was out of hearing, for she did not wish to go maying with him, and also that as she spoke she shot a glance of her grey eyes at me. Then and there I vowed to myself that I also would be gathering hawthorn bloom in this same place and on that Wednesday afternoon, yes, even if I must play truant and leave all the sick of Bungay to Nature's nursing. Moreover, I was determined on one thing, that if I could find Lily alone I would delay no longer, but tell her all that was in my heart; no great secret indeed, for though no word of love had ever passed between us as yet, each knew the other's hidden thoughts. Not that I was in the way to become affianced to a maid, who had my path to cut in the world, but I feared that if I

delayed to make sure of her affection my brother would be before me with her father, and Lily might yield to that to which she would not yield if once we had plighted troth.

Now it chanced that on this afternoon I was hard put to it to escape to my tryst, for my master, the physician, was ailing, and sent me to visit the sick for him, carrying them their medicines. At the last, however, between four and five o'clock, I fled, asking no leave. Taking the Norwich road I ran for a mile and more till I had passed the Manor House and the church turn, and drew near to Ditchingham Park. Then I dropped my pace to a walk, for I did not wish to come before Lily heated and disordered, but rather looking my best, to which end I had put on my Sunday garments. Now as I went down the little hill in the road that runs past the park, I saw a man on horseback who looked first at the bridle-path, that at this spot turns off to the right, then back across the common lands towards the Vineyard Hills and the Waveney, and then along the road as though he did not know which way to turn. I was quick to notice things-though at this moment my mind was not at its swiftest, being set on other matters, and chiefly as to how I should tell my tale to Lily-and I saw at once that this man was not of our country.

He was very tall and noble-looking, dressed in rich garments of velvet adorned by a gold chain that hung about his neck, and as I judged about forty years of age. But it was his face which chiefly caught my eye, for at that moment there was something terrible about it. It was long, thin, and deeply carved; the eyes were large, and gleamed like gold in sunlight; the mouth was small and well shaped, but it wore a devilish and cruel sneer; the forehead lofty, indicating a man of mind, and marked with a slight scar. For the rest the cavalier was dark and southern-looking, his curling hair, like my own, was black, and he wore a peaked chestnut-coloured beard.

By the time that I had finished these observations my feet had brought me almost to the stranger's side, and for the first time he caught sight of me. Instantly his face changed, the sneer left it, and it became kindly and pleasant looking. Lifting his bonnet with much courtesy he stammered something in broken English, of which all that I could catch was the word Yarmouth; then perceiving that I did not understand him, he cursed the English tongue and all those who spoke it, aloud and in good Castilian.

'If the senor will graciously express his wish in Spanish,' I said, speaking in that language, 'it may be in my power to help him.'

'What! you speak Spanish, young sir,' he said, starting, 'and yet you are not a Spaniard, though by

your face you well might be. Caramba! but it is strange!' and he eyed me curiously.

'It may be strange, sir,' I answered, 'but I am in haste. Be pleased to ask your question and let me go.'

'Ah!' he said, 'perhaps I can guess the reason of your hurry. I saw a white robe down by the streamlet yonder,' and he nodded towards the park. 'Take the advice of an older man, young sir, and be careful. Make what sport you will with such, but never believe them and never marry them-lest you should live to desire to kill them!'

Here I made as though I would pass on, but he spoke again.

'Pardon my words, they were well meant, and perhaps you may come to learn their truth. I will detain you no more. Will you graciously direct me on my road to Yarmouth, for I am not sure of it, having ridden by another way, and your English country is so full of trees that a man cannot see a mile?'

I walked a dozen paces down the bridle-path that joined the road at this place, and pointed out the way that he should go, past Ditchingham church. As I did so I noticed that while I spoke the stranger was watching my face keenly and, as it seemed to me, with an inward fear which he strove to master and could not. When I had finished again he raised his bonnet and thanked me, saying,

'Will you be so gracious as to tell me your name,

young Sir?'

'What is my name to you?' I answered roughly, for I disliked this man. 'You have not told me yours.'

'No, indeed, I am travelling incognito. Perhaps I also have met a lady in these parts,' and he smiled strangely. 'I only wished to know the name of one who had done me a courtesy, but who it seems is not so courteous as I deemed.' And he shook his horse's reins.

'I am not ashamed of my name,' I said. 'It has been an honest one so far, and if you wish to know it, it is Thomas Wingfield.'

'I thought it,' he cried, and as he spoke his face grew like the face of a fiend. Then before I could find time even to wonder, he had sprung from his horse and stood within three paces of me.

'A lucky day! Now we will see what truth there is in prophecies,' he said, drawing his silver-mounted sword. 'A name for a name; Juan de Garcia gives you greeting, Thomas Wingfield.'

Now, strange as it may seem, it was at this moment only that there flashed across my mind the thought of all that I had heard about the Spanish stranger, the report of whose coming to Yarmouth had stirred my father and mother so deeply. At any other time I should have remembered it soon enough, but on this day I was so set upon my tryst with Lily and what I should say to her, that nothing else could hold a place in my thoughts.

'This must be the man,' I said to myself, and then I said no more, for he was on me, sword up. I saw the keen point flash towards me, and sprang to one side having a desire to fly, as, being unarmed except for my stick, I might have done without shame. But spring as I would I could not avoid the thrust altogether. It was aimed at my heart and it pierced the sleeve of my left arm, passing through the flesh-no more. Yet at the pain of that cut all thought of flight left me, and instead of it a cold anger filled me, causing me to wish to kill this man who had attacked me thus and unprovoked. In my hand was my stout oaken staff which I had cut myself on the banks of Hollow Hill, and if I would fight I must make such play with this as I might. It seems a poor weapon indeed to match against a Toledo blade in the hands of one who could handle it well, and yet there are virtues in a cudgel, for when a man sees himself threatened with it, he is likely to forget that he holds in his hand a more deadly weapon, and to take to the guarding of his own head in place of running his adversary through the body.

And that was what chanced in this case, though how it came about exactly I cannot tell. The Spaniard was a fine swordsman, and had I been armed as he was would doubtless have overmatched me, who at that age had no practice in the art, which was almost unknown in England. But when he saw the big stick flourished over him he forgot his own advantage, and raised his

arm to ward away the blow. Down it came upon the back of his hand, and lo! his sword fell from it to the grass. But I did not spare him because of that, for my blood was up. The next stroke took him on the lips, knocking out a tooth and sending him backwards. Then I caught him by the leg and beat him most unmercifully, not upon the head indeed, for now that I was victor I did not wish to kill one whom I thought a madman as I would that I had done, but on every other part of him.

Indeed I thrashed him till my arms were weary and then I fell to kicking him, and all the while he writhed like a wounded snake and cursed horribly, though he never cried out or asked for mercy. At last I ceased and looked at him, and he was no pretty sight to see-indeed, what with his cuts and bruises and the mire of the roadway, it would have been hard to know him for the gallant cavalier whom I had met not five minutes before. But uglier than all his hurts was the look in his wicked eyes as he lay there on his back in the pathway and glared up at me.

'Now, friend Spaniard,' I said, 'you have learned a lesson; and what is there to hinder me from treating you as you would have dealt with me who had never harmed you?' and I took up his sword and held it to his throat.

'Strike home, you accursed whelp!' he answered in a broken voice; 'it is better to die than to live to

remember such shame as this.'

'No,' I said, 'I am no foreign murderer to kill a defenceless man. You shall away to the justice to answer for yourself. The hangman has a rope for such as you.'

'Then you must drag me thither,' he groaned, and shut his eyes as though with faintness, and doubtless he was somewhat faint.

Now as I pondered on what should be done with the villain, it chanced that I looked up through a gap in the fence, and there, among the Grubswell Oaks three hundred yards or more away, I caught sight of the flutter of a white robe that I knew well, and it seemed to me that the wearer of that robe was moving towards the bridge of the 'watering' as though she were weary of waiting for one who did not come.

Then I thought to myself that if I stayed to drag this man to the village stocks or some other safe place, there would be an end of meeting with my love that day, and I did not know when I might find another chance. Now I would not have missed that hour's talk with Lily to bring a score of murderous-minded foreigners to their deserts, and, moreover, this one had earned good payment for his behaviour. Surely thought I, he might wait a while till I had done my love-making, and if he would not wait I could find a means to make him do so. Not twenty paces from us the horse stood cropping the grass. I went to him and undid his bridle

rein, and with it fastened the Spaniard to a small wayside tree as best I was able.

'Now, here you stay,' I said, 'till I am ready to fetch you;' and I turned to go.

But as I went a great doubt took me, and once more I remembered my mother's fear, and how my father had ridden in haste to Yarmouth on business about a Spaniard. Now to-day a Spaniard had wandered to Ditchingham, and when he learned my name had fallen upon me madly trying to kill me. Was not this the man whom my mother feared, and was it right that I should leave him thus that I might go maying with my dear? I knew in my breast that it was not right, but I was so set upon my desire and so strongly did my heartstrings pull me towards her whose white robe now fluttered on the slope of the Park Hill, that I never heeded the warning.

Well had it been for me if I had done so, and well for some who were yet unborn. Then they had never known death, nor I the land of exile, the taste of slavery, and the altar of sacrifice.

CHAPTER IV
THOMAS TELLS HIS LOVE

Having made the Spaniard as fast as I could, his arms being bound to the tree behind him, and taking his sword with me, I began to run hard after Lily and

caught her not too soon, for in one more minute she would have turned along the road that runs to the watering and over the bridge by the Park Hill path to the Hall.

Hearing my footsteps, she faced about to greet me, or rather as though to see who it was that followed her. There she stood in the evening light, a bough of hawthorn bloom in her hand, and my heart beat yet more wildly at the sight of her. Never had she seemed fairer than as she stood thus in her white robe, a look of amaze upon her face and in her grey eyes, that was half real half feigned, and with the sunlight shifting on her auburn hair that showed beneath her little bonnet. Lily was no round-checked country maid with few beauties save those of health and youth, but a tall and shapely lady who had ripened early to her full grace and sweetness, and so it came about that though we were almost of an age, yet in her presence I felt always as though I were the younger. Thus in my love for her was mingled some touch of reverence.

'Oh! it is you, Thomas,' she said, blushing as she spoke. 'I thought you were not-I mean that I am going home as it grows late. But say, why do you run so fast, and what has happened to you, Thomas, that your arm is bloody and you carry a sword in your hand?'

'I have no breath to speak yet,' I answered. 'Come back to the hawthorns and I will tell you.'

'No, I must be wending homewards. I have been

among the trees for more than an hour, and there is little bloom upon them.'

'I could not come before, Lily. I was kept, and in a strange manner. Also I saw bloom as I ran.'

'Indeed, I never thought that you would come, Thomas,' she answered, looking down, 'who have other things to do than to go out maying like a girl. But I wish to hear your story, if it is short, and I will walk a little way with you.'

So we turned and walked side by side towards the great pollard oaks, and by the time that we reached them, I had told her the tale of the Spaniard, and how he strove to kill me, and how I had beaten him with my staff. Now Lily listened eagerly enough, and sighed with fear when she learned how close I had been to death.

'But you are wounded, Thomas,' she broke in; 'see, the blood runs fast from your arm. Is the thrust deep?'

'I have not looked to see. I have had no time to look.'

'Take off your coat, Thomas, that I may dress the wound. Nay, I will have it so.'

So I drew off the garment, not without pain, and rolled up the shirt beneath, and there was the hurt, a clean thrust through the fleshy part of the lower arm. Lily washed it with water from the brook, and bound it with her kerchief, murmuring words of pity all the

while. To say truth, I would have suffered a worse harm gladly, if only I could find her to tend it. Indeed, her gentle care broke down the fence of my doubts and gave me a courage that otherwise might have failed me in her presence. At first, indeed, I could find no words, but as she bound my wound, I bent down and kissed her ministering hand. She flushed red as the evening sky, the flood of crimson losing itself at last beneath her auburn hair, but it burned deepest upon the white hand which I had kissed.

'Why did you do that, Thomas?' she said, in a low voice.

Then I spoke. 'I did it because I love you, Lily, and do not know how to begin the telling of my love. I love you, dear, and have always loved as I always shall love you.'

'Are you so sure of that, Thomas?' she said, again.

'There is nothing else in the world of which I am so sure, Lily. What I wish to be as sure of is that you love me as I love you.'

For a moment she stood quiet, her head sunk almost to her breast, then she lifted it and her eyes shone as I had never seen them shine before.

'Can you doubt it, Thomas?' she said.

And now I took her in my arms and kissed her on the lips, and the memory of that kiss has gone with me through my long life, and is with me yet, when, old and withered, I stand upon the borders of the grave. It was

the greatest joy that has been given to me in all my days. Too soon, alas! it was done, that first pure kiss of youthful love-and I spoke again somewhat aimlessly.

'It seems then that you do love me who love you so well.'

'If you doubted it before, can you doubt it NOW?' she answered very softly. 'But listen, Thomas. It is well that we should love each other, for we were born to it, and have no help in the matter, even if we wished to find it. Still, though love be sweet and holy, it is not all, for there is duty to be thought of, and what will my father say to this, Thomas?'

'I do not know, Lily, and yet I can guess. I am sure, sweet, that he wishes you to take my brother Geoffrey, and leave me on one side.'

'Then his wishes are not mine, Thomas. Also, though duty be strong, it is not strong enough to force a woman to a marriage for which she has no liking. Yet it may prove strong enough to keep a woman from a marriage for which her heart pleads-perhaps, also, it should have been strong enough to hold me back from the telling of my love.'

'No, Lily, the love itself is much, and though it should bring no fruit, still it is something to have won it for ever and a day.'

'You are very young to talk thus, Thomas. I am also young, I know, but we women ripen quicker. Perhaps all this is but a boy's fancy, to pass with

boyhood.'

'It will never pass, Lily. They say that our first loves are the longest, and that which is sown in youth will flourish in our age. Listen, Lily; I have my place to make in the world, and it may take a time in the making, and I ask one promise of you, though perhaps it is a selfish thing to seek. I ask of you that you will be faithful to me, and come fair weather or foul, will wed no other man till you know me dead.'

'It is something to promise, Thomas, for with time come changes. Still I am so sure of myself that I promise-nay I swear it. Of you I cannot be sure, but things are so with us women that we must risk all upon a throw, and if we lose, good-bye to happiness.'

Then we talked on, and I cannot remember what we said, though these words that I have written down remain in my mind, partly because of their own weight, and in part because of all that came about in the after years.

And at last I knew that I must go, though we were sad enough at parting. So I took her in my arms and kissed her so closely that some blood from my wound ran down her white attire. But as we embraced I chanced to look up, and saw a sight that frightened me enough. For there, not five paces from us, stood Squire Bozard, Lily's father, watching all, and his face wore no smile.

He had been riding by a bridle-path to the

watering ford, and seeing a couple trespassing beneath the oaks, dismounted from his horse to hunt them away. Not till he was quite near did he know whom he came to hunt, and then he stood still in astonishment. Lily and I drew slowly apart and looked at him. He was a short stout man, with a red face and stern grey eyes, that seemed to be starting from his head with anger. For a while he could not speak, but when he began at length the words came fast enough. All that he said I forget, but the upshot of it was that he desired to know what my business was with his daughter. I waited till he was out of breath, then answered him that Lily and I loved each other well, and were plighting our troth.

'Is this so, daughter?' he asked.

'It is so, my father,' she answered boldly.

Then he broke out swearing. 'You light minx,' he said, 'you shall be whipped and kept cool on bread and water in your chamber. And for you, my half-bred Spanish cockerel, know once and for all that this maid is for your betters. How dare you come wooing my daughter, you empty pill-box, who have not two silver pennies to rattle in your pouch! Go win fortune and a name before you dare to look up to such as she.'

'That is my desire, and I will do it, sir,' I answered.

'So, you apothecary's drudge, you will win name and place, will you! Well, long before that deed is done the maid shall be safely wedded to one who has them

and who is not unknown to you. Daughter, say now that you have finished with him.'

'I cannot say that, father,' she replied, plucking at her robe. 'If it is not your will that I should marry Thomas here, my duty is plain and I may not wed him. But I am my own and no duty can make me marry where I will not. While Thomas lives I am sworn to him and to no other man.'

'At the least you have courage, hussey,' said her father. 'But listen now, either you will marry where and when I wish, or tramp it for your bread. Ungrateful girl, did I breed you to flaunt me to my face? Now for you, pill-box. I will teach you to come kissing honest men's daughters without their leave,' and with a curse he rushed at me, stick aloft, to thrash me.

Then for the second time that day my quick blood boiled in me, and snatching up the Spaniard's sword that lay upon the grass beside me, I held it at the point, for the game was changed, and I who had fought with cudgel against sword, must now fight with sword against cudgel. And had it not been that Lily with a quick cry of fear struck my arm from beneath, causing the point of the sword to pass over his shoulder, I believe truly that I should then and there have pierced her father through, and ended my days early with a noose about my neck.

'Are you mad?' she cried. 'And do you think to win me by slaying my father? Throw down that sword,

Thomas.'

'As for winning you, it seems that there is small chance of it;' I answered hotly, 'but I tell you this, not for the sake of all the maids upon the earth will I stand to be beaten with a stick like a scullion.'

'And there I do not blame you, lad,' said her father, more kindly. 'I see that you also have courage which may serve you in good stead, and it was unworthy of me to call you "pill-box" in my anger. Still, as I have said, the girl is not for you, so be gone and forget her as best you may, and if you value your life, never let me find you two kissing again. And know that to-morrow I will have a word with your father on this matter.'

'I will go since I must go,' I answered, 'but, sir, I still hope to live to call your daughter wife. Lily, farewell till these storms are overpast.'

'Farewell, Thomas,' she said weeping. 'Forget me not and I will never forget my oath to you.'

Then taking Lily by the arm her father led her away.

I also went away-sad, but not altogether ill-pleased. For now I knew that if I had won the father's anger, I had also won the daughter's unalterable love, and love lasts longer than wrath, and here or hereafter will win its way at length. When I had gone a little distance I remembered the Spaniard, who had been clean forgotten by me in all this love and war, and

I turned to seek him and drag him to the stocks, the which I should have done with joy, and been glad to find some one on whom to wreak my wrongs. But when I came to the spot where I had left him, I found that fate had befriended him by the hand of a fool, for there was no Spaniard but only the village idiot, Billy Minns by name, who stood staring first at the tree to which the foreigner had been made fast, and then at a piece of silver in his hand.

'Where is the man who was tied here, Billy?' I asked.

'I know not, Master Thomas,' he answered in his Norfolk talk which I will not set down. 'Half-way to wheresoever he was going I should say, measured by the pace at which he left when once I had set him upon his horse.'

'You set him on his horse, fool? How long was that ago?'

'How long! Well, it might be one hour, and it might be two. I'm no reckoner of time, that keeps its own score like an innkeeper, without my help. Lawks! how he did gallop off, working those long spurs he wore right into the ribs of the horse. And little wonder, poor man, and he daft, not being able to speak, but only to bleat sheeplike, and fallen upon by robbers on the king's roads, and in broad daylight. But Billy cut him loose and caught his horse and set him on it, and got this piece for his good charity. Lawks! but he was glad

to be gone. How he did gallop!'

'Now you are a bigger fool even than I thought you, Billy Minns,' I said in anger. 'That man would have murdered me, I overcame him and made him fast, and you have let him go.'

'He would have murdered you, Master, and you made him fast! Then why did you not stop to keep him till I came along, and we would have haled him to the stocks? That would have been sport and all. You call me fool-but if you found a man covered with blood and hurts tied to a tree, and he daft and not able to speak, had you not cut him loose? Well, he's gone, and this alone is left of him,' and he spun the piece into the air.

Now, seeing that there was reason in Billy's talk, for the fault was mine, I turned away without more words, not straight homewards, for I wished to think alone awhile on all that had come about between me and Lily and her father, but down the way which runs across the lane to the crest of the Vineyard Hills. These hills are clothed with underwood, in which large oaks grow to within some two hundred yards of this house where I write, and this underwood is pierced by paths that my mother laid out, for she loved to walk here. One of these paths runs along the bottom of the hill by the edge of the pleasant river Waveney, and the other a hundred feet or more above and near the crest of the slope, or to speak more plainly, there is but one path shaped like the letter O, placed thus [symbol of O

laying on its side omitted], the curved ends of the letter marking how the path turns upon the hill-side.

Now I struck the path at the end that is furthest from this house, and followed that half of it which runs down by the river bank, having the water on one side of it and the brushwood upon the other. Along this lower path I wandered, my eyes fixed upon the ground, thinking deeply as I went, now of the joy of Lily's love, and now of the sorrow of our parting and of her father's wrath. As I went, thus wrapped in meditation, I saw something white lying upon the grass, and pushed it aside with the point of the Spaniard's sword, not heeding it. Still, its shape and fashioning remained in my mind, and when I had left it some three hundred paces behind me, and was drawing near to the house, the sight of it came back to me as it lay soft and white upon the grass, and I knew that it was familiar to my eyes. From the thing, whatever it might be, my mind passed to the Spaniard's sword with which I had tossed it aside, and from the sword to the man himself. What had been his business in this parish?-an ill one surely-and why had he looked as though he feared me and fallen upon me when he learned my name?

I stood still, looking downward, and my eyes fell upon footprints stamped in the wet sand of the path. One of them was my mother's. I could have sworn to it among a thousand, for no other woman in these parts had so delicate a foot. Close to it, as though following

after, was another that at first I thought must also have been made by a woman, it was so narrow. But presently I saw that this could scarcely be, because of its length, and moreover, that the boot which left it was like none that I knew, being cut very high at the instep and very pointed at the toe. Then, of a sudden, it came upon me that the Spanish stranger wore such boots, for I had noted them while I talked with him, and that his feet were following those of my mother, for they had trodden on her track, and in some places, his alone had stamped their impress on the sand blotting out her footprints. Then, too, I knew what the white rag was that I had thrown aside. It was my mother's mantilla which I knew, and yet did not know, because I always saw it set daintily upon her head. In a moment it had come home to me, and with the knowledge a keen and sickening dread. Why had this man followed my mother, and why did her mantilla lie thus upon the ground?

I turned and sped like a deer back to where I had seen the lace. All the way the footprints went before me. Now I was there. Yes, the wrapping was hers, and it had been rent as though by a rude hand; but where was she?

With a beating heart once more I bent to read the writing of the footsteps. Here they were mixed one with another, as though the two had stood close together, moving now this way and now that in struggle. I looked

up the path, but there were none. Then I cast round about like a beagle, first along the river side, then up the bank. Here they were again, and made by feet that flew and feet that followed. Up the bank they went fifty yards and more, now lost where the turf was sound, now seen in sand or loam, till they led to the bole of a big oak, and were once more mixed together, for here the pursuer had come up with the pursued.

Despairingly as one who dreams, for now I guessed all and grew mad with fear, I looked this way and that, till at length I found more footsteps, those of the Spaniard. These were deep marked, as of a man who carried some heavy burden. I followed them; first they went down the hill towards the river, then turned aside to a spot where the brushwood was thick. In the deepest of the clump the boughs, now bursting into leaf, were bent downwards as though to hide something beneath. I wrenched them aside, and there, gleaming whitely in the gathering twilight was the dead face of my mother.

CHAPTER V
THOMAS SWEARS AN OATH

For a while I stood amazed with horror, staring down at the dead face of my beloved mother. Then I stooped to lift her and saw that she had been stabbed, and through the breast, stabbed with the sword which I

carried in my hand.

Now I understood. This was the work of that Spanish stranger whom I had met as he hurried from the place of murder, who, because of the wickedness of his heart or for some secret reason, had striven to slay me also when he learned that I was my mother's son. And I had held this devil in my power, and that I might meet my May, I had suffered him to escape my vengeance, who, had I known the truth, would have dealt with him as the priests of Anahuac deal with the victims of their gods. I understood and shed tears of pity, rage, and shame. Then I turned and fled homewards like one mad.

At the doorway I met my father and my brother Geoffrey riding up from Bungay market, and there was that written on my face which caused them to ask as with one voice:

'What evil thing has happened?'

Thrice I looked at my father before I could speak, for I feared lest the blow should kill him. But speak I must at last, though I chose that it should be to Geoffrey my brother. 'Our mother lies murdered yonder on the Vineyard Hill. A Spanish man has done the deed, Juan de Garcia by name.' When my father heard these words his face became livid as though with pain of the heart, his jaw fell and a low moan issued from his open mouth. Presently he rested his hand upon the pommel of the saddle, and lifting his ghastly face he

said:

'Where is this Spaniard? Have you killed him?'

'No, father. He chanced upon me in Grubswell, and when he learned my name he would have murdered me. But I played quarter staff with him and beat him to a pulp, taking his sword.'

'Ay, and then?'

'And then I let him go, knowing nothing of the deed he had already wrought upon our mother. Afterwards I will tell you all.'

'You let him go, son! You let Juan de Garcia go! Then, Thomas, may the curse of God rest upon you till you find him and finish that which you began to-day.'

'Spare to curse me, father, who am accursed by my own conscience. Turn your horses rather and ride for Yarmouth, for there his ship lies and thither he has gone with two hours' start. Perhaps you may still trap him before he sets sail.'

Without another word my father and brother wheeled their horses round and departed at full gallop into the gloom of the gathering night.

They rode so fiercely that, their horses being good, they came to the gates of Yarmouth in little more than an hour and a half, and that is fast riding. But the bird was flown. They tracked him to the quay and found that he had shipped a while before in a boat which was in waiting for him, and passed to his vessel that lay in the Roads at anchor but with the most of her

canvas set. Instantly she sailed, and now was lost in the night. Then my father caused notice to be given that he would pay reward of two hundred pieces in gold to any ship that should capture the Spaniard, and two started on the quest, but they did not find her that before morning was far on her way across the sea.

So soon as they had galloped away I called together the grooms and other serving men and told them what had chanced. Then we went with lanterns, for by now it was dark, and came to the thick brushwood where lay the body of my mother. I drew near the first, for the men were afraid, and so indeed was I, though why I should fear her lying dead who living had loved me tenderly, I do not know. Yet I know this, that when I came to the spot and saw two eyes glowering at me and heard the crash of bushes as something broke them, I could almost have fallen with fear, although I knew well that it was but a fox or wandering hound haunting the place of death.

Still I went on, calling the others to follow, and the end of it was that we laid my mother's body upon a door which had been lifted from its hinges, and bore her home for the last time. And to me that path is still a haunted place. It is seventy years and more since my mother died by the hand of Juan de Garcia her cousin, yet old as I am and hardened to such sad scenes, I do not love to walk that path alone at night.

Doubtless it was fancy which plays us strange

tricks, still but a year ago, having gone to set a springe for a woodcock, I chanced to pass by yonder big oak upon a November eve, and I could have sworn that I saw it all again. I saw myself a lad, my wounded arm still bound with Lily's kerchief, climbing slowly down the hill-side, while behind me, groaning beneath their burden, were the forms of the four serving men. I heard the murmur of the river and the wind that seventy years ago whispered in the reeds. I saw the clouded sky flawed here and there with blue, and the broken light that gleamed on the white burden stretched upon the door, and the red stain at its breast. Ay, I heard myself talk as I went forward with the lantern, bidding the men pass to the right of some steep and rotten ground, and it was strange to me to listen to my own voice as it had been in youth. Well, well, it was but a dream, yet such slaves are we to the fears of fancy, that because of the dead, I, who am almost of their number, do not love to pass that path at night.

At length we came home with our burden, and the women took it weeping and set about their task with it. And now I must not only fight my own sorrows but must strive to soothe those of my sister Mary, who as I feared would go mad with grief and horror. At last she sobbed herself into a torpor, and I went and questioned the men who sat round the fire in the kitchen, for none sought their beds that night. From them I learned that an hour or more before I met the Spaniard, a

richly-dressed stranger had been seen walking along the church-path, and that he had tied his horse among some gorse and brambles on the top of the hill, where he stood as though in doubt, till my mother came out, when he descended and followed her. Also I learned that one of the men at work in the garden, which is not more than three hundred paces from where the deed was done, heard cries, but had taken no note of them, thinking forsooth that it was but the play of some lover from Bungay and his lass chasing each other through the woods, as to this hour it is their fashion to do. Truly it seemed to me that day as though this parish of Ditchingham were the very nursery of fools, of whom I was the first and biggest, and indeed this same thought has struck me since concerning other matters.

At length the morning came, and with it my father and brother, who returned from Yarmouth on hired horses, for their own were spent. In the afternoon also news followed them that the ships which had put to sea on the track of the Spaniard had been driven back by bad weather, having seen nothing of him.

Now I told all the story of my dealings with the murderer of my mother, keeping nothing back, and I must bear my father's bitter anger because knowing that my mother was in dread of a Spaniard, I had suffered my reason to be led astray by my desire to win speech with my love. Nor did I meet with any comfort from my brother Geoffrey, who was fierce against me

because he learned that I had not pleaded in vain with the maid whom he desired for himself. But he said nothing of this reason. Also that no drop might be lacking in my cup, Squire Bozard, who came with many other neighbours to view the corpse and offer sympathy with my father in his loss, told him at the same time that he took it ill that I should woo his daughter against his wish, and that if I continued in this course it would strain their ancient friendship. Thus I was hit on every side; by sorrow for my mother whom I had loved tenderly, by longing for my dear whom I might not see, by self-reproach because I had let the Spaniard go when I held him fast, and by the anger of my father and my brother. Indeed those days were so dark and bitter, for I was at the age when shame and sorrow sting their sharpest, that I wished that I were dead beside my mother. One comfort reached me indeed, a message from Lily sent by a servant girl whom she trusted, giving me her dear love and bidding me to be of good cheer.

At length came the day of burial, and my mother, wrapped in fair white robes, was laid to her rest in the chancel of the church at Ditchingham, where my father has long been set beside her, hard by the brass effigies that mark the burying place of Lily's forefather, his wife, and many of their children. This funeral was the saddest of sights, for the bitterness of my father's grief broke from him in sobs and my sister Mary swooned

away in my arms. Indeed there were few dry eyes in all that church, for my mother, notwithstanding her foreign birth, was much loved because of her gentle ways and the goodness of her heart. But it came to an end, and the noble Spanish lady and English wife was left to her long sleep in the ancient church, where she shall rest on when her tragic story and her very name are forgotten among men. Indeed this is likely to be soon, for I am the last of the Wingfields alive in these parts, though my sister Mary has left descendants of another name to whom my lands and fortune go except for certain gifts to the poor of Bungay and of Ditchingham.

When it was over I went back home. My father was sitting in the front room well nigh beside himself with grief, and by him was my brother. Presently he began to assail me with bitter words because I had let the murderer go when God gave him into my hand.

'You forget, father,' sneered Geoffrey, 'Thomas woos a maid, and it was more to him to hold her in his arms than to keep his mother's murderer safely. But by this it seems he has killed two birds with one stone, he has suffered the Spanish devil to escape when he knew that our mother feared the coming of a Spaniard, and he has made enmity between us and Squire Bozard, our good neighbour, who strangely enough does not favour his wooing.'

'It is so,' said my father. 'Thomas, your mother's blood is on your hands.'

I listened and could bear this goading injustice no longer.

'It is false,' I said, 'I say it even to my father. The man had killed my mother before I met him riding back to seek his ship at Yarmouth and having lost his way; how then is her blood upon my hands? As for my wooing of Lily Bozard, that is my matter, brother, and not yours, though perhaps you wish that it was yours and not mine. Why, father, did you not tell me what you feared of this Spaniard? I heard some loose talk only and gave little thought to it, my mind being full of other things. And now I will say something. You called down God's curse upon me, father, till such time as I should find this murderer and finish what I had begun. So be it! Let God's curse rest upon me till I do find him. I am young, but I am quick and strong, and so soon as may be I start for Spain to hunt him there till I shall run him down or know him to be dead. If you will give me money to help me on my quest, so be it-if not I go without. I swear before God and by my mother's spirit that I will neither rest nor stay till with the very sword that slew her, I have avenged her blood upon her murderer or know him dead, and if I suffer myself to be led astray from the purpose of this oath by aught that is, then may a worse end than hers overtake me, may my soul be rejected in heaven, and my name be shameful for ever upon the earth!'

Thus I swore in my rage and anguish, holding up

my hand to heaven that I called upon to witness the oath.

My father looked at me keenly. 'If that is your mind, son Thomas, you shall not lack for money. I would go myself, for blood must be wiped out with blood, but I am too broken in my health; also I am known in Spain and the Holy Office would claim me there. Go, and my blessing go with you. It is right that you should go, for it is through your folly that our enemy has escaped us.'

'Yes, it is right that he should go,' said Geoffrey.

'You say that because you wish to be rid of me, Geoffrey,' I answered hotly, 'and you would be rid of me because you desire to take my place at the side of a certain maid. Follow your nature and do as you will, but if you would outwit an absent man no good shall come to you of it.'

'The girl is to him who can win her,' he said.

'The girl's heart is won already, Geoffrey. You may buy her from her father but you can never win her heart, and without a heart she will be but a poor prize.'

'Peace! now is no time for such talk of love and maids,' said my father, 'and listen. This is the tale of the Spanish murderer and your mother. I have said nothing of it heretofore, but now it must out. When I was a lad it happened that I also went to Spain because my father willed it. I went to a monastery at Seville, but I had no liking for monks and their ways, and I broke out from

the monastery. For a year or more I made my living as I best might, for I feared to return to England as a runaway. Still I made a living and not a bad one, now in this way and now in that, but though I am ashamed to say it, mostly by gaming, at which I had great luck. One night I met this man Juan de Garcia-for in his hate he gave you his true name when he would have stabbed you-at play. Even then he had an evil fame, though he was scarcely more than a lad, but he was handsome in person, set high in birth, and of a pleasing manner. It chanced that he won of me at the dice, and being in a good humour, he took me to visit at the house of his aunt, his uncle's widow, a lady of Seville. This aunt had one child, a daughter, and that daughter was your mother. Now your mother, Luisa de Garcia, was affianced to her cousin Juan de Garcia, not with her own will indeed, for the contract had been signed when she was only eight years old. Still it was binding, more binding indeed than in this country, being a marriage in all except in fact. But those women who are thus bound for the most part bear no wife's love in their hearts, and so it was with your mother. Indeed she both hated and feared her cousin Juan, though I think that he loved her more than anything on earth, and by one pretext and another she contrived to bring him to an agreement that no marriage should be celebrated till she was full twenty years of age. But the colder she was to him, the more was he inflamed with desire to win her and also

her possessions, which were not small, for like all Spaniards he was passionate, and like most gamesters and men of evil life, much in want of money.

'Now to be brief, from the first moment that your mother and I set eyes on each other we loved one another, and it was our one desire to meet as often as might be; and in this we had no great difficulty, for her mother also feared and hated Juan de Garcia, her nephew by marriage, and would have seen her daughter clear of him if possible. The end of it was that I told my love, and a plot was made between us that we should fly to England. But all this had not escaped the ears of Juan, who had spies in the household, and was jealous and revengeful as only a Spaniard can be. First he tried to be rid of me by challenging me to a duel, but we were parted before we could draw swords. Then he hired bravos to murder me as I walked the streets at night, but I wore a chain shirt beneath my doublet and their daggers broke upon it, and in place of being slain I slew one of them. Twice baffled, de Garcia was not defeated. Fight and murder had failed, but another and surer means remained. I know not how, but he had won some clue to the history of my life, and of how I had broken out from the monastery. It was left to him, therefore, to denounce me to the Holy Office as a renegade and an infidel, and this he did one night; it was the night before the day when we should have taken ship. I was sitting with your mother and her

mother in their house at Seville, when six cowled men entered and seized me without a word. When I prayed to know their purpose they gave no other answer than to hold a crucifix before my eyes. Then I knew why I was taken, and the women ceased clinging to me and fell back sobbing. Secretly and silently I was hurried away to the dungeons of the Holy Office, but of all that befell me there I will not stop to tell.

'Twice I was racked, once I was seared with hot irons, thrice I was flogged with wire whips, and all this while I was fed on food such as we should scarcely offer to a dog here in England. At length my offence of having escaped from a monastery and sundry blasphemies, so-called, being proved against me, I was condemned to death by fire.

'Then at last, when after a long year of torment and of horror, I had abandoned hope and resigned myself to die, help came. On the eve of the day upon which I was to be consumed by flame, the chief of my tormentors entered the dungeon where I lay on straw, and embracing me bade me be of good cheer, for the church had taken pity on my youth and given me my freedom. At first I laughed wildly, for I thought that this was but another torment, and not till I was freed of my fetters, clothed in decent garments, and set at midnight without the prison gates, would I believe that so good a thing had befallen me through the hand of God. I stood weak and wondering outside the gates, not knowing where to fly, and as I stood a woman glided up to me wrapped in a dark cloak, who whispered "Come." That woman was your mother. She had learned of my fate from the boasting of de Garcia and set herself to save me. Thrice her plans failed, but at length through the help of some cunning agent, gold won what was denied to justice and to mercy, and my life and liberty were bought with a very great sum.

'That same night we were married and fled for Cadiz, your mother and I, but not her mother, who was bedridden with a sickness. For my sake your beloved mother abandoned her people, what remained to her of her fortune after paying the price of my life, and her country, so strong is the love of woman. All had been made ready, for at Cadiz lay an English ship, the "Mary" of Bristol, in which passage was taken for us. But the "Mary" was delayed in port by a contrary wind which blew so strongly that notwithstanding his desire to save us, her master dared not take the sea. Two days and a night we lay in the harbour, fearing all things not without cause, and yet most happy in each other's love. Now those who had charge of me in the dungeon had given out that I had escaped by the help of my master the Devil, and I was searched for throughout the country side. De Garcia also, finding that his cousin and affianced wife was missing, guessed that we two were not far apart. It was his cunning, sharpened by jealousy and hate, that dogged us down step by step till at length he found us.

'On the morning of the third day, the gale having abated, the anchor of the "Mary" was got home and she swung out into the tideway. As she came round and while the seamen were making ready to hoist the sails, a boat carrying some twenty soldiers, and followed by two others, shot alongside and summoned the captain to heave to, that his ship might be boarded and searched

under warrant from the Holy Office. It chanced that I was on deck at the time, and suddenly, as I prepared to hide myself below, a man, in whom I knew de Garcia himself, stood up and called out that I was the escaped heretic whom they sought. Fearing lest his ship should be boarded and he himself thrown into prison with the rest of his crew, the captain would then have surrendered me. But I, desperate with fear, tore my clothes from my body and showed the cruel scars that marked it.

'"You are Englishmen," I cried to the sailors, "and will you deliver me to these foreign devils, who am of your blood? Look at their handiwork," and I pointed to the half-healed scars left by the red-hot pincers; "if you give me up, you send me back to more of this torment and to death by burning. Pity my wife if you will not pity me, or if you will pity neither, then lend me a sword that by death I may save myself from torture."

'Then one of the seamen, a Southwold man who had known my father, called out: "By God! I for one will stand by you, Thomas Wingfield. If they want you and your sweet lady they must kill me first," and seizing a bow from the rack he drew it out of its case and strung it, and setting an arrow on the string he pointed it at the Spaniards in the boat.

'Then the others broke into shouts of:

'"If you want any man from among us, come aboard and take him, you torturing devils," and the like.

'Seeing where the heart of the crew lay, the captain found courage in his turn. He made no answer to the Spaniards, but bade half of the men hoist the sails with all speed, and the rest make ready to keep off the soldiers should they seek to board us.

'By now the other two boats had come up and fastened on to us with their hooks. One man climbed into the chains and thence to the deck, and I knew him for a priest of the Holy Office, one of those who had stood by while I was tormented. Then I grew mad at the thought of all that I had suffered, while that devil watched, bidding them lay on for the love of God. Snatching the bow from the hand of the Southwold seaman, I drew the arrow to its head and loosed. It did not miss its mark, for like you, Thomas, I was skilled with the bow, and he dived back into the sea with an English yard shaft in his heart.

'After that they tried to board us no more, though they shot at us with arrows, wounding one man. The captain called to us to lay down our bows and take cover behind the bulwarks, for by now the sails began to draw. Then de Garcia stood up in the boat and cursed me and my wife.

'"I will find you yet," he screamed, with many Spanish oaths and foul words. "If I must wait for twenty years I will be avenged upon you and all you love. Be assured of this, Luisa de Garcia, hide where you will, I shall find you, and when we meet, you shall

come with me for so long as I will keep you or that shall be the hour of your death."

'Then we sailed away for England, and the boats fell astern.

'My sons, this is the story of my youth, and of how I came to wed your mother whom I have buried to-day. Juan de Garcia has kept his word.'

'Yet it seems strange,' said my brother, 'that after all these years he should have murdered her thus, whom you say he loved. Surely even the evilest of men had shrunk from such a deed!'

'There is little that is strange about it,' answered my father. 'How can we know what words were spoken between them before he stabbed her? Doubtless he told of some of them when he cried to Thomas that now they would see what truth there was in prophecies. What did de Garcia swear years since?-that she should come with him or he would kill her. Your mother was still beautiful, Geoffrey, and he may have given her choice between flight and death. Seek to know no more, son'-and suddenly my father hid his face in his hands and broke into sobs that were dreadful to hear.

'Would that you had told us this tale before, father,' I said so soon as I could speak. 'Then there would have lived a devil the less in the world to-day, and I should have been spared a long journey.'

Little did I know how long that journey would be!

CHAPTER VI
GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART

Within twelve days of the burial of my mother and the telling of the story of his marriage to her by my father, I was ready to start upon my search. As it chanced a vessel was about to sail from Yarmouth to Cadiz. She was named the 'Adventuress,' of one hundred tons burden, and carried wool and other goods outwards, purposing to return with a cargo of wine and yew staves for bows. In this vessel my father bought me a passage. Moreover, he gave me fifty pounds in gold, which was as much as I would risk upon my person, and obtained letters from the Yarmouth firm of merchants to their agents in Cadiz, in which they were advised to advance me such sums as I might need up to a total of one hundred and fifty English pounds, and further to assist me in any way that was possible.

Now the ship 'Adventuress' was to sail on the third day of June. Already it was the first of that month, and that evening I must ride to Yarmouth, whither my baggage had gone already. Except one my farewells were made, and yet that was the one I most wished to make. Since the day when we had sworn our troth I had gained no sight of Lily except once at my mother's burial, and then we had not spoken. Now it seemed that I must go without any parting word, for her father had

sent me notice that if I came near the Hall his serving men had orders to thrust me from the door, and this was a shame that I would not risk. Yet it was hard that I must go upon so long a journey, whence it well might chance I should not return, and bid her no goodbye. In my grief and perplexity I spoke to my father, telling him how the matter stood and asking his help.

'I go hence,' I said, 'to avenge our common loss, and if need be to give my life for the honour of our name. Aid me then in this.'

'My neighbour Bozard means his daughter for your brother Geoffrey, and not for you, Thomas,' he answered; 'and a man may do what he wills with his own. Still I will help you if I can, at the least he cannot drive me from his door. Bid them bring horses, and we will ride to the Hall.'

Within the half of an hour we were there, and my father asked for speech with its master. The serving man looked at me askance, remembering his orders, still he ushered us into the justice room where the Squire sat drinking ale.

'Good morrow to you, neighbour,' said the Squire; 'you are welcome here, but you bring one with you who is not welcome, though he be your son.'

'I bring him for the last time, friend Bozard. Listen to his request, then grant it or refuse it as you will; but if you refuse it, it will not bind us closer. The lad rides to-night to take ship for Spain to seek that man

who murdered his mother. He goes of his own free will because after the doing of the deed it was he who unwittingly suffered the murderer to escape, and it is well that he should go.'

'He is a young hound to run such a quarry to earth, and in a strange country,' said the Squire. 'Still I like his spirit and wish him well. What would he of me?'

'Leave to bid farewell to your daughter. I know that his suit does not please you and cannot wonder at it, and for my own part I think it too early for him to set his fancy in the way of marriage. But if he would see the maid it can do no harm, for such harm as there is has been done already. Now for your answer.'

Squire Bozard thought a while, then said:

'The lad is a brave lad though he shall be no son-in-law of mine. He is going far, and mayhap will return no more, and I do not wish that he should think unkindly of me when I am dead. Go without, Thomas Wingfield, and stand under yonder beech-Lily shall join you there and you may speak with her for the half of an hour-no more. See to it that you keep within sight of the window. Nay, no thanks; go before I change my mind.'

So I went and waited under the beech with a beating heart, and presently Lily glided up to me, a more welcome sight to my eyes than any angel out of heaven. And, indeed, I doubt if an angel could have been more fair than she, or more good and gentle.

'Oh! Thomas,' she whispered, when I had greeted her, 'is this true that you sail oversea to seek the Spaniard?'

'I sail to seek the Spaniard, and to find him and to kill him when he is found. It was to come to you, Lily, that I let him go, now I must let you go to come to him. Nay, do not weep, I have sworn to do it, and were I to break my oath I should be dishonoured.'

'And because of this oath of yours I must be widowed, Thomas, before I am a wife? You go and I shall never see you more.'

'Who can say, my sweet? My father went over seas and came back safe, having passed through many perils.'

'Yes, he came back and-not alone. You are young, Thomas, and in far countries there are ladies great and fair, and how shall I hold my own in your heart against them, I being so far away?'

'I swear to you, Lily-'

'Nay, Thomas, swear no oaths lest you should add to your sins by breaking them. Yet, love, forget me not, who shall forget you never. Perhaps-oh! it wrings my heart to say it-this is our last meeting on the earth. If so, then we must hope to meet in heaven. At the least be sure of this, while I live I will be true to you, and father or no father, I will die before I break my troth. I am young to speak so largely, but it shall be as I say. Oh! this parting is more cruel than death. Would that we

were asleep and forgotten among men. Yet it is best that you should go, for if you stayed what could we be to each other while my father lives, and may he live long!'

'Sleep and forgetfulness will come soon enough, Lily; none must await them for very long. Meanwhile we have our lives to live. Let us pray that we may live them to each other. I go to seek fortune as well as foes, and I will win it for your sake that we may marry.'

She shook her head sadly. 'It were too much happiness, Thomas. Men and women may seldom wed their true loves, or if they do, it is but to lose them. At the least we love, and let us be thankful that we have learned what love can be, for having loved here, perchance at the worst we may love otherwhere when there are none to say us nay.'

Then we talked on awhile, babbling broken words of love and hope and sorrow, as young folks so placed are wont to do, till at length Lily looked up with a sad sweet smile and said:

'It is time to go, sweetheart. My father beckons me from the lattice. All is finished.'

'Let us go then,' I answered huskily, and drew her behind the trunk of the old beech. And there I caught her in my arms and kissed her again and yet again, nor was she ashamed to kiss me back.

After this I remember little of what happened, except that as we rode away I saw her beloved face,

wan and wistful, watching me departing out of her life. For twenty years that sad and beautiful face haunted me, and it haunts me yet athwart life and death. Other women have loved me and I have known other partings, some of them more terrible, but the memory of this woman as she was then, and of her farewell look, overruns them all. Whenever I gaze down the past I see this picture framed in it and I know that it is one which cannot fade. Are there any sorrows like these sorrows of our youth? Can any bitterness equal the bitterness of such good-byes? I know but one of which I was fated to taste in after years, and that shall be told of in its place. It is a common jest to mock at early love, but if it be real, if it be something more than the mere arising of the passions, early love is late love also; it is love for ever, the best and worst event which can befall a man or woman. I say it who am old and who have done with everything, and it is true.

One thing I have forgotten. As we kissed and clung in our despair behind the bole of the great beech, Lily drew a ring from her finger and pressed it into my hand saying, 'Look on this each morning when you wake, and think of me.' It had been her mother's, and to-day it still is set upon my withered hand, gleaming in the winter sunlight as I trace these words. Through the long years of wild adventure, through all the time of after peace, in love and war, in the shine of the camp fire, in the glare of the sacrificial flame, in the light of

lonely stars illumining the lonely wilderness, that ring has shone upon my hand, reminding me always of her who gave it, and on this hand it shall go down into the grave. It is a plain circlet of thick gold, somewhat worn now, a posy-ring, and on its inner surface is cut this quaint couplet:

Heart to heart,
Though far apart.

A fitting motto for us indeed, and one that has its meaning to this hour.

That same day of our farewell I rode with my father to Yarmouth. My brother Geoffrey did not come with us, but we parted with kindly words, and of this I am glad, for we never saw each other again. No more was said between us as to Lily Bozard and our wooing of her, though I knew well enough that so soon as my back was turned he would try to take my place at her side, as indeed happened. I forgive it to him; in truth I cannot blame him much, for what man is there that would not have desired to wed Lily who knew her? Once we were dear friends, Geoffrey and I, but when we ripened towards manhood, our love of Lily came between us, and we grew more and more apart. It is a common case enough. Well, as it chanced he failed, so why should I think unkindly of him? Let me rather remember the affection of our childhood and forget the

rest. God rest his soul.

Mary, my sister, who after Lily Bozard was now the fairest maiden in the country side, wept much at my going. There was but a year between us, and we loved each other dearly, for no such shadow of jealousy had fallen on our affection. I comforted her as well as I was able, and telling her all that had passed between me and Lily, I prayed her to stand my friend and Lily's, should it ever be in her power to do so. This Mary promised to do readily enough, and though she did not give the reason, I could see that she thought it possible that she might be able to help us. As I have said, Lily had a brother, a young man of some promise, who at this time was away at college, and he and my sister Mary had a strong fancy for each other, that might or might not ripen into something closer. So we kissed and bade farewell with tears.

And after that my father and I rode away. But when we had passed down Pirnhow Street, and mounted the little hill beyond Waingford Mills to the left of Bungay town, I halted my horse, and looked back upon the pleasant valley of the Waveney where I was born, and my heart grew full to bursting. Had I known all that must befall me, before my eyes beheld that scene again, I think indeed that it would have burst. But God, who in his wisdom has laid many a burden upon the backs of men, has saved them from this; for had we foreknowledge of the future, I think that of our

own will but few of us would live to see it. So I cast one long last look towards the distant mass of oaks that marked the spot where Lily lived, and rode on.

On the following day I embarked on board the 'Adventuress' and we sailed. Before I left, my father's heart softened much towards me, for he remembered that I was my mother's best beloved, and feared also lest we should meet no more. So much did it soften indeed, that at the last hour he changed his mind and wished to hold me back from going. But having put my hand to the plough and suffered all the bitterness of farewell, I would not return to be mocked by my brother and my neighbours. 'You speak too late, father,' I said. 'You desired me to go to work this vengeance and stirred me to it with many bitter words, and now I would go if I knew that I must die within a week, for such oaths cannot be lightly broken, and till mine is fulfilled the curse rests on me.'

'So be it, son,' he answered with a sigh. 'Your mother's cruel death maddened me and I said what I may live to be sorry for, though at the best I shall not live long, for my heart is broken. Perhaps I should have remembered that vengeance is in the hand of the Lord, who wreaks it at His own time and without our help. Do not think unkindly of me, my boy, if we should chance to meet no more, for I love you, and it was but the deeper love that I bore to your mother which made me deal harshly with you.'

'I know it, father, and bear no grudge. But if you think that you owe me anything, pay it by holding back my brother from working wrong to me and Lily Bozard while I am absent.'

'I will do my best, son, though were it not that you and she have grown so dear to each other, the match would have pleased me well. But as I have said, I shall not be long here to watch your welfare in this or any other matter, and when I am gone things must follow their own fate. Do not forget your God or your home wherever you chance to wander, Thomas: keep yourself from brawling, beware of women that are the snare of youth, and set a watch upon your tongue and your temper which is not of the best. Moreover, wherever you may be do not speak ill of the religion of the land, or make a mock of it by your way of life, lest you should learn how cruel men can be when they think that it is pleasing to their gods, as I have learnt already.'

I said that I would bear his counsel in mind, and indeed it saved me from many a sorrow. Then he embraced me and called on the Almighty to take me in His care, and we parted.

I never saw him more, for though he was but middle-aged, within a year of my going my father died suddenly of a distemper of the heart in the nave of Ditchingham church, as he stood there, near the rood screen, musing by my mother's grave one Sunday after mass, and my brother took his lands and place. God rest

him also! He was a true-hearted man, but more wrapped up in his love for my mother than it is well for any man to be who would look at life largely and do right by all. For such love, though natural to women, is apt to turn to something that partakes of selfishness, and to cause him who bears it to think all else of small account. His children were nothing to my father when compared to my mother, and he would have been content to lose them every one if thereby he might have purchased back her life. But after all it was a noble infirmity, for he thought little of himself and had gone through much to win her.

Of my voyage to Cadiz, to which port I had learned that de Garcia's ship was bound, there is little to be told. We met with contrary winds in the Bay of Biscay and were driven into the harbour of Lisbon, where we refitted. But at last we came safely to Cadiz, having been forty days at sea.

CHAPTER VII
ANDRES DE FONSECA

Now I shall dwell but briefly on all the adventures which befell me during the year or so that I remained in Spain, for were I to set out everything at length, this history would have no end, or at least mine would find me before I came to it.

Many travellers have told of the glories of

Seville, to which ancient Moorish city I journeyed with all speed, sailing there up the Guadalquiver, and I have to tell of lands from which no other wanderer has returned to England, and must press on to them. To be short then; foreseeing that it might be necessary for me to stop some time in Seville, and being desirous to escape notice and to be at the smallest expense possible, I bethought me that it would be well if I could find means of continuing my studies of medicine, and to this end I obtained certain introductions from the firm of merchants to whose care I had been recommended, addressed to doctors of medicine in Seville. These letters at my request were made out not in my own name but in that of 'Diego d'Aila,' for I did not wish it to be known that I was an Englishman. Nor, indeed, was this likely, except my speech should betray me, for, as I have said, in appearance I was very Spanish, and the hindrance of the language was one that lessened every day, since having already learned it from my mother, and taking every opportunity to read and speak it, within six months I could talk Castilian except for some slight accent, like a native of the land. Also I have a gift for the acquiring of languages.

When I was come to Seville, and had placed my baggage in an inn, not one of the most frequented, I set out to deliver a letter of recommendation to a famous physician of the town whose name I have long forgotten. This physician had a fine house in the street

of Las Palmas, a great avenue planted with graceful trees, that has other little streets running into it. Down one of these I came from my inn, a quiet narrow place having houses with patios or courtyards on either side of it. As I walked down this street I noticed a man sitting in the shade on a stool in the doorway of his patio. He was small and withered, with keen black eyes and a wonderful air of wisdom, and he watched me as I went by. Now the house of the famous physician whom I sought was so placed that the man sitting at this doorway could command it with his eyes and take note of all who went in and came out. When I had found the house I returned again into the quiet street and walked to and fro there for a while, thinking of what tale I should tell to the physician, and all the time the little man watched me with his keen eyes. At last I had made up my story and went to the house, only to find that the physician was from home. Having inquired when I might find him I left, and once more took to the narrow street, walking slowly till I came to where the little man sat. As I passed him, his broad hat with which he was fanning himself slipped to the ground before my feet. I stooped down, lifted it from the pavement, and restored it to him.

'A thousand thanks, young sir,' he said in a full and gentle voice. 'You are courteous for a foreigner.'

'How do you know me to be a foreigner, senor?' I asked, surprised out of my caution.

'If I had not guessed it before, I should know it now,' he answered, smiling gravely. 'Your Castilian tells its own tale.'

I bowed, and was about to pass on, when he addressed me again.

'What is your hurry, young sir? Step in and take a cup of wine with me; it is good.'

I was about to say him nay, when it came into my mind that I had nothing to do, and that perhaps I might learn something from this gossip.

'The day is hot, senor, and I accept.'

He spoke no more, but rising, led me into a courtyard paved with marble in the centre of which was a basin of water, having vines trained around it. Here were chairs and a little table placed in the shade of the vines. When he had closed the door of the patio and we were seated, he rang a silver bell that stood upon the table, and a girl, young and fair, appeared from the house, dressed in a quaint Spanish dress.

'Bring wine,' said my host.

The wine was brought, white wine of Oporto such as I had never tasted before.

'Your health, senor?' And my host stopped, his glass in his hand, and looked at me inquiringly.

'Diego d'Aila,' I answered.

'Humph,' he said. 'A Spanish name, or perhaps an imitation Spanish name, for I do not know it, and I have a good head for names.'

'That is my name, to take or to leave, senor?'-And I looked at him in turn.

'Andres de Fonseca,' he replied bowing, 'a physician of this city, well known enough, especially among the fair. Well, Senor Diego, I take your name, for names are nothing, and at times it is convenient to change them, which is nobody's business except their owners'. I see that you are a stranger in this city-no need to look surprised, senor, one who is familiar with a town does not gaze and stare and ask the path of passers-by, nor does a native of Seville walk on the sunny side of the street in summer. And now, if you will not think me impertinent, I will ask you what can be the business of so healthy a young man with my rival yonder?' And he nodded towards the house of the famous physician.

'A man's business, like his name, is his own affair, senor,' I answered, setting my host down in my mind as one of those who disgrace our art by plying openly for patients that they may capture their fees. 'Still, I will tell you. I am also a physician, though not yet fully qualified, and I seek a place where I may help some doctor of repute in his daily practice, and thus gain experience and my living with it.'

'Ah is it so? Well, senor, then you will look in vain yonder,' and again he nodded towards the physician's house. 'Such as he will take no apprentice without the fee be large indeed; it is not the custom of

this city.'

'Then I must seek a livelihood elsewhere, or otherwise.'

'I did not say so. Now, senor, let us see what you know of medicine, and what is more important, of human nature, for of the first none of us can ever know much, but he who knows the latter will be a leader of men-or of women-who lead the men.'

And without more ado he put me many questions, each of them so shrewd and going so directly to the heart of the matter in hand, that I marvelled at his sagacity. Some of these questions were medical, dealing chiefly with the ailments of women, others were general and dealt more with their characters. At length he finished.

'You will do, senor,' he said; 'you are a young man of parts and promise, though, as was to be expected from one of your years, you lack experience. There is stuff in you, senor, and you have a heart, which is a good thing, for the blunders of a man with a heart often carry him further than the cunning of the cynic; also you have a will and know how to direct it.'

I bowed, and did my best to hold back my satisfaction at his words from showing in my face.

'Still,' he went on, 'all this would not cause me to submit to you the offer that I am about to make, for many a prettier fellow than yourself is after all unlucky, or a fool at the bottom, or bad tempered and destined to

the dogs, as for aught I know you may be also. But I take my chance of that because you suit me in another way. Perhaps you may scarcely know it yourself, but you have beauty, senor, beauty of a very rare and singular type, which half the ladies of Seville will praise when they come to know you.'

'I am much flattered,' I said, 'but might I ask what all these compliments may mean? To be brief, what is your offer?'

'To be brief then, it is this. I am in need of an assistant who must possess all the qualities that I see in you, but most of all one which I can only guess you to possess-discretion. That assistant would not be ill-paid; this house would be at his disposal, and he would have opportunities of learning the world such as are given to few. What say you?'

'I say this, senor, that I should wish to know more of the business in which I am expected to assist. Your offers sound too liberal, and I fear that I must earn your bounty by the doing of work that honest men might shrink from.'

'A fair argument, but, as it happens, not quite a correct one. Listen: you have been told that yonder physician, to whose house you went but now, and these'-here he repeated four or five names-'are the greatest of their tribe in Seville. It is not so. I am the greatest and the richest, and I do more business than any two of them. Do you know what my earnings have

been this day alone? I will tell you; just over twenty-five gold pesos,[2] more than all the rest of the profession have taken together, I will wager. You want to know how I earn so much; you want to know also, why, if I have earned so much, I am not content to rest from my labours. Good, I will tell you. I earn it by ministering to the vanities of women and sheltering them from the results of their own folly. Has a lady a sore heart, she comes to me for comfort and advice. Has she pimples on her face, she flies to me to cure them. Has she a secret love affair, it is I who hide her indiscretion; I consult the future for her, I help her to atone the past, I doctor her for imaginary ailments, and often enough I cure her of real ones. Half the secrets of Seville are in my hands; did I choose to speak I could set a score of noble houses to broil and bloodshed. But I do not speak, I am paid to keep silent; and when I am not paid, still I keep silent for my credit's sake. Hundreds of women think me their saviour, I know them for my dupes. But mark you, I do not push this game too far. A love philtre-of coloured water-I may give at a price, but not a poisoned rose. These they must seek elsewhere. For the rest, in my way I am honest. I take the world as it comes, that is all, and, as women will be fools, I profit by their folly and have

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[2] About sixty-three pounds sterling.

grown rich upon it.

'Yes, I have grown rich, and yet I cannot stop. I love the money that is power; but more than all, I love the way of life. Talk of romances and adventure! What romance or adventure is half so wonderful as those that come daily to my notice? And I play a part in every one of them, and none the less a leading part because I do not shout and strut upon the boards.'

'If all this is so, why do you seek the help of an unknown lad, a stranger of whom you know nothing?' I asked bluntly.

'Truly, you lack experience,' the old man answered with a laugh. 'Do you then suppose that I should choose one who was NOT a stranger-one who might have ties within this city with which I was unacquainted. And as for knowing nothing of you, young man, do you think that I have followed this strange trade of mine for forty years without learning to judge at sight? Perhaps I know you better than you know yourself. By the way, the fact that you are deeply enamoured of that maid whom you have left in England is a recommendation to me, for whatever follies you may commit, you will scarcely embarrass me and yourself by suffering your affections to be seriously entangled. Ah! have I astonished you?'

'How do you know?' I began-then ceased.

'How do I know? Why, easily enough. Those boots you wear were made in England. I have seen

many such when I travelled there; your accent also though faint is English, and twice you have spoken English words when your Castilian failed you. Then for the maid, is not that a betrothal ring upon your hand? And when I spoke to you of the ladies of this country, my talk did not interest you overmuch as at your age it had done were you heart-whole. Surely also the lady is fair and tall? Ah! I thought so. I have noticed that men and women love their opposite in colour, no invariable rule indeed, but good for a guess.'

'You are very clever, senor.'

'No, not clever, but trained, as you will be when you have been a year in my hands, though perchance you do not intend to stop so long in Seville. Perhaps you came here with an object, and wish to pass the time profitably till it is fulfilled. A good guess again, I think. Well, so be it, I will risk that; object and attainment are often far apart. Do you take my offer?'

'I incline to do so.'

'Then you will take it. Now I have something more to say before we come to terms. I do not want you to play the part of an apothecary's drudge. You will figure before the world as my nephew, come from abroad to learn my trade. You will help me in it indeed, but that is not all your duty. Your part will be to mix in the life of Seville, and to watch those whom I bid you watch, to drop a word here and a hint there, and in a hundred ways that I shall show you to draw grist to my

mill-and to your own. You must be brilliant and witty, or sad and learned, as I wish; you must make the most of your person and your talents, for these go far with my customers. To the hidalgo you must talk of arms, to the lady, of love; but you must never commit yourself beyond redemption. And above all, young man'-and here his manner changed and his face grew stern and almost fierce-'you must never violate my confidence or the confidence of my clients. On this point I will be quite open within you, and I pray you for your own sake to believe what I say, however much you may mistrust the rest. If you break faith with me, YOU DIE. You die, not by my hand, but you die. That is my price; take it or leave it. Should you leave it and go hence to tell what you have heard this day, even then misfortune may overtake you suddenly. Do you understand?'

'I understand. For my own sake I will respect your confidence.'

'Young sir, I like you better than ever. Had you said that you would respect it because it was a confidence, I should have mistrusted you, for doubtless you feel that secrets communicated so readily have no claim to be held sacred. Nor have they, but when their violation involves the sad and accidental end of the violator, it is another matter. Well now, do you accept?'

'I accept.'

'Good. Your baggage I suppose is at the inn. I will send porters to discharge your score and bring it

here. No need for you to go, nephew, let us stop and drink another glass of wine; the sooner we grow intimate the better, nephew.'

It was thus that first I became acquainted with Senor Andres de Fonseca, my benefactor, the strangest man whom I have ever known. Doubtless any person reading this history would think that I, the narrator, was sowing a plentiful crop of troubles for myself in having to deal with him, setting him down as a rogue of the deepest, such as sometimes, for their own wicked purposes, decoy young men to crime and ruin. But it was not so, and this is the strangest part of the strange story. All that Andres de Fonseca told me was true to the very letter.

He was a gentleman of great talent who had been rendered a little mad by misfortunes in his early life. As a physician I have never met his master, if indeed he has one in these times, and as a man versed in the world and more especially in the world of women, I have known none to compare with him. He had travelled far, and seen much, and he forgot nothing. In part he was a quack, but his quackery always had a meaning in it. He fleeced the foolish, indeed, and even juggled with astronomy, making money out of their superstition; but on the other hand he did many a kind act without reward. He would make a rich lady pay ten gold pesos for the dyeing of her hair, but often he would nurse some poor girl through her trouble and ask no charge; yes, and find her honest employment after it. He who knew all the secrets of Seville never made money out of them by threat of exposure, as he said because it would not pay to do so, but really because though he affected to be a selfish knave, at bottom his heart was honest.

For my own part I found life with him both easy and happy, so far as mine could be quite happy. Soon I learned my role and played it well. It was given out that I was the nephew of the rich old physician Fonseca, whom he was training to take his place; and this, together with my own appearance and manners, ensured me a welcome in the best houses of Seville. Here I took that share of our business which my master could not take, for now he never mixed among the

fashion of the city. Money I was supplied with in abundance so that I could ruffle it with the best, but soon it became known that I looked to business as well as to pleasure. Often and often during some gay ball or carnival, a lady would glide up to me and ask beneath her breath if Don Andres de Fonseca would consent to see her privately on a matter of some importance, and I would fix an hour then and there. Had it not been for me such patients would have been lost to us, since, for the most part, their timidity had kept them away.

In the same fashion when the festival was ended and I prepared to wend homewards, now and again a gallant would slip his arm in mine and ask my master's help in some affair of love or honour, or even of the purse. Then I would lead him straight to the old Moorish house where Don Andres sat writing in his velvet robe like some spider in his web, for the most of our business was done at night; and straight-way the matter would be attended to, to my master's profit and the satisfaction of all. By degrees it became known that though I was so young yet I had discretion, and that nothing which went in at my ears came out of my lips; that I neither brawled nor drank nor gambled to any length, and that though I was friendly with many fair ladies, there were none who were entitled to know my secrets. Also it became known that I had some skill in my art of healing, and it was said among the ladies of Seville that there lived no man in that city so deft at

clearing the skin of blemishes or changing the colour of the hair as old Fonseca's nephew, and as any one may know this reputation alone was worth a fortune. Thus it came about that I was more and more consulted on my own account. In short, things went so well with us that in the first six months of my service I added by one third to the receipts of my master's practice, large as they had been before, besides lightening his labours not a little.

It was a strange life, and of the things that I saw and learned, could they be written, I might make a tale indeed, but they have no part in this history. For it was as though the smiles and silence with which men and women hide their thoughts were done away, and their hearts spoke to us in the accents of truth. Now some fair young maid or wife would come to us with confessions of wickedness that would be thought impossible, did not her story prove itself; the secret murder perchance of a spouse, or a lover, or a rival; now some aged dame who would win a husband in his teens, now some wealthy low-born man or woman, who desired to buy an alliance with one lacking money, but of noble blood. Such I did not care to help indeed, but to the love-sick or the love-deluded I listened with a ready ear, for I had a fellow-feeling with them. Indeed so deep and earnest was my sympathy that more than once I found the unhappy fair ready to transfer their affections to my unworthy self, and in fact once things

came about so that, had I willed it, I could have married one of the loveliest and wealthiest noble ladies of Seville.

But I would none of it, who thought of my English Lily by day and night.

CHAPTER VIII
THE SECOND MEETING

It may be thought that while I was employed thus I had forgotten the object of my coming to Spain, namely to avenge my mother's murder on the person of Juan de Garcia. But this was not so. So soon as I was settled in the house of Andres de Fonseca I set myself to make inquiries as to de Garcia's whereabouts with all possible diligence, but without result.

Indeed, when I came to consider the matter coolly it seemed that I had but a slender chance of finding him in this city. He had, indeed, given it out in Yarmouth that he was bound for Seville, but no ship bearing the same name as his had put in at Cadiz or sailed up the Guadalquivir, nor was it likely, having committed murder in England, that he would speak the truth as to his destination. Still I searched on. The house where my mother and grandmother had lived was burned down, and as their mode of life had been retired, after more than twenty years of change few even remembered their existence. Indeed I only discovered one, an old woman

whom I found living in extreme poverty, and who once had been my grandmother's servant and knew my mother well, although she was not in the house at the time of her flight to England. From this woman I gathered some information, though, needless to say, I did not tell her that I was the grandson of her old mistress.

It seemed that after my mother fled to England with my father, de Garcia persecuted my grandmother and his aunt with lawsuits and by other means, till at last she was reduced to beggary, in which condition the villain left her to die. So poor was she indeed, that she was buried in a public grave. After that the old woman, my informant, said she had heard that de Garcia had committed some crime and been forced to flee the country. What the crime was she could not remember, but it had happened about fifteen years ago.

All this I learned when I had been about three months in Seville, and though it was of interest it did not advance me in my search.

Some four or five nights afterwards, as I entered my employer's house I met a young woman coming out of the doorway of the patio; she was thickly veiled and my notice was drawn to her by her tall and beautiful figure and because she was weeping so violently that her body shook with her sobs. I was already well accustomed to such sights, for many of those who sought my master's counsel had good cause to weep,

and I passed her without remark. But when I was come into the room where he received his patients, I mentioned that I had met such a person and asked if it was any one whom I knew.

'Ah! nephew,' said Fonseca, who always called me thus by now, and indeed began to treat me with as much affection as though I were really of his blood, 'a sad case, but you do not know her and she is no paying patient. A poor girl of noble birth who had entered religion and taken her vows, when a gallant appears, meets her secretly in the convent garden, promises to marry her if she will fly with him, indeed does go through some mummery of marriage with her-so she says-and the rest of it. Now he has deserted her and she is in trouble, and what is more, should the priests catch her, likely to learn what it feels like to die by inches in a convent wall. She came to me for counsel and brought some silver ornaments as the fee. Here they are.'

'You took them!'

'Yes, I took them-I always take a fee, but I gave her back their weight in gold. What is more, I told her where she might hide from the priests till the hunt is done with. What I did not like to tell her is that her lover is the greatest villain who ever trod the streets of Seville. What was the good? She will see little more of him. Hist! here comes the duchess-an astrological case this. Where are the horoscope and the wand, yes, and

the crystal ball? There, shade the lamps, give me the book, and vanish.'

I obeyed, and presently met the great lady, a stout woman attended by a duenna, gliding fearfully through the darkened archways to learn the answer of the stars and pay many good pesos for it, and the sight of her made me laugh so much that I forgot quickly about the other lady and her woes.

And now I must tell how I met my cousin and my enemy de Garcia for the second time. Two days after my meeting with the veiled lady it chanced that I was wandering towards midnight through a lonely part of the old city little frequented by passers-by. It was scarcely safe to be thus alone in such a place and hour, but the business with which I had been charged by my master was one that must be carried out unattended. Also I had no enemies whom I knew of, and was armed with the very sword that I had taken from de Garcia in the lane at Ditchingham, the sword that had slain my mother, and which I bore in the hope that it might serve to avenge her. In the use of this weapon I had grown expert enough by now, for every morning I took lessons in the art of fence.

My business being done I was walking slowly homeward, and as I went I fell to thinking of the strangeness of my present life and of how far it differed from my boyhood in the valley of the Waveney, and of many other things. And then I thought of Lily and

wondered how her days passed, and if my brother Geoffrey persecuted her to marry him, and whether or no she would resist his importunities and her father's. And so as I walked musing I came to a water-gate that opened on to the Guadalquivir, and leaning upon the coping of a low wall I rested there idly to consider the beauty of the night. In truth it was a lovely night, for across all these years I remember it. Let those who have seen it say if they know any prospect more beautiful than the sight of the August moon shining on the broad waters of the Guadalquivir and the clustering habitations of the ancient city.

Now as I leaned upon the wall and looked, I saw a man pass up the steps beside me and go on into the shadow of the street. I took no note of him till presently I heard a murmur of distant voices, and turning my head I discovered that the man was in conversation with a woman whom he had met at the head of the path that ran down to the water-gate. Doubtless it was a lovers' meeting, and since such sights are of interest to all, and more especially to the young, I watched the pair. Soon I learned that there was little of tenderness in this tryst, at least on the part of the gallant, who drew continually backwards toward me as though he would seek the boat by which doubtless he had come, and I marvelled at this, for the moonlight shone upon the woman's face, and even at that distance I could see that it was very fair. The man's face I could not see

however, since his back was towards me for the most part, moreover he wore a large sombrero that shaded it. Now they came nearer to me, the man always drawing backward and the woman always following, till at length they were within earshot. The woman was pleading with the man.

'Surely you will not desert me,' she said, 'after marrying me and all that you have sworn; you will not have the heart to desert me. I abandoned everything for you. I am in great danger. I-' and here her voice fell so that I could not catch her words.

Then he spoke. 'Fairest, now as always I adore you. But we must part awhile. You owe me much, Isabella. I have rescued you from the grave, I have taught you what it is to live and love. Doubtless with your advantages and charms, your great charms, you will profit by the lesson. Money I cannot give you, for I have none to spare, but I have endowed you with experience that is more valuable by far. This is our farewell for awhile and I am brokenhearted. Yet

'"Neath fairer skies Shine other eyes,"

and I-' and again he spoke so low that I could not catch his words.

As he talked on, all my body began to tremble. The scene was moving indeed, but it was not that which stirred me so deeply, it was the man's voice and bearing that reminded me-no, it could scarcely be!

'Oh! you will not be so cruel,' said the lady, 'to

leave me, your wife, thus alone and in such sore trouble and danger. Take me with you, Juan, I beseech you!' and she caught him by the arm and clung to him.

He shook her from him somewhat roughly, and as he did so his wide hat fell to the ground so that the moonlight shone upon his face. By Heaven! it was he-Juan de Garcia and no other! I could not be mistaken. There was the deeply carved, cruel face, the high forehead with the scar on it, the thin sneering mouth, the peaked beard and curling hair. Chance had given him into my hand, and I would kill him or he should kill me.

I took three paces and stood before him, drawing my sword as I came.

'What, my dove, have you a bully at hand?' he said stepping back astonished. 'Your business, senor? Are you here to champion beauty in distress?'

'I am here, Juan de Garcia, to avenge a murdered woman. Do you remember a certain river bank away in England, where you chanced to meet a lady you had known, and to leave her dead? Or if you have forgotten, perhaps at least you will remember this, which I carry that it may kill you,' and I flashed the sword that had been his before his eyes.

'Mother of God! It is the English boy who-' and he stopped.

'It is Thomas Wingfield who beat and bound you, and who now purposes to finish what he began yonder

as he has sworn. Draw, or, Juan de Garcia, I will stab you where you stand.'

De Garcia heard this speech, that to-day seems to me to smack of the theatre, though it was spoken in grimmest earnest, and his face grew like the face of a trapped wolf. Yet I saw that he had no mind to fight, not because of cowardice, for to do him justice he was no coward, but because of superstition. He feared to fight with me since, as I learned afterwards, he believed that he would meet his end at my hand, and it was for this reason chiefly that he strove to kill me when first we met.

'The duello has its laws, senor,' he said courteously. 'It is not usual to fight thus unseconded and in the presence of a woman. If you believe that you have any grievance against me-though I know not of what you rave, or the name by which you call me-I will meet you where and when you will.' And all the while he looked over his shoulder seeking some way of escape.

'You will meet me now,' I answered. 'Draw or I strike!'

Then he drew, and we fell to it desperately enough, till the sparks flew, indeed, and the rattle of steel upon steel rang down the quiet street. At first he had somewhat the better of me, for my hate made me wild in my play, but soon I settled to the work and grew cooler. I meant to kill him-more, I knew that I should

kill him if none came between us. He was still a better swordsman than I, who, till I fought with him in the lane at Ditchingham, had never even seen one of these Spanish rapiers, but I had the youth and the right on my side, as also I had an eye like a hawk's and a wrist of steel.

Slowly I pressed him back, and ever my play grew closer and better and his became wilder. Now I had touched him twice, once in the face, and I held him with his back against the wall of the way that led down to the water-gate, and it had come to this, that he scarcely strove to thrust at me at all, but stood on his defence waiting till I should tire. Then, when victory was in my hand disaster overtook me, for the woman, who had been watching bewildered, saw that her faithless lover was in danger of death and straightway seized me from behind, at the same time sending up shriek after shriek for help. I shook her from me quickly enough, but not before de Garcia, seeing his advantage, had dealt me a coward's thrust that took me in the right shoulder and half crippled me, so that in my turn I must stand on my defence if I would keep my life in me. Meanwhile the shrieks had been heard, and of a sudden the watch came running round the corner whistling for help. De Garcia saw them, and disengaging suddenly, turned and ran for the water-gate, the lady also vanishing, whither I do not know.

Now the watch was on me, and their leader came at me to seize me, holding a lantern in his hand. I struck it with the handle of the sword, so that it fell upon the roadway, where it blazed up like a bonfire. Then I turned also and fled, for I did not wish to be dragged before the magistrates of the city as a brawler, and in my desire to escape I forgot that de Garcia was escaping also. Away I went and three of the watch after me, but they were stout and scant of breath, and by the time that I had run three furlongs I distanced them. I halted to get my breath and remembered that I had lost de Garcia and did not know when I should find him again. At first I was minded to return and seek him, but reflection told me that by now it would be useless, also that the end of it might be that I should fall into the hands of the watch, who would know me by my wound, which began to pain me. So I went homeward cursing my fortune, and the woman who had clasped me from behind just as I was about to send the death-thrust home, and also my lack of skill which had delayed that thrust so long. Twice I might have made it and twice I had waited, being overcautious and over-anxious to be sure, and now I had lost my chance, and might bide many a day before it came again.

How should I find him in this great city? Doubtless, though I had not thought of it, de Garcia passed under some feigned name as he had done at Yarmouth. It was bitter indeed to have been so near to

vengeance and to have missed it.

By now I was at home and bethought me that I should do well to go to Fonseca, my master, and ask his help. Hitherto I had said nothing of this matter to him, for I have always loved to keep my own counsel, and as yet I had not spoken of my past even to him. Going to the room where he was accustomed to receive patients, I found he had retired to rest, leaving orders that I was not to awake him this night as he was weary. So I bound up my hurt after a fashion and sought my bed also, very ill-satisfied with my fortune.

On the morrow I went to my master's chamber where he still lay abed, having been seized by a sudden weakness that was the beginning of the illness which ended in his death. As I mixed a draught for him he noticed that my shoulder was hurt and asked me what had happened. This gave me my opportunity, which I was not slow to take.

'Have you patience to listen to a story?' I said, 'for I would seek your help.'

'Ah!' he answered, 'it is the old case, the physician cannot heal himself. Speak on, nephew.'

Then I sat down by the bed and told him all, keeping nothing back. I told him the history of my mother and my father's courtship, of my own childhood, of the murder of my mother by de Garcia, and of the oath that I had sworn to be avenged upon him. Lastly I told him of what had happened upon the

previous night and how my enemy had evaded me. All the while that I was speaking Fonseca, wrapped in a rich Moorish robe, sat up in the bed holding his knees beneath his chin, and watching my face with his keen eyes. But he spoke no word and made no sign till I had finished the tale.

'You are strangely foolish, nephew,' he said at length. 'For the most part youth fails through rashness, but you err by over-caution. By over-caution in your fence you lost your chance last night, and so by over-caution in hiding this tale from me you have lost a far greater opportunity. What, have you not seen me give counsel in many such matters, and have you ever known me to betray the confidence even of the veriest stranger? Why then did you fear for yours?'

'I do not know,' I answered, 'but I thought that first I would search for myself.'

'Pride goeth before a fall, nephew. Now listen: had I known this history a month ago, by now de Garcia had perished miserably, and not by your hand, but by that of the law. I have been acquainted with the man from his childhood, and know enough to hang him twice over did I choose to speak. More, I knew your mother, boy, and now I see that it was the likeness in your face to hers that haunted me, for from the first it was familiar. It was I also who bribed the keepers of the Holy Office to let your father loose, though, as it chanced, I never saw him, and arranged his flight. Since

then, I have had de Garcia through my hands some four or five times, now under this name and now under that. Once even he came to me as a client, but the villainy that he would have worked was too black for me to touch. This man is the wickedest whom I have known in Seville, and that is saying much, also he is the cleverest and the most revengeful. He lives by vice for vice, and there are many deaths upon his hands. But he has never prospered in his evil-doing, and to-day he is but an adventurer without a name, who lives by blackmail, and by ruining women that he may rob them at his leisure. Give me those books from the strong box yonder, and I will tell you of this de Garcia.'

I did as he bade me, bringing the heavy parchment volumes, each bound in vellum and written in cipher.

'These are my records,' he said, 'though none can read them except myself. Now for the index. Ah! here it is. Give me volume three, and open it at page two hundred and one.'

I obeyed, laying the book on the bed before him, and he began to read the crabbed marks as easily as though they were good black-letter.

'De Garcia-Juan. Height, appearance, family, false names, and so on. This is it-history. Now listen.'

Then came some two pages of closely written matter, expressed in secret signs that Fonseca translated as he read. It was brief enough, but such a record as it