

Masterworks of Adventure:

Pirates

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Emilio Salgari, Jeffrey Farnol
Robert E. Howard**



Masterworks of Adventure: Pirates

Treasure Island

Robert Louis Stevenson

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The Black Corsair

Emilio Salgari

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The Sea-Hawk

Rafael Sabatini

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The Sea-Hawk

Rafael Sabatini

Note

LORD HENRY GOADE, WHO had, as we shall see, some personal acquaintance with Sir Oliver Tressilian, tells us quite bluntly that he was ill-favoured. But then his lordship is addicted to harsh judgments and his perceptions are not always normal. He says, for instance, of Anne of Cleves, that she was the “ugliest woman that ever I saw.” As far as we can glean from his own voluminous writings it would seem to be extremely doubtful whether he ever saw Anne of Cleves at all, and we suspect him here of being no more than a slavish echo of the common voice, which attributed Cromwell’s downfall to the ugliness of this bride he procured for his Bluebeard master. To the common voice from the brush of Holbein, which permits us to form our own opinions and shows us a lady who is certainly very far from deserving his lordship’s harsh stricture. Similarly, I like to believe that Lord Henry was wrong in his pronouncement upon Sir Oliver, and I am encouraged in this belief by the pen-portrait which he himself appends to it. “He was,” he says, “a tall, powerful fellow of a good shape, if we except that his arms were too long and that his feet and hands were of an uncomely bigness. In face he was swarthy, with black hair and a black forked beard; his nose was big and very high in the bridge, and his eyes sunk deep under beetling eyebrows were very pale-coloured and very cruel and sinister. He had—and this I have ever remarked to be the sign of great virility in a man—a big, deep, rough voice, better suited to, and no doubt oftener employed in, quarterdeck oaths and foulnesses than the worship of his Maker.”

Thus my Lord Henry Goade, and you observe how he permits his lingering disapproval of the man to intrude upon his description of him. The truth is that—as there is ample testimony in his prolific writings—his lordship was something of a misanthropist. It was, in fact, his misanthropy which drove him, as it has driven many another, to

authorship. He takes up the pen, not so much that he may carry out his professed object of writing a chronicle of his own time, but to the end that he may vent the bitterness engendered in him by his fall from favour. As a consequence he has little that is good to say of anyone, and rarely mentions one of his contemporaries but to tap the sources of a picturesque invective. After all, it is possible to make excuses for him. He was at once a man of thought and a man of action—a combination as rare as it is usually deplorable. The man of action in him might have gone far had he not been ruined at the outset by the man of thought. A magnificent seaman, he might have become Lord High Admiral of England but for a certain proneness to intrigue. Fortunately for him — since otherwise he could hardly have kept his head where nature had placed it — he came betimes under a cloud of suspicion. His career suffered a check; but it was necessary to afford him some compensation since, after all, the suspicions could not be substantiated.

Consequently he was removed from his command and appointed by the Queen's Grace her Lieutenant of Cornwall, a position in which it was judged that he could do little mischief. There, soured by this blighting of his ambitions, and living a life of comparative seclusion, he turned, as so many other men similarly placed have turned, to seek consolation in his pen. He wrote his singularly crabbed, narrow and superficial *History of Lord Henry Goade: his own Times*—which is a miracle of injuvenations, distortions, misrepresentations, and eccentric spelling. In the eighteen enormous folio volumes, which he filled with his minute and gothic characters, he gives his own version of the story of what he terms his downfall, and, having, notwithstanding his prolixity, exhausted this subject in the first five of the eighteen tomes, he proceeds to deal with so much of the history of his own day as came immediately under his notice in his Cornish retirement.

For the purposes of English history his chronicles are entirely negligible, which is the reason why they have been

allowed to remain unpublished and in oblivion. But to the student who attempts to follow the history of that extraordinary man, Sir Oliver Tressilian, they are entirely invaluable. And, since I have made this history my present task, it is fitting that I should here at the outset acknowledge my extreme indebtedness to those chronicles. Without them, indeed, it were impossible to reconstruct the life of that Cornish gentleman who became a renegade and a Barbary Corsair and might have become Basha of Algiers—or Argire, as his lordship terms it—but for certain matters which are to be set forth.

Lord Henry wrote with knowledge and authority, and the tale he has to tell is very complete and full of precious detail. He was, himself, an eyewitness of much that happened; he pursued a personal acquaintance with many of those who were connected with Sir Oliver's affairs that he might amplify his chronicles, and he considered no scrap of gossip that was to be gleaned along the countryside too trivial to be recorded. I suspect him also of having received no little assistance from Jasper Leigh in the matter of those events that happened out of England, which seem to me to constitute by far the most interesting portion of his narrative.

R. S.

Part I
Sir Oliver Tressilian

Chapter 1

The Huckster

SIR OLIVER TRESSILIAN SAT at his ease in the lofty dining-room of the handsome house of Penarrow, which he owed to the enterprise of his father of lamented and lamentable memory and to the skill and invention of an Italian engineer named Bagnolo who had come to England half a century ago as one of the assistants of the famous Torrigiani.

This house of such a startlingly singular and Italianate grace for so remote a corner of Cornwall deserves, together with the story of its construction, a word in passing.

The Italian Bagnolo who combined with his salient artistic talents a quarrelsome, volcanic humour had the mischance to kill a man in a brawl in a Southwark tavern. As a result he fled the town, nor paused in his headlong flight from the consequences of that murderous deed until he had all but reached the very ends of England. Under what circumstances he became acquainted with Tressilian the elder I do not know. But certain it is that the meeting was a very timely one for both of them. To the fugitive, Ralph Tressilian—who appears to have been inveterately partial to the company of rascals of all denominations—afforded shelter; and Bagnolo repaid the service by offering to rebuild the decaying half-timbered house of Penarrow. Having taken the task in hand he went about it with all the enthusiasm of your true artist, and achieved for his protector a residence that was a marvel of grace in that crude age and outlandish district. There arose under the supervision of the gifted engineer, worthy associate of Messer Torrigiani, a noble two-storied mansion of mellow red brick, flooded with light and sunshine by the enormously tall mullioned windows that rose almost from base to summit of each pilastered façade. The main doorway was set in a projecting wing and was overhung by a massive balcony, the whole surmounted by a pillared pediment of extraordinary

grace, now partly clad in a green mantle of creepers. Above the burnt red tiles of the roof soared massive twisted chimneys in lofty majesty.

But the glory of Penarrow—that is, of the new Penarrow begotten of the fertile brain of Bagnolo—was the garden fashioned out of the tangled wilderness about the old house that had crowned the heights above Penarrow point. To the labours of Bagnolo, Time and Nature had added their own. Bagnolo had cut those handsome esplanades, had built those noble balustrades bordering the three terraces with their fine connecting flights of steps; himself he had planned the fountain, and with his own hands had carved the granite faun presiding over it and the dozen other statues of nymphs and sylvan gods in a marble that gleamed in white brilliance amid the dusky green. But Time and Nature had smoothed the lawns to a velvet surface, had thickened the handsome boxwood hedges, and thrust up those black spear-like poplars that completed the very Italianate appearance of that Cornish demesne.

Sir Oliver took his ease in his dining-room considering all this as it was displayed before him in the mellowing September sunshine, and found it all very good to see, and life very good to live. Now no man has ever been known so to find life without some immediate cause, other than that of his environment, for his optimism. Sir Oliver had several causes. The first of these—although it was one which he may have been far from suspecting—was his equipment of youth, wealth, and good digestion; the second was that he had achieved honour and renown both upon the Spanish Main and in the late harrying of the Invincible Armada—or, more aptly perhaps might it be said, in the harrying of the late Invincible Armada—and that he had received in that the twenty-fifth year of his life the honour of knighthood from the Virgin Queen; the third and last contributor to his pleasant mood—and I have reserved it for the end as I account this to be the proper place for the most important factor—was Dan Cupid who for once seemed compounded

entirely of benignity and who had so contrived matters that Sir Oliver's wooing of Mistress Rosamund Godolphin ran an entirely smooth and happy course.

So, then, Sir Oliver sat at his ease in his tall, carved chair, his doublet untrussed, his long legs stretched before him, a pensive smile about the firm lips that as yet were darkened by no more than a small black line of mustachios. (Lord Henry's portrait of him was drawn at a much later period.) It was noon, and our gentleman had just dined, as the platters, the broken meats and the half-empty flagon on the board beside him testified. He pulled thoughtfully at a long pipe—for he had acquired this newly imported habit of tobacco-drinking—and dreamed of his mistress, and was properly and gallantly grateful that fortune had used him so handsomely as to enable him to toss a title and some measure of renown into his Rosamund's lap.

By nature Sir Oliver was a shrewd fellow (“cunning as twenty devils,” is my Lord Henry's phrase) and he was also a man of some not inconsiderable learning. Yet neither his natural wit nor his acquired endowments appear to have taught him that of all the gods that rule the destinies of mankind there is none more ironic and malicious than that same Dan Cupid in whose honour, as it were, he was now burning the incense of that pipe of his. The ancients knew that innocent-seeming boy for a cruel, impish knave, and they mistrusted him. Sir Oliver either did not know or did not heed that sound piece of ancient wisdom. It was to be borne in upon him by grim experience, and even as his light pensive eyes smiled upon the sunshine that flooded the terrace beyond the long mullioned window, a shadow fell athwart it which he little dreamed to be symbolic of the shadow that was even falling across the sunshine of his life.

After that shadow came the substance—tall and gay of raiment under a broad black Spanish hat decked with blood-red plumes. Swinging a long beribboned cane the figure passed the windows, stalking deliberately as Fate.

The smile perished on Sir Oliver's lips. His swarthy face grew thoughtful, his black brows contracted until no more than a single deep furrow stood between them. Then slowly the smile came forth again, but no longer that erstwhile gentle pensive smile. It was transformed into a smile of resolve and determination, a smile that tightened his lips even as his brows relaxed, and invested his brooding eyes with a gleam that was mocking, crafty and almost wicked.

Came Nicholas his servant to announce Master Peter Godolphin, and close upon the lackey's heels came Master Godolphin himself, leaning upon his beribboned cane and carrying his broad Spanish hat. He was a tall, slender gentleman, with a shaven, handsome countenance, stamped with an air of haughtiness; like Sir Oliver, he had a high-bridged, intrepid nose, and in age he was the younger by some two or three years. He wore his auburn hair rather longer than was the mode just then, but in his apparel there was no more foppishness than is tolerable in a gentleman of his years.

Sir Oliver rose and bowed from his great height in welcome. But a wave of tobacco-smoke took his graceful visitor in the throat and set him coughing and grimacing.

"I see," he choked, "that ye have acquired that filthy habit."

"I have known filthier," said Sir Oliver composedly.

"I nothing doubt it," rejoined Master Godolphin, thus early giving indications of his humour and the object of his visit.

Sir Oliver checked an answer that must have helped his visitor to his ends, which was no part of the knight's intent.

"Therefore," said he ironically, "I hope you will be patient with my shortcomings. Nick, a chair for Master Godolphin and another cup. I bid you welcome to Penarrow."

A sneer flickered over the younger man's white face. "You pay me a compliment, sir, which I fear me 'tis not mine to return to you."

"Time enough for that when I come to seek it," said Sir Oliver, with easy, if assumed, good humour.

"When you come to seek it?"

“The hospitality of your house,” Sir Oliver explained.

“It is on that very matter I am come to talk with you.”

“Will you sit?” Sir Oliver invited him, and spread a hand towards the chair which Nicholas had set. In the same gesture he waved the servant away.

Master Godolphin ignored the invitation. “You were,” he said, “at Godolphin Court but yesterday, I hear.” He paused, and as Sir Oliver offered no denial, he added stiffly: “I am come, sir, to inform you that the honour of your visits is one we shall be happy to forgo.”

In the effort he made to preserve his self-control before so direct an affront Sir Oliver paled a little under his tan.

“You will understand, Peter,” he replied slowly, “that you have said too much unless you add something more.” He paused, considering his visitor a moment. “I do not know whether Rosamund has told you that yesterday she did me the honour to consent to become my wife...”

“She is a child that does not know her mind,” broke in the other.

“Do you know of any good reason why she should come to change it?” asked Sir Oliver, with a slight air of challenge.

Master Godolphin sat down, crossed his legs and placed his hat on his knee.

“I know a dozen,” he answered. “But I need not urge them. Sufficient should it be to remind you that Rosamund is but seventeen and that she is under my guardianship and that of Sir John Killigrew. Neither Sir John nor I can sanction this betrothal.”

“Good lack!” broke out Sir Oliver. “Who asks your sanction or Sir John’s? By God’s grace your sister will grow to be a woman soon and mistress of herself. I am in no desperate haste to get me wed, and by nature—as you may be observing—I am a wondrous patient man. I’ll even wait,” And he pulled at his pipe.

“Waiting cannot avail you in this, Sir Oliver. ’Tis best you should understand. We are resolved, Sir John and I.”

“Are you so? God’s light. Send Sir John to me to tell me of his resolves and I’ll tell him something of mine. Tell him from me, Master Godolphin, that if he will trouble to come as far as Penarrow I’ll do by him what the hangman should have done long since. I’ll crop his pimpish ears for him, by this hand!”

“Meanwhile,” said Master Godolphin whettingly, “will you not essay your rover’s prowess upon me?”

“You?” quoth Sir Oliver, and looked him over with good-humoured contempt. “I’m no butcher of fledgelings, my lad. Besides, you are your sister’s brother, and ’tis no aim of mine to increase the obstacles already in my path.” Then his tone changed. He leaned across the table. “Come, now, Peter. What is at the root of all this matter? Can we not compose such differences as you conceive exist? Out with them. ’Tis no matter for Sir John. He’s a curmudgeon who signifies not a finger’s snap. But you, ’tis different. You are her brother. Out with your complaints, then. Let us be frank and friendly.”

“Friendly?” The other sneered again. “Our fathers set us an example in that.”

“Does it matter what our fathers did? More shame to them if, being neighbours, they could not be friends. Shall we follow so deplorable an example?”

“You’ll not impute that the fault lay with my father,” cried the other, with a show of ready anger.

“I impute nothing, lad. I cry shame upon them both.”

“Swounds!” swore Master Peter. “Do you malign the dead?”

“If I do, I malign them both. But I do not. I no more than condemn a fault that both must acknowledge could they return to life.”

“Then, Sir, confine your condemnings to your own father with whom no man of honour could have lived at peace...”

“Softly, softly, good Sir...”

“There’s no call to go softly. Ralph Tressilian was a dishonour, a scandal to the countryside. Not a hamlet between here and Truro, or between here and Helston, but

swarms with big Tressilian noses like your own, in memory of your debauched parent.”

Sir Oliver’s eyes grew narrower: he smiled. “I wonder how you came by your own nose?” he wondered.

Master Godolphin got to his feet in a passion, and his chair crashed over behind him. “Sir,” he blazed, “you insult my mother’s memory!”

Sir Oliver laughed. “I make a little free with it, perhaps, in return for your pleasantries on the score of my father.”

Master Godolphin pondered him in speechless anger, then swayed by his passion he leaned across the board, raised his long cane and struck Sir Oliver sharply on the shoulder.

That done, he strode off magnificently towards the door. Half-way thither he paused.

“I shall expect your friends and the length of your sword,” said he.

Sir Oliver laughed again. “I don’t think I shall trouble to send them,” said he.

Master Godolphin wheeled, fully to face him again. “How? You will take a blow?”

Sir Oliver shrugged. “None saw it given,” said he.

“But I shall publish it abroad that I have caned you.”

“You’ll publish yourself a liar if you do; for none will believe you.” Then he changed his tone yet again. “Come, Peter, we are behaving unworthily. As for the blow, I confess that I deserved it. A man’s mother is more sacred than his father. So we may cry quits on that score. Can we not cry quits on all else? What can it profit us to perpetuate a foolish quarrel that sprang up between our fathers?”

“There is more than that between us,” answered Master Godolphin. “I’ll not have my sister wed a pirate.”

“A pirate? God’s light! I am glad there’s none to hear you for since her grace has knighted me for my doings upon the seas, your words go very near to treason. Surely, lad, what the Queen approves, Master Peter Godolphin may approve and even your mentor Sir John Killigrew. You’ve been listening to him. ’Twas he sent you hither.”

“I am no man’s lackey,” answered the other hotly, resenting the imputation—and resenting it the more because of the truth in it.

“To call me a pirate is to say a foolish thing. Hawkins with whom I sailed has also received the accolade, and who dubs us pirates insults the Queen herself. Apart from that, which, as you see, is a very empty charge, what else have you against me? I am, I hope, as good as any other here in Cornwall; Rosamund honours me with her affection and I am rich and shall be richer still ere the wedding bells are heard.”

“Rich with the fruit of thieving upon the seas, rich with the treasures of scuttled ships and the price of slaves captured in Africa and sold to the plantations, rich as the vampire is glutted—with the blood of dead men.”

“Does Sir John say that?” asked Sir Oliver, in a soft deadly voice.

“I say it.”

“I heard you; but I am asking where you learnt that pretty lesson. Is Sir John your preceptor? He is, he is. No need to tell me. I’ll deal with him. Meanwhile let me disclose to you the pure and disinterested source of Sir John’s rancour. You shall see what an upright and honest gentleman is Sir John, who was your father’s friend and has been your guardian.”

“I’ll not listen to what you say of him.”

“Nay, but you shall, in return for having made me listen to what he says of me. Sir John desires to obtain a licence to build at the mouth of the Fal. He hopes to see a town spring up above the haven there under the shadow of his own Manor of Arwenack. He represents himself as nobly disinterested and all concerned for the prosperity of the country, and he neglects to mention that the land is his own and that it is his own prosperity and that of his family which he is concerned to foster. We met in London by a fortunate chance whilst Sir John was about this business at the Court. Now it happens that I, too, have interests in Truro and Penryn; but, unlike Sir John, I am honest in the matter, and proclaim it. If any growth should take place about Smithick it

follows from its more advantageous situation that Truro and Penryn must suffer, and that suits me as little as the other matter would suit Sir John. I told him so, for I can be blunt, and I told the Queen in the form of a counter-petition to Sir John's." He shrugged. "The moment was propitious to me. I was one of the seamen who had helped to conquer the unconquerable Armada of King Philip. I was therefore not to be denied, and Sir John was sent home as emptyhanded as he went to Court. D'ye marvel that he hates me? Knowing him for what he is, d'ye marvel that he dubs me pirate and worse? 'Tis natural enough so to misrepresent my doings upon the sea, since it is those doings have afforded me the power to hurt his profit. He has chosen the weapons of calumny for this combat, but those weapons are not mine, as I shall show him this very day. If you do not credit what I say, come with me and be present at the little talk I hope to have with that curmudgeon."

"You forget," said Master Godolphin, "that I, too, have interests in the neighbourhood of Smithick, and that you are hurting those."

"Soho!" crowed Sir Oliver. "Now at last the sun of truth peeps forth from all this cloud of righteous indignation at my bad Tressilian blood and pirate's ways! You, too, are but a trafficker. Now see what a fool I am to have believed you sincere, and to have stood here in talk with you as with an honest man." His voice swelled and his lip curled in a contempt that struck the other like a blow. "I swear I had not wasted breath with you had I known you for so mean and pitiful a fellow."

"These words..." began Master Godolphin, drawing himself up very stiffly.

"Are a deal less than your deserts," cut in the other, and he raised his voice to call—"Nick."

"You shall answer to them," snapped his visitor.

"I am answering now," was the stern answer. "To come here and prate to me of my dead father's dissoluteness and of an ancient quarrel between him and yours, to bleat of my

trumped-up course of piracy and my own ways of life as a just cause why I may not wed your sister whilst the real consideration in your mind, the real spur to your hostility is not more than the matter of some few paltry pounds a year that I hinder you from pocketing. A God's name get you gone."

Nick entered at that moment.

"You shall hear from me again, Sir Oliver," said the other, white with anger. "You shall account to me for these words."

"I do not fight with... with hucksters," flashed Sir Oliver.

"D'ye dare call me that?"

"Indeed, 'tis to discredit an honourable class, I confess it. Nick, the door for Master Godolphin."

Chapter 2

Rosamund

ANON, AFTER HIS VISITOR had departed, Sir Oliver grew calm again. Then being able in his calm to consider his position, he became angry anew at the very thought of the rage in which he had been, a rage which had so mastered him that he had erected additional obstacles to the already considerable ones that stood between Rosamund and himself. In full blast, his anger swung round and took Sir John Killigrew for its objective. He would settle with him at once. He would so, by Heaven's light!

He bellowed for Nick and his boots.

"Where is Master Lionel? he asked when the boots had been fetched.

"He be just ridden in, Sir Oliver."

"Bid him hither."

Promptly, in answer to that summons, came Sir Oliver's half-brother—a slender lad favouring his mother the dissolute Ralph Tressilian's second wife. He was as unlike Sir Oliver in body as in soul. He was comely in a very gentle,

almost womanish way; his complexion was fair and delicate, his hair golden, and his eyes of a deep blue. He had a very charming stripling grace—for he was but in his twenty-first year—and he dressed with all the care of a Court-gallant.

“Has that whelp Godolphin been to visit you?” he asked as he entered.

“Aye,” growled Sir Oliver. “He came to tell me some things and to hear some others in return.”

“Ha. I passed him just beyond the gates, and he was deaf to my greeting. ’Tis a most cursed insufferable pup.”

“Art a judge of men, Lal.” Sir Oliver stood up booted. “I am for Arwenack to exchange a compliment or two with Sir John.”

His tight-pressed lips and resolute air supplemented his words so well that Lionel clutched his arm.

“You’re not... you’re not...?”

“I am.” And affectionately, as if to soothe the lad’s obvious alarm, he patted his brother’s shoulder. “Sir John,” he explained, “talks too much. ’Tis a fault that wants correcting. I go to teach him the virtue of silence.”

“There will be trouble, Oliver.”

“So there will—for him. If a man must be saying of me that I am a pirate, a slave-dealer, a murderer, and Heaven knows what else, he must be ready for the consequences. But you are late, Lal. Where have you been?”

“I rode as far as Malpas.”

“As far as Malpas?” Sir Oliver’s eyes narrowed, as was the trick with him. “I hear it whispered what magnet draws you thither,” he said. “Be wary, boy. You go too much to Malpas.”

“How?” quoth Lionel a trifle coldly.

“I mean that you are your father’s son. Remember it, and strive not to follow in his ways lest they bring you to his own end. I have just been reminded of these predilections of his by good Master Peter. Go not over often to Malpas, I say. No more.” But the arm which he flung about his younger

brother's shoulders and the warmth of his embrace made resentment of his warning quite impossible.

When he was gone, Lionel sat him down to dine, with Nick to wait on him. He ate but little, and never addressed the old servant in the course of that brief repast. He was very pensive. In thought he followed his brother on that avenging visit of his to Arwenack. Killigrew was no babe, but man of his hands, a soldier and a seaman. If any harm should come to Oliver...He trembled at the thought; and then almost despite him his mind ran on to calculate the consequences to himself. His fortune would be in a very different case, he reflected. In a sort of horror, he sought to put so detestable a reflection from his mind; but it returned insistently. It would not be denied. It forced him to a consideration of his own circumstances.

All that he had he owed to his brother's bounty. That dissolute father of theirs had died as such men commonly die, leaving behind him heavily encumbered estates and many debts; the very house of Penarrow was mortgaged, and the moneys raised on it had been drunk, or gambled, or spent on one or another of Ralph Tressilian's many lights o' love. Then Oliver had sold some little property near Helston, inherited from his mother; he had sunk the money into a venture upon the Spanish Main. He had fitted out and manned a ship, and had sailed with Hawkins upon one of those ventures, which Sir John Killigrew was perfectly entitled to account pirate raids. He had returned with enough plunder in specie and gems to disencumber the Tressilian patrimony. He had sailed again and returned still wealthier. And meanwhile, Lionel had remained at home taking his ease. He loved his ease. His nature was inherently indolent, and he had the wasteful extravagant tastes that usually go with indolence. He was not born to toil and struggle, and none had sought to correct the shortcomings of his character in that respect. Sometimes he wondered what the future might hold for him should Oliver come to marry. He feared his life might not be as easy as it was at present. But he did not seriously fear. It was not in his

nature—it never is in the natures of such men—to give any excess of consideration to the future. When his thoughts did turn to it in momentary uneasiness, he would abruptly dismiss them with the reflection that when all was said Oliver loved him, and Oliver would never fail to provide adequately for all his wants.

In this undoubtedly he was fully justified. Oliver was more parent than brother to him. When their father had been brought home to die from the wound dealt him by an outraged husband—and a shocking spectacle that sinner's death had been with its hasty terrified repentance—he had entrusted Lionel to his elder brother's care. At the time Oliver was seventeen and Lionel twelve. But Oliver had seemed by so many years older than his age, that the twice-widowed Ralph Tressilian had come to depend upon this steady, resolute, and masterful child of his first marriage. It was into his ear that the dying man had poured the wretched tale of his repentance for the life he had lived and the state in which he was leaving his affairs with such scant provision for his sons. For Oliver he had no fear. It was as if with the prescience that comes to men in his pass he had perceived that Oliver was of those who must prevail, a man born to make the world his oyster. His anxieties were all for Lionel, whom he also judged with that same penetrating insight vouchsafed a man in his last hours. Hence his piteous recommendation of him to Oliver, and Oliver's ready promise to be father, mother, and brother to the youngster.

All this was in Lionel's mind as he sat musing there, and again he struggled with that hideous insistent thought that if things should go ill with his brother at Arwenack, there would be great profit to himself; that these things he now enjoyed upon another's bounty he would then enjoy in his own right. A devil seemed to mock him with the whispered sneer that were Oliver to die his own grief would not be long-lived. Then in revolt against that voice of an egoism so loathsome that in his better moments it inspired even himself with horror, he bethought him of Oliver's unvarying, unwavering

affection; he pondered all the loving care and kindness that through these years past Oliver had ever showered upon him; and he cursed the rottenness of a mind that could even admit such thoughts as those which he had been entertaining. So wrought upon was he by the welter of his emotions, by that fierce strife between his conscience and his egotism, that he came abruptly to his feet, a cry upon his lips.

“Vade retro, Sathanas!”¹

Old Nicholas, looking up abruptly, saw the lad’s face, waxen, his brow bedewed with sweat.

“Master Lionel! Master Lionel!” he cried, his small bright eyes concernedly scanning his young master’s face. “What be amiss?”

Lionel mopped his brow. “Sir Oliver has gone to Arwenack upon a punitive business,” said he.

“An’ what be that, zur?” quoth Nicholas.

“He has gone to punish Sir John for having maligned him.”

A grin spread upon the weatherbeaten countenance of Nicholas.

“Be that so? Marry, ’twere time. Sir John he be over long i’ th’ tongue.”

Lionel stood amazed at the man’s easy confidence and supreme assurance of how his master must acquit himself.

“You... you have no fear, Nicholas...” He did not add of what. But the servant understood, and his grin grew broader still.

“Fear? Lackaday! I bain’t afeard for Sir Oliver, and doan’t ee be afeard. Sir Oliver’ll be home to sup with a sharp-set appetite—’tis the only difference fighting ever made to he.”

The servant was justified of his confidence by the events, though through a slight error of judgment Sir Oliver did not quite accomplish all that he promised and intended. In anger, and when he deemed that he had been affronted, he was—as his chronicler never wearies of insisting, and as you shall judge before the end of this tale is reached—of a tigerish

¹ Vade retro, Sathanas! “Go back, Satan!” or “Step back, Satan!”

ruthlessness. He rode to Arwenack fully resolved to kill his calumniator. Nothing less would satisfy him. Arrived at that fine embattled castle of the Killigrews which commanded the entrance to the estuary of the Fal, and from whose crenels the country might be surveyed as far as the Lizard, fifteen miles away, he found Peter Godolphin there before him; and because of Peter's presence Sir Oliver was more deliberate and formal in his accusation of Sir John than he had intended. He desired, in accusing Sir John, also to clear himself in the eyes of Rosamund's brother, to make the latter realize how entirely odious were the calumnies which Sir John had permitted himself, and how basely prompted.

Sir John, however, came halfway to meet the quarrel. His rancour against the Pirate of Penarrow—as he had come to dub Sir Oliver—ended him almost as eager to engage as was his visitor.

They found a secluded corner of the deer-park for their business, and there Sir John—a slim, sallow gentleman of some thirty years of age—made an onslaught with sword and dagger upon Sir Oliver, full worthy of the onslaught he had made earlier with his tongue. But his impetuosity availed him less than nothing. Sir Oliver was come there with a certain purpose, and it was his way that he never failed to carry through a thing to which he set his hand.

In three minutes it was all over and Sir Oliver was carefully wiping his blade, whilst Sir John lay coughing upon the turf tended by white-faced Peter Godolphin and a scared groom who had been bidden thither to make up the necessary tale of witnesses.

Sir Oliver sheathed his weapons and resumed his coat, then came to stand over his fallen foe, considering him critically.

"I think I have silenced him for a little time only," he said. "And I confess that I intended to do better. I hope, however, that the lesson will suffice and that he will lie no more—at least concerning me."

"Do you mock a fallen man?" was Master Godolphin's angry protest.

“God forbid!” said Sir Oliver soberly. “There is no mockery in my heart. There is, believe me, nothing but regret—regret that I should not have done the thing more thoroughly. I will send assistance from the house as I go. Give you good day, Master Peter.”

From Arwenack he rode round by Penryn on his homeward way. But he did not go straight home. He paused at the Gates of Godolphin Court, which stood above Trefusis Point commanding the view of Carrick Roads. He turned in under the old gateway and drew up in the courtyard. Leaping to the kidney-stones that paved it, he announced himself a visitor to Mistress Rosamund.

He found her in her bower—a light, turreted chamber on the mansion’s eastern side, with windows that looked out upon that lovely sheet of water and the wooded slopes beyond. She was sitting with a book in her lap in the deep of that tall window when he entered, preceded and announced by Sally Pentreath, who, now her tire-woman, had once been her nurse.

She rose with a little exclamation of gladness when he appeared under the lintel—scarce high enough to admit him without stooping—and stood regarding him across the room with brightened eyes and flushing cheeks.

What need is there to describe her? In the blaze of notoriety into which she was anon to be thrust by Sir Oliver Tressilian there was scarce a poet in England who did not sing the grace and loveliness of Rosamund Godolphin, and in all conscience enough of those fragments have survived. Like her brother she was tawny headed and she was divinely tall, though as yet her figure in its girlishness was almost too slender for her height.

“I had not looked for you so early...” she was beginning, when she observed that his countenance was oddly stern. “Why... what has happened?” she cried, her intuitions clamouring loudly of some mischance.

“Naught to alarm you, sweet; yet something that may vex you.” He set an arm about that lissom waist of hers above the

swelling farthingale, and gently led her back to her chair, then flung himself upon the window-seat beside her. "You hold Sir John Killigrew in some affection?" he said between statement and inquiry.

"Why, yes. He was our guardian until my brother came of full age."

Sir Oliver made a wry face. "Aye, there's the rub. Well, I've all but killed him."

She drew back into her chair, recoiling before him, and he saw horror leap to her eyes and blench her face. He made haste to explain the causes that had led to this, he told her briefly of the calumnies concerning him that Sir John had put about to vent his spite at having been thwarted in a matter of his coveted licence to build at Smithick.

"That mattered little," he concluded. "I knew these tales concerning me were abroad, and I held them in the same contempt as I hold their utterer. But he went further, Rose: he poisoned your brother's mind against me, and he stirred up in him the slumbering rancour that in my father's time was wont to lie between our houses. Today Peter came to me with the clear intent to make a quarrel. He affronted me as no man has ever dared."

She cried out at that, her already great alarm redoubled. He smiled.

"Do not suppose that I could harm him. He is your brother, and, so, sacred to me. He came to tell me that no betrothal was possible between us, forbade me ever again to visit Godolphin Court, dubbed me pirate and vampire to my face and reviled my father's memory. I tracked the evil of all this to its source in Killigrew, and rode straight to Arwenack to dam that source of falsehood for all time. I did not accomplish quite so much as I intended. You see, I am frank, my Rose. It may be that Sir John will live; if so I hope that he may profit by this lesson. I have come straight to you," he concluded, "that you may hear the tale from me before another comes to malign me with false stories of this happening."

“You... you mean Peter?” she cried.

“Alas!” he sighed.

She sat very still and white, looking straight before her and not at all at Sir Oliver. At length she spoke.

“I am not skilled in reading men,” she said in a sad, small voice. “How should I be, that am but a maid who has led a cloistered life? I was told of you that you were violent and passionate, a man of bitter enmities, easily stirred to hatreds, cruel and ruthless in the persecution of them.”

“You, too, have been listening to Sir John,” he muttered, and laughed shortly.

“All this was I told,” she pursued as if he had not spoken, “and all did I refuse to believe because my heart was given to you. Yet... yet of what have you made proof today?”

“Of forbearance,” said he shortly.

“Forbearance?” she echoed, and her lips writhed in a smile of weary irony. “Surely you mock me!”

He set himself to explain.

“I have told you what Sir John had done. I have told you that the greater part of it—and matter all that touched my honour—I know Sir John to have done long since. Yet I suffered it in silence and contempt. Was that to show myself easily stirred to ruthlessness? What was it but forbearance? When, however, he carries his petty huckster’s rancour so far as to seek to choke for me my source of happiness in life and sends your brother to affront me, I am still so forbearing that I recognize your brother to be no more than a tool and go straight to the hand that wielded him. Because I know of your affection for Sir John I gave him such latitude as no man of honour in England would have given him.”

Then seeing that she still avoided his regard, still sat in that frozen attitude of horror at learning that the man she loved had imbrued his hands with the blood of another whom she also loved, his pleading quickened to a warmer note. He flung himself upon his knees beside her chair, and took in his great sinewy hands the slender fingers which she listlessly surrendered. “Rose,” he cried, and his deep voice quivered

with intercession, “dismiss all that you have heard from out your mind. Consider only this thing that has befallen. Suppose that Lionel my brother came to you, and that, having some measure of power and authority to support him, he swore to you that you should never wed me, swore to prevent this marriage because he deemed you such a woman as could not bear my name with honour to myself; and suppose that to all this he added insult to the memory of your dead father, what answer would you return him? Speak, Rose! Be honest with thyself and me. Deem yourself in my place, and say in honesty if you can still condemn me for what I have done. Say if it differs much from what you would wish to do in such a case as I have named.”

Her eyes scanned now his upturned face, every line of which was pleading to her and calling for impartial judgment. Her face grew troubled, and then almost fierce. She set her hands upon his shoulders, and looked deep into his eyes.

“You swear to me, Noll, that all is as you have told it me—you have added naught, you have altered naught to make the tale more favourable to yourself?”

“You need such oaths from me?” he asked, and she saw sorrow spread upon his countenance.

“If I did, I should not love thee, Noll. But in such an hour I need your own assurance. Will you not be generous and bear with me, strengthen me to withstand anything that may be said hereafter?”

“As God’s my witness, I have told you true in all,” he answered solemnly.

She sank her head to his shoulder. She was weeping softly, overwrought by this climax to all that in silence and in secret she had suffered since he had come a-wooing her.

“Then,” she said, “I believe you acted rightly. I believe with you that no man of honour could have acted otherwise. I must believe you, Noll, for did I not, then I could believe in naught and hope for naught. You are as a fire that has seized upon the better part of me and consumed it all to ashes that you may hold it in your heart. I am content so you be true.”

“True I shall ever be, sweetheart,” he whispered fervently. “Could I be less since you are sent to make me so?”

She looked at him again, and now she was smiling wistfully through her tears.

“And you will bear with Peter?” she implored him.

“He shall have no power to anger me,” he answered. “I swear that too. Do you know that but today he struck me?”

“Struck you? You did not tell me that!”

“My quarrel was not with him but with the rogue that sent him. I laughed at the blow. Was he not sacred to me?”

“He is good at heart, Noll,” she pursued. “In time he will come to love you as you deserve, and you will come to know that he, too, deserves your love.”

“He deserves it now for the love he bears to you.”

“And you will think ever thus during the little while of waiting that perforce must lie before us?”

“I shall never think otherwise, sweet. Meanwhile I shall avoid him, and that no harm may come should he forbid me Godolphin Court I’ll even stay away. In less than a year you will be of full age, and none may hinder you to come and go. What is a year, with such hope as mine to still impatience?”

She stroked his face. “Art very gentle with me ever, Noll,” she murmured fondly. “I cannot credit you are ever harsh to any, as they say.”

“Heed them not,” he answered her. “I may have been something of all that, but you have purified me, Rose. What man that loved you could be aught but gentle.” He kissed her, and stood up. “I had best be going now,” he said. “I shall walk along the shore towards Trefusis Point tomorrow morning. If you should chance to be similarly disposed....”

She laughed, and rose in her turn. “I shall be there, dear Noll.”

“’Twere best so hereafter,” he assured her, smiling, and so took his leave.

She followed him to the stairhead, and watched him as he descended with eyes that took pride in the fine upright carriage of that stalwart, masterful lover.

Chapter 3

The Forge

SIR OLIVER'S WISDOM IN being the first to bear Rosamund the story of that day's happenings was established anon when Master Godolphin returned home. He went straight in quest of his sister; and in a frame of mind oppressed by fear and sorrow, for Sir John, by his general sense of discomfiture at the hands of Sir Oliver and by the anger begotten of all this he was harsh in manner and disposed to hector.

"Madam," he announced abruptly, "Sir John is like to die."

The astounding answer she returned him—that is, astounding to him—did not tend to soothe his sorely ruffled spirit.

"I know," she said. "And I believe him to deserve no less. Who deals in calumny should be prepared for the wages of it."

He stared at her in a long, furious silence, then exploded into oaths, and finally inveighed against her unnaturalness and pronounced her bewitched by that foul dog Tressilian.

"It is fortunate for me," she answered him composedly, "that he was here before you to give me the truth of this affair." Then her assumed calm and the anger with which she had met his own all fell away from her. "Oh, Peter, Peter," she cried in anguish, "I hope that Sir John will recover. I am distraught by this event. But be just, I implore you. Sir Oliver has told me how hard-driven he had been."

"He shall be driven harder yet, as God's my life! If you think this deed shall go unpunished...."

She flung herself upon his breast and implored him to carry this quarrel no further. She spoke of her love for Sir Oliver and announced her firm resolve to marry him in despite of all opposition that could be made, all of which did not tend to soften her brother's humour. Yet because of the love that ever had held these two in closest bonds he went so far in the

end as to say that should Sir John recover he would not himself pursue the matter further. But if Sir John should die—as was very likely—honour compelled him to seek vengeance of a deed to which he had himself so very largely contributed.

“I read that man as if he were an open book,” the boy announced, with callow boastfulness. “He has the subtlety of Satan, yet he does not delude me. It was at me he struck through Killigrew. Because he desires you, Rosamund, he could not—as he bluntly told me—deal with me however I provoked him, not even though I went the length of striking him. He might have killed me for’t; but he knew that to do so would place a barrier ’twixt him and you. Oh! he is calculating as all the fiends of Hell. So, to wipe out the dishonour which I did him, he shifts the blame of it upon Killigrew and goes out to kill him, which he further thinks may act as a warning to me. But if Killigrew dies....” And thus he rambled on, filling her gentle heart with anguish to see this feud increasing between the two men she loved best in all the world. If the outcome of it should be that either were to kill the other, she knew that she could never again look upon the survivor.

She took heart at last in the memory of Sir Oliver’s sworn promise that her brother’s life should be inviolate to him, betide what might. She trusted him; she depended upon his word and that rare strength of his which rendered possible to him a course that no weaker man would dare pursue. And in this reflection her pride in him increased, and she thanked God for a lover who in all things was a giant among men.

But Sir John Killigrew did not die. He hovered between this world and a better one for some seven days, at the end of which he began to recover. By October he was abroad again, gaunt and pale, reduced to half the bulk that had been his before, a mere shadow of a man.

One of his first visits was to Godolphin Court. He went to remonstrate with Rosamund upon her betrothal, and he did so at the request of her brother. But his remonstrances were strangely lacking in the force that she had looked for.

The odd fact is that in his near approach to death, and with his earthly interest dwindling, Sir John had looked matters frankly in the face, and had been driven to the conclusion—a conclusion impossible to him in normal health—that he had got no more than he deserved. He realized that he had acted unworthily, if unconscious at the time of the unworthiness of what he did; that the weapons with which he had fought Sir Oliver were not the weapons that become a gentleman or in which there is credit to be won. He perceived that he had permitted his old enmity for the house of Tressilian, swollen by a sense of injury lately suffered in the matter of the licence to build at Smithick, to warp his judgment and to persuade him that Sir Oliver was all he had dubbed him. He realized that jealousy, too, had taken a hand in the matter. Sir Oliver's exploits upon the seas had brought him wealth, and with this wealth he was building up once more the Tressilian sway in those parts, which Ralph Tressilian had so outrageously diminished, so that he threatened to eclipse the importance of the Killigrews of Arwenack.

Nevertheless, in the hour of reaction he did not go so far as to admit that Sir Oliver Tressilian was a fit mate for Rosamund Godolphin. She and her brother had been placed in his care by their late father, and he had nobly discharged his tutelage until such time as Peter had come to full age. His affection for Rosamund was tender as that of a lover, but tempered by a feeling entirely paternal. He went very near to worshipping her, and when all was said, when he had cleared his mind of all dishonest bias, he still found overmuch to dislike in Oliver Tressilian, and the notion of his becoming Rosamund's husband was repellent.

First of all there was that bad Tressilian blood—notoriously bad, and never more flagrantly displayed than in the case of the late Ralph Tressilian. It was impossible that Oliver should have escaped the taint of it; nor could Sir John perceive any signs that he had done so. He displayed the traditional Tressilian turbulence. He was passionate and brutal, and the pirate's trade to which he had now set his hand was of all

trades the one for which he was by nature best equipped. He was harsh and overbearing, impatient of correction and prone to trample other men's feelings underfoot. Was this, he asked himself in all honesty, a mate for Rosamund? Could he entrust her happiness to the care of such a man? Assuredly he could not.

Therefore, being whole again, he went to remonstrate with her as he accounted it his duty and as Master Peter had besought him. Yet knowing the bias that had been his he was careful to understate rather than to overstate his reasons.

"But, Sir John," she protested, "if every man is to be condemned for the sins of his forbears, but few could escape condemnation, and wherever shall you find me a husband deserving your approval?"

"His father..." began Sir John.

"Tell me not of his father, but of himself," she interrupted.

He frowned impatiently—they were sitting in that bower of hers above the river.

"I was coming to 't," he answered, a thought testily, for these interruptions which made him keep to the point robbed him of his best arguments. "However, suffice it that many of his father's vicious qualities he has inherited, as we see in his ways of life; that he has not inherited others only the future can assure us."

"In other words," she mocked him, yet very seriously, "I am to wait until he dies of old age to make quite sure that he has no such sins as must render him an unfitting husband?"

"No, no," he cried. "Good lack! what a perverseness is thine!"

"The perverseness is your own, Sir John. I am but the mirror of it."

He shifted in his chair and grunted. "Be it so, then," he snapped. "We will deal with the qualities that already he displays." And Sir John enumerated them.

"But this is no more than your judgment of him—no more than what you think him."

"'Tis what all the world thinks him."

“But I shall not marry a man for what others think of him, but for what I think of him myself. And in my view you cruelly malign him. I discover no such qualities in Sir Oliver.”

“’Tis that you should be spared such a discovery that I am beseeching you not to wed him.”

“Yet unless I wed him I shall never make such a discovery; and until I make it I shall ever continue to love him and to desire to wed him. Is all my life to be spent so?” She laughed outright, and came to stand beside him. She put an arm about his neck as she might have put it about the neck of her father, as she had been in the habit of doing any day in these past ten years—and thereby made him feel himself to have reached an unconscionable age. With her hand she rubbed his brow.

“Why, here are wicked wrinkles of ill-humour,” she cried to him. “You are all undone, and by a woman’s wit, and you do not like it.”

“I am undone by a woman’s wilfulness, by a woman’s headstrong resolve not to see.”

“You have naught to show me, Sir John.”

“Naught? Is all that I have said naught?”

“Words are not things; judgments are not facts. You say that he is so, and so and so. But when I ask you upon what facts you judge him, your only answer is that you think him to be what you say he is. Your thoughts may be honest, Sir John, but your logic is contemptible.” And she laughed again at his gaping discomfiture. “Come, now, deal like an honest upright judge, and tell me one act of his—one thing that he has ever done and of which you have sure knowledge—that will bear him out to be what you say he is. Now, Sir John!”

He looked up at her impatiently. Then, at last he smiled.

“Rogue!” he cried—and upon a distant day he was to bethink him of those words. “If ever he be brought to judgment, I can desire him no better advocate than thou.”

Thereupon following up her advantage swiftly, she kissed him. “Nor could I desire him a more honest judge than you.”

What was the poor man to do thereafter? What he did. Live up to her pronouncement, and go forthwith to visit Sir Oliver and compose their quarrel.

The acknowledgment of his fault was handsomely made, and Sir Oliver received it in a spirit no less handsome. But when Sir John came to the matter of Mistress Rosamund he was, out of his sense of duty to her, less generous. He announced that since he could not bring himself to look upon Sir Oliver as a suitable husband for her, nothing that he had now said must mislead Sir Oliver into supposing him a consenting party to any such union.

“But that,” he added, “is not to say that I oppose it. I disapprove, but I stand aside. Until she is of full age her brother will refuse his sanction. After that, the matter will concern neither him nor myself.”

“I hope,” said Sir Oliver, “he will take as wise a view. But whatever view he takes will be no matter. For the rest, Sir John, I thank you for your frankness, and I rejoice to know that if I may not count you for my friend, at least I need not reckon you among my enemies.”

But if Sir John was thus won round to a neutral attitude, Master Peter’s rancour abated nothing; rather it increased each day, and presently there came another matter to feed it, a matter of which Sir Oliver had no suspicion.

He knew that his brother Lionel rode almost daily to Malpas, and he knew the object of those daily rides. He knew of the lady who kept a sort of court there for the rustic bucks of Truro, Penryn, and Helston, and he knew something of the ill-repute that had attached to her in town—a repute, in fact, which had been the cause of her withdrawal into the country. He told his brother some frank and ugly truths, concerning her, by way of warning him, and therein, for the first time, the twain went very near to quarrelling.

After that he mentioned her no more. He knew that in his indolent way Lionel could be headstrong, and he knew human nature well enough to be convinced that interference here would but set up a breach between himself and his

brother without in the least achieving its real object. So Oliver shrugged resignedly, and held his peace.

There he left the affair, nor ever spoke again of Malpas and the siren who presided there. And meanwhile the autumn faded into winter, and with the coming of stormy weather Sir Oliver and Rosamund had fewer opportunities of meeting. To Godolphin Court he would not go since she did not desire it; and himself he deemed it best to remain away since otherwise he must risk a quarrel with its master, who had forbidden him the place. In those days he saw Peter Godolphin but little, and on the rare occasions when they did meet they passed each other with a very meagre salute.

Sir Oliver was entirely happy, and men noticed how gentler were his accents, how sunnier had become a countenance that they had known for haughty and forbidding. He waited for his coming happiness with the confidence of an immortal in the future. Patience was all the service Fate asked of him, and he gave that service blithely, depending upon the reward that soon now would be his own. Indeed, the year drew near its close; and ere another winter should come round Penarrow House would own a mistress. That to him seemed as inevitable as the season itself. And yet for all his supreme confidence, for all his patience and the happiness he culled from it, there were moments when he seemed oppressed by some elusive sense of overhanging doom, by some subconsciousness of an evil in the womb of Destiny. Did he challenge his oppression, did he seek to translate it into terms of reason, he found nothing upon which his wits could fasten—and he came ever to conclude that it was his very happiness by its excessiveness that was oppressing him, giving him at times that sense of premonitory weight about the heart as if to check its joyous soarings.

One day, a week from Christmas, he had occasion to ride to Helston on some trifling affair. For half a week a blizzard had whirled about the coast, and he had been kept chafing indoors what time layer upon layer of snow was spread upon the countryside. On the fourth day, the storm being spent,

the sun came forth, the skies were swept clear of clouds and all the countryside lay robed in a sundrenched, dazzling whiteness. Sir Oliver called for his horse and rode forth alone through the crisp snow. He turned homeward very early in the afternoon, but when a couple of miles from Helston he found that his horse had cast a shoe. He dismounted, and bridle over arm tramped on through the sunlit vale between the heights of Pendennis and Arwenack, singing as he went. He came thus to Smithick and the door of the forge. About it stood a group of fishermen and rustics, for, in the absence of any inn just there, this forge was ever a point of congregation. In addition to the rustics and an itinerant merchant with his packhorses, there were present Sir Andrew Flack, the parson from Penryn, and Master Gregory Baine, one of the Justices from the neighbourhood of Truro. Both were well known to Sir Oliver, and he stood in friendly gossip with them what time he waited for his horse.

It was all very unfortunate, from the casting of that shoe to the meeting with those gentlemen; for as Sir Oliver stood there, down the gentle slope from Arwenack rode Master Peter Godolphin.

It was said afterwards by Sir Andrew and Master Baine that Master Peter appeared to have been carousing, so flushed was his face, so unnatural the brightness of his eye, so thick his speech and so extravagant and foolish what he said. There can be little doubt that it was so. He was addicted to Canary, and so indeed was Sir John Killigrew, and he had been dining with Sir John. He was of those who turn quarrelsome in wine—which is but another way of saying that when the wine was in and the restraint out, his natural humour came uppermost untrammelled. The sight of Sir Oliver standing there gave the lad precisely what he needed to indulge that evil humour of his, and he may have been quickened in his purpose by the presence of those other gentlemen. In his half-fuddled state of mind he may have recalled that once he had struck Sir Oliver and Sir Oliver had laughed and told him that none would believe it.

He drew rein suddenly as he came abreast of the group, so suddenly that he pulled his horse until it almost sat down like a cat; yet he retained his saddle. Then he came through the snow that was all squelched and mudded just about the forge, and leered at Sir Oliver.

“I am from Arwenack,” he announced unnecessarily. “We have been talking of you.”

“You could have had no better subject of discourse,” said Sir Oliver, smiling, for all that his eyes were hard and something scared—though his fears did not concern himself.

“Marry, you are right; you make an engrossing topic—you and your debauched father.”

“Sir,” replied Sir Oliver, “once already have I deplored your mother’s utter want of discretion.”

The words were out of him in a flash under the spur of the gross insult flung at him, uttered in the momentary blind rage aroused by that inflamed and taunting face above him. No sooner were they sped than he repented them, the more bitterly because they were greeted by a guffaw from the rustics. He would have given half his fortune in that moment to have recalled them.

Master Godolphin’s face had changed as utterly as if he had removed a mask. From flushed that it had been it was livid now and the eyes were blazing, the mouth twitching. Thus a moment he glowered upon his enemy. Then standing in his stirrups he swung aloft his whip.

“You dog!” he cried, in a snarling sob. “You dog!” And his lash came down and cut a long red wheal across Sir Oliver’s dark face.

With cries of dismay and anger the others, the parson, the Justice and the rustics got between the pair, for Sir Oliver was looking very wicked, and all the world knew him for a man to be feared.

“Master Godolphin, I cry shame upon you,” exclaimed the parson. “If evil comes of this I shall testify to the grossness of your aggression. Get you gone from here!”

“Go to the devil, sir,” said Master Godolphin thickly. “Is my mother’s name to be upon the lips of that bastard? By God, man, the matter rests not here. He shall send his friends to me, or I will horsewhip him every time we meet. You hear, Sir Oliver?”

Sir Oliver made him no reply.

“You hear?” he roared. “There is no Sir John Killigrew this time upon whom you can shift the quarrel. Come you to me and get the punishment of which that whiplash is but an earnest.” Then with a thick laugh he drove spurs into his horse’s flanks, so furiously that he all but sent the parson and another sprawling.

“Stay but a little while for me,” roared Sir Oliver after him. “You’ll ride no more, my drunken fool!”

And in a rage he bellowed for his horse, flinging off the parson and Master Baine, who endeavoured to detain and calm him. He vaulted to the saddle when the nag was brought him, and whirled away in furious pursuit.

The parson looked at the Justice and the Justice shrugged, his lips tight-pressed.

“The young fool is drunk,” said Sir Andrew, shaking his white head. “He’s in no case to meet his Maker.”

“Yet he seems very eager,” quoth Master Justice Baine. “I doubt I shall hear more of the matter.” He turned and looked into the forge where the bellows now stood idle, the smith himself grimy and aproned in leather in the doorway, listening to the rustics account of the happening. Master Baine it seems had a taste for analogies. “Faith,” he said, “the place was excellently well chosen. They have forged here today a sword which it will need blood to temper.”



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