

them as like it. Packed tight wi' seeds, the colour of the heather, wi' a bitter-sweet taste to it as be very refreshing to the throat. Such a fruit I picked without 'by your leave,' an' chewed at un, an' looked at the butivul blue sea down-under, an' talked to myself out loud, as my manner always was.

"'Well, Bob Bates,' I sez, 'you be most tired o' caddling about doing nought, ban't you? Still, you'm a lucky chap, whether or no; for a live D.B.S. be a sight better'n a dead cabin-boy. 'Twill larn 'e to treat the sun less civil. Don't do for to cap to him in these parts. But you keep up your heart an' trust in the Lord, as Mistley told 'e. He'll look to 'e for sartain in His own time.'

"Then I heard a curious ristling alongside in the bush, an' caught sight of a pair o' cat-like eyes on me. 'Course I knowed there wasn't no savage beasts there, but I didn't know as there mightn't be savage men, an' I was going to get back over thicky wall an' run for it. But too late. They was human eyes, wi' a human nose atop an' a human moustache under, but a very comical fashion of face an' a queerer than ever I'd seen afore or have since.

"'Tis hard for me to call home exactly what Matthew Damian looked like then, for 'tis above thirty year ago, an' that man filled my eye every day, winter an' summer, for twenty years. Yet, though he looks different now, with all I know behind my

mind's eye as I see him, then he 'peared mighty strange, wild an' shaggy. A face like a round shot he had, but a terrible deep jaw under the ear. A little chin, round eyes — grey-green — an' ears standing sharp off a close-cropped head, wi' hair pepper-an'-salt colour. A huge, tall man, an' his beard was cut to his chin, an' his moustache stuck out like a bush five inches to port an' starboard. Well, I was mortal feared, for I'd never seen nothing like un outside a nightmare; yet his voice was so thin as a boy's, an' piped like a reed in his thick throat. He had the nigger whine, too — as I dare say you may mark on my tongue now, after my ears have soaked in it so long.

"He stared an' I stared. Then he spoke. 'You come along with me,' he said in a Frenchy sort of English.

"'Why for?' I said; then I thought I seed his eyes 'pon the pomegranate. 'Very sorry, sir, if this here be yours,' I said; 'but I'm baggered if a chap can tell what be wild an' what ban't on this here ridicklous island. 'Tis like a gentleman's hothouse broke loose,' I said to un.

"'No matter about that,' he said.

"'I can give 'e my knife,' I told un, 'if you must have payment; but that be all I've got in the world 'cept the things I stand up in, an' I'd a deal rather keep it.'



"‘I do not want your knife,’ he answers. ‘I want you.’

"‘Well, I’m going cheap, I do assure ’e,’ I said, thinking I’d try how a light heart would serve me. But I weren’t comfortable by a long way, ’cause there’s a lot of madness in them islands, an’ I thought as this chap might be three-halfpence short of a shilling, as we say. However, he was too busy thinking to laugh at my poor fun, an’ for that matter, as I found after, he never laughed easy, — nor talked easy for that matter. Now he fell silent, an’ I walked by him. Then, after a stretch through a reg’lar Garden of Eden, wi’out our first parents, us comed upon a lovely house, whitewashed home to the roof — like snow in all that butivul green. ’Pon sight of it the man spoke again.

"‘I want you to talk to my mother,’ he said suddenly. ‘You’ll just talk and talk in an easy way, as you was talking to yourself when I found you.’

"‘I be only a sailor-man, wi’ nought to say to a lady,’ I told him.

"‘No matter for that,’ he said. ‘Just talk straight on. It do not signify a bit what you say, so you speak natural. In fact, talk to my mother as if madame was your own mother.’

"‘So then, of course, I reckoned the cat-faced chap was out of his mind — as who wouldn’t have?

"‘To a great verandah we comed, all crawled over

with the butivulest white flowers the sun draws the scent from; an’ there, in a cane chair, sat an ancient lady — lady, I say, though you might have reckoned she was an old brown lizard by the look of her. Old ban’t the word for her. Time’s self would have looked a boy alongside her, if the picture-books be true. A great sunbonnet was over her head, an’ a frill under, an’ just a scanty thread or two of white hair peeping from that. A face all deep lines where the years had run over it; bright eyes peeping from behind great gold spectacles, an’ hands — my word! like joints of an old apple tree. Her was that homely too! A dandy-go-risset gown her wore, an’ a bit of knitting was in her hands, an’ a good book, wi’ very large print, ’pon a table beside her, an’ a li’l nigger gal waved a fan to keep the flies away.

"‘I took my hat off an’ made a leg; then her son spoke: ‘Sit down there beside her and talk loud, and pretend with yourself that Madame Damian is your grandmother. Don’t try to use fine words; and remember this: if you do rightly as I bid you, you shall never repent this day as long as you live.’

"‘I was all in a maze, I do assure ’e; but I just reckoned obedience was best, an’ went at her with one eye on my gentleman, for fear as he should change his mind.

"‘Well, my old dear,’ I said, ‘I be very pleased to meet ’e, an’ I do like to have a tell with ’e very



much, if you'll pardon a rough sailor-man. An' I hopes you'll put in a word with this here big gen'leman for me, 'cause I've eat one of his pomegranates unbeknownst-like, though I'm shot if I'd have touched un come I'd known 'twasn't wild. An' to tell 'e gospel, I be in a jakes of a mess as 'tis — far from my home an' not a friend in the world that I know of.'

"Dallybuttons! To see that ancient woman! When I began to talk, her dropped her knitting, as if there was a spider in it, an' sat up an' stared out of her bead-black eyes. Though 'twas a fiery day, I went so cold as a frog all down my spine to see her glaze so keen.

"Go on,' she said in a funny old voice, 'go on, young man, will 'e? Tell about where you come from, please.'

"There! it did sound mighty familiar to hear her, an' no mistake!

"My heart! You'm West Country too!' I cried out.

"Her nodded, but her couldn't speak another word.

"Go on, go on talking to her,' the man said.

"So I sailed on.

"You must know I runned off to sea, ma'am, from a farm down Dartmoor way. 'Tis a terrible coorious sort of a place, an' calls for hard work if

you wants to thrive there. Roots will do if you'm generous with stable stuff an' lime, but corn be cruel shy, except oats. I was a lazy boy, I'm afraid, an' got weary of being hit about like a foot-ball, though I deserved it; an' I thought to mend my life by running away. The things I've seed! Lor'-a-mercy! 'tis a wonnerful world, sure enough, ma'am.'

"So it be,' she said, very soft, 'an' a wonnerful God made it, my dear. Go on, go on about the Dartmoors, will 'e?'

"Well,' I said, 'tis a gert, lonesome land, all broke up wi' rocky tors, as we call 'em, an' clitters o' granite where the foxes breed, an' gashly bogs, in which you'm like to be stogged if you don't know no better. An' the cots be scattered over the face of it, an' the little farms do lie here an' there in the lew corners, wi' their new-take fields around about. There's a smell o' peat in the air most times, an' it do rise up very blue into the morning light. An' the great marshes glimmer, an' the plovers call in spring; an' the ponies, wi' their little ragged foals, go galloping unshod over the Moor. Then the rivers an' rills twinkle every way, like silver an' gold threads stretching miles an' miles; an' come summer the heather blows an' the great hills shine out rosylike an' butivul; an' — oh, my old dear — oh, ma'am —' I says, breaking off, 'doan't 'e — doan't 'e sob



so — doan't 'e take on like that, for I wouldn't bring a wisht thought to 'e for money.'

"This I said 'cause the old ancient's lips shook, an' her bright eyes fell a-blinking, an' great tears rolled down. Then she put her hands over her face an' bowed over 'em.

"My God!' said the chap, half to hisself, 'this is the first time my mother have wept to my sight; an' I am sixty years old!'

"But of course a Devonshire woman wouldn't cry afore a Frenchman, even if he was her son.

"Come presently she cheered up. 'Do 'e knaw a place by the name of Postbridge, my boy?' she says.

"I did ought to, ma'am,' I sez; 'twas from Hartland Farm I runned.'

"She sighed a gert sigh. 'Hartland!' she says, as if the word was a whole hymn tune to her.

"There's a church, an' a public, there now,' I said.

"An' the gert men of renown? Parson Mason, an' Mr. Slack, an' Judge Buller, an' Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt?' she axed me.

"Never heard tell of none of them,' I said.

"Course not,' old lady answers. 'Why — why, I forgot I be ninety-four. They heroes was all dead afore your faither an' mother were born.'

"As to them,' I tells her — 'as to my faither an'

mother, ma'am, there's a manner of grave doubt, for I'm a workhouse boy, wi'out any havage that be known.'

"But her had fallen to dreaming.

"Tell about the in-country,' she said all of a sudden. 'My mother comed from down Totnes way.'

"So I tells about the South Hams, an' the farms, an' the butivul apple-blooth, as creams out over the orchards in spring, an' all the rest of it.

"There, I talked myself dry an' no mistake; an' she nodded an' nodded an' laughed once; an' it set her off coughing, an' 'frighted her son terrible.

"Then, after I'd been chittering for a month of Sundays, as it seemed to me, the day ended and it comed on dark, an' she got up to go.

"Keep un here,' she says to the man. 'For God's love doan't 'e let un go. Pay un anything he axes for to stop.'

"She went off very slow, wi' a nigger to support her at each elbow, an' a fine young brown woman to look after her. An' I was took in the kitchen, an' had such a bellyful of meat an' drink as minded me of Christmas up to Hartland Farm in the old days.

"Then the chap — he lets me into the riddle of it all. You see his mother was Farmer Blake's darter — the first as ever saved land in these parts, an' rented from the Duchy more'n a hundred years



agone now. An' when Princetown was made for a prison to hold the French us caught in the wars, there comed a Monseer Damian among the prisoners. Him an' many other gents the authorities let out on parole, as they say; an' he made friends with Farmer Blake, an' fallied in love with Margery Blake. An' when war was done, if he didn't marry her all correct an' snatch her away to foreign parts! Martinique was left to the French, an' he took her to that island first, then to Trinidad, which be ours, then to Tobago, which be also ours. There the man prospered, an' growed sugar, an' did very flourishing, an' comed to be first an' richest party in the island. But smallpox took him in middle life, an' it took all his children but his eldest son, Matthew Damian. He bided with his mother, an' married a French woman from Guadeloupe.

"An' 'twas old lady's hope an' prayer for seventy year to hear good Devon spoke again some day. Her only got to hunger terrible for the old country when her childer an' her husband died, by which time she was too old to travel home again. An' the Postbridge Blakes had all gone dead ages afore; an' in truth there couldn't have been a soul on Dartmoor as remembered her. Of course her son knowed the sound of the speech, from hearing his mother, as never lost it; an' when he caught me telling to myself, his first thought was for her.

"'Twas meat an' drink to her, sure enough; an' meat an' drink to me too, for that matter, because I never left the Man-o'-War Bay Sugar Estate no more. Very little work I done at first, for old Mrs. Damian would have me keep on 'bout home every afternoon in the verandah; but six months after I comed there she died, happy as a bird; an' if I wasn't down for fifty pound in her will!

"Richest people in Tobago, they was; an' then I settled to work for Matthew Damian, an' when he died, seventeen year after, the head man was pensioned off, an' I got the billet under Matthew Damian's son, who be my master now. An' there I'll work to the end, an' my childern after me, please the Lord."

"'Tis a very fine tale, Mr. Bates, if I may speak for the company," said Merryweather Chugg; "an' it do show what a blessing it be to come out of Devonshire. If you'd been a foreigner, now, none of these good things would have happened to 'e."

"I mind my faither telling about Farmer Blake an' how he helped to carry his coffin to Widecombe soon after I was born," said Gaffer Pearn.

"For my part," declared the landlady, "my mind be all 'pon that poor old blid, as went away from these parts in her maiden days. To think, after seventy years of waiting, that she should hear a



Devonshire tongue again! I lay it helped her to pass in peace."

"It did so," declared the returned native. "She went out of life easy as a babby; for her appeared to see all her own folks very clear just afore she died, an' she was steadfast sure as there'd be a West-Country welcome waitin' up-along. Fill your glasses, my dears; an' give they boys some ginger-beer, ma'am, will 'e?"

## THE TWO WIDOWS