

either. It's the King's ship, sure enough, but what is she doing here?—that's the question. What does she want, and whom does she bring?"

"We'll soon know," I answered, "for there goes her anchor."

Five minutes later a boat was lowered from the ship, and came swiftly toward us. The boat had four rowers, and in the stern sat a tall man, black-bearded, high-colored, and magnificently dressed. It touched the sand some two hundred feet from the spot where Governor, Councilors, officers, and a sprinkling of other sorts stood staring at it, and at the great ship beyond. The man in the stern leaped out, looked around him, and then walked toward us. As he walked slowly, we had leisure to note the richness of his doublet and cloak,—the one slashed, the other lined with scarlet taffeta,—the arrogance of his mien and gait, and the superb full-blooded beauty of his face.

"The handsomest man that ever I saw!" ejaculated the Governor.

Master Pory, standing beside him, drew in his breath, then puffed it out again. "Handsome enough, your Honor," he said, "unless handsome is as handsome does. That, gentlemen, is my Lord Carnal,—that is the King's latest favorite."

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH ENTERS MY LORD CARNAL

I FELT a touch upon my shoulder, and turned to find Mistress Percy beside me. Her cheeks were white, her eyes aflame, her whole frame tense. The passion that dominated her was so clearly anger at white heat that I stared at her in amazement. Her hand slid from my shoulder to the bend of my arm and rested there. "Remember that I am your wife, sir," she said in a low, fierce voice,— "your kind and loving wife. You said that your sword was mine; now bring your wit to the same service!"

There was not time to question her meaning. The man whose position in the realm had just been announced by the Secretary, and of whom we had all heard as one not unlikely to supplant even Buckingham himself, was close at hand. The Governor, headpiece in hand, stepped forward; the other swept off his Spanish hat; both bowed profoundly.

"I speak to his Honor the Governor of Virginia?" inquired the newcomer. His tone was offhand, his hat already back upon his head.

"I am George Yeardley, at my Lord Carnal's service," answered the Governor.

The favorite raised his eyebrows. "I don't need to introduce myself, it seems," he said. "You've found that I am not the devil, after all,—at least not the Spanish Apollyon. Zooks! a hawk above

a poultry yard could n't have caused a greater commotion than did my poor little ship and my few poor birding pieces! Does every strange sail so put you through your paces?"

The Governor's color mounted. "We are not at home," he answered stiffly. "Here we are few and weak and surrounded by many dangers, and have need to be vigilant, being planted, as it were, in the very grasp of that Spain who holds Europe in awe, and who claims this land as her own. That we are here at all is proof enough of our courage, my lord."

The other shrugged his shoulders. "I don't doubt your mettle," he said negligently. "I dare say it matches your armor."

His glance had rested for a moment upon the battered headpiece and ancient rusty breastplate with which Master Jeremy Sparrow was bedight.

"It is something antique, truly, something out of fashion," remarked that worthy, — "almost as out of fashion as courtesy from guests, or respect for dignities from my-face-is-my-fortune minions and lords on carpet considerations."

The hush of consternation following this audacious speech was broken by a roar of laughter from the favorite himself. "Zounds!" he cried, "your courage is worn on your sleeve, good giant! I'll uphold you to face Spaniards, strappado, rack, galleys, and all!"

The bravado with which he spoke, the insolence of his bold glance and curled lip, the arrogance with which he flaunted that King's favor which should be a brand more infamous than the hangman's, his beauty, the pomp of his dress, — all were alike hateful. I hated him then, scarce knowing why, as I hated him afterward with reason.

He now pulled from the breast of his doublet a packet, which he proffered the Governor. "From the King, sir," he announced, in the half-fierce, half-mocking tone he had made his own. "You may read it at your leisure. He wishes you to further me in a quest upon which I have come."

The Governor took the packet with reverence. "His Majesty's will is our law," he said. "Anything that lies in our power, sir; though if you come for gold" —

The favorite laughed again. "I've come for a thing a deal more precious, Sir Governor, — a thing worth more to me than all the treasure of the Indies with Manoa and El Dorado thrown in, — to wit, the thing upon which I've set my mind. That which I determine to do, I do, sir; and the thing I determine to have, why, sooner or later, by hook or by crook, fair means or foul, I have it! I am not one to be crossed or defied with impunity."

"I do not take your meaning, my lord," said the Governor, puzzled, but courteous. "There are none here who would care to thwart, in any honorable enterprise, a nobleman so high in the King's favor. I trust that my Lord Carnal will make my poor house his own during his stay in Virginia — What's the matter, my lord?"

My lord's face was dark red, his black eyes afire, his mustaches working up and down. His white teeth had closed with a click on the loud oath which had interrupted the Governor's speech. Honest Sir George and his circle stared at this unaccountable guest in amazement not unmingled with dismay. As for myself, I knew before he spoke what had caused the oath and the fierce triumph in that handsome

face. Master Jeremy Sparrow had moved a little to one side, thus exposing to view that which his great body had before screened from observation, — namely, Mistress Jocelyn Percy.

In a moment the favorite was before her, hat in hand, bowing to the ground.

“My quest hath ended where I feared it but begun!” he cried, flushed and exultant. “I have found my Manoa sooner than I thought for. Have you no welcome for me, lady?”

She withdrew her arm from mine and curtsied to him profoundly; then stood erect, indignant and defiant, her eyes angry stars, her cheeks carnation, scorn on her smiling lips.

“I cannot welcome you as you should be welcomed, my lord,” she said in a clear voice. “I have but my bare hands. Manoa, my lord, lies far to the southward. This land is quite out of your course, and you will find here but your travail for your pains. My lord, permit me to present to you my husband, Captain Ralph Percy. I think that you know his cousin, my Lord of Northumberland.”

The red left the favorite’s cheeks, and he moved as though a blow had been dealt him by some invisible hand. Recovering himself he bowed to me, and I to him, which done we looked each other in the eyes long enough for each to see the thrown gauntlet.

“I raise it,” I said.

“And I raise it,” he answered.

“A l’outrance, I think, sir?” I continued.

“A l’outrance,” he assented.

“And between us two alone,” I suggested.

His answering smile was not good to see, nor was the tone in which he spoke to the Governor good to hear.

“It is now some weeks, sir,” he said, “since there disappeared from court a jewel, a diamond of most inestimable worth. It in some sort belonged to the King, and his Majesty, in the goodness of his heart, had promised it to a certain one, — nay, had sworn by his kingdom that it should be his. Well, sir, that man put forth his hand to claim his own — when lo! the jewel vanished! Where it went no man could tell. There was, as you may believe, a mighty running up and down and looking into dark corners, all for naught, — it was clean gone. But the man to whom that bright gem had been promised was not one easily hoodwinked or baffled. He swore to trace it, follow it, find it, and wear it.”

His bold eyes left the Governor, to rest upon the woman beside me; had he pointed to her with his hand, he could not have more surely drawn upon her the regard of that motley throng. By degrees the crowd had fallen back, leaving us three — the King’s minion, the masquerading lady, and myself — the centre of a ring of staring faces; but now she became the sole target at which all eyes were directed.

In Virginia, at this time, the women of our own race were held in high esteem. During the first years of our planting they were a greater rarity than the mocking-birds and flying squirrels, or than that weed the eating of which made fools of men. The man whose wife was loving and daring enough, or jealous enough of Indian maids, to follow him into the wilderness counted his friends by the score and never lacked for company. The first marriage in Virginia was between a laborer and a waiting maid, and yet there was as great a deal of candy stuff as if it had been the nuptials of a lieutenant of the shire. The brother of

my Lord de la Warre stood up with the groom, the brother of my Lord of Northumberland gave away the bride and was the first to kiss her, and the President himself held the caudle to their lips that night. Since that wedding there had been others. Gentlewomen made the Virginia voyage with husband or father; women signed as servants and came over, to marry in three weeks' time, the husband paying good tobacco for the wife's freedom; in the cargoes of children sent for apprentices there were many girls. And last, but not least, had come Sir Edwyn's doves. Things had changed since that day — at the memory of which men still held their sides — when Madam West, then the only woman in the town with youth and beauty, had marched down the street to the pillory, mounted it, called to her the drummer, and ordered him to summon to the square by tuck of drum every man in the place. Which done, and the amazed population at hand, gaping at the spectacle of the wife of their commander (then absent from home) pilloried before them, she gave command, through the crier, that they should take their fill of gazing, whispering, and nudging then and there, forever and a day, and then should go about their business and give her leave to mind her own.

That day was gone, but men still dropped their work to see a woman pass, still cheered when a farthingale appeared over a ship's side, and at church still devoted their eyes to other service than staring at the minister. In our short but crowded history few things had made a greater stir than the coming in of Sir Edwyn's maids. They were married now, but they were still the observed of all observers; to be pointed out to strangers, run after by children, gaped

at by the vulgar, bowed to with broad smiles by Burgess, Councilor, and commander, and openly contemned by those dames who had attained to a husband in somewhat more regular fashion. Of the ninety who had arrived two weeks before, the greater number had found husbands in the town itself or in the neighboring hundreds, so that in the crowd that had gathered to withstand the Spaniard, and had stayed to welcome the King's favorite, there were farthingales not a few.

But there were none like the woman whose hand I had kissed in the courting meadow. In the throng, that day, in her Puritan dress and amid the crowd of meaner beauties, she had passed without overmuch comment, and since that day none had seen her save Rolfe and the minister, my servants and myself; and when "The Spaniard!" was cried, men thought of other things than the beauty of women; so that until this moment she had escaped any special notice. Now all that was changed. The Governor, following the pointing of those insolent eyes, fixed his own upon her in a stare of sheer amazement; the gold-laced quality about him craned necks, lifted eyebrows, and whispered; and the rabble behind followed their betters' example with an emphasis quite their own.

"Where do you suppose that jewel went, Sir Governor," said the favorite, — "that jewel which was overnice to shine at court, which set up its will against the King's, which would have none of that one to whom it had been given?"

"I am a plain man, my lord," replied the Governor bluntly. "An it please you, give me plain words."

My lord laughed, his eyes traveling round the ring of greedily intent faces. "So be it, sir," he assented. "May I ask who is this lady?"

"She came in the Bonaventure," answered the Governor. "She was one of the treasurer's poor maids."

"With whom I trod a measure at court not long ago," said the favorite. "I had to wait for the honor until the prince had been gratified."

The Governor's round eyes grew rounder. Young Hamor, a-tiptoe behind him, drew a long, low whistle.

"In so small a community," went on my lord, "sure you must all know one another. There can be no masks worn, no false colors displayed. Everything must be as open as daylight. But we all have a past as well as a present. Now, for instance" —

I interrupted him. "In Virginia, my lord, we live in the present. At present, my lord, I like not the color of your lordship's cloak."

He stared at me, with his black brows drawn together. "It is not of your choosing nor for your wearing, sir," he rejoined haughtily.

"And your sword knot is villainously tied," I continued. "And I like not such a fire-new, bejeweled scabbard. Mine, you see, is out at heel."

"I see," he said dryly.

"The pinking of your doublet suits me not, either," I declared. "I could make it more to my liking," and I touched his Genoa three-pile with the point of my rapier.

A loud murmur arose from the crowd, and the Governor started forward, crying out, "Captain Percy! Are you mad?"

"I was never saner in my life, sir," I answered. "French fashions like me not, — that is all, — nor Englishmen that wear them. To my thinking such are scarcely true-born."

That thrust went home. All the world knew the

story of my late Lord Carnal and the waiting woman in the service of the French ambassador's wife. A gasp of admiration went up from the crowd. My lord's rapier was out, the hand that held it shaking with passion. I had my blade in my hand, but the point was upon the ground. "I'll lesson you, you madman!" he said thickly. Suddenly, without any warning, he thrust at me; had he been less blind with rage, the long score which each was to run up against the other might have ended where it began. I swerved, and the next instant with my own point sent his rapier whirling. It fell at the Governor's feet.

"Your lordship may pick it up," I remarked. "Your grasp is as firm as your honor, my lord."

He glared at me, foam upon his lips. Men were between us now, — the Governor, Francis West, Master Pory, Hamor, Wynne, — and a babel of excited voices arose. The diversion I had aimed to make had been made with a vengeance. West had me by the arm. "What a murrain is all this coil about, Ralph Percy? If you hurt hair of his head, you are lost!"

The favorite broke from the Governor's detaining hand and conciliatory speech.

"You'll fight, sir?" he cried hoarsely.

"You know that I need not now, my lord," I answered.

He stamped upon the ground with rage and shame; not true shame for that foul thrust, but shame for the sword upon the grass, for that which could be read in men's eyes, strive to hide it as they might, for the open scorn upon one face. Then, during the minute or more in which we faced each other in silence, he exerted to some effect that will of which he had

boasted. The scarlet faded from his face, his frame steadied, and he forced a smile. Also he called to his aid a certain soldierly, honest-seeming frankness of speech and manner which he could assume at will.

"Your Virginian sunshine dazzleth the eyes, sir," he said. "Of a verity it made me think you on guard. Forgive me my mistake."

I bowed. "Your lordship will find me at your service. I lodge at the minister's house, where your lordship's messenger will find me. I am going there now with my wife, who hath ridden a score of miles this morning and is weary. We give you good-day, my lord."

I bowed to him again and to the Governor, then gave my hand to Mistress Percy. The crowd opening before us, we passed through it, and crossed the parade by the west bulwark. At the further end was a bit of rising ground. This we mounted; then, before descending the other side into the lane leading to the minister's house, we turned as by one impulse and looked back. Life is like one of those endless Italian corridors, painted, picture after picture, by a master hand; and man is the traveler through it, taking his eyes from one scene but to rest them upon another. Some remain a blur in his mind; some he remembers not; for some he has but to close his eyes and he sees them again, line for line, tint for tint, the whole spirit of the piece. I close my eyes, and I see the sunshine hot and bright, the blue of the skies, the sheen of the river. The sails are white again upon boats long lost; the Santa Teresa, sunk in a fight with an Algerine rover two years afterward, rides at anchor there forever in the James, her crew in the waist and the rigging, her master and his mates on

the poop, above them the flag. I see the plain at our feet and the crowd beyond, all staring with upturned faces; and standing out from the group of perplexed and wondering dignitaries a man in black and scarlet, one hand busy at his mouth, the other clenched upon the newly restored and unsheathed sword. And I see, standing on the green hillock, hand in hand, us two, — myself and the woman so near to me, and yet so far away that a common enemy seemed our only tie.

We turned and descended to the green lane and the deserted houses. When we were quite hidden from those we had left on the bank below the fort, she dropped my hand and moved to the other side of the lane; and thus, with never a word to spare, we walked sedately on until we reached the minister's house.