

his narrow face with malignant eyes, and thin white lips drawn tightly over gleaming teeth, something infinitely repulsive, sickening to the sight as are certain reptiles to the touch.

"There are no simples or herbs of grace to be found amongst reeds and half-drowned willows," I said. "What did so learned a doctor look for in so unlikely a place?"

He shrugged his shoulders and made play with his clawlike hands, as if he understood me not. It was a lie, for I knew that he and the English tongue were sufficiently acquainted. I told him as much, and he shot at me a most venomous glance, but continued to shrug, gesticulate, and jabber in Italian. At last I saw nothing better to do than to take him, still by the collar, to the edge of the garden next the churchyard, and with the toe of my boot to send him tumbling among the graves. I watched him pick himself up, set his attire to rights, and go away in the gathering dusk, winding in and out among the graves; and then I went in to supper, and told Mistress Percy that the snake was dead.

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH I RECEIVE A WARNING AND REPOSE A TRUST

SHORTLY before daybreak I was wakened by a voice beneath my window. "Captain Percy," it cried, "the Governor wishes you at his house!" and was gone.

I dressed and left the house, disturbing no one. Hurrying through the chill dawn, I reached the square not much behind the rapid footsteps of the watch who had wakened me. About the Governor's door were horses, saddled and bridled, with grooms at their heads, men and beasts gray and indistinct, wrapped in the fog. I went up the steps and into the hall, and knocked at the door of the Governor's great room. It opened, and I entered to find Sir George, with Master Pory, Rolfe, West, and others of the Council gathered about the great centre table and talking eagerly. The Governor was but half dressed; West and Rolfe were in jack boots and coats of mail. A man, breathless with hard riding, spattered with swamp mud and torn by briers, stood, cap in hand, staring from one to the other.

"In good time, Captain Percy!" cried the Governor. "Yesterday you called the profound peace with the Indians, of which some of us boasted, the lull before the storm. Faith, it looks to-day as though you were in the right, after all!"

"What's the matter, sir?" I asked, advancing to the table.

"Matter enough!" he answered. "This man has come, post haste, from the plantations above Paspahugh. Three days ago, Morgan, the trader, was decoyed into the woods by that Paspahugh fool and bully, Nemattanow, whom they call Jack of the Feather, and there murdered. Yesterday, out of sheer bravado, the Indian turned up at Morgan's house, and Morgan's men shot him down. They buried the dog, and thought no more of it. Three hours ago, Chanco the Christian went to the commander and warned him that the Paspahughs were in a ferment, and that the warriors were painting themselves black. The commander sent off at once to me, and I see naught better to do than to dispatch you with a dozen men to bring them to their senses. But there's to be no harrying nor battle. A show of force is all that's needed,— I'll stake my head upon it. Let them see that we are not to be taken unawares, but give them fair words. That they may be the sooner placated I send with you Master Rolfe,— they'll listen to him. See that the black paint is covered with red, give them some beads and a knife or two, then come home. If you like not the look of things, find out where Opechancanough is, and I'll send him an embassy. He loves us well, and will put down any disaffection."

"There's no doubt that he loves us," I said dryly. "He loves us as a cat loves the mouse that it plays with. If we are to start at once, sir, I'll go get my horse."

"Then meet us at the neck of land," said Rolfe.

I nodded, and left the room. As I descended the steps into the growing light outside, I found Master Pory at my side.

"I kept late hours last night," he remarked, with a

portentous yawn. "Now that this business is settled, I'll go back to bed."

I walked on in silence.

"I am in your black books," he continued, with his sly, merry, sidelong glance. "You think that I was overcareful of the ground, that morning behind the church, and so unfortunately delayed matters until the Governor happened by and brought things to another guess conclusion."

"I think that you warned the Governor," I said bluntly.

He shook with laughter. "Warned him? Of course I warned him. Youth would never have seen that molehill and fairy ring and projecting root, but wisdom cometh with gray hairs, my son. D'ye not think I'll have the King's thanks?"

"Doubtless," I answered. "An the price contents you, I do not know why I should quarrel with it."

By this we were halfway down the street, and we now came upon the guest house. A window above us was unshuttered, and in the room within a light still burned. Suddenly it was extinguished. A man's face looked down upon us for a moment, then drew back; a skeleton hand was put out softly and slowly, and the shutter drawn to. Hand and face belonged to the man I had sent tumbling among the graves the evening before.

"The Italian doctor," said Master Pory.

There was something peculiar in his tone. I glanced at him, but his broad red face and twinkling eyes told me nothing. "The Italian doctor," he repeated. "If I had a friend in Captain Percy's predicament, I should bid him beware of the Italian doctor."

"Your friend would be obliged for the warning," I replied.

We walked a little further. "And I think," he said, "that I should inform this purely hypothetical friend of mine that the Italian and his patron had their heads mighty close together, last night."

"Last night?"

"Ay, last night. I went to drink with my lord, and so broke up their tête-à-tête. My lord was boisterous in his cups and not oversecret. He dropped some hints" — He broke off to indulge in one of his endless silent laughs. "I don't know why I tell you this, Captain Percy. I am on the other side, you know, — quite on the other side. But now I bethink me, I am only telling you what I should tell you were I upon your side. There's no harm in that, I hope, no disloyalty to my Lord Carnal's interests which happen to be my interests?"

I made no answer. I gave him credit both for his ignorance of the very hornbook of honor and for his large share of the milk of human kindness.

"My lord grows restive," he said, when we had gone a little further. "The Francis and John, coming in yesterday, brought court news. Out of sight, out of mind. Buckingham is making hay while the sun shines. Useth angel water for his complexion, sleepeth in a medicated mask such as the Valois used, and is grown handsomer than ever; changeth the fashion of his clothes thrice a week, which mightily pleaseth his Majesty. Whoops on the Spanish match, too, and, wonderful past all whooping, from the prince's detestation hath become his bosom friend. Small wonder if my Lord Carnal thinks it's time he was back at Whitehall."

"Let him go, then," I said. "There's his ship that brought him here."

"Ay, there's his ship," rejoined Master Pory. "A few weeks more, and the Due Return will be here with the Company's commands. D'ye think, Captain Percy, that there's the slightest doubt as to their tenor?"

"No."

"Then my lord has but to possess his soul with patience and wait for the Due Return. No doubt he'll do so."

"No doubt he'll do so," I echoed.

By this we had reached the Secretary's own door. "Fortune favor you with the Paspaheghs!" he said, with another mighty yawn. "As for me, I'll to bed. Do you ever dream, Captain Percy? I don't; mine is too good a conscience. But if I did, I should dream of an Italian doctor."

The door shut upon his red face and bright eyes. I walked rapidly on down the street to the minister's house. The light was very pale as yet, and house and garden lay beneath a veil of mist. No one was stirring. I went on through the gray wet paths to the stable, and roused Diccon.

"Saddle Black Lamoral quickly," I ordered. "There's trouble with the Paspaheghs, and I am off with Master Rolfe to settle it."

"Am I to go with you?" he asked.

I shook my head. "We have a dozen men. There's no need of more."

I left him busy with the horse, and went to the house. In the hall I found the negress strewing the floor with fresh rushes, and asked her if her mistress yet slept. In her soft half English, half Spanish, she

answered in the affirmative. I went to my own room and armed myself; then ran upstairs to the comfortable chamber where abode Master Jeremy Sparrow, surrounded by luxuries which his soul contemned. He was not there. At the foot of the stair I was met by Goodwife Allen. "The minister was called an hour ago, sir," she announced. "There's a man dying of the fever at Archer's Hope, and they sent a boat for him. He won't be back until afternoon."

I hurried past her back to the stable. Black Lamoral was saddled, and Diccon held the stirrup for me to mount.

"Good luck with the vermin, sir!" he said. "I wish I were going, too."

His tone was sullen, yet wistful. I knew that he loved danger as I loved it, and a sudden remembrance of the dangers we had faced together brought us nearer to each other than we had been for many a day.

"I don't take you," I explained, "because I have need of you here. Master Sparrow has gone to watch beside a dying man, and will not be back for hours. As for myself, there's no telling how long I may be kept. Until I come you are to guard house and garden well. You know what I mean. Your mistress is to be molested by no one."

"Very well, sir."

"One thing more. There was some talk yesterday of my taking her across the neck to the forest. When she awakes, tell her from me that I am sorry for her to lose her pleasure, but that now she could not go even were I here to take her."

"There's no danger from the Paspahghs there," he muttered.

"The Paspahghs happen not to be my only foes,"

I said curtly. "Do as I bid you without remark. Tell her that I have good reasons for desiring her to remain within doors until my return. On no account whatever is she to venture without the garden."

I gathered up the reins, and he stood back from the horse's head. When I had gone a few paces I drew rein, and, turning in my saddle, spoke to him across the dew-drenched grass. "This is a trust, Diccon," I said.

The red came into his tanned face. He raised his hand and made our old military salute. "I understand it so, my captain," he answered, and I rode away satisfied.