

## CHAPTER XIII

### IN WHICH THE SANTA TERESA DROPS DOWNSTREAM

AN hour's ride brought us to the block house standing within the forest, midway between the white plantations at Paspahugh and the village of the tribe. We found it well garrisoned, spies out, and the men inclined to make light of the black paint and the seething village.

Amongst them was Chanco the Christian. I called him to me, and we listened to his report with growing perturbation. "Thirty warriors!" I said, when he had finished. "And they are painted yellow as well as black, and have dashed their cheeks with pucocoon: it's à l'outrance, then! And the war dance is toward! If we are to pacify this hornets' nest, it's high time we set about it. Gentlemen of the block house, we are but twelve, and they may beat us back, in which case those that are left of us will fight it out with you here. Watch for us, therefore, and have a sally party ready. Forward, men!"

"One moment, Captain Percy," said Rolfe. "Chanco, where's the Emperor?"

"Five suns ago he was with the priests at Uttamussac," answered the Indian. "Yesterday, at the full sun power, he was in the lodge of the werowance of the Chickahominies. He feasts there still. The Chickahominies and the Powhatans have buried the hatchet."

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"I regret to hear it," I remarked. "Whilst they took each other's scalps, mine own felt the safer."

"I advise going direct to Opechancanough," said Rolfe.

"Since he's only a league away, so do I," I answered.

We left the block house and the clearing around it, and plunged into the depths of the forest. In these virgin woods the trees are set well apart, though linked one to the other by the omnipresent grape, and there is little undergrowth, so that we were able to make good speed. Rolfe and I rode well in front of our men. By now the sun was shining through the lower branches of the trees, and the mist was fast vanishing. The forest — around us, above us, and under the hoofs of the horses where the fallen leaves lay thick — was as yellow as gold and as red as blood.

"Rolfe," I asked, breaking a long silence, "do you credit what the Indians say of Opechancanough?"

"That he was brother to Powhatan only by adoption?"

"That, fleeing for his life, he came to Virginia, years and years ago, from some mysterious land far to the south and west?"

"I do not know," he replied thoughtfully. "He is like, and yet not like, the people whom he rules. In his eye there is the authority of mind; his features are of a nobler cast" —

"And his heart is of a darker," I said. "It is a strange and subtle savage."

"Strange enough and subtle enough, I admit," he answered, "though I believe not with you that his friendliness toward us is but a mask."

"Believe it or not, it is so," I said. "That dark,

cold, still face is a mask, and that simple-seeming amazement at horses and armor, guns and blue beads, is a mask. It is in my mind that some fair day the mask will be dropped. Here 's the village."

Until our interview with Chanco the Christian, the village of the Paspaheghs, and not the village of the Chickahominies, had been our destination, and since leaving the block house we had made good speed; but now, within the usual girdle of mulberries, we were met by the werowance and his chief men with the customary savage ceremonies. We had long since come to the conclusion that the birds of the air and the fish of the streams were Mercuries to the Indians.

The werowance received us in due form, with presents of fish and venison, cakes of chinquapin meal and gourds of pohickory, an uncouth dance by twelve of his young men and a deal of hellish noise; then, at our command, led us into the village, and to the lodge which marked its centre. Around it were gathered Opechancanough's own warriors, men from Orapax and Uttamussac and Werowocomoco, chosen for their strength and cunning; while upon the grass beneath a blood-red gum tree sat his wives, painted and tattooed, with great strings of pearl and copper about their necks. Beyond them were the women and children of the Chickahominies, and around us all the red forest.

The mat that hung before the door of the lodge was lifted, and an Indian, emerging, came forward, with a gesture of welcome. It was Nantauquas, the Lady Rebekah's brother, and the one Indian — saving always his dead sister — that was ever to my liking; a savage, indeed, but a savage as brave and chivalrous, as courteous and truthful, as a Christian knight.

Rolfe sprang from his horse, and advancing to meet the young chief embraced him. Nantauquas had been much with his sister during those her happy days at Varina, before she went with Rolfe that ill-fated voyage to England, and Rolfe loved him for her sake and for his own. "I thought you at Orapax, Nantauquas!" he exclaimed.

"I was there, my brother," said the Indian, and his voice was sweet, deep, and grave, like that of his sister. "But Opechancanough would go to Uttamussac, to the temple and the dead kings. I lead his war parties now, and I came with him. Opechancanough is within the lodge. He asks that my brother and Captain Percy come to him there."

He lifted the mat for us, and followed us into the lodge. There was the usual winding entrance, with half a dozen mats to be lifted one after the other, but at last we came to the central chamber and to the man we sought.

He sat beside a small fire burning redly in the twilight of the room. The light shone now upon the feathers in his scalp lock, now upon the triple row of pearls around his neck, now upon knife and tomahawk in his silk grass belt, now on the otterskin mantle hanging from his shoulder and drawn across his knees. How old he was no man knew. Men said that he was older than Powhatan, and Powhatan was very old when he died. But he looked a man in the prime of life; his frame was vigorous, his skin unwrinkled, his eyes bright and full. When he rose to welcome us, and Nantauquas stood beside him, there seemed not a score of years between them.

The matter upon which we had come was not one that brooked delay. We waited with what patience

we might until his long speech of welcome was finished, when, in as few words as possible, Rolfe laid before him our complaint against the Paspaheghs. The Indian listened; then said, in that voice that always made me think of some cold, still, bottomless pool lying black beneath overhanging rocks: "My brothers may go in peace. The Paspaheghs have washed off the black paint. If my brothers go to the village, they will find the peace pipe ready for their smoking."

Rolfe and I stared at each other. "I have sent messengers," continued the Emperor. "I have told the Paspaheghs of my love for the white man, and of the goodwill the white man bears the Indian. I have told them that Nemattanow was a murderer, and that his death was just. They are satisfied. Their village is as still as this beast at my feet." He pointed downward to a tame panther crouched against his moccasins. I thought it an ominous comparison.

Involuntarily we looked at Nantauquas. "It is true," he said. "I am but come from the village of the Paspaheghs. I took them the word of Opechancanough."

"Then, since the matter is settled, we may go home," I remarked, rising as I spoke. "We could, of course, have put down the Paspaheghs with one hand, giving them besides a lesson which they would not soon forget, but in the kindness of our hearts toward them and to save ourselves trouble we came to Opechancanough. For his aid in this trifling business the Governor gives him thanks."

A smile just lit the features of the Indian. It was gone in a moment. "Does not Opechancanough love the white men?" he said. "Some day he will do more than this for them."

We left the lodge and the dark Emperor within it, got to horse, and quitted the village, with its painted people, yellowing mulberries, and blood-red gum trees. Nantauquas went with us, keeping pace with Rolfe's horse, and giving us now and then, in his deep musical voice, this or that bit of woodland news. At the block house we found confirmation of the Emperor's statement. An embassy from the Paspaheghs had come with presents, and the peace pipe had been smoked. The spies, too, brought news that all warlike preparations had ceased in the village. It had sunk once more into a quietude befitting the sleepy, dreamy, hazy weather.

Rolfe and I held a short consultation. All appeared safe, but there was the possibility of a ruse. At the last it seemed best that he, who by virtue of his peculiar relations with the Indians was ever our negotiator, should remain with half our troop at the block house, while I reported to the Governor. So I left him, and Nantauquas with him, and rode back to Jamestown, reaching the town some hours sooner than I was expected.

It was after noon when I passed through the gates of the palisade, and an hour later when I finished my report to the Governor. When he at last dismissed me, I rode quickly down the street toward the minister's house. As I passed the guest house, I glanced up at the window from which, at daybreak, the Italian had looked down upon me. No one looked out now; the window was closely shuttered, and at the door beneath my lord's French rascals were conspicuously absent. A few yards further on I met my lord face to face, as he emerged from a lane that led down to the river. At sight of me he started vio-

lently, and his hand went to his mouth. I slightly bent my head, and rode on past him. At the gate of the churchyard, a stone's throw from home, I met Master Jeremy Sparrow.

"Well met!" he exclaimed. "Are the Indians quiet?"

"For the nonce. How is your sick man?"

"Very well," he answered gravely. "I closed his eyes two hours ago."

"He's dead, then," I said. "Well, he's out of his troubles, and hath that advantage over the living. Have you another call, that you travel from home so fast?"

"Why, to tell the truth," he replied, "I could not but feel uneasy when I learned just now of this commotion amongst the heathen. You must know best, but I should not have thought it a day for madam to walk in the woods; so I e'en thought I would cross the neck and bring her home."

"For madam to walk in the woods?" I said slowly. "So she walks there? With whom?"

"With Diccon and Angela," he answered. "They went before the sun was an hour high, so Goodwife Allen says. I thought that you"—

"No," I told him. "On the contrary, I left command that she should not venture outside the garden. There are more than Indians abroad."

I was white with anger; but besides anger there was fear in my heart.

"I will go at once and bring her home," I said. As I spoke, I happened to glance toward the fort and the shipping in the river beyond. Something seemed wrong with the prospect. I looked again, and saw what hated and familiar object was missing.

"Where is the Santa Teresa?" I demanded, the fear at my heart tugging harder.

"She dropped downstream this morning. I passed her as I came up from Archer's Hope, awhile ago. She's anchored in midstream off the big spring. Why did she go?"

We looked each other in the eyes, and each read the thought that neither cared to put into words.

"You can take the brown mare," I said, speaking lightly because my heart was as heavy as lead, "and we'll ride to the forest. It is all right, I dare say. Doubtless we'll find her garlanding herself with the grape, or playing with the squirrels, or asleep on the red leaves, with her head in Angela's lap."

"Doubtless," he said. "Don't lose time. I'll saddle the mare and overtake you in two minutes."