

## CHAPTER XXVII

### IN WHICH I FIND AN ADVOCATE

SHE came slowly nearer the ring of now very quiet and attentive faces until she stood beside me, but she neither looked at me nor spoke to me. She was thinner and there were heavy shadows beneath her eyes, but she was beautiful.

"I stand before gentlemen to whom, perhaps, I am not utterly unknown," she said. "Some here, perchance, have been to court, and have seen me there. Master Sandys, once, before the Queen died, you came to Greenwich to kiss her Majesty's hands; and while you waited in her antechamber you saw a young maid of honor — scarce more than a child — curled in a window seat with a book. You sat beside her, and told her wonderful tales of sunny lands and gods and nymphs. I was that maid of honor. Master Clayborne, once, hawking near Windsor, I dropped my glove. There were a many out of their saddles before it touched the ground, but a gentleman, not of our party, who had drawn his horse to one side to let us pass, was quicker than they all. Did you not think yourself well paid, sir, when you kissed the hand to which you restored the glove? All here, I think, may have heard my name. If any hath heard aught that ever I did in all my life to tarnish it, I pray him to speak now and shame me before you all!"

Clayborne started up. "I remember that day at

Windsor, lady!" he cried. "The man of whom I afterward asked your name was a most libertine courtier, and he raised his hat when he spoke of you, calling you a lily which the mire of the court could not besmirch. I will believe all good, but no harm of you, lady!"

He sat down, and Master Sandys said gravely: "Men need not be courtiers to have known of a lady of great wealth and high birth, a ward of the King's, and both beautiful and pure. I nor no man else, I think, ever heard aught of the Lady Jocelyn Leigh but what became a daughter of her line."

A murmur of assent went round the circle. The Governor, leaning forward from his seat, his wife's hand in his, gravely bent his head. "All this is known, lady," he said courteously.

She did not answer; her eyes were upon the King's favorite, and the circle waited with her.

"It is known," said my lord.

She smiled proudly. "For so much grace, thanks, my lord," she said, then addressed herself again to the Governor: "Your Honor, that is the past, the long past, the long, long past, though not a year has gone by. Then I was a girl, proud and careless; now, your Honor, I am a woman, and I stand here in the dignity of suffering and peril. I fled from England" — She paused, drew herself up, and turned upon my lord a face and form so still, and yet so expressive of noble indignation, outraged womanhood, scorn, and withal a kind of angry pity, that small wonder if he shrank as from a blow. "I left the only world I knew," she said. "I took a way low and narrow and dark and set with thorns, but the only way that I — alone and helpless and bewildered —



could find, because that I, Jocelyn Leigh, willed not to wed with you, my Lord Carnal. Why did you follow me, my lord? You knew that I loved you not. You knew my mind, and that I was weak and friendless, and you used your power. I must tell you, my lord, that you were not chivalrous, nor compassionate, nor brave" —

"I loved you!" he cried, and stretched out his arm toward her across the table. He saw no one but her, spoke to none but her. There was a fierce yearning and a hopelessness in his voice and bent head and outstretched arm that lent for the time a tragic dignity to the pageant, evil and magnificent, of his life.

"You loved me," she said. "I had rather you had hated me, my lord. I came to Virginia, your Honor, and men thought me the thing I professed myself. In the green meadow beyond the church they wooed me as such. This one came and that one, and at last a fellow, when I said him nay and bade him begone, did dare to seize my hands and kiss my lips. While I struggled one came and flung that dastard out of the way, then asked me plainly to become his wife, and there was no laugh or insult in his voice. I was wearied and fordone and desperate. . . . So I met my husband, and so I married him. That same day I told him a part of my secret, and when my Lord Carnal was come I told him all. . . . I had not met with much true love or courtesy or compassion in my life. When I saw the danger in which he stood because of me, I told him he might free himself from that coil, might swear to what they pleased, whistle me off, save himself, and I would say no word of blame. There was wine upon the table, and he filled a cup and brought it to me, and we drank of it

together. We drank of the same cup then, your Honor, and we will drink of it still. We twain were wedded, and the world strove to part us. Which of you here, in such quarrel, would not withstand the world? Lady Wyatt, would not thy husband hold thee, while he lived, against the world? Then speak for mine!"

"Frank, Frank!" cried Lady Wyatt. "They love each other!"

"If he withstood the King," went on the King's ward, "it was for his honor and for mine. If he fled from Virginia, it was because I willed it so. Had he stayed, my Lord Carnal, and had you willed to follow me again, you must have made a yet longer journey to a most distant bourne. That wild night when we fled, why did you come upon us, my lord? The moon burst forth from a black cloud, and you stood there upon the wharf above us, calling to the footsteps behind to hasten. We would have left you there in safety, and gone ourselves alone down that stream as black and strange as death. Why did you spring down the steps and grapple with the minister? And he that might have thrust you beneath the flood and drowned you there did but fling you into the boat. We wished not your company, my lord; we would willingly have gone without you. I trust, my lord, you have made honest report of this matter, and have told these gentlemen that my husband gave you, a prisoner whom he wanted not, all fair and honorable treatment. That you have done this I dare take my oath, my lord" —

She stood silent, her eyes upon his. The men around stirred, and a little flash like the glint of drawn steel went from one pair of eyes to another.



"My lord, my lord!" said the King's ward. "Long ago you won my hatred; an you would not win my contempt, speak truth this day!"

In his eyes, which he had never taken from her face, there leaped to meet the proud appeal in her own a strange fire. That he loved her with a great and evil passion, I, who needs had watched him closely, had long known. Suddenly he burst into jarring laughter. "Yea, he treated me fairly enough, damn him to everlasting hell! But he's a pirate, sweet bird; he's a pirate, and must swing as such!"

"A pirate!" she cried. "But he was none! My lord, you know he was none! Your Honor" —

The Governor interrupted her: "He made himself captain of a pirate ship, lady. He took and sunk ships of Spain."

"In what sort did he become their chief?" she cried. "In such sort, gentlemen, as the bravest of you, in like straits, would have been blithe to be, an you had had like measure of wit and daring! Your Honor, the wind before which our boat drave like a leaf, the waves that would engulf us, wrecked us upon a desert isle. There was no food or water or shelter. That night, while we slept, a pirate ship anchored off the beach, and in the morning the pirates came ashore to bury their captain. My husband met them alone, fought their would-be leaders one by one, and forced the election to fall upon himself. Well he knew that if he left not that isle their leader, he would leave it their captive; and not he alone! God's mercy, gentlemen, what other could he do? I pray you to hold him absolved from a willing embrace of that life! Sunk ships of Spain! Yea, forsooth; and how long hath it been since other English gentlemen sunk other

ships of Spain? The world hath changed indeed if to fight the Spaniard in the Indies, e'en though at home we be at peace with him, be conceived so black a crime! He fought their galleons fair and knightly, with his life in his hand; he gave quarter, and while they called him chief those pirates tortured no prisoner and wronged no woman. Had he not been there, would the ships have been taken less surely? Had he not been there, God wot, ships and ships' boats alike would have sunk or burned, and no Spanish men and women had rowed away and blessed a generous foe. A pirate! He, with me and with the minister and with my Lord Carnal, was prisoner to the pirates, and out of that danger he plucked safety for us all! Who hath so misnamed a gallant gentleman? Was it you, my lord?"

Eyes and voice were imperious, and in her cheeks burned an indignant crimson. My lord's face was set and white; he looked at her, but spoke no word.

"The Spanish ships might pass, lady," said the Governor; "but this is an English ship, with the flag of England above her."

"Yea," she said. "What then?"

The circle rustled again. The Governor loosed his wife's fingers and leaned forward. "You plead well, lady!" he exclaimed. "You might win, an Captain Percy had not seen fit to fire upon us."

A dead silence followed his words. Outside the square window a cloud passed from the face of the sun, and a great burst of sunshine entered the cabin. She stood in the heart of it, and looked a goddess angered. My lord, with his haggard face and burning eyes, slowly rose from his seat, and they faced each other.



"You told them not who fired those guns, who sunk that pirate ship?" she said. "Because he was your enemy, you held your tongue? Knight and gentleman — my Lord Carnal — my Lord Coward!"

"Honor is an empty word to me," he answered. "For you I would dive into the deepest hell, — if there be a deeper than that which burns me, day in, day out. . . . Jocelyn, Jocelyn, Jocelyn!"

"You love me so?" she said. "Then do me pleasure. Because I ask it of you, tell these men the truth." She came a step nearer, and held out her clasped hands to him. "Tell them how it was, my lord, and I will strive to hate you no longer. The harm that you have done me I will pray for strength to forgive. Ah, my lord, let me not ask in vain! Will you that I kneel to you?"

"I fix my own price," he said. "I will do what you ask, an you will let me kiss your lips."

I sprang forward with an oath. Some one behind caught both my wrists in an iron grasp and pulled me back. "Be not a fool!" growled Clayborne in my ear. "The cord's loosening fast: if you interfere, it may tighten with a jerk!" I freed my hands from his grasp. The Treasurer, sitting next him, leaned across the table and motioned to the two seamen beside the window. They left their station, and each seized me by an arm. "Be guided, Captain Percy," said Master Sandys in a low voice. "We wish you well. Let her win you through."

"First tell the truth, my lord," said the King's ward; "then come and take the reward you ask."

"Jocelyn!" I cried. "I command you" —

She turned upon me a perfectly colorless face. "All my life after I will be to you an obedient wife," she

said. "This once I pray you to hold me excused. . . . Speak, my lord."

There was the mirth of the lost in the laugh with which he turned to the Governor. "That pretty little tale, sir, that I regaled you with, the day you obligingly picked me up, was pure imagination; the wetting must have disordered my reason. A potion sweeter than the honey of Hybla, which I am about to drink, hath restored me beforehand. Gentlemen all, there was mutiny aboard that ship which so providentially sank before your very eyes. For why? The crew, who were pirates, and the captain, who was yonder gentleman, did not agree. The one wished to attack you, board you, rummage you, and slay, after recondite fashions, every mother's son of you; the other demurred, — so strongly, in fact, that his life ceased to be worth a pin's purchase. Indeed, I believe he resigned his captaincy then and there, and, declining to lift a finger against an English ship, defied them to do their worst. He had no hand in the firing of those culverins; the mutineers touched them off without so much as a 'by your leave.' His attention was otherwise occupied. Good sirs, there was not the slightest reason in nature why the ship should have struck upon that sunken reef, to the damnation of her people and the salvation of yours. Why do you suppose she diverged from the path of safety to split into slivers against that fortunate ledge?"

The men around drew in their breath, and one or two sprang to their feet. My lord laughed again. "Have you seen the pious man who left Jamestown and went aboard the pirate ship as this gentleman's lieutenant? He hath the strength of a bull. Captain Percy here had but to nod his head, and hey, presto!



the helmsman was bowled over, and the minister had the helm. The ship struck: the pirates went to hell, and you, gentlemen, were preserved to order all things well in Virginia. May she long be grateful! The man who dared that death rather than attack the ship he guessed to be the Company's is my mortal foe, whom I will yet sweep from my path, but he is not a pirate. Ay, take it down, an it please you, Master Secretary! I retreat from a most choice position, to be sure, but what care I? I see a vantage ground more to my liking. I have lost a throw, perhaps, but I will recoup ten such losses with one such kiss. By your leave, lady."

He went up to her where she stood, with hanging arms, her head a little bent, white and cold and yielding as a lady done in snow; gazed at her a moment, with his passion written in his fierce eyes and haggard, handsome face; then crushed her to him.

If I could have struck him dead, I would have done so. When her word had been kept, she released herself with a quiet and resolute dignity. As for him, he sank back into the great chair beside the Governor's, leaned an elbow on the table, and hid his eyes with one shaking hand.

The Governor rose to his feet, and motioned away the two seamen who held me fast. "We'll have no hanging this morning, gentlemen," he announced. "Captain Percy, I beg to apologize to you for words that were never meant for a brave and gallant gentleman, but for a pirate who I find does not exist. I pray you to forget them, quite."

I returned his bow, but my eyes traveled past him.

"I will allow you no words with my Lord Carnal,"

he said. "With your wife, — that is different." He moved aside with a smile.

She was standing, pale, with downcast eyes, where my lord had left her. "Jocelyn," I said. She turned toward me, crimsoned deeply, uttered a low cry, half laughter, half a sob, then covered her face with her hands. I took them away and spoke her name again, and this time she hid her face upon my breast.

A moment thus; then — for all eyes were upon her — I lifted her head, kissed her, and gave her to Lady Wyatt, whom I found at my side. "I commend my wife to your ladyship's care," I said. "As you are woman, deal sisterly by her!"

"You may trust me, sir," she made answer, the tears upon her cheeks. "I did not know, — I did not understand. . . . Dear heart, come away, — come away with Margaret Wyatt."

Clayborne opened the door of the cabin, and stood aside with a low bow. The men who had sat to judge me rose; only the King's favorite kept his seat. With Lady Wyatt's arm about her, the King's ward passed between the lines of standing gentlemen to the door, there hesitated, turned, and, facing them with I know not what of pride and shame, wistfulness of entreaty and noble challenge to belief in the face and form that were of all women's most beautiful, curtsied to them until her knee touched the floor. She was gone, and the sunlight with her.

When I turned upon that shameless lord where he sat in his evil beauty, with his honor dead before him, men came hastily in between. I put them aside with a laugh. I had but wanted to look at him. I had no sword, — already he lay beneath my challenge, — and words are weak things.



At length he rose, as arrogant as ever in his port, as evilly superb in his towering pride, and as amazingly indifferent to the thoughts of men who lied not. "This case hath wearied me," he said. "I will retire for a while to rest, and in dreams to live over a past sweetness. Give you good-day, gentles! Sir Francis Wyatt, you will remember that this gentleman did resist arrest, and that he lieth under the King's displeasure!" So saying he clapped his hat upon his head and walked out of the cabin. The Company's officers drew a long breath, as if a fresher air had come in with his departure.

"I have no choice, Captain Percy, but to keep you still under restraint, both here and when we shall reach Jamestown," said the Governor. "All that the Company, through me, can do, consistent with its duty to his Majesty, to lighten your confinement shall be done" —

"Then send him not again into the hold, Sir Francis!" exclaimed the Treasurer, with a wry face.

The Governor laughed. "Lighter and sweeter quarters shall be found. Your wife's a brave lady, Captain Percy" —

"And a passing fair one," said Clayborne under his breath.

"I left a friend below in the hold, your Honor," I said. "He came with me from Jamestown because he was my friend. The King hath never heard of him. And he's no more a pirate than I or you, your Honor. He is a minister, — a sober, meek, and godly man" —

From behind the Secretary rose the singsong of my acquaintance of the hold, Dr. John Pott. "He is Jeremy, your Honor, Jeremy who made the town

merry at Blackfriars. Your Honor remembers him? He had a sickness, and forsook the life and went into the country. He was known to the Dean of St. Paul's. All the town laughed when it heard that he had taken orders."

"Jeremy!" cried out the Treasurer. "Nick Bottom! Christopher Sly! Sir Toby Belch! Sir Francis, give me Jeremy to keep in my cabin!"

The Governor laughed. "He shall be bestowed with Captain Percy where he'll not lack for company, I warrant! Jeremy! Ben Jonson loved him; they drank together at the Mermaid."

A little later the Treasurer turned to leave my new quarters, to which he had walked beside me, glanced at the men who waited for him without, — Jeremy had not yet been brought from the hold, — and returned to my side to say, in a low voice, but with emphasis: "Captain Percy has been a long time without news from home, — from England. What would he most desire to hear?"

"Of the welfare of his Grace of Buckingham," I replied.

He smiled. "His Grace is as well as heart could desire, and as powerful. The Queen's dog now tuggeth the sow by the ears this way or that, as it pleaseth him. Since we are not to hang you as a pirate, Captain Percy, I incline to think your affairs in better posture than when you left Virginia."

"I think so too, sir," I said, and gave him thanks for his courtesy, and wished him good-day, being anxious to sit still and thank God, with my face in my hands and summer in my heart.