

I thought of a woman who used to sing, softly and sweetly, in the twilight at Weyanoke, in the firelight at the minister's house. At last the noises ceased, the light died away, and the village slept beneath a heaven that seemed somewhat deaf and blind.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN WHICH NANTAUQUAS COMES TO OUR RESCUE

A MAN who hath been a soldier and an adventurer into far and strange countries must needs have faced Death many times and in many guises. I had learned to know that grim countenance, and to have no great fear of it. And beneath the ugliness of the mask that now presented itself there was only Death at last. I was no babe to whimper at a sudden darkness, to cry out against a curtain that a Hand chose to drop between me and the life I had lived. Death frightened me not, but when I thought of one whom I should leave behind me I feared lest I should go mad. Had this thing come to me a year before, I could have slept the night through; now -- now --

I lay, bound to the log, before the open door of the lodge, and, looking through it, saw the pines waving in the night wind and the gleam of the river beneath the stars, and saw her as plainly as though she had stood there under the trees, in a flood of noon sunshine. Now she was the Jocelyn Percy of Weyanoke, now of the minister's house, now of a storm-tossed boat and a pirate ship, now of the gaol at Jamestown. One of my arms was free; I could take from within my doublet the little purple flower, and drop my face upon the hand that held it. The bloom was quite withered, and scalding tears would not give it life again.

The face that was now gay, now defiant, now pale

and suffering, became steadfastly the face that had leaned upon my breast in the Jamestown gaol, and looked at me with a mournful brightness of love and sorrow. Spring was in the land, and the summer would come, but not to us. I stretched forth my hand to the wife who was not there, and my heart lay crushed within me. She had been my wife not a year; it was but the other day that I knew she loved me —

After a while the anguish lessened, and I lay, dull and hopeless, thinking of trifling things, counting the stars between the pines. Another slow hour, and, a braver mood coming upon me, I thought of Diccon, who was in that plight because of me, and spoke to him, asking him how he did. He answered from the other side of the lodge, but the words were scarcely out of his mouth before our guard broke in upon us commanding silence. Diccon cursed them, whereupon a savage struck him across the head with the handle of a tomahawk, stunning him for a time. As soon as I heard him move I spoke again, to know if he were much hurt; when he had answered in the negative we said no more.

It was now moonlight without the lodge and very quiet. The night was far gone; already we could smell the morning, and it would come apace. Knowing the swiftness of that approach, and what the early light would bring, I strove for a courage which should be the steadfastness of the Christian, and not the vainglorious pride of the heathen. If my thoughts wandered, if her face would come athwart the verses I tried to remember, the prayer I tried to frame, perhaps He who made her lovely understood and forgave. I said the prayer I used to say when I was a child, and wished with all my heart for Jeremy.

Suddenly, in the first gray dawn, as at a trumpet's call, the village awoke. From the long, communal houses poured forth men, women, and children; fires sprang up, dispersing the mist, and a commotion arose through the length and breadth of the place. The women made haste with their cooking, and bore maize cakes and broiled fish to the warriors who sat on the ground in front of the royal lodge. Diccon and I were loosed, brought without, and allotted our share of the food. We ate sitting side by side with our captors, and Diccon, with a great cut across his head, seized the Indian girl who brought him his platter of fish, and pulling her down beside him kissed her soundly, whereat the maid seemed not ill pleased and the warriors laughed.

In the usual order of things, the meal over, tobacco should have followed. But now not a pipe was lit, and the women made haste to take away the platters and to get all things in readiness. The werowance of the Paspaheghs rose to his feet, cast aside his mantle, and began to speak. He was a man in the prime of life, of a great figure, strong as a Susquehannock, and a savage cruel and crafty beyond measure. Over his breast, stained with strange figures, hung a chain of small bones, and the scalp locks of his enemies fringed his moccasins. His tribe being the nearest to Jamestown, and in frequent altercation with us, I had heard him speak many times, and knew his power over the passions of his people. No player could be more skillful in gesture and expression, no poet more nice in the choice of words, no general more quick to raise a wild enthusiasm in the soldiers to whom he called. All Indians are eloquent, but this savage was a leader among them.

He spoke now to some effect. Commencing with a day in the moon of blossoms when for the first time winged canoes brought white men into the Powhatan, he came down through year after year to the present hour, ceased, and stood in silence, regarding his triumph. It was complete. In its wild excitement the village was ready then and there to make an end of us who had sprung to our feet and stood with our backs against a great bay tree, facing the maddened throng. So much the best for us would it be if the tomahawks left the hands that were drawn back to throw, if the knives that were flourished in our faces should be buried to the haft in our hearts, that we courted death, striving with word and look to infuriate our executioners to the point of forgetting their former purpose in the lust for instant vengeance. It was not to be. The werowance spoke again, pointing to the hills with the black houses upon them, dimly seen through the mist. A moment, and the hands clenched upon the weapons fell; another, and we were upon the march.

As one man, the village swept through the forest toward the rising ground that was but a few bowshots away. The young men bounded ahead to make preparation; but the approved warriors and the old men went more sedately, and with them walked Diccon and I, as steady of step as they. The women and children, for the most part brought up the rear, though a few impatient hags ran past us, calling the men tortoisés who would never reach the goal. One of these women bore a great burning torch, the flame and smoke streaming over her shoulder as she ran. Others carried pieces of bark heaped with the slivers of pine of which every wigwam has store.

The sun was yet to rise when we reached a hollow amongst the low red hills. Above us were the three long houses in which they keep the image of Okee and the mummies of their kings. These temples faced the crimson east, and the mist was yet about them. Hideous priests, painted over with strange devices, the stuffed skins of snakes knotted about their heads, in their hands great rattles which they shook vehemently, rushed through the doors and down the bank to meet us, and began to dance around us, contorting their bodies, throwing up their arms, and making a hellish noise. Diccon stared at them, shrugged his shoulders, and with a grunt of contempt sat down upon a fallen tree to watch the enemy's manœuvres.

The place was a natural amphitheatre, well fitted for a spectacle. Those Indians who could not crowd into the narrow level spread themselves over the rising ground, and looked down with fierce laughter upon the driving of the stakes which the young men brought. The women and children scattered into the woods beyond the cleft between the hills, and returned bearing great armfuls of dry branches. The hollow rang to the exultation of the playgoers. Taunting laughter, cries of savage triumph, the shaking of the rattles, and the furious beating of two great drums combined to make a clamor deafening to stupor. And above the hollow was the angry reddening of the heavens, and the white mist curling up like smoke.

I sat down beside Diccon on the log. Beneath it there were growing tufts of a pale blue, slender-stemmed flower. I plucked a handful of the blossoms, and thought how blue they would look against the whiteness of her hand; then dropped them in a sudden shame that in that hour I was so little steadfast.

to things which were not of earth. I did not speak to Diccon, nor he to me. There seemed no need of speech. In the pandemonium to which the world had narrowed, the one familiar, matter-of-course thing was that he and I were to die together.

The stakes were in the ground and painted red, the wood properly arranged. The Indian woman who held the torch that was to light the pile ran past us, whirling the wood around her head to make it blaze more fiercely. As she went by she lowered the brand and slowly dragged it across my wrists. The beating of the drums suddenly ceased, and the loud voices died away. To Indians no music is so sweet as the cry of an enemy; if they have wrung it from a brave man who has striven to endure, so much the better. They were very still now, because they would not lose so much as a drawing in of the breath.

Seeing that they were coming for us, Diccon and I rose to await them. When they were nearly upon us I turned to him and held out my hand.

He made no motion to take it. Instead he stood with fixed eyes looking past me and slightly upwards. A sudden pallor had overspread the bronze of his face. "There's a verse somewhere," he said in a quiet voice, — "it's in the Bible, I think, — I heard it once long ago, before I was lost: '*I will look unto the hills from whence cometh my help*' — Look, sir!"

I turned and followed with my eyes the pointing of his finger. In front of us the bank rose steeply, bare to the summit, — no trees, only the red earth, with here and there a low growth of leafless bushes. Behind it was the eastern sky. Upon the crest, against the sunrise, stood the figure of a man, — an Indian. From one shoulder hung an otterskin, and a great bow

was in his hand. His limbs were bare, and as he stood motionless, bathed in the rosy light, he looked like some bronze god, perfect from the beaded moccasins to the calm, uneager face below the feathered headdress. He had but just risen above the brow of the hill; the Indians in the hollow saw him not.

While Diccon and I stared our tormentors were upon us. They came a dozen or more at once, and we had no weapons. Two hung upon my arms, while a third laid hold of my doublet to rend it from me. An arrow whistled over our heads and stuck into a tree behind us. The hands that clutched me dropped, and with a yell the busy throng turned their faces in the direction whence had come the arrow.

The Indian who had sent that dart before him was descending the bank. An instant's breathless hush while they stared at the solitary figure; then the dark forms bent forward for the rush straightened, and there arose a loud cry of recognition. "The son of Powhatan! The son of Powhatan!"

He came down the hillside to the level of the hollow, the authority of his look and gesture making way for him through the crowd that surged this way and that, and walked up to us where we stood, hemmed round, but no longer in the clutch of our enemies. "It was a very big wolf this time, Captain Percy," he said.

"You were never more welcome, Nantauquas," I answered, — "unless, indeed, the wolf intends making a meal of three instead of two."

He smiled. "The wolf will go hungry to-day." Taking my hand in his he turned to his frowning countrymen. "Men of the Pamunkeys!" he cried. "This is Nantauquas' friend, and so the friend of all

the tribes that called Powhatan 'father.' The fire is not for him nor for his servant; keep it for the Monacans and for the dogs of the Long House! The calumet is for the friend of Nantauquas, and the dance of the maidens, the noblest buck and the best of the weirs" —

There was a surging forward of the Indians, and a fierce murmur of dissent. The werowance, standing out from the throng, lifted his voice. "There was a time," he cried, "when Nantauquas was the panther crouched upon the bough above the leader of the herd; now Nantauquas is a tame panther and rolls at the white men's feet! There was a time when the word of the son of Powhatan weighed more than the lives of many dogs such as these, but now I know not why we should put out the fire at his command! He is war chief no longer, for Opechancanough will have no tame panther to lead the tribes. Opechancanough is our head, and Opechancanough kindleth a fire indeed! We will give to this one what fuel we choose, and to-night Nantauquas may look for the bones of the white men!"

He ended, and a great clamor arose. The Paspaheghs would have cast themselves upon us again but for a sudden action of the young chief, who had stood motionless, with raised head and unmoved face, during the werowance's bitter speech. Now he flung up his hand, and in it was a bracelet of gold carved and twisted like a coiled snake and set with a green stone. I had never seen the toy before, but evidently others had done so. The excited voices fell, and the Indians, Pamunkeys and Paspaheghs alike, stood as though turned to stone.

Nantauquas smiled coldly. "This day hath Ope-

chancanough made me war chief again. We have smoked the peace pipe together — my father's brother and I — in the starlight, sitting before his lodge, with the wide marshes and the river dark at our feet. Singing birds in the forest have been many; evil tales have they told; Opechancanough has stopped his ears against their false singing. My friends are his friends, my brother is his brother, my word is his word: witness the armlet that hath no like; that Opechancanough brought with him when he came from no man knows where to the land of the Powhatans, many Huskanawings ago; that no white men but these have ever seen. Opechancanough is at hand; he comes through the forest with his two hundred warriors that are as tall as Susquehannocks, and as brave as the children of Wahunsonacock. He comes to the temples to pray to Kiwassa for a great hunting. Will you, when you lie at his feet, that he ask you, 'Where is the friend of my friend, of my war chief, of the Panther who is one with me again?'"

There came a long, deep breath from the Indians, then a silence, in which they fell back, slowly and sullenly; whipped hounds, but with the will to break that leash of fear.

"Hark!" said Nantauquas, smiling. "I hear Opechancanough and his warriors coming over the leaves."

The noise of many footsteps was indeed audible, coming toward the hollow from the woods beyond. With a burst of cries, the priests and the conjurer whirled away to bear the welcome of Okee to the royal worshiper, and at their heels went the chief men of the Pamunkeys. The werowance of the Paspaheghs was one that sailed with the wind; he listened

to the deepening sound, and glanced at the son of Powhatan where he stood, calm and confident, then smoothed his own countenance and made a most pacific speech, in which all the blame of the late proceedings was laid upon the singing birds. When he had done speaking, the young men tore the stakes from the earth and threw them into a thicket, while the women plucked apart the newly kindled fire and flung the brands into a little near-by stream, where they went out in a cloud of hissing steam.

I turned to the Indian who had wrought this miracle. "Art sure it is not a dream, Nantauquas?" I said. "I think that Opechancanough would not lift a finger to save me from all the deaths the tribes could invent."

"Opechancanough is very wise," he answered quietly. "He says that now the English will believe in his love indeed when they see that he holds dear even one who might be called his enemy, who hath spoken against him at the Englishmen's council fire. He says that for five suns Captain Percy shall feast with Opechancanough, and that then he shall be sent back free to Jamestown. He thinks that then Captain Percy will not speak against him any more, calling his love to the white men only words with no good deeds behind."

He spoke simply, out of the nobility of his nature, believing his own speech. I that was older, and had more knowledge of men and the masks that they wear, was but half deceived. My belief in the hatred of the dark Emperor was not shaken, and I looked yet to find the drop of poison within this honey flower. How poisoned was that bloom God knows I could not guess!

"When you were missed, three suns ago," Nantauquas went on, "I and my brother tracked you to the hut beside the forest, where we found only the dead panther. There we struck the trail of the Paspahghs; but presently we came to running water, and the trail was gone."

"We walked up the bed of the stream for half the night," I said.

The Indian nodded. "I know. My brother went back to Jamestown for men and boats and guns to go to the Paspahgh village and up the Powhatan. He was wise with the wisdom of the white men, but I, who needed no gun, and who would not fight against my own people, I stepped into the stream and walked up it until past the full sun power. Then I found a broken twig and the print of a moccasin, half hidden by a bush, overlooked when the other prints were smoothed away. I left the stream and followed the trail until it was broken again. I looked for it no more then, for I knew that the Paspahghs had turned their faces toward Uttamussac, and that they would make a fire where many others had been made, in the hollow below the three temples. Instead I went with speed to seek Opechancanough. Yesterday, when the sun was low, I found him, sitting in his lodge above the marshes and the colored river. We smoked the peace pipe together, and I am his war chief again. I asked for the green stone, that I might show it to the Paspahghs for a sign. He gave it, but he willed to come to Uttamussac with me."

"I owe you my life," I said, with my hand upon his. "I and Diccon" —

What I would have said he put aside with a fine gesture. "Captain Percy is my friend. My brother

loves him, and he was kind to Matoax when she was brought prisoner to Jamestown. I am glad that I could pull off this wolf."

"Tell me one thing," I asked. "Before you left Jamestown, had you heard aught of my wife or of my enemy?"

He shook his head. "At sunrise, the commander came to rouse my brother, crying out that you had broken gaol and were nowhere to be found, and that the man you hate was lying within the guest house, sorely torn by some beast of the forest. My brother and I followed your trail at once; the town was scarce awake when we left it behind us, — and I did not return."

By this we three were alone in the hollow, for all the savages, men and women, had gone forth to meet the Indian whose word was law from the falls of the far west to the Chesapeake. The sun now rode above the low hills, pouring its gold into the hollow and brightening all the world besides. The little stream flashed diamonds, and the carven devils upon the black houses above us were frightful no longer. There was not a menace anywhere from the cloudless skies to the sweet and plaintive chant to *Kiwassa*, sung by women and floating to us from the woods beyond the hollow. The singing grew nearer, and the rustling of the leaves beneath many feet more loud and deep; then all noise ceased, and *Opechancanough* entered the hollow alone. An eagle feather was thrust through his scalp lock; over his naked breast, that was neither painted nor pricked into strange figures, hung a triple row of pearls; his mantle was woven of bluebird feathers, as soft and sleek as satin. The face of this barbarian was dark, cold, and impassive as death. Behind that

changeless mask, as in a safe retreat, the supersubtle devil that was the man might plot destruction and plan the laying of dreadful mines. He had dignity and courage, — no man denied him that. I suppose he thought that he and his had wrongs: God knows! perhaps they had. But if ever we were hard or unjust in our dealings with the savages, — I say not that this was the case, — at least we were not treacherous and dealt not in Judas kisses.

I stepped forward, and met him on the spot where the fire had been. For a minute neither spoke. It was true that I had striven against him many a time, and I knew that he knew it. It was also true that without his aid *Nantauquas* could not have rescued us from that dire peril. And it was again the truth that an Indian neither forgives nor forgets. He was my saviour, and I knew that mercy had been shown for some dark reason which I could not divine. Yet I owed him thanks, and gave them as shortly and simply as I could.

He heard me out with neither liking nor disliking nor any other emotion written upon his face; but when I had finished, as though he suddenly bethought himself, he smiled and held out his hand, white-man fashion. Now, when a man's lips widen I look into his eyes. The eyes of *Opechancanough* were as fathomless as a pool at midnight, and as devoid of mirth or friendliness as the staring orbs of the carven imps upon the temple corners.

"Singing birds have lied to Captain Percy," he said, and his voice was like his eyes. "*Opechancanough* thinks that Captain Percy will never listen to them again. The chief of the *Powhatans* is a lover of the white men, of the English, and of other white

men, — if there are others. He would call the Englishmen his brothers, and be taught of them how to rule, and who to pray to” —

“Let Opechancanough go with me to-day to Jamestown,” I said. “He hath the wisdom of the woods; let him come and gain that of the town.”

The Emperor smiled again. “I will come to Jamestown soon, but not to-day nor to-morrow nor the next day. And Captain Percy must smoke the peace pipe in my lodge above the Pamunkey, and watch my young men and maidens dance, and eat with me five days. Then he may go back to Jamestown with presents for the great white father there, and with a message that Opechancanough is coming soon to learn of the white men.”

I could have gnashed my teeth at that delay when she must think me dead, but it would have been the madness of folly to show the impatience which I felt. I too could smile with my lips when occasion drove, and drink a bitter draught as though my soul delighted in it. Blithe enough to all seeming, and with as few inward misgivings as the case called for, Diccon and I went with the subtle Emperor and the young chief he had bound to himself once more, and with their fierce train, back to that village which we had never thought to see again. A day and a night we stayed there; then Opechancanough sent away the Paspaheghs, — where we knew not, — and taking us with him went to his own village above the great marshes of the Pamunkey.

CHAPTER XXXII

IN WHICH WE ARE THE GUESTS OF AN EMPEROR

I HAD before this spent days among the Indians, on voyages of discovery, as conqueror, as negotiator for food, exchanging blue beads for corn and turkeys. Other Englishmen had been with me. Knowing those with whom we dealt for sly and fierce heathen, friends to-day, to-morrow deadly foes, we kept our muskets ready and our eyes and ears open, and, what with the danger and the novelty and the bold wild life, managed to extract some merriment as well as profit from these visits. It was different now.

Day after day I ate my heart out in that cursed village. The feasting and the hunting and the triumph, the wild songs and wilder dances, the fantastic mummeries, the sudden rages, the sudden laughter, the great fires with their rings of painted warriors, the sleepless sentinels, the wide marshes that could not be crossed by night, the leaves that rustled so loudly beneath the lightest footfall, the monotonous days, the endless nights when I thought of her grief, of her peril, maybe, — it was an evil dream, and for my own pleasure I could not wake too soon.

Should we ever wake? Should we not sink from that dream without pause into a deeper sleep whence there would be no waking? It was a question that I asked myself each morning, half looking to find another hollow between the hills before the night should