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# Saint Mary's Beacon

VOL. 70.

LEONARDTOWN, MD., THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 1909.

4447

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### ROB OF THE BOWL.

#### A LEGEND OF ST. INIGO'S.

BY JOHN P. KENNEDY.

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY,  
Publishers, Washington Square,  
Philadelphia, Sept. 25, 1908.  
FRANCIS V. KING, Ed.,  
Leonardtown, Md.

DEAR SIR:—Replying to yours of the 17th, I must state that all interest in the author's "Rob of the Bowl" is now in the hands of the publisher, who has no correspondence on the subject for some years and does not know where to direct you. However, the work is out of copyright, and there is no reason why you might not reprint it without permission.  
Yours very truly,  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY, Inc.

JOHN PENDELTON KENNEDY, LL. D., author, was born in Baltimore, Aug. 18, 1876; died Oct. 20, 1908. He graduated at the University of Maryland in 1898, and served in the Maryland State Militia in 1898-99; member of Congress 1899-1901; president of the Maryland Historical Society in 1900, and was Chairman of the House Committee on Commerce in 1901. He was again elected to the Maryland Legislature and was Secretary of the House in 1902-03. He was appointed Commodore of the Maryland State Militia in 1903, and was President of the University of Maryland in 1904. He was also President of the Historical Society, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Peabody Academy, Baltimore, and of the Peabody Educational Fund. Was the author of several novels and a Life of William Wirt.

(Reprint from the Lippincott edition of 1908.)

#### CHAPTER XII.

There remains a rugged trunk, diamond and unglazed, waiting the bursting of the final bolt to slip it to oblivion.

THE DOOR OF DAVENPORT.

The shore of the Chesapeake between Cape St. Michael and the northern headland at the mouth of the Potomac was denominated by the early settlers—and the Patuxent, is generally flat, and distinguished by a clear pebbly beach or strand. The shore, comprising about twenty miles is intersected by a single creek, that of St. Jerome, which enters the bay some five or six miles north of the Potomac. The line of beach, which I have referred to, is here and there relieved by small elevations which in any other region would scarce deserve the name, but which are sufficiently prominent in this locality to attract remark. From the general level of the country they rise high enough to afford a clear prospect over the wide waters, and no less to distinguish the landward perspective to the mariner whose vessel approaches the varieties of landscape as he holds his course up the bay. At a few points these small hills terminate immediately upon the tide in the abrupt form of a cliff, and, at others, take the shape of a knoll sinking away by a rapid, but grass-covered, declivity to the strand. This latter feature is observable in the vicinity of St. Jerome's, where the slope falls somewhat abruptly to the level of the tide, leaving something above fifty paces in width of low ground between its base and the ordinary water-mark. It was upon this flat that, in ancient times, stood the dwelling-house of Paul Kelpy the fisherman—a long, low building of deal boards, constructed somewhat in the shape of a warehouse or magazine. Some way up the beach, and farther up the beach, so sheltered from the brow of the slope as scarcely to be seen amongst the natural shrubbery that shaded it, stood a cottage or hut of very humble pretensions. It was so low that a man of ordinary height, while standing at the door, might lay his hand upon the eaves of the roof, and, corresponding to its elevation, it was so scanty in space as to afford but two apartments, of which the largest was not above ten feet square. It was strongly built of hewn logs, and the door, strengthened by nails thickly studded over its surface, was further fortified by a heavy padlock, which rendered it sufficiently impregnable against a sharper assault than might be counted on from such an ordinary proprietor of such a dwelling.

A small enclosure surrounded the hut and furnished ground for some common garden plants which were not neglected in their culture. A few acres, on the higher plain above the bank, exhibited signs of husbandry; and the small nets and other fishing tackle disposed about the curtilage, together with a skiff drawn up on the sand, gave evidence of the constant thrift by which the occupant of the hut obtained a livelihood.

To this spot I propose to introduce my reader, the day preceding that at which my story has been opened. It was about an hour before sunset, and a light drizzling rain, with a steady wind from the north-east, infused a chilly gloom into their, and heightened the tone of solitude which prevailed over the scene. A thin rind of smoke which rose from the clumsy chimney of the hut gave a sign of habitation to the premises, and this was further confirmed by the presence of a large and cross-visaged mastiff bitch, whose heavy head might be discerned thrust forth from beneath the sill of the gable,—a sullen warder of this sullen place of strength. The waves, now propelled upon the shore, and broke almost at the door of the hut, with a hoarse and harsh and ceaseless plash. Far out over the bay, the white caps of the wind-driven surge floated like changing snow-drifts upon the surface of the waters. The water lowly rose in squanders above this murky waste and struggled to windward, in a slight so low as frequently to abate them from the night in the spray. An old bald eagle perched on the loftiest branch of a lightning-

given tree, immediately upon the bank above the hut, kept anxious watch upon her nest which, built in the highest fork, rocked to and fro in the breeze, whilst her screams of warning to her young seemed to answer to the din of the waters.

In the larger apartment of the hut a few fagots blazed upon the hearth, supplying heat to a pot that simmered above them, the care of which together with order culinary operations, engaged the attention of a brown, haggard and weather-beaten woman, who piled this household duty with a silent and mechanical thrift. She was not the only tenant of the dwelling. Remote from the hearth, and immediately below a small window, sat, apparently upon the floor, a figure eminently calculated for the unpleasing observation. His features were those of a man of seventy, sharp, shrewd and imprinted with a deep trace of care. His frame indicated the possession, at an earlier period of his life, of the highest degree of strength; it was broad in the shoulders, ample in chest, and still muscular, although deprived of its roundness by age.

His dress, of coarse green serge, made into a doublet with skirts that fell both front and rear, secured by a leathern belt, was so contrived as to conceal, in his present posture, his lower extremities. A broad ruff received his locks of iron gray, which fell over his back in crisp wiry curls; a thick grizzly beard, of the same hue, gave an elongation to his countenance which imparted to the observer the unpleasant impression of a head disproportionately large for the body, at least as seen in its present aspect. His eyes, dark and unusually clear, were sunk deep in their sockets, whilst a shaggy and matted brow, overarching the like a porch, gave sometimes an almost preternatural brilliancy to their quick and changeful glances—like the sparkling of water when agitated in a well. It was observable from the drooping tip of the upper jaw that he had lost his teeth, and this had given a tendency to the strong furrowed lines and seams, with which his features were marked, to converge towards the mouth.

His girdle sustained a long knife which apparently constituted a part of his ordinary equipment; and the oblique flash of his eye, and tremulous motion of his thin lip, betrayed the ferment, from which one might infer that the weapon of offense was not merely an ornament of the person.

The individual described in this summary was familiar to report, throughout the province, as The Cripple. His true name was supposed to be Robert Swale,—but this was almost lost in the pervading popular designation of Rob of the Bowl, or Trencher Rob—an appellation which he had borne ever since his arrival in the province, now some fifteen years ago. Of his history but little was known, and the little was duly mystified, in the public repute, by the common tendency in the vulgar mind to make the most of any circumstance of suspicion.

The story went that he had been shipwrecked, on a winter voyage, upon this coast, and after suffering incredible hardships, had saved his life at the expense of the loss of both legs by frost. In this manner the condition he had reached the shore of the province, and sometime afterwards built the hut in which he now dwelt, near the mouth of St. Jerome's. Here he had passed many years, without attracting other notice than such as the stunted charity of the world affords when it is exercised upon the fate or fortunes of an obnoxious recluse. This observation had found out that Rob was occasionally possessed of good merchantable commodities much in request by the inhabitants of the port, and dark whispers were sometimes circulated touching the manner in which he came by them. These surmises were not made topics of public discussion for two reasons;—first, because it was not inconvenient or unprofitable to the traders in the secret to deal with Rob; and secondly, Rob was not a man to allow this indulgence of idle speculation; he was of an irascible temper, free to strike when crossed, and, what was still more to be feared, had friends who were not unwilling to take up his quarrel.

The loss of his legs was supplied by a wooden bowl or trencher, of an elliptical shape, to which his thighs were attached by a strap, and this rude contrivance was swayed forward, when the owner chose, by the aid of two short crutches, which enabled him to lift himself from the ground and assume a progressive motion. It was to the exercise which this mode of locomotion imposed upon his upper limbs, that the unusual breadth and squareness of his figure about the shoulders, as well as the visible manifestations of strength of arm for which he was remarkable, were in part, perhaps, to be attributed. Use had made him expert in the management of his bowl, and he could keep pace pretty fairly with an ordinary walker. The Cripple was a man of unsocial habits and ascetic life, although there were times in which his severe temper relaxed into an approach to companionable enjoyment, and then his

intercourse with the few who had access to him was marked by a sarcastic humor and keen ridicule of the domestic, which showed some grudge against the world, and, at the same time, denoted conversancy with mankind and by no means a deficiency of education. But, in general, his vein was peevish, and apt to vent itself in indiscriminate insult or stern reproof.

A small painting of St. Romain at his devotions, by the hand of Salvator himself, hung over a dressing table in the back room of the hut in which the bed of The Cripple was placed; and this exquisite gem of art, which the possessor seemed daily to appreciate, was surmounted by a crucifix, indicating the religious faith in which he worshipped. This might be gathered also from a curious antique pix, of heavy gilded metal, a porous misal with silver class, a whole volume of the lives of the saints, and other furniture of the like nature, all of which denoted that the ingredient of a religious devotee formed an element in his singular compound of character.

The superiority of his mind and attainments over those of the mass of the inhabitants of the province had contributed to render The Cripple an object of some interest as well as of distrust amongst them, and this sentiment was heightened into one approaching to vulgar awe, by the reputation of the person who had always been somewhat in his confidence, and now attended him as his servitor and only domestic. This person was the ungainly and repulsive beldam whom I have already noticed as ministering in the household concerns of the hut. She was a woman who had long maintained a most unenviable fame as The Woman of Warrington, in the small hamlet of that name on the Cliffs of Patuxent, from whence she had been recently transplanted to perform the domestic drudgery in which we have found her. Her habitation was a rude hovel some few hundred paces distant from the hut of The Cripple, on the margin of St. Jerome's creek, and within gunshot of the rear of the Black Chapel. To this hovel, after her daily work was done, she retired to pass the night, leaving her master or patron to that solitude which he seemed to prefer to any society. The surly mastiff bitch, we have noticed, alternately kept guard at the hut, master and domestic,—roving between the two in nightly patrol, with a growl and unsocial fidelity,—and suitable go-between to so strange a pair. It will not be wondered at, that, in a superstitious age, such an association as this of The Cripple and the beldam, in the vicinity of such a spot, desecrated, as the fisherman's lodge had been, by the acting of a horrible tragedy, should excite, far and wide amongst the people, a sentiment of terror sufficiently potent to turn the steps of the wayfarer, as the shades of evening fell around him, aside from the path that led to St. Jerome's. The Cripple, at the time I have chosen to present him to my reader, was seated, as I have said immediately beneath the window. A pair of spectacles assisted his vision as he perused a packet of papers, several of which lay scattered around him. The dim light for a while perplexed his labor, and he had directed the door to be thrown wide open that he might take advantage of the last moment before the approaching twilight should arrest his occupation. Whilst thus employed, the deadened sound of a shot boomed across the bay.

"Hal!" he exclaimed as he threw aside the paper in his hand and directed his eyes towards the water; "there is a signal—an ill bird is flying homeward. Did you not hear that shot, woman?"

"Those can't it else?" demanded The Cripple sharply, as he swung himself forward to the door-sill and shook his locks from his brow in the act of straining his sight across the dim surface of the bay. "Ay, ay; there is the path that leads to St. Jerome's;—Dickon, sure enough!—The brigantine is in the offing. Cocklescraft is coming in with the speed of a gull. He comes full freighted—full freighted, as is his wont, with the wiles of the plunderer. What dole hath he done this night?—what more wealthy knave than himself hath he robbed?—Mischief, mischief, mischief—good store of it, I'll be sworn;—and a keener knife than himself he hath not found in his wide venture. He will be coming ashore to visit The Cripple, hal—he shall be welcome—as he ever hath been. We are comrades,—we are cronies, and merry in our divisions—The Skipper and the Cripple—merry men both!"

These uprisings of the inner thoughts of the man were uttered in various tones—some moment scarce audible, the next with an emphatic enunciation, as if addressed to his companion in the hut, and sometimes with the semblance of a laugh, or rather chuckle, which was worm-wood in its accent, and brought the reum from his eye down his cheek. The beldam, accustomed to this habit of self-communion in The Cripple, apparently heeded not these mutterings, until he, at length, accosted her with a command—"Mistress Kate, double the contents of your pot;—the skipper and some of his men will be here presently, as keen and trenchant as their own cutlasses. They will be hungry, woman,—as these salt-water monsters always

are for earthy provender." "Such sharp-set cattle should bring their provender with them," replied the domestic, as she went about increasing her store of provision in compliance with her master's directions.

"Or the good red gold, or the good red gold, old jade," interrupted The Cripple. "The skipper doth not shrink in the girdle from the disease of lean purse, and is therefore worthy of our worshipful entertainment. So goes the world, and we will be in the fashion? Though the world's maidens drive him either as before a tempest, yet, come he rich in his gear; he shall have princely reception. I am king of this castle, and ordain it. Is he taking in sail?—is he seeking an anchorage? Ha, he understands his craft, and will be with us anon," he continued, as he marked the movements of the approaching vessel.

There might be dimly seen, nearly abreast of St. Jerome's, a close-reefed brig holding her course before a fair wind directly across the bay towards the hut of The Cripple. She was, at intervals, lost to view behind the thickening haze, and as often reappeared as she bent under the fresh northeast breeze and bounded rapidly with the waves towards the lee shore. It was after the hour of sunset when the tenants of the hut were just able to discern, in the murky gloom of the near nightfall, that she had lowered sail and swung round with her head seaward, at an anchorage some two miles out in the bay.

"Quick, Mistress Kate, and kindle some brushwood on the shore," said the master of the hut. "It grows dark, and the boat's crew will need a signal to steer by." The woman gathered a handful of fagots, and kindling them into a blaze, transferred them to the beach in front of the hut, where, notwithstanding the rain, they burned with a steady light. This illumination had not subsided before the stroke of oars rose above the din of the waves; and the boat with her crew, sheeted with the broad glare of the signal fire, suddenly appeared mounded on the surf, surrounded with foam and spray, and in the same instant was heard grating on the gravel of the beach.

Cocklescraft, with two seamen, entered the hut. The skipper was now in the prime of youthful manhood; tall, active and strong, with the free step and erect bearing that no less denoted the fearlessness of his nature than pride in the consciousness of such a quality. His face, tinged with a deep brown hue, was not unhandsome, although an expression of sensuality, to some extent, deprived it of its claim to be admired. A brilliant eye suffered the same disparagement by its over-ready defiance, which told of a temper obstinately prone to quarrel. The whole physiognomy wanted gentleness, although a fine set of teeth, a regular profile, and a comeliness for exposure to the weather, was uncommonly good, would unquestionably have won the repute of a high degree of masculine beauty.

A scarlet jacket fitted close across the breast, wide breeches of ash-colored stuff, hanging in the fashion of a kilt or kilt to the knees, tight gray hose, accurately displaying the leg in all its fine proportions, and light shoes, furnished a costume well adapted to the lithe and sinewy figure of the wearer. A jet black and glossy moustache, and tuft below the nether lip, gave a martial aspect to his face, which had, nevertheless, the smoothness of skin of a boy. He wore in his embroidered belt, a pair of pistols richly mounted with chased silver and costly jewels, and his person was somewhat gorgeously and, in his present occupation, inappropriately ornamented with gems and chains of gold. His hair, in almost feminine luxuriance, descended in ringlets upon his neck. A large hat made of the palm leaf, broad enough to shade his face and shoulders, but ill assorted with the rest of his apparel, and was still less adapted to the season and the latitude he was in, though it threw into the general expression of his figure that trait of the swaggering companion which was, in fact, somewhat prominent in his character.

"How dost, friend Rob?" was his salutation in crossing the threshold; "how dost, Rob of the Bowl, or Rob of the Trencher?—bowl or trencher,—either likes me; I am sworn friends to both." he continued as he stooped and took The Cripple's hand. "Ay, thy conscience has never stayed thee," was The Cripple's reply, as he received the skipper's grasp, "when thou wouldst put thy hand in another man's bowl or trencher,—and especially, Dickon, if they were made of gold. Thou hast an appetite for such dishes. How now! where do you come from?" "That shall be answered variously, friend of the wooden platter. If you speak to me as Meinher Von Cogglescraft, I am from Antwerp, master of the Olive Branch, with a comfortable cargo of Hollands, and wines French and Rhenish, old gray-beard, and some solid articles of Dutch bulk. But if it be to me as Caballer Don Ricardo,—le beso las manos—I am from Tortuga and the Keys, Senior Captain del Escalador (there is much virtue in a painted cloth) with a choice assortment of crockeries, which shall set every vench in the province agog. I have rare velvets of Genoa, piled and out in the choicest fashions: I

have programs, and stuffs, and sarasnets, with a whole inventory of woman trumpery—the very piece of a Spanish bark, bound from Naples to the islands, which was so foolish as to read my flag by its seeming, and just to drop into the Chafing Dish when he thought he was getting a convey to help him out of the way of the too pressing and inquisitive courtesies of certain lurking friends of ours in the Keys. I have, besides, some trinkets, which are none the worse for having been blessed by the Church. You shall have a choice, Rob, select out your chamber with some santly gems."

"Hal, I guessed thy devilry, Dickon," said Rob, with a laugh which, as always happened when much moved, brought tears down his cheeks—"I guessed it when I saw you step across the door sill with that large and suspicious sombrero on your head. It never came from Holland—though you would fain persuade the province folks that you trade no where else: it is of the breed of the tropics, and smells of Hispaniola and Santo Domingo."

"It is a tall tale," replied Cocklescraft, "and should have been thrown overboard before this. Old Kate of Warrington, your hand—and here is a hand for you! How does the world use you? Fairly, I hope, as you deserve? You shall have the sombrero, Kate; you can trust it up into a new fashion for a bonnet, and I have store of ribands to give you to set it off."

"My share of this world's favor," said the cronie, in acknowledgment of the skipper's bounty, "has never been more than the cast-off bravery of such as hold a high head over a wicked heart. I have ever served at the mess of the devil's bantlings. But, as the custom is, I must be civil and thankful for these blessings; and so, Master Cocklescraft, I give you thanks," she added with a courtesy, as she placed the hat upon her head, and strutted fantastically in the room, "for your dainty head-gear that you are unwilling to wear, and durst not, master, before the port warden, of St. Mary's."

"How, Kate!" exclaimed the skipper, "you have lost no whit of that railing tongue I left with you at my last venture? I marvel that the devil has not shorn it, out of pure envy. But I know, Kate, you can do justice to the good will of a friend, after all. I would, however, know what you have not been unconsidered, good mother of a thousand devils. I have brought you stuff for a new gown, rich and ladylike, Kate, and becoming your grave and matronly years, and sundry trinkeries for it, by way of garniture; and, reverend dam of night-monsters, I have in store for you some choice distillations of dainty Wines, dyes, both plain and spiced. You do not spurn the strong waters, Kate of Warrington,—nor the giver of them?"

"This is a make-peace fashion of yours," said the beldam, relaxing into a smile. "You thought not of the woman of Warrington—no, not so much as a dog's dream of her—until it chanced for you some choice distillations of dainty Wines, dyes, both plain and spiced. You do not spurn the strong waters, Kate of Warrington,—nor the giver of them?"

"How should it be other than ready? Doth not the devil keep his quarters there?" said Rob, with a low-toned chuckle that shook his figure for some moments, and almost his eyes; but he not his court in the Chapel? Go ask the whole country side; they will swear to it on their bible oaths. Sundries have seen the hoofs and horns, and heard the howlings—ay, and smelt the brimstone—ha, ha, hal! They'll swear to it. Is the Chapel ready in south? It is a precious Chapel Paul Kelpy, thou wert an honest cut-throat, to bedevil so good a house; we turn it to account—ha, hal! It needs but to take the key, Dickon. I warrant you ne'er a man in the province, burgher or planter, gentle or simple, ventures near enough to molest you."

"The surf runs high," said Cocklescraft, "and may give us trouble in the landing to-night; and as daylight must not find me in this latitude, I shall put what I may ashore before the dawn, and then take a flight to the opposite side of the bay. To-morrow night I shall finish my work; and shall be soon after hear, at St. Mary's, that the good and peaceful brigantine, the Olive Branch, has arrived from Holland. Meantime, I will leave you a half dozen men to garrison the Chapel, Rob."

"It is so well garrisoned with my merry goblins already," said Rob, "that it requires but a light watch. The first alone would frighten his Lordship's whole array of rangers. That was a pretty device of mine, Dickon—blue, green, and red—ex-

Continued on Fourth Page.