

when, says he, looking at the darkening woad:

"I love it, captain. 'Tis mine. My home is there, God willing, Annie's, too, shall be."

"Amen," said I, heartily, for the boy had gone to my heart, absurd though he was.

And just on that there was a noise without the door, the clank of heavy feet rang on the boards, and Timothy Grubbe's ugly mask disfigured the room.

He came forward a little with a grin on his distorted features, and, looking from one to the other of us, said he:

"My respects, captain, and to this young plover that no doubt you're plucking. By the Lord, Dick Ryder, but I had given you up! Heaven sends us good fortune when we're least thinking of it."

Masters at his word had started up. "Who are you, sir, that intrudes on two gentlemen?" he demanded with spirit. "I'll have you know this is a private room. Get you gone."

"Softly, man," says Grubbe in an insinuating voice, "but maybe I'm wrong, and you're two of a color. It is an apprentice, Dick, this brave lad that talks so bold and has such fine feathers?"

"If you do not quit," said I shortly, "I will spit your beauty for you in two ticks."

"Dick Ryder had always plenty heart," said he, in his jeering way; "Dick had always a famous wit, and was known as a hospitable host. So I will take the liberty to invite to his sociable board some good fellows that are below to make merry. We shall prove an excellent company, I'll warrant."

Masters took a step toward him. "Now who the devil soever you may be, you shall not use gentlemen so," he said, whipping out his blade.

But Grubbe turned on him satirically.

"As for you, you cockchafer," said he, "it bodes no good to find you in his company. But as you seem simpleton enough I'll give you five minutes to take your leave of this gentleman of the road. Dick, you're a fine tobyman, and you have enjoyed a brave career, but your hour is struck."

I rose, but ere I could get to him young Masters had fallen on him.

"Defend yourself, d—n ye!" he said, "you that insult a gentleman that is my friend. Put up your blade, curse you!" and he made at him with incredible energy.

Uttering a curse, Grubbe thrust with his point and took the first onrush, swerving it aside; and ere I could intervene they were at it. My young friend was impetuous, and, as I saw at once, none too skillful, and Grubbe kept his temper, as he always did. He stood with a thin ugly smile, pushing aside the opponent's blade for a moment or two, until, of a sudden, he drew himself up and let drive very low and under the other's guard. The sword rattled from Master's hand and he went down on the floor. I uttered an oath.

"By God, for this you shall die, you swine," said I, fiercely, and I ran at him, but being by the door he swept it open with a movement and backed into the passage.

"The boot is on t'other leg, Dick," says he, maliciously. "'Tis you are doomed," and closing the door sharply behind him, he whistled shrilly.

I knew what he intended, and that his men were there, but I stopped over the boy's body and held my fingers to his heart; 'twas dead and still. I cursed Grubbe and started up. If I was not to be taken there was only the window looking on the deeps of the descending valley. I threw back the casement and leaped over the sill. Grubbe should perish, I swore, and doubled now my oath. I could have wept for that poor youth that had died to avenge my honor. But my first business was my safety, and I crept down as fast as I might and dropped. By that time the catchpols were crowding into the room above. I struck the slanting hill, and fell backward, and getting to my feet, which were very numb with the concussion of the fall, I sped briskly into the darkness, making for the woods.

I lay in the shelter of the woods an hour, and resolved on a circumspection. It was not my intention to leave the mare behind, if so she had escaped Grubbe and his creatures, and moreover, I had other designs in my head. So I made my way back deviously to the inn and reconnoitered. Stillness hung about it, and after a time I marched up to the door mightily cautiously and knocked on it. The innkeeper opened it, and the lamp burning in my face, started as if I were the devil.

"Hush, man," said I, "is the officer gone? He looked at me dubiously and trembling. "Come," said I, "for I know the reputation of those parts, 'I am from Shortham Gap yonder, and I was near taken for an offense against the revenue."

"You are a smuggler?" said he anxiously. "They said you were a tobyman."

"They will take away any decent man's name," said I. "Come, I want my horse. You have no fancy for preventive men, I'll guess."

And this was true enough, for he had a mine of cellars under his inn and in the roadway.

"But your friend?" said he, still wavering. "Him that is dead—"

"As good a man as ever rolled a barrel," said I.

He relaxed his grip on the door.

"'Tis a sore business for me this night," he complained.

"Nay," said I, "for I will rid your premises of myself and friend, by your leave, or without it," says I.

He seemed relieved at that, and I entered. The horses were safe, as I discovered, for Grubbe must have been too full of his own prime business to make search, and getting them out, I made my preparations. I strapped the lad's body in the stirrup so that he lay forward on the horse with his head a-wagging, but (God deliver him) his soul at rest. And presently we were on the road, and threading the wilderness of the black pine woods for the vale below toward London.

The moon was a glimmering arc across the Hurtwood, as I came out on the back of Shere, and pulling out of the long lane that gave entry to the village, reined up by the White Horse. From the inn streamed a clamor of laughter and without the doorway, and well-nigh blocking it, was drawn up a carriage with a coachman in his seat that struck my eyes dimly in the small light. I was not for calling eyes on me with the dead man astride his horse, so I moved into the yard, thinking to drain a tankard of ale if no better before I took the road over the downs to Effingham. But I was scarce turned into the yard ere light flung through the window peered on a face that changed all the notions in my skull. 'Twas Grubbe!

Leaving the horses by I went back to the front of the inn and says I to the coachman that waited there as I rapped loud on the door:

"'Tis shrewish tonight."

"Ay," says he, in a grumbling, surly voice, "I would the country were in h—ll."

"Why, so 'twill be in good time," said I, cheerfully; and then to the man that came: "Fetch me two quarts well-laced with gin," said I, "for to keep the chill o' the night and the fear of death."

The coachman laughed a little stoutly, for he knew that this was his invitation.

"Whence come you, then?" said I, delivering him the pot that was fetched out.

He threw an arm out. "Lewes," said he, "under charge with a tobyman that was for chains yonder."

He nodded toward the downs and drank. I cast my eyes up and the loom of the hill just t'other side of the village was black and ominous.

"Oh," says I, "he hangs there?"

"At the top of the London road," says he, dipping his nose again. "There stand the gallows where the roads cross and near the gate."

"Gallows Gate," said I, laughing.

"Well, 'twas a merry job enough."

"Ay," says he, "but for this we might have been far toward London town, whither most of us are already gone. But 'twas not his meaning. He must come back with the Lewes Sheriff and drink him farewell."

"Leaving a poor, likely young man as yourself to starve of cold and an empty belly here," said I. "Well, I would learn such a one manners in your place; and you shall have another tankard of dog's-nose for your pains," says I, whereat I called out the innkeeper again, but took care that he had my share of the gin, in addition to his own. By that time he was garrulous, and had lost his caution, so keeping him in talk a little, and dragging his wits along from point to point, I presently called to him:

"Come down," said I, "and stamp your feet. 'Twill warm you without the liquor within;" and he did as I suggested without demur.

"Run round to the back," says I, "and get yourself a noggin, and if so be you see a gentleman on horseback asleep, why, 'tis only a friend of mine that is weary of his long journey; I will call you if there be occasion."

He hesitated a moment, but I set a crown on his palm and his scruples vanished. He limped into the darkness.

'Twas no more than two minutes later that I heard voices in the doorway, and next came Timothy Grubbe into the night, in talk with some one. At which it took me about thirty seconds to whip me into the seat and pull the coachman's cloak about me, so that I sat stark and black in the starlight. Grubbe left the man he talked with and came forward.

"You shall drink when we reach Cobham Crossway," says he, looking up at me, "and mind your ways, d—n ye."

And at that he made no more ado, but humming an air he lurched into the carriage. I pulled out the nags, and turned their heads so that they were set for the north. And then I whistled low and short—a whistle I knew that the mare would heed and I trusted she would bring her companion with her. Then the wheels rolled out upon the road and Timothy Grubbe and I were bound for London all alone.

As I turned up the London road that swept steeply up the downs I looked back, and behind the moon shone faintly on Calypso, and behind her came on the dead man wagging awkwardly in his stirrups.

I pushed the horses up the steep of the London road as fast as might be, but the ruts were still deep in mud, and the carriage jolted and rocked and swayed as we went. The wind came now with a little moaning sound from the bottom of the valley, and the naked branches croaked above my head, for that way was senken and

tangled with the thickets of nut and yew. And presently I was forced to go at a foot pace, so abrupt was the height, the moon struck through the trees, and peered on us, and Grubbe put his head forth of the window.

"Why go you no faster, d—n ye?" says he, being much in liquor.

"'Tis the hill, your honor," said I. He glanced up and down.

"What is't comes up behind?" says he, shouting. "There is a noise of horses that pounds upon the road."

"'Tis the wind," says I, "that comes off the valley, and makes play among the branches."

He sank back in his seat, and we went forward slowly. But he was presently out again, screaming on the night:

"There is a horseman behind," says he. "What does he there?"

"'Tis a traveler, your honor," says I, "that goes no doubt by our road, and is bound for London."

"He shall be bound for h—ll," says he, and falls back again.

The horses wound up foot by foot and emerged now upon a space of better light. I looked round, and there was Grubbe, with his head through the window and his eyes cast backward.

"What fool is this," says he, "that rides so awkwardly and drives a spare horse? If he ride no better I will ask him to keep me company, if he be a gentleman. Many gentlemen have rode along of me, and have rode to the gallows tree, and he chuckled harshly.

"Maybe he will ride with you to the Gallows Gate, sir," says I.

"Why, Crossway," says he, laughing aloud, "you have turned a wit," says he; and once more withdrew his head.

By now we were right to the top of the down, and I could see the faint shadow of the Triple Beam. With that I knew my journey was done; and that my work must be accomplished. I pulled to the horses on the rise, and got down from my seat.

"Why d'ye stop, rascal?" called Grubbe in a fury, but I was by the door now and had it open.

"Timothy Grubbe," said I, "ye're a d—n rogue that the devil, your master, wants and he shall have ye."

He stared at me in amaze, his nostrils working, and then says he in a low voice:

"So, 'tis you?"

"Your time has come, Timothy," said I, flinging off my cloak, and I took my sword. Out with you, worm!"

He said never a word, but stepped forth and loomed about him. He was sobered now, as I could see from his face, which had a strange look on it.

"Ye're two rascals to one, Dick," says he slowly, looking on the dead man and his horse which had come to a stop in the shadows.

"No," says I. "This gentleman will see fair play for us."

Grubbe took a step backward.

"Sir," says he, addressing the dead man, but at that moment Calypso and her companion started and came into the open and the moon shone on the face of the dead. Grubbe uttered a cry, and turned on me. His teeth showed in a grin.

"No ghost shall haunt me, Dick," says he, "rather shall another ghost keep him company."

I pointed upward where the tobyman hung in chains, keeping his sheep by moonlight. "There's your destiny," said I. "There's your doom." Now defend ye, d—n ye, for I'll not prick another at a disadvantage."

He drew his blade, for no man could say that Timothy Grubbe, time-server, pander, traitor, as he was, lacked courage. Suddenly he sliced at me, but I put out and turned off the blow.

"If you will have it so soon," said I, "in God's name have it," and I ran upon him.

My third stroke went under his guard and took him in the midriff. He gave vent to an oath, cursed me in a torrent, and struck at me weakly as he went down. He was dead as mutton almost ere he reached the ground.

I have never been the man of the church, nor do I lay any claim to own more religion than such as to make shift by when it comes to the end. No, nor do I deny that I have sundry offenses on my conscience, some of which I have narrated in my memoirs. But when it comes to a reckoning, I will make bold to claim credit in that I rid the world he had encumbered of Timothy Grubbe, the foulest ruffian that ever I did encounter in the length of my days on the roads.

I climbed the beam and lowered the poor tobyman, and it took me but a little time to make the exchange. The one I left where he had paid quit-

tance in the peace of this earth, and t'other a-swinging under the light of the moon on Gallows Gate.

I have said my journey was done, but that was not so. There was more for me to do which was to deliver poor Masters at his lady love's and break the unhappy news. And so, leaving the carriage where it stood, with the patient horses, that were cropping the grass, I mounted the mare and began to go down the long span of the downs to the north. 'Twas late near midnight when I reached Effingham and found my way to the Manor. I rapped on the door, leaving Calypso and t'other in the shadows of the house, and presently one answered my knock. "What is it?" says she.

"'Tis a stranger," says I, "that has news of great import for Miss Anne Varley, whom I beg you will call."

"She cannot hear you," said she, "'tis her wedding night."

"What!" said I, in amazement, and instantly there flowed in upon me the meaning of this. D—n all women save one or two, thinks I. And I turned to the maid again with my mind made up.

"Look you, miss," said I, "this is urgent. I have an instant message that presses. And if so be your mistress will bear with me a moment and hold discourse, I'll warrant she shall not regret it, nor you," says I, with a crown piece in my palm.

At that she seemed to consent and with my coin in her hand she disappeared into the darkness of the house. It must have been some ten minutes later that a light flashed in the hall, and a voice called to me. "Who is it?" it asked, "and what do you want at this hour?"

She was of pretty face enough, rather pale of color, and with eyes that moved restlessly, and measured all things. I have known women all my life in all stations, and I would have pinned no certainty on those treacherous eyes. She was young, too, but had an air of satisfaction in herself, and was in no wise embarrassed by this interview. I had no mercy on her with her oaths of constancy writ in water that feigned to be tears, and her false pretenses.

"Madam," said I civilly, "I hear you wed today a gentleman of standing."

"What is that to you, sir?" she asked quickly.

"'Tis nothing for sure," said I, "but to a friend of mine that I valued deeply, 'tis much."

"You speak of Mr. Masters?" said she sharply, and with discomposure.

"Sure, if he be a gentleman, he will not trouble me when he knows."

"Anne!" cried a voice from the top of the stairs. "Anne!"

'Twas her bridegroom calling. Well, she should go to him in what mood she might when I had done with her.

"He will never know," says I, "unless he have it from yourself."

"Anne!" says the voice above the stairs.

"He shall not—I will not," she cried angrily. "I will not be persecuted; 'twas all a mistake."

I whistled and Calypso emerged from the night, and behind Calypso was the horse with its burden. An anxious look dawned in her face. "I am insulted," says she, and paused quickly. "Edward!" she called, and put her hand in her bosom.

"Anne, my dove!" cried the voice, "where are you? Come, child, 'tis late."

The horses came to a stop before the door, with the body in the saddle, bound to the crupper.

"What is it!" she cried in alarm, and suddenly she shrieked out, clutching at the door post. "It is an omen—my wedding night."

"Aye," says I, "which be your bridegroom, he that calls out or he that is silent? Call on him and he hears not."

Peal after peal went up from her, and the house was awake with alarm. I turned away, leaving her on the doorstep, and mounted the mare. As I cantered off into the night, I cast a glance behind me, and a group gathered at the door, and in that group lay Mrs. Anne, fallen in a swoon with the sleeping figure on the horse before her.

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