



The DOOM TRAIL

by ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH
AUTHOR of PORTO BELLO GOLD ETC.
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"I could not have put neater my own feelings, Master Juggins. When I was a lad not yet of age I risked all I had for the Stuart cause. What came of it? A life of exile that might have ruined me, as it has many a better man. My family's estate was sequestrated; my outlawry was proclaimed. I have no place to lay my head, save it be by the bounty of a foreigner.

"Have I secured any moral satisfaction by these sacrifices? At first I thought I had. But when I looked closer I found that I had done nothing for my country. For the Stuarts, yes. But for my country, nothing.

"This made me think the harder, Master Juggins. At the beginning I had taken zest in the plots and plans which were aimed to bring about his restoration to power.

"But the longer I studied them the more insincere they became. I found my leader a catspaw of foreigners, used to undermine England's prestige. His aims were not the good of England, but his own aggrandizement, the furthering of France's ambitions."

"Hast learned that, lad? Why, then, there's no more loyal Englishman in London!"

"So you think," I answered. "So I think. But hear me out. I told my feelings to a certain great gentleman who handles affairs at St. Germain. He cursed me for a turncoat, would have ordered his lackeys to flog me from the palace. I left him—in disgrace. The doors of my friends were closed to me. I thought I would make my way to England and begin a new life.

"So I applied to the English ambassador for a passport. He laughed at me. Did I think he was so innocent as to be blinded by such transparent trickery? Nay, the Stuarts must seek elsewhere for means to plant a fresh spy in England. In desperation then I bought passage from a smuggler of Dieppe, who landed me three weeks since in Sussex. I made my way to Dorset, hoping to find old friends who would help me to gain a pardon; but I was recognized by one of my cousins who now hold Foxcroft house, and he raised a hue and cry after me, fearing no doubt that I sought to regain the estate.

"Since then I have been hunted like a beast. My last shilling was spent

this morning. Tomorrow, had I escaped so long, I planned to sell my sword, and if all else failed to seek a press-gang."

"Let us thank God you heard my cries," said Juggins earnestly.

"I do," I said, "and with no lack of reverence, my friend, I also thank you."

He gave me a keen look.

"You call me friend. Do you mean the word?"

"Why not?"

"I was your father's servant," he said, and he said it so that the words were at once proud and humble.

I caught his hand in mine.

"You were his friend, too; and who am I, an outlaw without name or fortune, to set myself above a man who has prospered like you through the diligence of his own hands and brains?"

Master Juggins drew a deep breath and wrung my hand hard.

"You'll do, lad," he said. "My help would have been yours on any terms. But you have made it a glad privilege for me to help you. Doubt not we shall find a way.

"Now get you to bed. I shall have somewhat to say to you on the morrow."

CHAPTER II

Before the Lords of Trade

How long I might have slept I know not, but the pallid sun that strove to pierce the fog-reek proclaimed high noon when Master Juggins waked me. He would not listen to my protestations of regret, but directed my attention to the pile of clothes he carried over his arm.

"See, we shall make a 'prentice lad of you," he said. "I have a youth downstairs of about your build, and these are his Sunday clothes."

"And must I in truth wear these?" I demanded with some disgust as I felt their coarseness of texture.

"Aye, indeed, Master Harry."

His tone sobered.

"I have been abroad since rising," he continued, "and forgive me if I say 'twas well for you we met last night. Your cousin is come up to London, frantic with fear lest you should succeed in replacing him, and he hath pulled wires right and left, so that all are convinced you are here for no less

a purpose than the murder of the king."

I cursed with a fluency conferred by two languages.

"There is no hope of a pardon now," proceeded Juggins. "I am not altogether without influence, and I had hoped— But 'tis doubly hopeless. If you were Scots or Irish, it might be done. But few of the English gentry besides you and Master Charles rose in the '19. You are a marked man, and with your cousin's interest against you 'twill be impossible even to gain a hearing for you."

"There is naught to do, then, save go back to France and the friends who now distrust me," I said bitterly.

"Never say so," remonstrated Master Juggins with energy. "I have an idea of another course which may commend itself to you. Come, don these poor garments, which will none the less cloak you with safety, and join me in granny's morning room."

The coffee which the old lady poured us in blue-bordered china bowls put new life and hope in me. I settled back in my chair and puffed at the long clay pipe which Juggins had filled for me.

Granny Juggins gave me an approving pat on the shoulder.

"That is well, Master Harry. Worry never solved any difficulty. And now I must be going about my duties; but remember that what Robert tells you hath my indorsement."

"And what is that?" I inquired in some curiosity as the door closed behind her.

He smoked in silence for several moments.

"I am resolved to take you fully into my confidence, Master Harry," he began at last, "and I should not do so if I doubted your discretion."

He fell silent again.

"Did it not seem strange to you that such an assault as you saw last night should have been made upon an ordinary merchant?" he asked suddenly.

"I thought they meant robbery."

"Robbery? They never made a demand upon me. They meant murder. The truth is, lad, I am at grips with a deadly enemy. 'Tis a curious story, concerned with high politics, great spoils of trade, intrigues of church and state—mayhap the future of a continent. And as it happens Robert Juggins is at the hub of it.

"Do you think you would like to play a hand—on England's behalf and to checkmate the very foreign influences which sickened you of the Jacobite cause? I need a strong arm combined with an agile mind, a mind used to French ways and the French tongue."

I would have answered, but he checked me.

"If you accept you must be prepared to fight your old friends, for the enemy I have spoken of is Jacobite at heart and works under cover for the return of the Pretender through the weakening of England and the paramount influence of France. Remember that before you commit yourself."

"Even as I told you last night, Master Juggins, I am for England now," I answered. "If such a plot as you speak of is under way, then surely 'tis for loyal Englishmen to thwart it. Count me with you, I pray!"

"I will," he said quietly. "Now hasten to these facts. At the instance of myself and my associates in the Company of Merchant Traders to the Western Plantations, the provincial government of New York several years ago secured the royal assent to a law prohibiting the sale of Indian trading goods to the French in Canada.

"Our object was twofold. The best and cheapest trading goods are manufactured in England. If we can keep them to ourselves and compel the French to use more costly and less durable goods made on the Continent we shall be able to underbid them with the Indians. So the fur trade will come more and more into our hands."

Juggins leaned forward and tapped me on the knee.

"North America," he went on, "is the richest land in all the world—how rich it is or how vast no man knows. 'Twill require centuries to exploit it. Since first we colonized there we have contended with France, not only for further power, but for the actual right to breathe. Our two countries cannot agree to divide this domain, limitless though it be. Sooner or later one must oust the other."

"The fur trade is the key to it all. It is so, because neither the French nor we are yet sufficiently powerful to ignore the strength of the Indian tribes. The fur trade is the source of the savages for securing trade goods. They will be bound closest to the country which gives them the best terms. If we can deprive the French of the ability to buy their goods as cheaply as we do, then we shall be able to trade to better advantage with the Indians and so increase their friendship for us. At the same time the volume of the provincial trade will be increased."

"I see," I answered. "But you spoke before of a twofold object in depriving the French of the right to obtain trade goods through New York?"

"So I did, and that brings me to the enemy whom I mentioned. Heard you ever in Paris of one Murray—Andrew Murray?"

I shook my head.

"He hath connections with the French, and, too, with the Jacobites; but they would be well covered, no doubt. Murray owns the Provincial Fur company of New York, which is the largest of all the trading agencies. He hath set himself deliberately to drive out of existence all the independent traders and secure the entire trade for himself. The trade with the French in Canada likewise is in his hands."

"Before the provincial government passed the prohibitive law of which I spoke, he carried on this trade openly, and the French traders, helped by a government subsidy, more often than not underbid our traders—using English goods, mind you, for the purpose. And then the French traders would sell their skins in the London market at a lower price than our own traders could afford to charge."

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