

# The Doom Trail

— By —  
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 Author of PORTO BELLO GOLD, Etc.

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## THE STORY

CHAPTER I—Harry Ormerod, proscribed traitor to King George as a Stuart partisan, returning from France to London, rescues Alderman Robert Juggins from a band of assassins. Juggins proves to be the grandson of a former steward of Ormerod's father, to whom Juggins feels himself indebted. Ormerod tells Juggins he has abandoned the Stuart cause.

CHAPTER II—Juggins tells Ormerod of a Jacobite plot in the American colonies to weaken England by forwarding French interests. Their aim is the return of King James to the English throne. At its head is one Andrew Murray, a Scotsman, and a Frenchman, De Veulle, deadly enemy of Ormerod. The two are in London furthering their schemes. Ormerod sees them. Anticipating the plotters' early return to America, Juggins arranges for Ormerod to go there with letters to Governor Burnet, friend of Juggins, and work to foil Murray.

CHAPTER III—Disguised as Juggins' servant, Ormerod takes passage to America. He meets a Scottish girl, daughter of Murray, and ardent Jacobite, De Veulle recognizes him, and their enmity flares. The Frenchman denounces Ormerod to the girl as a traitor to the Stuart cause. Believing him, she repulses Ormerod's proffer of friendship. He is thrown into the sea by an unseen assailant.

Murray's daughter! I rebelled against the idea. It could not be. It ought not to be. What right had it to a daughter—and such a maid as this? 'Twas absurd! Manifestly absurd!

Why, I must hate the man. I had no other recourse. And he had a daughter! And above all, this daughter!

When I came on deck the next morning we were driving down-channel before a smart northwest wind. Murray stood by the weather rail with the negro, who I learned afterward was called Tom, at his elbow. As I emerged from the companionway Tom leaned forward and whispered something to his master. Murray walked straight across the deck to my side, his eyes fastened upon my face.

"How, now, Master Juggins," he said heartily, his hand outstretched, "and did you leave your good uncle—or is it cousin?—well?"

I perceived that he took me for the lost I was dressed to represent, and strove to play up to the disguise.

"Well enough, sir," I answered sullenly, shifting clownishly from foot to foot.

"'Tis good!" he exclaimed. "Faith I am vastly relieved. I have a warm regard for honest Robert Juggins. He has spoken of me, perhaps?"

The question, designed to catch my simple mentality unawares, gave me considerable amusement.

"Oh, aye," I muttered.

"We have been rivals in our ventures, as you doubtless know," continued Murray.

"But he doesn't take it seriously, sir," I assured him gravely.

"Eh? What's that?"

"He laughs about it, sir."

And I giggled at him stupidly. After a moment's inspection of my countenance he seemed constrained to accept the remark as witless innocence, for a grim light of humor appeared in his eyes.

"Laughs, does he? Zooks, I might have known it. He is a merry soul, Robert Juggins, and I should like to see him footing a morris to a right merry tune. Mayhap we shall see it some day. Who knows?"

"Who knows, sir?" I repeated vacantly.

"And you are to cast your fortunes in America, lad? You may count upon my good offices in New York. Faith, I shall be glad to do a favor if I can, for Robert Juggins' nephew—or did you say cousin?"

"I am—"

But he saved me from the lie.

"Ah, here is come one of our fellow passengers," he interrupted.

I turned to see De Veulle approaching us.

"'Tis a French gentleman," pursued Murray, bent upon winning my confidence with his easy manners and glib tongue, "on his way to Canada. He chevallier, meet a young countryman of mine, Master Juggins—the Chevallier de Veulle."

All unsuspecting, De Veulle made me a slight bow, a look of indifference on his face at sight of my plebeian figure. The disguise was good and I hoped I might cozen him for a time at least. But no man forgets another who has toyed with his life and his indifference was dissipated the instant his eye met mine.

"Juggins?" he exclaimed in bewilderment. "Parbleu! 'Tis Harry Ormerod, the Jacobite refugee!"

Murray snapped his fingers to Tom the negro, who had been a silent witness to our conversation. In an instant he stood beside us.

"Is this the man who came with Master Juggins to the hearing before the lords of trade?" snapped Murray.

"He de man, massa."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, massa."

"Tom doesn't make mistakes," remarked Murray with a gesture of dismissal to the negro. "May I ask who you are, sir?" he addressed me.

"I suppose you may," I replied coolly; and with a sense of relief I ripped the hobbled scratch-wig off my head and tossed it into the sea. "Does that help you at all?" I inquired of De Veulle.

He stared back at me, his face all drawn with hatred.

"I knew you with it on," he said savagely. "It became you. Why should a deserter wear the clothes of a gentleman?"

I laughed at him, but Murray intervened quickly.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. De Veulle made a gesture in my direction.

"This person, who was in the immediate entourage of the Pretender, abandoned his leader not long ago and fled to England to seek a pardon, repudiated and detested by all honorable men in Paris. But in England his protestations of loyalty were refused, for they naturally doubted the sincerity of one who wearied so soon of an unfortunate cause."

"Is this true?" Murray asked me.

"Within reason," I said.

Murray stared from one to the other of us. "Stap me, but I rejoice to see that we may look forward to an entertaining voyage!" he exclaimed. "I had feared 'twould be most tedious. Are you seeking satisfaction from the gentleman, chevallier?"

"I shall fight him when I choose, on ground of my own choosing," replied De Veulle curtly.

"And by no means with small-swords," I jeered.

He gave me a black look.

"You will pray me to kill you if you ever fall into my power, Ormerod. I can wait until then."

"As you please."

He turned and left us. Murray took snuff very deliberately, first offering the box to me—which he had not done before—and scrutinized me politely from head to foot.

"I fear I have been patronizing in my conduct, sir," he observed. "Pray accept my apologies. 'Twas a perfect disguise. And your manner, if I may say so, was well conceived."

"I thank you."

"In short, I find you an opponent of totally different importance. You are an opponent?" he shot at me.

"Sure, sir, that is for you to say," I made answer. "So far as I know at this time we merely happen to be passengers together on this craft."

He laughed.

"I might have known it!" he exclaimed. "'Twas not like Juggins to send a bumpkin to Burnet. He hath been an enemy I might not scorn at any moment. But I must go below now. I have some papers to attend to. And I shall also attempt to induce the Chevallier de Veulle to preserve the amenities of life whilst we are restricted to such confined quarters."

"He shall not have to labor against my hostility," I promised as he departed.

Despite myself, I was taken with the man. His unmistakable breeding, his ready wit, the assurance of power and self-sufficiency which radiated from him and explained, as I thought, his readiness to admit himself in the wrong, all these joined to inspire respect for his past, if not admiration for his character.

During the rest of that day I made myself at home about the ship, talking with the seamen and their officers and watching vainly for the lady of the green cloak who had awakened me with her song. But she kept her cabin until the second afternoon, when we were sailing easily with a fair wind abeam. I found her then as I returned from a walk forward, standing with her hand on the poop-railing to steady her.

"I have met your father," I said, coming to her side, "and I make no doubt he would present me were he here, so—"

"Sir," she said stiffly, "I have no desire for your company."

I stared at her, mouth agape.

"If I have offended—" I began.

"I may as well tell you," she interrupted me again. "I have heard that about you which will make me have no inclination for your company."

"And I shall ask you to tell me what that is," I retorted with mounting indignation. "It is not fair that you should accept the slurs of an enemy behind my back."

She hesitated.

"That may be so," she admitted, "but you will be willing to answer me two questions?"

"Surely."

"You are Captain Ormerod, formerly chamberlain to King James III?"

"Yes."

"And you not long ago abandoned

the king's service and fruitlessly sought a pardon in London?"

"Yes."

"That is enough for me. You are a traitor, a deserter, proven out of your own mouth."

"But—"

"No, sir; there is naught you can say would interest me. I should despise you none the less had you deserted in the same circumstances to my own side. It makes it no less culpable that you deserted from my side because our fortunes were at low ebb."

"But you shall hear me," I protested. "This is absurd, what you say. You have taken two bare statements of fact and twisted into them the implications skillfully made by a personal enemy. You—"

"Last night, sir," she said cuttingly, withdrawing the folds of her cloak so that they might not touch me, "you played upon my sympathies with your tale of exile and a brother buried in the Clan Donald country, and I was all for sympathy with you and sorrow for your sorrow. You as much as told me you were one of the Good People. You let me deceive myself, after you had deceived me first. Oh, you will have acted unspeakably!"

"What I told you was true! I was out in the '19; I fled to Scotland with my brother; he died and was buried there; I escaped with the remnants of the expedition; I am an exile at this moment."

"An exile! Phaugh! Think on the honest men can truly say that in their misfortune this day! And you—I could weep for the shame that your dead brother and the mother that bore you will be feeling as they look down upon you!"

With that she was gone, and I was left cursing De Veulle, whose treacherous tongue had planted the distorted shreds of truth in her mind; cursing Murray, who must have stood by and listened to it all, smugly amused; cursing my cousin who had put me in such a plight, after winning my inheritance; cursing the men and women at St. Germain who repaid years of sacrifice and ungrudging loyalty with such enmities; cursing Juggins for having embarked me upon the ship with the girl; cursing myself for getting into such a false position; cursing the girl—

But no. Common sense came to my rescue then. There was something unaccountably fine about her attitude, something I should never have thought to uncover in Murray's daughter, however beautiful and attractive she might be. There was devotion for you, faithfulness to a lost cause, the single-minded truthfulness which only a good woman can possess.

The twilight faded rapidly, and I found myself with no appetite for the crowded main cabin, where De Veulle and Murray played piquet, or my stuffy berth. I strolled the deck, immersed in thought. I conned over what Juggins had told me, memorized anew many of the messages he had entrusted to me, speculated upon the possible turn of affairs. I planned in some vague way to win a fortune in that unknown new world ahead of me, and with the proceeds in one hand and a pardon in the other, return and reclaim Foxcroft from those abominable Hampshire cousins.

With chin cupped in hand I leaned upon the starboard rail in the black well of shadow which was formed by the overhang of the forecastle, and the towering piles of canvas that clothed the foremast. Somewhere beyond the wastes of watery darkness that veiled my eyes lay England, the home which had disowned me. I—

Without any warning a huge arm was twisted around my shoulders and a hand so huge that my teeth could make no impression in it was clamped down over my mouth. Another arm encircled my waist. My arms were pinned to my sides. My legs kicked feebly at a muscular body which pressed me against the bulwark. Fighting back with all my strength, I was nevertheless lifted gradually from the deck and shoved slowly across the flat level of the life-rail.

Do what I might, I could not resist the pressure of those tremendous arms, which seemed to have a reach and a power twice those of my own. I gasped for breath as they squeezed my lungs—and in gasping I sensed a queer taint in the air, a musky odor which I did not at once associate with the seamen or anyone else on board the ship.

It was no use. I could not resist. The snakelike arms mastered me. One shifted swiftly to a grip on my legs. I was whirled into the air and dropped clear of the railing—falling, falling, until the cold waters engulfed me.

(Continued Next Week.)

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