SIMON DALE

BY ANTHONY HOPE

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SYNOPSIS FOR "SIMON DALE."

Simon Dale, the teller of the story, born shortly after the execution of Charles I., is looked upon as destined to greatness because a wise woman has prophesied that he shall "Love what the King loves, know what the King hides, and drink of the King's cup." Falling in love with Barbara, daughter of the parish magistrate, Lord Quinton, his young affections are diverted by the appearance of a mysterious London beauty named Cydaria, who secretly sojourns at Hatchstead. On Cydaria's return to London he receives a commission in the king's guards. He goes to London, discovers that Cydaria is really Nell Gwynn, and decides to resign his commission because she procured it. He becomes a favorite of the young duke of Monmouth, and is attached to his suite. Goes to Dover with the duke, where a reception is given the king's sister, queen of France. The queen and her suite are received with much pomp and ceremony, but the greatest interest centers in the arrival of M. De Perrencourt, who comes by night from Calais. Secret conferences are held. While waiting secretly in an outer hall for one of the meetings to break up Simon overhears Monmouth lavishly complimenting Mistress Barbara. M. De Perrencourt appears, to whom the young duke bows in most abject submission. M. De Perrencourt is very partial to Barbara, and seems determined to win her by any means. On his departure Simon makes his appearance to assure her of his presence and services when needed. He is made prisoner in his own apartment on the day following, as punishment for his curiosity. Dale is hurriedly summoned into the king's presence, and commanded to "drink of the king's cup." At the first draught his senses leave him. The drink proves to be drugged wine sent to him by Phineas Tate and offered to the king by his friend Darrell. Tate is apprehended and confesses his diabolical purpose and is sentenced. Dale is then attached to the suite of M. De Perrencourt, at that gentleman's request. Carford seeks him, in his apartments, knowing the French king's purpose, and tries, first by persuasion and then by threat, to prevent his going to France. This interview is interrupted by the entrance of King Louis himself, who casually dismisses Carford and commands Dale to prepare for the journey at once. His preparations made, he seeks to warn Barbara, who is also going, of their danger and to devise a way of escape. Without a definite plan they embark with the king for Calais. At a moment when the boat is becalmed in a dense fog they jump overboard into the pilot's boat, but before they can push off Louis discovers them and leaps into the boat. Dale overpowers him while Barbara rows some distance from the ship. The king, finding himself at a disadvantage, graciously acquiesces, and, having been rowed to the ship, dismisses the young people, who row back to the English coast, near Dover. Simon discovers that he has but a single guinea. This he presents to Barbara as a token of his desire to serve her to the utmost. In a moment of temper she flings it into the sea. Penniless and in danger of apprehension for their conduct, he upbraids her.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

SOME MIGHTY SILLY BUSINESS.

"In truth, madame," said I, "it's the wont of your sex. So soon as a woman knows a thing to be hers entirely she'll fling it away." With this scrap of love's lore and youth's philosophy I turned my back to my companion, and, having walked to where the battered oasty lay beside the empty jug, sat down in high dudgeon. Barbara's eyes were set on the spot where the guinea had been swallowed by the waves and she took no heed of my remarks or of my going.

Say that my pleasantry was misplaced, say that she was weary and strained beyond her power, say what you will in excuse, I allow it all. Yet it was not reason to fling my last guinea into the sea. A flash of petulance is well enough and may become beauty as summer lightning decks the sky, but fury is for termagants, and naught but fury could fling my last guinea to the waves. The offense, if offense there were, was too small for so monstrous an outburst. Well, if she would quarrel, I was ready. I had no patience with such tricks; they weary a man of sense; women serve their turn ill by using them. Also I had done her some small service; I would die sooner then call it to her mind, but it would have been a grace in her to remember it.

The afternoon came, grew to its height and waned as I lay there, back to sea and face to cliff, thinking now of all that had passed, now of what was before me, staring a moment's fitful sorrow for the poor wretch who lay dead there by the cottage door, but returning always in a resentful mood to my lost guinea and Barbara's sore lack of courtesy. If she needed me I was there, but heaven forbid that I should face fresh rebuffs by seeking her. I would do my duty to her and redeem my pledge, more could not now be looked for, nay, by no possibility could be welcome, to keep away from her was to please her best; it was well, for in that her mind jumped with mine. In two hours now we could set out for Dover.

"Simon, I'm hungry."

The voice came from behind my shoulder, a yard or two away, a voice very meek and piteous, eloquent of an exhaustion and a weakness so great that, had they been real, she must have fallen by me, not stood upright on her feet. Against such stratagems

"I'M TIRED AND VERY HUNGRY."

I would be iron. I paid no heed, but lay like a log.

"Simon, I'm very thirsty too."

Slowly I gathered myself up and standing, bowed.

"There's a fragment of the pasty," said I, "but the jug is empty."

I did not look in her face and I knew she did not look in mine.

"I can't eat without drinking," she murmured.

"I have nothing with which to buy liquor."

"But water, Simon? Ah, but I mustn't trouble you."

"I'll go to the college and seek some."

"But that's dangerous."

"You shall come to no hurt."

"But you?"

"Indeed, I need a draught for myself. I should have gone after one in any case."

There was a pause. Then Barbara said:

"I don't want it. My thirst has passed away."

"Will you take the pasty?"

"No, my hunger is gone also."

I bowed again. We stood in silence for a moment.

"I'll walk a little," said Barbara.

"At your pleasure," said I. "But pray don't go far. There may be danger."

She turned away and retraced her steps to the beach. The instant she was gone I sprang up, seized the jug and ran at the best of my speed to the cottage. Jonah Wall lay still across the entrance, no living creature was in sight. I darted in and looked around for water, a pitcher stood on the table, and I filled the jug hastily. Then, with a smile of sour triumph, I hurried back by the way I had come. She should have no cause to complain of me. I had been wronged and was minded to hug my grievance and keep the merit of the difference all on my side. That motive, too, commonly underlies a seeming patience of wrong. I would not for the world enrich her with a just quarrel, therefore I brought her water, aye, although she feigned not to desire it. There it was for her, let her take it if she would, or leave it if she would, and I set the jug down by the pasty. She should not say that I had refused to fetch her what she asked, although she had, for her own good reasons, flung my guinea into the sea. She would come soon, then would be my hour. Yet I would spare her; a gentleman should show no exultation; silence would serve to point the moral.

But where was she? To say the truth, I was impatient for the play to begin, and anticipation grew flat with waiting. I looked down to the shore, but could not see her. I rose and walked forward till the beach lay open before me. Where was Barbara?

A sudden fear ran through me. Had any madness seized the girl, some uncontrolled whim made her fly from me? She could not be so foolish. But where was she? On the moment of the question a cry of surprise rang from my lips. There, ahead of me, not on the shore, but on the sea, was Barbara. The boat was twelve or fifteen yards from the beach. Barbara's face was toward me, and she was rowing out to sea. Forgetting pasty and jug, I bounded down. What new folly was this? To show herself in the boat was to court capture. And why did she row out to sea? In an instant I was on the margin of the water. I called out to her. She took no heed. The boat was heavy, but, putting her strength into the strokes, she drove it along. Again I called and called, unheeded. Was this my triumph? I saw a smile on her face. Not she, but I, afforded the sport then. I would not stand there, mocked for a fool by her eyes and her smile.

"Come back!" I cried.

The boat moved on. I was in the water to my knees. "Come back!" I cried. I heard a laugh from the boat, a high, nervous laugh, but the boat moved on. With an oath I cast my sword from me, throwing it behind me on the beach, and plunged into the water. Soon I was up to the neck, and I took to swimming. Straight out to sea went the boat, not fast, but relentlessly. In grim anger I swam with all my strength. I could not gain on her. She had ceased now even to look where my head bobbed among the waves; her face was lifted toward the sky. By heaven, did she in very truth mean to leave me? I called once more. Now she answered.

"Go back," she said. "I'm going alone."

"By God, you aren't," I muttered, with a gasp, and set myself to a faster stroke. Bad to deal with are women. Must she fly from me and risk all because I had not smiled and grinned and run for what she needed, like a well-trained monkey? Well, I would catch her and bring her back.

But catch her I could not. A poor oarsman may beat a fair swimmer, and she had the start of me. Steadily out to sea she rowed, and I toiled behind. If her mood lasted—and hurt pride lasts long in disdainful ladies who are more wont to deal strokes than to bear them—my choice was plain. I must drown there like a rat, or turn back a beaten cur. Alas for my triumph. If to have thought on it were sin, I was now chastened. But Barbara rowed on. In very truth she meant to leave me, punishing herself if by that she might sting me. What man would have shown that folly—or that flower of pride?

Yet was I beaten? I do not love to be beaten, above all when the game has seemed in my hands. I had a card to play, and between my pants, smiled grimly as it came into my mind. I glanced over my shoulder. I was hard on half a mile from shore. Women are compassionate; quick on pride's heels there comes remorse. I looked at the boat; the interval that parted me from it had not narrowed by an inch, and its head was straight for the coast of France. I raised my voice, crying:

"Stop, stop!"

No answer came. The boat moved on. The slim figure bent and rose again, the blades moved through the water. Well, then, the card should be played, the trick of a wily gamester, but my only resource.

"Help, help!" I cried, and letting my legs fall and raising my hands over my head, I inhaled a full breath and sank like a stone far out of sight beneath the water. Here I abode as long as I could; then, after swimming some yards under the surface, I rose and put my head out again, gasping hard and clearing my matted hair from before my eyes. I could scarcely stifle a cry. The boat's head was turned now and Barbara was rowing with furious speed toward where I had sunk, her head turned over her shoulder and her eyes fixed on the spot. She passed by where I was, but did not see me. She reached the spot and dropped her oars.

"Help, help!" I cried, a second time, and stayed long enough to let her see my head before I dived below. But my stay was shorter now. Up again, I looked for her. She was all but over me as she went by. She panted, she sobbed, and the oars but touched the water. I swam five strokes and caught at the gunwale of the boat. A great cry broke from her. The oars fell from her hand. The boat was broad and steady. I flung my leg over and climbed in, panting hard. In truth, I was out of breath. Barbara cried "You're safe," and hid her face in her hands.

We were mad, both of us, beyond a doubt, she sobbing there on the thwart, I panting and dripping in the bows. Yet for a touch of such sweet madness now, when all young nature was strung to a delicious contest, and the blood spun through the veins full of life. Our boat lay motionless on the sea, and the setting sun caught the undergrowth of red-brown hair that shot through Barbara's dark locks. My own state was, I must confess, less fair to look upon.

I controlled my voice to a cold steadiness, as I wrung the water from my clothes.

"This is a mighty silly business, Mistress Barbara," said I.

I had angled for a new outburst of fury. My catch was not what I looked for. Her hands were stretched out toward me, and her face, pale and tearful, pleaded with me.

"Simon, Simon, you were drowning. Through my—my folly! Oh, will you ever forgive me? If—if you had come to hurt I wouldn't have lived."

"Yet you were running away from me."

"I didn't dream that you'd follow. Indeed, I didn't think that you'd risk death." Then her eyes seemed to fall on my dripping clothes. In an instant she snatched up her cloak that lay by her and held it toward me, crying, "Wrap yourself in it."

"Nay, keep your cloak," said I. "I shall be warm enough with rowing. I pray you, madam, tell me the meaning of this freak of yours."

"Nothing, nothing. I—Oh, forgive me, Simon. Ah, how I shuddered when I looked round on the water and couldn't see you! I vowed to God that if you were saved—" She stopped abruptly.

"My death would have been on your conscience?" I asked.

"Till my own death," she said.

"Then, indeed," said I, "I'm very glad that I wasn't drowned."

"It's enough that you were in peril of it," she murmured, woefully.

"I pray heaven," said I cheerfully, "that I may never be in greater. Come, Mistress Barbara, sport for sport, trick for trick, feint for feint. I think your intention of leaving me was pretty much as real as this peril of drowning, from which I have escaped."

Her hands that had still implored me fell to her side. An expression of wonder spread over her face.

"In truth, I meant to leave you," she said.

"And why, madam?"

"Because I burdened you."

"But you had consented to accept my aid."

"While you seemed to give it willingly. But I had angered you in the matter of that—"

"Aye, of that guinea. Well, it was my last."

"Yes, of the guinea. Although I was foolish yet I could not endure your—" Again she hesitated.

"Pray let me hear," said I.

"I would not stay where my company was suffered rather than prized," said she.

"So you were for trying fortune alone?"

"Better that than an unwilling defender," said she.

"Behold your injustice!" I cried. "For, rather than lose you I have faced all, even drowning!" And I laughed.

Her eyes were fixed on my face, but she did not speak. I believe she feared to ask me the question that was in her dark eyes. But at last she murmured:

"Why did you speak of tricks? Simon, why do you laugh?"

"Why, since by a trick you left me—indeed, I cannot believe it was no trick."

"I swear it was no trick."

"I warrant it was. And thus by a trick I have contrived to thwart it."

"By a trick?"

"Most assuredly. Am I a man to drown with half a mile's swimming in smooth water?" Again I laughed.

She leaned forward and spoke in an agitated voice, yet imperiously:

"Tell me the truth. Were you indeed in danger and distress?"

"Not a whit," said I, composedly. "But you wouldn't wait for me."

Slowly came her next question.

"It was a trick, then?"

"And crowned with great success," said I.

"All a trick?"

"Throughout," I answered.

Her face grew set and rigid, and, if it might be, yet paler than before. I waited

JONAH WALL LAY STILL ACROSS THE ENTRANCE, NO LIVING CREATURE IN SIGHT.

for her to speak, but she said nothing. She drew away the cloak she had offered me, and wrapping it about her shoulders withdrew to the stern of the boat. I took her place and laid hold of the oars.

"What's your pleasure now, madam?" I asked.

"What you will," she said, briefly.

I looked at her. She met my gaze with a steady regard. I had expected scorn, but found grief and hurt. Accused by the sight, I wrapped myself in a cold flippancy.

"There is small choice," said I. "The beach is there, and that we have found not pleasant. Calais is yonder, where certainly we must not go. To Dover, then? Evening falls, and if we go gently it will be dark before we reach the town."

"Where you will. I care not," said Barbara, and she folded her cloak so about her face that I could see little more of her than her eyes and her brows. Here at length was my triumph. As sweet as such joys are, malice is their foient, and they smack of its bitterness. Had I followed my heart I would have prayed her pardon. A sore spirit had impelled her; my revenge lacked justice. Yet I would not abase myself, being now in my turn sore, and therefore obstinate. With slow strokes I propelled the boat toward Dover town.

For half an hour I rowed; dusk fell, and I saw the lights of Dover. A gentler mood came on me. I rested an instant, and, leaning forward, said to Barbara:

"Yet I must thank you. Had I been in peril you would have saved me."

No answer came.

"I perceived that you were moved by my fancied danger," I persisted.

Then she spoke, clearly, calmly and coldly:

"I wouldn't have a dog drown under my eyes," said she. "The spectacle is painful."

I performed such a bow as I could, sitting there, and took up my oars again. I had made my reproach. If such were the welcome no more should come from me. I rowed slowly on, then lay on my oars a while, waiting for darkness to fall. The night came, misty again and chill. I grew cold as I waited (my clothes were but half dry) and would gladly have thumped myself with my hands. But I should have seemed to ask pity of the statue that sat there, enveloped in the cloak, with closed eyes and pale, unmoved face. Suddenly she spoke:

"Are you cold, sir?"

"Cold? I am somewhat overheated with rowing, madam," I answered. "But, I pray you, wrap your cloak closer around you."

"I am very well, I thank you, sir."

Yet cold I was, and bitterly. Moreover I was hungry and somewhat faint. Was Barbara hungry? I dared not ask her, lest she should find a fresh mockery in the question.

When I ventured to beach the boat a little way out of Dover it was quite dark, being hard on 10 o'clock. I offered Barbara my hand to alight, but she passed it by unnoticed. Leaving the boat to its fate we walked toward the town.

"Where are you taking me?" asked Barbara.

"To the one person who can serve us," I answered. "Veil your face, and it would be well that we shouldn't speak loud."

"I have no desire to speak at all," said Barbara.

I would not tell her whither she went. Had we been friends, to bring her there would have taxed my persuasion to the full, as our affairs stood. I knew she would lie the night in the street before she would go. But if I got her to the house I could keep her. But would she reach the house? She walked very wearily, faltering in her step, and stumbling over every loose stone. I put out my arm to save her once, but she drew away from it, as though I had sought to strike her.

At last we came to the narrow alley; making a sign to Barbara, I turned down it. The house was in front of me; all was quiet, we had escaped detection. Why, who should look for us? We were at Calais with King Louis; at Calais, where we were to be married!

Looking at the house I found the upper windows dark; there had been the quarters of Phineas Tate and the king had found him others. But below there was a light.

"Will it please you to wait an instant, while I go forward and rouse my friend? I shall see then whether all is safe."

"I will wait here," answered Barbara, and she leaned against the wall of the alley, that fronted the house. In much trepidation I went on and knocked with my knuckles on the door. There was no other course, yet I knew not how either of them would take my action, the lady within and the lady without, she whom I asked for succor and she in whose cause I sought it.

My entry was easy. A man servant and a maid were just within, and the house seemed astir. My request for their mistress caused no surprise; the girl opened the door of the room. I knew the room and gave my name. A cry of pleasure greeted it, and a moment later Nell herself stood before me.

"From the castle or Calais, from Deal or the devil," she cried. In truth, she had a knack of telling you all she knew in a sentence.

"Why, from half-way between Deal and the devil," said I. "For I have left Monmouth on one side and M. de Perrencourt on the other, and am come safe through."

"A witty Simon. But why in Dover again?"

"For want of a friend, mistress. Am I come to one?"

"With all my heart, Simon. What would you?"

"Means to go to London."

"Now, heaven is kind. I go there myself in a few hours. You stare. In truth, it's worth a stare. But the king commands. How did you get rid of Louis?"

I told her briefly. She seemed barely to listen, but looked at me with evident curiosity, and, as I think, with some pleasure.

"A brave thing," she cried. "Come; I'll carry you to London. Nobody shall touch you while you're hid under the hem of my petticoat. It will be like old times, Simon."

"I have no money," said I.

"But I have plenty. For the less the king comes, the more he sends. He's a gentleman in his apologies." Her sigh breathed more contentment than repining.

"So you'll take me with you?"

"To the world's end, Simon, and if you don't ask that, at least to London."

"But I'm not alone," said I.

She looked at me for an instant. Then she began to laugh.

"Whom have you with you?" she asked.

"The lady," said I.

She laughed still, but it seemed to me not very heartily.

"I'm glad," she said, "that one man in England thinks me a good Christian. By heaven, you do, Simon, or you'd never ask me to aid your love."

"There's no love in the matter," I cried. "We're at daggers drawn."

"Then certainly there's love in it," said Mistress Nell, nodding her pretty head in a mighty sagacious manner. "Does she know to whom she is brought?"

"Not yet," I answered, with a somewhat uneasy smile.

"How will she suffer it?"

"She has no other help," said I.

"Oh, Simon, what a smooth tongue is yours." She paused, seeming to fall into a reverie. Then she looked at me wickedly.

"You and your lady are ready to face the perils of the road?"

"Her peril is greater here, and mine as great."

"The king's pursuit, Monmouth's rage, soldiers, officers, footpads?"

"A fig for them all."

"Another peril?"

"For her or for me?"

"Why, for both, good Simon. Don't you understand? See, then." She came near to me, smiling most saucily, and pursing her lips together as though she meant to kiss me.

"If I were vowed to the lady, I should fear the test," said I, "but I am free."

"Where is she?" asked Nell, letting my answer pass with a pout.

"By your very door."

"Let's have her in," cried Nell, and straightway she ran into the alley.

I followed, and came up with her just as she reached Barbara. Barbara leaned no more against the wall, but lay huddled at the foot of it. Weariness and hunger had overcome her. She was in a faint, her lips colorless and her eyes closed. Nell dropped beside her, murmuring low, soft consolations. I stood by in awkward helplessness. These matters were beyond my learning.

"Lift her and carry her in," Nell commanded, and stooping, I lifted her in my arms. The maid and the man stared. Nell shut the door sharply on them.

"What have you done to her?" she cried in angry accusation. "You've let her go without food."

"We had none. She flung my last money into the sea," I pleaded.

"And why? Oh, hold your peace and let us be!"

To question and refuse an answer is woman's way; should it be forbidden to Nell, who was woman from crown to sole? I shrugged my shoulders and drew off to the far end of the room. For some moments I heard nothing and remained very uneasy, not knowing whether it were allowed me to look or not, nor what passed. Then I heard Barbara's voice.

"I thank you, I think you very much. But where am I, and who are you? Forgive me, but who are you?"

"You're in Dover, and safe enough, madam," answered Nell. "What matters it who I am? Will you drink a little of this to please me?"

"Nay, but who are you? I seem to know your face."

"Like enough. Many have seen it."

"But tell me who you are."

"Since you will know, Simon Dale must stand sponsor for me. Here, Simon!"

I rose in obedience to the summons. A thing that a man does not feel of his own accord, a girl's eyes will often make him feel. I took my stand by Nell boldly enough, but Barbara's eyes were on mine and I was full of fear.

"Tell her who I am," said Nell.

I looked at Nell. As I live, the fear that was in my heart was in her eyes. Yet she had faced the world and laughed to scorn all England's frowns. She understood my thought and colored red. Since when had Cydaria learned to blush? Even at Hatchstead my blush had been the target for her mockery! "Tell her," she repeated angrily.

But Barbara knew. Turning to her I had seen the knowledge take shape in her eyes and grow to revulsion and dismay. I could not tell what she would say; but now my fear was in no way for myself. She seemed to watch Nell for a while in a strange mingling of horror and attraction. Then she rose and, still without a word, took her way on trembling feet toward the door. To me she gave no glance and seemed to pay no heed. We two looked for an instant, then Nell darted forward.

"You mustn't go," she cried. "Where would you go? You've no other friend."

Barbara paused, took one step more, paused again.

"I shan't harm you," said Nell. Then she laughed. "You needn't touch me, if you will have it so. But I can help you. And I can help Simon. He's not safe in Dover." She had grown grave, but she ended with another laugh. "You needn't touch me. My maid is a good girl—yes, it's true—and she will tend you."

"For pity's sake, Mistress Barbara—" I began.

"Hush," said Nell, waving me back with a motion of her hand. Barbara now stood still in the middle of the room. She turned her eyes on me, and her whisper sounded clear through all the room.

"Is it?" she asked.

"It is Mistress Eleanor Gwyn," said I, bowing my head.

Nell laughed a short, strange laugh. I saw her breast rise and fall, and a bright red patch marked either cheek.

"Yes I'm Nelly," said she, and laughed again.

Barbara's eyes now met hers.

"You were at Hatchstead?"

"Yes," said Nell, and now she smiled defiantly, but in a moment she sprang forward, for Babara had reeled, and seemed like to faint again and fall. A proud motion of the hand forbade Nell's approach, but weakness baffled pride, and now perforce Barbara caught at her hand.

"I—I can go in a moment," stammered Barbara. But—"

Nell held one hand. Very slowly, very timidly, with fear and shame plain on her face, she drew nearer, and put out her other hand to Barbara. Barbara did not resist her, but let her come nearer. Nell's glance warned me not to move, and I stood where I was, watching them. Now the clasp of the hand was changed for a touch on the shoulder, now the comforting arm sank to the waist and stole around it, full as timidly as ever gallant's round a denying mistress. Still I watched, and I met Nell's bright eyes that looked across at me, wet and sparkling. The dark hair almost mingled with the ruddy brown, as Barbara's head fell on Nell's shoulder. I heard a little sob, and Barbara moaned.

"Oh I'm tired and very hungry."

"Rest here and you shall have food, my pretty," said Nell Gwyn. "Simon, go and bid them give you some."

I went, glad to go. And as I went I heard, "There, pretty, don't cry."

Well, women love to weep. A plague on them, though they need not make us also fools.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NIGHT ON THE ROAD.

In a man of green age and inexperience a hasty judgment may gain pardon, and none need wonder that his hopes carry him on straightway to conclusions born of desire rather than of reason. The meeting I feared had passed off so softly that I forgot how strange and delicate it was, and what were the barriers which a gust of sympathy had for the moment levelled. It did not enter my mind that they must raise their heads again, and that friendship, or even companionship, must be impossible between the two whom I, desperately seeking some refuge, had thrown together. Yet an endeavor was made, and that on both sides. Obligation sounded the edge of Mistress Barbara's scorn, freedom's respect for virtue's chain schooled Nell to an unwonted staidness of demeanor. The fires of war but smouldered, the faintest puff of smoke showing only here and there. I was on the alert to avoid an outbreak; for awhile no outbreak came, and my hopes grew to confidence. But then—I can write the thing no other way—that ancient devil of hers made re-entry into the heart of Mistress Gwyn. I was a man, and a man who had loved her. It was, then, twice intolerable that I should disclaim her dominion, that I should be free, nay, that I should serve another with a sedulous care which might well seem devotion; for the offense touching the guinea was forgotten, my mock drowning well nigh forgiven, and although Barbara had few words for me, they were such that gratitude and friendship shone in them through the veil of embarrassment. Mistress Nell's shrewd eyes were on us, and she watched while she aided. It was in truth her interest, as she conceived, to carry Barbara safe over to Dover, but there was kindness also in hr ample succor, although fever slave to the sparkle of a gem, she seized with eager gratitude on Louis' jewelled dagger when I offered it as my share of our journey's charges) she gave full return. Barbara was seated in her coach, a good horse was provided for me, her servant found me a sober suit of clothes and a sword. Thus our strange party stole from Dover before the town was awake, Nell, obeying the king's command, which sent her back to London, and delighting that she could punish him for it by going in our company. I rode behind the coach, bearing myself like a serving man until we reached open country, when I quickened my pace and stationed myself by the window.

Up to this time matters had gone well; if they spoke, it was of service given and kindness shown. But as the day wore on and we came near Canterbury the devil began to busy himself. Perhaps I showed some discouragement at the growing coldness of Barbara's manner, and my anxiety to warn her to greater cordiality acted as a spur on our companion. First Nell laughed that my callies gained small attention and my compliments no return, that Barbara would not talk of our adventures of the day before, but harped always on coming speedily where her father was and so discharging me from my forced service. A merry look declared that if Mistress Quinton would not play the game, another would; a fusillade of glances opened, Barbara reeling and feigning not to see, I embarrassed yet chagrined into some return; there followed words, half-whispered, half-aloud, not sparing in reminiscence of other days and mischievously pointed with tender sentiment. The challenge to my manhood was too tempting, the joy of encounter sweet. Barbara grew utterly silent, sitting with eyes downcast and lips set in a disapproval that needed no speech for its expression. Bolder and bolder came Nell's advances; when I sought to drop behind she called me up; if I rode ahead, she swore she would bid the driver gallop his horses till she came to me again. "I can't be without you, Simon. Ah, 'tis so long since we were together," she whispered, and turned naughty eyes on Barbara.

Yet we might have come through without declared conflict had not a thing befallen us at Canterbury that brought Nell into fresh temptation, and thereby broke the strained cords of amity. The doings of the king at Dover had set the country in some stir, there was no love of the French and less of the pope; men were asking, and pretty loudly, why madame came; she had been seen at Canterbury; the duke of York had made a great entertainment there for her. They did not know what I knew, but they were uneasy concerning the king's religion and their own. Yet Nell must needs put her head well out of the window as we drove in. I knew not whether the sequel were what she desired; it was at least what she seemed not to fear—a fellow caught sight of her and raised a cheer. The news spread quick among the idle folk in the street, and the busy, hearing it, came out of their houses. A few looked askance at our protector, but the larger part, setting their Protestantism above their scruples, greeted her gladly, and made a procession for her, cheering and encouraging her with cries which had more friendliness than delicacy in them. Now, indeed, I dropped behind and rode beside the mounted servant. The fellow was all a-grin, triumphing in his mistress' popularity. Even so she herself exulted in it, and threw all around nods and smiles, aye, and alas, repartees conceived much in the same spirit as the jests that called them forth. I could have cried on the earth to swallow me, not for my own sake (in itself the scene was entertaining enough, however little it might tend to edification), but on account of Mistress Barbara. Fairly I was afraid to ride forward and see her face, and dreaded to remember that I had brought her to this situation. But Nell laughed and jested, flinging back at me now and again a look that mocked my glum face, and declared her keen pleasure in my perplexity and her scorn of Barbara's shame. Where now were the tenderness and sympathy that had made their meeting beautiful? The truce was ended, and war waged relentlessly.

(To Be Continued.)

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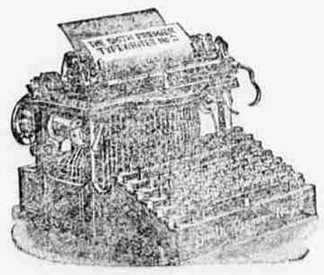

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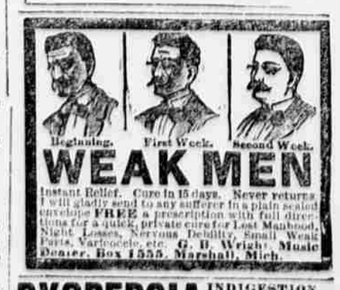

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