

The Isle of the Winds

By S. R. CROCKETT

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CHAPTER I. I Meet My Father.

"Come in, John Bell," here you will see at one eye-blink the whole ruffled pack kenneled, the young priest that glared at me, the faded English cat that disinfected me and the gap-toothed old hound that barked me—and did me other disservices besides."

These are the first words that ever I remember hearing my father speak—clear, that is, for I must have been and heard him often enough in my innocence before that I grew word-conscious.

I can recall the scene yet as clear in my mind's eye—as, clearer than the dinner I have this day eaten or the pattern in the lace-silk waistcoat which lies folded in the drawer at my elbow.

It was in the wide kitchen or house-place of James Brydson's change house or common wayside inn which sits on the brow overlooking the little Scottish town of New Milns. A low door it had, to enter which your head had to bow and your feet simultaneously to descend till with a creak and double twist of the body you were down found yourself within and after the winking blinking and sneezing in the bluish atmosphere of the peat reek that billowed and belled between you and the hatch. But Brydson's inn was mostly frequented by weavers and they had hauled in a new one. So the peculiarity of access mattered little, though now and then a gentleman or hill farmer broke his head on the crossbeam.

I remember I was sitting on a creosote stool by the peat fire warming my feet at the red glow and admiring the glinting of the little flames on my new silver shoe-buckle. I had gone thither from the lodge Yett, which was my mother's dwelling, clinging to my grandfather's hand. As I went my feet had nearly touched the ground, so firm a hold he took of my wrist and such long strides as he conquered the ground withal. Sir James Stanfield of New Milns, he was called, a fine, unassuming, well-regarded man, any in that country, a friend of democracy, gracious of speech and exceeding keenly to the eye with his broad-brimmed hat, wide-ankled coat of fine blue cloth, white silk undercoat, white stockings and the silver buckled shoes that were copies in great of mine. There was no other gentleman in all the southlands of Scotland than my grandfather.

He seemed at once to enoble and to illuminate that smoky little hostelry as he sat in the high-backed elbow chair and tapped the bare boards lightly with his glove tips. With him were Mr. John Bell, preacher of the gospel, in whose discourse my grandfather sometimes delighted (at other times he would laugh heartily at his simplicity), and Umphray Spurway, the old master-drover, a great red Englishman from Yorkshire, at whose laugh you seemed to see the rafters dirl as he threw back his head and blattered applause with his pain on the white scored tent of his table.

To these three gentlemen, sitting at their wine in the change house kitchen of New Milns that snowy December night in the year of our Lord's grace 17—there entered a fourth, and with him presently a fifth, at sight of whom silence fell upon the men and constraint upon the women folk. James Brydson, the landlord, was out upon his occasions, and I mind nothing of him. But Mistress Brydson, the landlady, sat in the corner by a flickering cruciate lamp derry, and as if by an epical spinning a web across a windowpane; and, smiling good-humoredly all the while she glanced up and caught the eye of this one and that among her guests, proud, keen, that she herself did not disdain to leave his great furnished house to sit with his guests in her kitchen. A proud woman, as all might see, was Lucky Brydson, smiling and beaming at her ease as the white bonnet knitting pin clicked and twiddled in the cross lights. Shyly and at times slyly whispering, nodding and confiding secretaries to each other, as girls will, her two daughters, Elsie and Margit, stood by the door of the inner room, where the entrance to the cellar was. I suppose they were bonny enough rosy-cheeked wenches. I was not yet of an age to note or care. But this I know, that Elsie was kind to me, and often gave me fine tastes of cake with honey in my lady's bread thereon liberally. I had no fault to find with Elsiep Brydson that night or any night, but sat composedly munching my piece and dusting the crumbs from my bosom, lest, when I returned to the cellar way, my eyes should note a heinous sin in the decolour of Lady Griselda Stanfield, which must indeed have been written upon two tables of sin.

The talk had been brisk and merry all the evening, and such of it, as I can remember now, goes to show how debonaire and kind my grandfather was when he escaped from his wife's leading. For an hour, unobtrusively and ungrudgingly, his waistband in a place where mirth was not counted ungodliness and laughter compared (with true asperity) to the crackling of thorns under a pot.

"Hush, Umphray! Besides what, Elsie?" the lass would finish her sentence.

"Beside," she hesitated, "there are many wed who would give all they possess to be unwed again. I want not to make one more."

"A shrewd lass, and, faith," he said, "very true—very true. I know some such myself. But all the same it is not well becoming in your jurisdiction that such a pretty creature should lack an husband, so long as Umphray Spurway, great English lout that he is, hath neither wife to keep him warm nights nor hair to hold his goods and go clad in cloth of his weaving. Look to it, man! Look to it!"

At this the great red Englishman laughed, being well pleased, as all men do when they are rallied concerning women.

"Ah, Sir James," he said, speaking with a curious lilt in his utterance, "had I lands and houses, milns and water powers like you, I had not so long been eating the bread of an hireling's baking. Elsie here is a pretty lass and an honest, but I get well to say to an old gray-headed Englishman!"

By this the lass had recovered from her first daunting and found the sharp tongue wherewith to hold her own which comes naturally to women bred and born in inns and hostelries.

"Never before have I gotten the chance to say either ye or nay to that, Master Umphray Spurway," she said, dropping her pinafore and standing with her hands behind her a little defiantly; "but, after all, 'tis better late than after dark," as the saying is!"

Sir James laughed loud and hearty, and even the minister chuckled over his cup of wine.

the women on the other side of the inn kitchen. As I say, she was indeed very bonny and homely of feature, but (this I learned afterward) there was no steadfast or housewifely look in her eyes. And that, after all, is the way to tell a good woman.

The young man with the haughty air and handsome countenance took his hand from his sword and pointed scornfully at the table.

"Look, Janet," he cried, "look we! at them. There sit all the three. For a silver girl I would send them all to hell—aye, and swing for them in the Grass Market in the morning, Janet!"

The rosy mirth of the wine beat had ebbed quickly from my grandfather's lips. He gripped the table to steady himself—so that he was in the least overcome with fear or apprehension, but that he might worthily say that which he had to say.

"Phillip," he murmured, and then put his fingers to the koftered frill of his neckerchief. "Phillip, my lad, you are my eldest son. Will you not take warning and lead a new life? Give up the skirts of the sake of the hair I learned to say his prayers kneeling at my knee. Put away this wicked, wanton woman that has made you live like a beast. Return to your wife. She greets for you. She prays for you. Look upon this hair."

My grandfather had now his hand upon my head, for I had run to him at the first sight of my father. He would have said more. I could hear his heart thumping in his side and his breath wheezing dry in his throat. But at this moment the woman broke in shrill revellings, demanding furiously who he was thus to flit from her her good name.

"I would have you know that I am an honest man's wife," she shouted the words at him like throwing stones.

"Sir James' eyes were steady on her face. "Said you by any chance," he inquired gravely, "a man's honest wife?"

"I dropped his honest wife quietly as a fisher drops a bait into a pool."

"At which the woman swore a horrid oath and turned away as if to escape the questioning eyes of these present. She even made as if to leave her companion's side and go over to the other side of the room, where Mistress Brydson still sat knitting with her daughters gathered in beside her like chickens when the hawk hovers."

But the women folk of the house readily "divining" her intention, gathered the skirts of their clothes closely about them and swept off into the inner room. The door slammed in her face and with a heartick little laugh the woman returned to the side of her paramour. There was no weakness in his attitude.

Phillip Stanfield stood browbeating all that were in the inn kitchen except perhaps Umphray Spurway, the Englishman, who sat sipping his stone ale contemptuously and smiling in a way that was a vast admiration to me to behold.

CHAPTER II.
The Little Inn.

Then the minister man arose and lifted his hand with great appearance of solemnity, which made the Englishman cough behind his palm. For Master Bell began to exhort the young man and woman to repent and put away their sin, citing instances of well-accredited reformations both from scripture and (as he added) from the records of profane history.

But this timely and improving rebuke did the young man no good. Nay, it even made him more angry than before, such is the hardness of the human heart.

"On upon you, canting hound," he cried, breaking in on the preacher's sermonizing.

Phillip Stanfield, you detached man and blasphemer of your father!"

"As for you, Janet Mark," Spurway continued, speaking to the woman, "you shall be whipped from here to Moreham—aye, if I have to lay on the lashes myself!"

At which, after a volley of oaths from Phillip Stanfield and a snarling like that of a trapped wild beast from his companion, the pair went forth into the night, vowing vengeance upon us all.

The three gentlemen sat a long time silent without touching the wine which remained, nor so much as emptying their glasses. Then Umphray Spurway rose.

"Let us take the boy home to his mother," he said.

And with that he handed one of the pistols to Sir James, reserving the other for himself. The minister placed himself next to my grandfather on the inner side, and commended his life and work to God in moving words. I thought he might have spared a prayer for my grandfather and me, but he did not.

In this order we were just about to go up the stairs of Brydson's change house, and adventure forth into the night, when of a sudden before us there appeared the strangest little figure.

A lassic bairn stood at the door barring the way—a girl of a year or thereby. Her head was a tangle of light brown curls, which the firelight netted with gold. Her eyes danced light. Her mouth smiled red. She herself seemed to smile and dance as she could hardly keep her feet still. I thought she looked kindly and pretty and little more than a babe, but at sight of her the womanfolk of the house, came running indignantly forward to thrust her forth.

"My mither—where have ye put my mither?" cried the child.

"Oot o' this, del'ist bratt!" they answered.

"I told her he'd be here," said the minister to Sir James, "but she would not believe me. It was good to be once more within walls, though even now I could not get the thought of the witch child out of my head."

My grandfather's old serving man, Robin Green, came to take his master's overcoat, letting Umphray Spurway and myself shift for ourselves.

"Her ladyship has gone to bed," he said, "she wanted waiting for you."

"Did she wait for me?" asked Sir James, a little anxious, it seemed to me.

"I told her he'd be here," said the minister to Sir James, "but she would not believe me. It was good to be once more within walls, though even now I could not get the thought of the witch child out of my head."

Then Robin Green went back to the hearth, and, stooping over the fire, he carefully removed the entire amount of faggots which Sir James had tossed on, blowing out each if it had caught, and laying it at the side, so that presently the whole room was full of the acid life of wood smoke, and the smell of the rich yellow liquid with a liberal hand, all the time looking Sir James in the eye and nodding at the proper places in the story, as if that were his sole concern.

My grandfather had compounded a steaming glassful for his guest and then for himself, but so absorbed was he in his narrative that he quite forgot at the end of the operation to add the spirit to Umphray Spurway's glass—an omission which the Englishman immediately repaired without comment, reaching his hand for the decanter and pouring in the rich yellow liquid with a liberal hand, all the time looking Sir James in the eye and nodding at the proper places in the story, as if that were his sole concern.

My grandfather, after having bidden me and Robin Green my supper, because it was late and my mother would wish me in bed, presently forgot all about me, and proceeded with his argument. Still talking, he rose from his seat, and, going to one of the shelves which went about the deep window seat, he took from that which was readiest to his hand a little book covered in crimson leather, and with the pages grown yellow with age and handling, holding it up, "is now my chief comfort. No, Master Spurway, it is not the Bible. Her ladyship—yes, certainly, she is a comfort, but of a mild nature, and, as one might say, occasional in action. But, you may know it without this in Burton, his 'Melancholy,' or the right edition, before he grew clumsy. At Oxford: Printed by John Litchfield and James Short for Henry Crips; Anno Domini 1621. By that you may know it. Without this written cordial I can neither live merry hour nor sleep quiet night. Having Burton's fellowship, even though my son strive after my death, I can go on merrily toward heaven, as indeed sayeth mine author."

Then Umphray Spurway, with a curious smile on his face, asked my grandfather if it became him as an elder of the Kirk to pass his time with Burton, who, after all, was a little better than a pagan (or at least an Epicurean) in his habits. "Go to your right, Oh, nay, lie not to me. That will not serve you. I know the way of your cloth with female saints. Out with it, dog, or by the devil's dice box I will forthwith disembowel you with this sword."

"So doing him thus urgent, to keep the peace I got down on my knees and told him all."

"Hides Umphray Spurway at the great house this night?" he asked me.

"I told him that Master Phillip," said the man from Yorks, taking out of his pistols and handing them in his hand.

Still I remember that procession down the long passage to the outer door, my grandfather leading the way with a candle in a great elvyr candlestick. Then came Umphray, the Englishman, his face grim and set, striding on with his heavy footfall. Behind him again were the minister and myself, fearful, I trow, to go, but still more fearful or being left in the poor alone. I mind the shouting boom of the bolts one by one, the swinging noise of the hinges, the widening of the black crack in the door opened and the night looked in, the expectation in my heart that I should see the face of a dead foot out of the blackness. Then I heard Umphray stride down the steps. My grandfather's candle shone a moment on a stretch of white, glistening snow, over which the wind moaned. Then what a heavy door slammed, the bolts were shot and Sir James turned and found me at his feet.

He gave a little start at sight of me. "Phillip," he said, in a strange tone, "my boy Philip?"

"Then, with a long sigh, he added, 'And now he seeks my life.'"

Strong Evidence

The strongest evidence in the world, aside from personal experience, is the direct testimony of an honest man.

The word of some one way off East, or West, of whom we never heard before, may be true—

But we are not so sure of it as we are of the statement of a man who lives in the same town with us—a man we can see and talk to any time we want to—we can depend positively upon the evidence of such a man.

And that is just the sort of men who are testifying for

Doan's Kidney Pills.

Men who live right here in Omaha.

Men whose statement can be

verified in an hour any time. Men who have suffered

from every form of kidney trouble, and who have been

cured by the Little Conqueror of Kidney Ills. It is

their own experience they are telling, and it is true,

every word of it. Here is the story of one Omaha man:

Mr. John C. Hoefler, stock keeper of the third floor in McLeod-Brady Co.'s wholesale grocery, living at 2027 Charles street, says: "I had a weak back for nearly three years. Sometimes it ached intensely, particularly so if I stooped or lifted. I used medicine said to be good for the kidneys, but the trouble still continued. An announcement about Doan's Kidney Pills was sent to me, and he lifted up a box at Klein & Co's drug store, corner 15th and Douglas sts. The treatment cured me."

DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS are for sale at all drug stores, 50 cents a box. Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y.

LADIES' FRIEND

TURKISH T. & P. PILLS brings monthly menstruation sure to time—never disappoints you. 25c. box. 50c. box will help any case. By mail, Habn's Drug Store, 18th & Farnam, Omaha, Neb.

bed, presently forgot all about me, and proceeded with his argument. Still talking, he rose from his seat, and, going to one of the shelves which went about the deep window seat, he took from that which was readiest to his hand a little book covered in crimson leather, and with the pages grown yellow with age and handling, holding it up, "is now my chief comfort. No, Master Spurway, it is not the Bible. Her ladyship—yes, certainly, she is a comfort, but of a mild nature, and, as one might say, occasional in action. But, you may know it without this in Burton, his 'Melancholy,' or the right edition, before he grew clumsy. At Oxford: Printed by John Litchfield and James Short for Henry Crips; Anno Domini 1621. By that you may know it. Without this written cordial I can neither live merry hour nor sleep quiet night. Having Burton's fellowship, even though my son strive after my death, I can go on merrily toward heaven, as indeed sayeth mine author."

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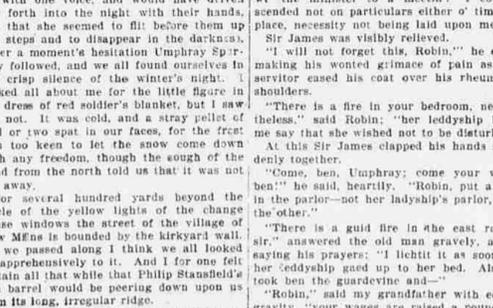


WE COULD SEE IT FLITTING LIKE A SNOWFLAKE ACROSS THE TOMSTONES TOWARD THE VAULT OF THE STANFIELDS.

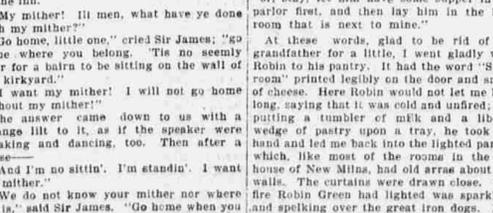


HE SEEMED AT ONCE TO ENNOBLE AND TO ILLUMINATE THAT SMOKY LITTLE HOSTELRY.

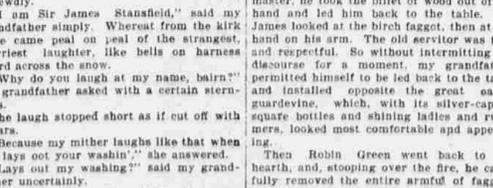
I SAW A TALL, SMART-VISAGED MAN STANDING ERECT BY THE OUTER DOOR.



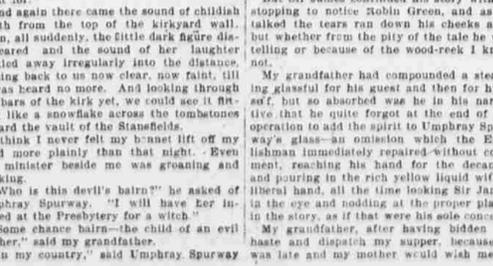
THE MINISTER MAN AROSE AND LIFTED HIS HAND WITH GREAT APPEARANCE OF SOLEMNITY, WHICH MADE THE ENGLISHMAN COUGH BEHIND HIS PALM.



THE MINISTER PLACED HIMSELF NEXT TO MY GRANDFATHER ON THE INNER SIDE, AND COMMENDED HIS LIFE AND WORK TO GOD IN MOVING WORDS.



MY GRANDFATHER HAD NOW HIS HAND UPON MY HEAD, FOR I HAD RUN TO HIM AT THE FIRST SIGHT OF MY FATHER.



PHILLIP, HE MURMURED, AND THEN PUT HIS FINGERS TO THE KOTTERED FRILL OF HIS NECKERCHIEF.