



The Tale of the Willows

By R. S. Crockett

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Synopsis of Previous Installments.

James Stanfield of New Mills, in company with his grandson, Philip, meets in an inn-house his son Philip and his son's betrothed, Janet Mark. Philip's quarrel with Janet's father, Mr. Spurr, is taken up. Philip's father, Mr. Stanfield, is taken up. Philip's father, Mr. Stanfield, is taken up.

country and folk. Have pity on us, great lady! We suffer for our religion. "I know not about that," she answered with a sudden chill; "but from what part of Scotland do you come?"

"He never was executed," I said. "He escaped on the very day, though many in Scotland say that he died on the widdy by the hangman's cord."

CHAPTER XL

The Taming of the Tiger.

Standing thus stricken I flashed a look at those who stood about me, Anna and Will. I scanned their faces, and it was with the almost relief that I perceived it was the only one of the company who knew the woman's secret.

Meanwhile Eborra continued to speak the flash up into her face, a warm, rosy hue upon the whiteness of her skin. For that was her great beauty in a land of dusky women.

"What, ye are English folk that have been among the pirates," she said in good English, bringing her mule about that she might have a better look at us.

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on a time had seen service with Grier of Lag. The beasts pulled us up the bank in a series of standing leaps and at the top we found ourselves in a pleasant country, with trees and green grass, and a few green hills in the distance.

There were many trees, too, some loaded with fruit, others gay with birds of red and green, and a few and gabbed with hideous noise. The road improved greatly from this point and the poor captain of Spain had hard work to keep up with us, which from his jealousy of his wife he was determined to do.

Then all suddenly we came out upon the crest of a little hill, and there beneath us showed the town and castle of Porto Rico. The castle is very strong, standing with its works defensive and strong buildings on a point of land which jut into the sea.

CHAPTER XLII Perilous Favor.

Yet it was curious to note how in all her grandeur, and while speaking with carelessness and unprecision the new language she had learned, Janet Mark retained the manners of the off-hand, hoydenish, half-egypt Scot's wife.

WHEREUPON THE GALLANT SOLDIER OF THE MOST CATHOLIC KING BENT HIM ON ONE KNEE IN THE DUST.

getting in, in order that we might try the luxury of the red velvet cushions and admire the Venetian mirrors set into the front and sides, in which she was never tired of regarding the comeliness of her own buxom countenance and wide, smiling mouth with its fine double row of teeth white as milk.

Donna Juanita talked to us in English, or more often in the Moreham Scotch of the more vulgar sort, while her husband, not being able to understand a word, sat and digested, or stood by the window kicking his heels and tugging his spurs in the hands, not daring to say a word.

For me, I declare I wished myself well back in the chain gang! Will confessed to me afterwards that she had been looking at me the while she was doing as a meaty home! If this be favor with fine women folk, Lord send me back to poor Jean Carrel. I had rather suffer for my religion any day!

tell the lady many things to fill up the time. I spoke of my mother, but could not summon resolution to tell her of Anna. And, indeed, if any one will take the trouble to think of all the circumstances, I judge that he will not greatly blame me. So that, be it well believed, it was with a tremulous heart that I waited the advent of my mother and Little Anna Mark.

CHAPTER XLIII Jezebel's Daughter.

Before her husband's return the lady had time to tell us all her adventures, now standing by Will's stool and playing with his hair, anon gazing out at the window.

"But there—I have come to a country where the slaves are the only free men, where I must put up with fools and knaves and such 'Why left my name?' Yet God be thanked, I can make them serve me. If a dog barks at you give him a bone, and death is the only sickness for which there is no remedy. But what keeps my husband? He had time to have been here and back a score of times. What is your name, young lady?"

"I started up and was at the door in a moment, but Will was before me. 'This lady would in no wise permit. She thought more of Will's bodily presence than of me, being older, I suppose—a thing that made me glad, and I resolved to vex her a little by casting up to him the lady's preference for the opinion of any surname.'

"At which Will had performed to return against his will and I departed well content. But I had none too well pleased with the sight that met me on leaving the town. For mounted on mules and carried by mules I met a whole cavalcade. First came my mother on a steady pacing beast of a gray color. She had on a kind of nun's dress with a white band across the forehead, in which she had pinned a white roseary was about her neck, and she looked as if she had spent all her life within convent walls, this owing not so much to piety as to the delicate purity of her complexion, of which she always took the greatest care.

"Next came the old woman, carried in a sort of rude litter by two stout negroes, while Eborra ran beside her, ready to render any assistance which might be necessary.

"But the last pair caused me the greatest astonishment of all. For Anna rode boy fashion on a fiery little steed with the commandante beside her on his black. She was still dressed in the manner which some of the Spaniards have learned from the Indians, that is to say, in a youth's suit of dressed deerskin, fringed and beaded. A short tanned skirt of fine doekskin came a little below her knee. Cross-carriered hosen, little peaked Indian shoes and a feathered wig completed an attire pretty indeed to look upon, but one which would have raised a revolution in all the parishes.

"All the time the commandante was deploring Anna with his eyes, while as for the rest of herself, she was eking out her broken Spanish with her eyelashes. 'No puede, senor!' she was saying. 'no mas agua—'

looked out of the window over my shoulder, and there upon the piazza she saw King Abah kneeling, if you please, on the hard mud to my Anna, decked out like a stripling from a play-acting booth, all fine with beads and tags and garlands. And she, well-looking down at him like the little vixen she is.

"Well—then I tell you, she was in a rare taking. My lady thought no more of breathing down my neck. By the head of Neil, will a cat lick her paws when she can lick cream? Jezebel stamped her foot and clenched her hands, looking as if she would have leaped down from the window upon the pair of them. She strode up and down like one of Lag's troopers in a covenanted house, and when at last the door opened I expected her every moment to fly at Anna as she came in.

"And she would, too—only that the don came first, and the brunt of her anger fell on him. He quailed and stammered—as indeed you heard him. His own fine Castilian fell in the hour of need as if it had been a foreign tongue.

"'Foul road, spawn of a mud bank,' she cried, 'you would betray me to my face, and that with a silly ape-faced girl, the slave of a slave? By our lady, I will mar her. She shall no longer witch fools with her upward glance as she looks out her eyes—ye gods as corbies do—'

"At this, thinking that she would do even as she said, I came between. In a moment she had a dagger drawn on me, the which she stuck through my forearm. Then plucking it out again, she flew like a fury upon Anna, and if you, Philip, had not gotten between them I trow she would have had it in her heart."

"This lady, Will, I may as well tell the rest in my own plain tale. I did get between the two, and Anna kept her ground gallantly as the wife of the commandante rushed at her with dagger uplifted.

"'Hold, Janet Mark!' I cried loudly, catching her by the arm; 'do not kill your own child.' She struggled wildly for a minute as I held her, but I was too strong for her. 'She is your own child, your little Anna Mark!' I repeated in a calm tone.

"And the second time the spoken words did not fall of their effect. 'Little Anna Mark!' she repeated after me, uncertainly, pausing between each word. 'The babe you bare farewell to on the steps of Moreham kirk. I killed you, Janet Mark, even as soon as I clapped eyes on you!'

"I expected every moment that she would turn on me and order us all to the gallows, being in fear lest her own words should cover her for the thing she was. But I misjudged the woman. She like this man's dobeses the heart, but it does not kill natural affection.

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