Montezuma's Daughter

H. Rider Haggard

DEDICATION

My dear Jebb,

Strange as were the adventures and escapes of Thomas Wingfield, once of this parish, whereof these pages tell, your own can almost equal them in these latter days, and, since a fellow feeling makes us kind, you at least they may move to a sigh of sympathy. Among many a distant land you know that in which he loved and fought, following vengeance and his fate, and by your side I saw its relics and its peoples, its volcans and its valleys. You know even where lies the treasure which, three centuries and more ago, he helped to bury, the countless treasure that an evil fortune held us back from seeking. Now the Indians have taken back their secret, and though many may search, none will lift the graven stone that seals it, nor shall the light of day shine again upon the golden head of Montezuma. So be it! The wealth which Cortes wept over, and his Spaniards sinned and died for, is for ever hidden yonder by the shores of the bitter lake whose waters gave up to you that ancient horror, the veritable and sleepless god of Sacrifice, of whom I would not rob you—and, for my part, I do not regret the loss.

What cannot be lost, what to me seem of more worth than the dead hero Guatemoc's gems and jars of gold, are the memories of true friendship shown to us far away beneath the shadow of the Slumbering Woman,[1] and it is in gratitude for these that I ask permission to set your name within a book which were it not for you would never have been written.

I am, my dear Jebb,
Always sincerely yours,
H. RIDER HAGGARD.

DITCHINGHAM, NORFOLK, *October* 5, 1892.
To J. Gladwyn Jebb, Esq.

NOTE

Worn out prematurely by a life of hardship and extraordinary adventure, Mr. Jebb passed away on March 18, 1893, taking with him the respect and affection of all who had the honour of his friendship. The author has learned with pleasure that the reading of this tale in proof and the fact of its dedication to himself afforded him some amusement and satisfaction in the intervals of his sufferings.

H. R. H.

March 22, 1893.

[1] The volcano Izticcihuatl in Mexico.

NOTE

The more unpronounceable of the Aztec names are shortened in many instances out of consideration for the patience of the reader; thus “Popocatapetl” becomes “Popo,” “Huitzelcoatl” becomes “Huitzel,” &c. The prayer in Chapter xxvi. is freely rendered from Jourdanet’s French translation of Fray Bernardino de Sahagun’s History of New Spain, written shortly after the conquest of Mexico (Book VI, chap. v.), to which monumental work and to Prescott’s admirable history the author of this romance is much indebted. The portents described as heralding the fall of the Aztec Empire, and many of the incidents and events written of in this story, such as the annual personation of the god Tezcatlipoca by a captive distinguished for his personal beauty, and destined to sacrifice, are in the main historical. The noble speech of the Emperor Guatemoc to the Prince of Tacuba uttered while they both were suffering beneath the hands of the Spaniards is also authentic.

Montezuma’s Daughter

CHAPTER I
WHY THOMAS WINGFIELD TELLS HIS TALE

Now glory be to God who has given us the victory! It is true, the strength of Spain is shattered, her ships are sunk or fled, the sea has swallowed her soldiers and her sailors by hundreds and by thousands, and England breathes again. They came to conquer, to bring us to the torture and the stake—to do to us free Englishmen as Cortes did by the Indians of Anahuac. Our manhood to the slave bench, our daughters to dishonour, our souls to the loving-kindness of the priest, our wealth to the Emperor and the Pope! God has answered them with his winds, Drake has answered them with his guns. They are gone, and with them the glory of Spain.

I, Thomas Wingfield, heard the news to-day on this very Thursday in the Bungay market-place, whither I went to gossip and to sell the apples which these dreadful gales have left me, as they hang upon my trees.

Before there had been rumours of this and of that, but here in Bungay was a man named Young, of the Youngs of Yarmouth, who had served in one of the Yarmouth ships in the fight at Gravelines, aye and sailed north after the Spaniards till they were lost in the Scottish seas.

Little things lead to great, men say, but here great things lead to little, for because of these tidings it comes about that I, Thomas Wingfield, of the Lodge and the parish of Ditchingham in the county of Norfolk, being now of a great age and having only a short time to live, turn to pen and ink. Ten years ago, namely, in the year 1578, it pleased her Majesty, our gracious Queen Elizabeth, who at that date visited this county, that I should be brought before her at Norwich. There and then, saying that the fame of it had reached her, she commanded me to give her some particulars of the story of my life, or rather of those twenty years, more or less, which I spent among the Indians at that time when Cortes conquered their country of Anahuac, which is now known as Mexico. But almost before I could begin my tale, it was time for her to start for Cossey to

hunt the deer, and she said it was her wish that I should write the story down that she might read it, and moreover that if it were but half as wonderful as it promised to be, I should end my days as Sir Thomas Wingfield. To this I answered her Majesty that pen and ink were tools I had no skill in, yet I would bear her command in mind. Then I made bold to give her a great emerald that once had hung upon the breast of Montezuma's daughter, and of many a princess before her, and at the sight of it her eyes glistened brightly as the gem, for this Queen of ours loves such costly playthings. Indeed, had I so desired, I think that I might then and there have struck a bargain, and set the stone against a title; but I, who for many years had been the prince of a great tribe, had no wish to be a knight. So I kissed the royal hand, and so tightly did it grip the gem within that the knuckle joints shone white, and I went my ways, coming back home to this my house by the Waveney on that same day.

Now the Queen's wish that I should set down the story of my life remained in my mind, and for long I have desired to do it before life and story end together. The labour, indeed, is great to one unused to such tasks; but why should I fear labour who am so near to the holiday of death? I have seen things that no other Englishman has seen, which are worthy to be recorded; my life has been most strange, many a time it has pleased God to preserve it when all seemed lost, and this perchance He has done that the lesson of it might become known to others. For there is a lesson in it and in the things that I have seen, and it is that no wrong can ever bring about a right, that wrong will breed wrong at last, and be it in man or people, will fall upon the brain that thought it and the hand that wrought it.

Look now at the fate of Cortes—that great man whom I have known clothed with power like a god. Nearly forty years ago, so I have heard, he died poor and disgraced in Spain; he, the conqueror—yes, and I have learned also that his son Don Martin has been put to the torture in that city which the father won with so great cruelties for Spain. Malinche, she whom the Spaniards named Marina, the chief and best beloved of all the women of this same Cortes, foretold it to him in her anguish when after all that had been, after she had so many times preserved him and his soldiers to look upon the sun, at the last he deserted her, giving her in marriage to Don Juan Xaramillo. Look again at the fate of Marina herself. Because she loved this

man Cortes, or Malinche, as the Indians named him after her, she brought evil on her native land; for without her aid Tenoctitlan, or Mexico, as they call it now, had never bowed beneath the yoke of Spain—yes, she forgot her honour in her passion. And what was her reward, what right came to her of her wrongdoing? This was her reward at last: to be given away in marriage to another and a lesser man when her beauty waned, as a worn-out beast is sold to a poorer master.

Consider also the fate of those great peoples of the land of Anahuac. They did evil that good might come. They sacrificed the lives of thousands to their false gods, that their wealth might increase, and peace and prosperity be theirs throughout the generations. And now the true God has answered them. For wealth He has given them desolation, for peace the sword of the Spaniard, for prosperity the rack and the torment and the day of slavery. For this it was that they did sacrifice, offering their own children on the altars of Huitzel and of Tezcat.

And the Spaniards themselves, who in the name of mercy have wrought cruelties greater than any that were done by the benighted Aztecs, who in the name of Christ daily violate His law to the uttermost extreme, say shall they prosper, shall their evil-doing bring them welfare? I am old and cannot live to see the question answered, though even now it is in the way of answering. Yet I know that their wickedness shall fall upon their own heads, and I seem to see them, the proudest of the peoples of the earth, bereft of fame and wealth and honour, a starveling remnant happy in nothing save their past. What Drake began at Gravelines God will finish in many another place and time, till at last Spain is of no more account and lies as low as the empire of Montezuma lies to-day.

Thus it is in these great instances of which all the world may know, and thus it is even in the life of so humble a man as I, Thomas Wingfield. Heaven indeed has been merciful to me, giving me time to repent my sins; yet my sins have been visited on my head, on me who took His prerogative of vengeance from the hand of the Most High. It is just, and because it is so I wish to set out the matter of my life’s history that others may learn from it. For many years this has been in my mind, as I have said, though to speak truth it was her Majesty the Queen who first set the seed. But only on this day, when I have heard for certain of the fate of

the Armada, does it begin to grow, and who can say if ever it will come to flower? For this tidings has stirred me strangely, bringing back my youth and the deeds of love and war and wild adventure which I have been mingled in, fighting for my own hand and for Guatemoc and the people of the Otomie against these same Spaniards, as they have not been brought back for many years. Indeed, it seems to me, and this is no rare thing with the aged, as though there in the far past my true life lay, and all the rest were nothing but a dream.

From the window of the room wherein I write I can see the peaceful valley of the Waveney. Beyond its stream are the common lands golden with gorse, the ruined castle, and the red roofs of Bungay town gathered about the tower of St. Mary's Church. Yonder far away are the king's forests of Stowe and the fields of Flixton Abbey; to the right the steep bank is green with the Earsham oaks, to the left the fast marsh lands spotted with cattle stretch on to Beccles and Lowestoft, while behind me my gardens and orchards rise in terraces up the turfy hill that in old days was known as the Earl's Vineyard. All these are about me, and yet in this hour they are as though they were not. For the valley of the Waveney I see the vale of Tenoctitlan, for the slopes of Stowe the snowy shapes of the volcans Popo and Iztac, for the spire of Earsham and the towers of Ditchingham, of Bungay, and of Beccles, the soaring pyramids of sacrifice gleaming with the sacred fires, and for the cattle in the meadows the horsemen of Cortes sweeping to war.

It comes back to me; that was life, the rest is but a dream. Once more I feel young, and, should I be spared so long, I will set down the story of my youth before I am laid in yonder churchyard and lost in the world of dreams. Long ago I had begun it, but it was only on last Christmas Day that my dear wife died, and while she lived I knew that this task was better left undone. Indeed, to be frank, it was thus with my wife: She loved me, I believe, as few men have the fortune to be loved, and there is much in my past that jarred upon this love of hers, moving her to a jealousy of the dead that was not the less deep because it was so gentle and so closely coupled with forgiveness. For she had a secret sorrow that ate her heart away, although she never spoke of it. But one child was born to us, and this child died in infancy, nor for all her prayers did it please God to give her another, and indeed remembering the words of Otomie I did not expect that it would be so. Now she knew well that

yonder across the seas I had children whom I loved by another wife, and though they were long dead, must always love unalterably, and this thought wrung her heart. That I had been the husband of another woman she could forgive, but that this woman should have borne me children whose memory was still so dear, she could not forget if she forgave it, she who was childless. Why it was so, being but a man, I cannot say; for who can know all the mystery of a loving woman's heart? But so it was. Once, indeed, we quarrelled on the matter; it was our only quarrel.

It chanced that when we had been married but two years, and our babe was some few days buried in the churchyard of this parish of Ditchingham, I dreamed a very vivid dream as I slept one night at my wife's side. I dreamed that my dead children, the four of them, for the tallest lad bore in his arms my firstborn, that infant who died in the great siege, came to me as they had often come when I ruled the people of the Otomie in the City of Pines, and talked with me, giving me flowers and kissing my hands. I looked upon their strength and beauty, and was proud at heart, and, in my dream, it seemed as though some great sorrow had been lifted from my mind; as though these dear ones had been lost and now were found again. Ah! what misery is there like to this misery of dreams, that can thus give us back our dead in mockery, and then departing, leave us with a keener woe?

Well, I dreamed on, talking with my children in my sleep and naming them by their beloved names, till at length I woke to look on emptiness, and knowing all my sorrow I sobbed aloud. Now it was early morning, and the light of the August sun streamed through the window, but I, deeming that my wife slept, still lay in the shadow of my dream as it were, and groaned, murmuring the names of those whom I might never see again. It chanced, however, that she was awake, and had overheard those words which I spoke with the dead, while I was yet asleep and after; and though some of this talk was in the tongue of the Otomie, the most was English, and knowing the names of my children she guessed the purport of it all. Suddenly she sprang from the bed and stood over me, and there was such anger in her eyes as I had never seen before nor have seen since, nor did it last long then, for presently indeed it was quenched in tears.

"What is it, wife?" I asked astonished.

“It is hard,” she answered, “that I must bear to listen to such talk from your lips, husband. Was it not enough that, when all men thought you dead, I wore my youth away faithful to your memory? though how faithful you were to mine you know best. Did I ever reproach you because you had forgotten me, and wedded a savage woman in a distant land?”

“Never, dear wife, nor had I forgotten you as you know well; but what I wonder at is that you should grow jealous now when all cause is done with.”

“Cannot we be jealous of the dead? With the living we may cope, but who can fight against the love which death has completed, sealing it for ever and making it immortal! Still, *that* I forgive you, for against this woman I can hold my own, seeing that you were mine before you became hers, and are mine after it. But with the children it is otherwise. They are hers and yours alone. I have no part nor lot in them, and whether they be dead or living I know well you love them always, and will love them beyond the grave if you may find them there. Already I grow old, who waited twenty years and more before I was your wife, and I shall give you no other children. One I gave you, and God took it back lest I should be too happy; yet its name was not on your lips with those strange names. My dead babe is little to you, husband!”

Here she choked, bursting into tears; nor did I think it well to answer her that there was this difference in the matter, that whereas, with the exception of one infant, those sons whom I had lost were almost adolescent, the babe she bore lived but sixty days.

Now when the Queen first put it in my mind to write down the history of my life, I remembered this outbreak of my beloved wife; and seeing that I could write no true tale and leave out of it the story of her who was also my wife, Montezuma’s daughter, Otomie, Princess of the Otomie, and of the children that she gave me, I let the matter lie. For I knew well, that though we spoke very rarely on the subject during all the many years we passed together, still it was always in Lily’s mind; nor did her jealousy, being of the finer sort, abate at all with age, but rather gathered with the gathering days. That I should execute the task without the knowledge of my wife would not have been possible, for till the very last she watched over my every

act, and, as I verily believe, divined the most of my thoughts.

And so we grew old together, peacefully, and side by side, speaking seldom of that great gap in my life when we were lost to each other and of all that then befell. At length the end came. My wife died suddenly in her sleep in the eighty-seventh year of her age. I buried her on the south side of the church here, with sorrow indeed, but not with sorrow inconsolable, for I know that I must soon rejoin her, and those others whom I have loved.

There in that wide heaven are my mother and my sister and my sons; there are great Guatemoc my friend, last of the emperors, and many other companions in war who have preceded me to peace; there, too, though she doubted of it, is Otomie the beautiful and proud. In the heaven which I trust to reach, all the sins of my youth and the errors of my age notwithstanding, it is told us there is no marrying and giving in marriage; and this is well, for I do not know how my wives, Montezuma’s daughter and the sweet English gentlewoman, would agree together were it otherwise.

And now to my task.

CHAPTER II
OF THE PARENTAGE OF THOMAS WINGFIELD

I, Thomas Wingfield, was born here at Ditchingham, and in this very room where I write to-day. The house of my birth was built or added to early in the reign of the seventh Henry, but long before his time some kind of tenement stood here, which was lived in by the keeper of the vineyards, and known as Gardener's Lodge. Whether it chanced that the climate was more kindly in old times, or the skill of those who tended the fields was greater, I do not know, but this at the least is true, that the hillside beneath which the house nestles, and which once was the bank of an arm of the sea or of a great broad, was a vineyard in Earl Bigod's days. Long since it has ceased to grow grapes, though the name of the "Earl's Vineyard" still clings to all that slope of land which lies between this house and a certain health-giving spring that bubbles from the bank the half of a mile away, in the waters of which sick folks come to bathe even from Norwich and Lowestoft. But sheltered as it is from the east winds, to this hour the place has the advantage that gardens planted here are earlier by fourteen days than any others in the country side, and that a man may sit in them coatless in the bitter month of May, when on the top of the hill, not two hundred paces hence, he must shiver in a jacket of otterskins.

The Lodge, for so it has always been named, in its beginnings having been but a farmhouse, faces to the south-west, and is built so low that it might well be thought that the damp from the river Waveney, which runs through the marshes close by, would rise in it. But this is not so, for though in autumn the roke, as here in Norfolk we name ground fog, hangs about the house at nightfall, and in seasons of great flood the water has been known to pour into the stables at the back of it, yet being built on sand and gravel there is no healthier habitation in the parish. For the rest the building is of stud-work and red brick, quaint and mellow looking, with many corners and gables

that in summer are half hĭdden in rosĕs and other crēeping plants, and with its outlook on the marshes and the common where the lights vary continually with the seasons and even with the hours of the day, on the red roofs of Bungay town, and on the wooded bank that stretches round the Earsham lands; though there are many larger, to my mind there is none pleasanter in these parts. Here in this house I was born, and here doubtless I shall die, and having spoken of it at some length, as we are wont to do of spots which long custom has endeared to us, I will go on to tell of my parentage.

First, then, I would set out with a certain pride—for who of us does not love an ancient name when we happen to be born to it?—that I am sprung from the family of the Wingfields of Wingfield Castle in Suffolk, that lies some two hours on horseback from this place. Long ago the heiress of the Wingfields married a De la Pole, a family famous in our history, the last of whom, Edmund, Earl of Suffolk, lost his head for treason when I was young, and the castle passed to the De la Poles with her. But some offshoots of the old Wingfield stock lingered in the neighbourhood, perchance there was a bar sinister on their coat of arms, I know not and do not care to know; at the least my fathers and I are of this blood. My grandfather was a shrewd man, more of a yeoman than a squire, though his birth was gentle. He it was who bought this place with the lands round it, and gathered up some fortune, mostly by careful marrying and living, for though he had but one son he was twice married, and also by trading in cattle.

Now my grandfather was godly-minded even to superstition, and strange as it may seem, having only one son, nothing would satisfy him but that the boy should be made a priest. But my father had little leaning towards the priesthood and life in a monastery, though at all seasons my grandfather strove to reason it into him, sometimes with words and examples, at others with his thick cudgel of holly, that still hangs over the ingle in the smaller sitting-room. The end of it was that the lad was sent to the priory here in Bungay, where his conduct was of such nature that within a year the prior prayed his parents to take him back and set him in some way of secular life. Not only, so said the prior, did my father cause scandal by his actions, breaking out of the priory at night and visiting drinking houses and other places; but, such was the sum of his wickedness, he did not scruple to question and make mock

of the very doctrines of the Church, alleging even that there was nothing sacred in the image of the Virgin Mary which stood in the chancel, and shut its eyes in prayer before all the congregation when the priest elevated the Host. “Therefore,” said the prior, “I pray you take back your son, and let him find some other road to the stake than that which runs through the gates of Bungay Priory.”

Now at this story my grandfather was so enraged that he almost fell into a fit; then recovering, he bethought him of his cudgel of holly, and would have used it. But my father, who was now nineteen years of age and very stout and strong, twisted it from his hand and flung it full fifty yards, saying that no man should touch him more were he a hundred times his father. Then he walked away, leaving the prior and my grandfather staring at each other.

Now to shorten a long tale, the end of the matter was this. It was believed both by my grandfather and the prior that the true cause of my father’s contumacy was a passion which he had conceived for a girl of humble birth, a miller’s fair daughter who dwelt at Waingford Mills. Perhaps there was truth in this belief, or perhaps there was none. What does it matter, seeing that the maid married a butcher at Beccles and died years since at the good age of ninety and five? But true or false, my grandfather believed the tale, and knowing well that absence is the surest cure for love, he entered into a plan with the prior that my father should be sent to a monastery at Seville in Spain, of which the prior’s brother was abbot, and there learn to forget the miller’s daughter and all other worldly things.

When this was told to my father he fell into it readily enough, being a young man of spirit and having a great desire to see the world, otherwise, however, than through the gratings of a monastery window. So the end of it was that he went to foreign parts in the care of a party of Spanish monks, who had journeyed here to Norfolk on a pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady of Walsingham.

It is said that my grandfather wept when he parted with his son, feeling that he should see him no more; yet so strong was his religion, or rather his superstition, that he did not hesitate to send him away, though for no reason save that he would mortify his own love and flesh, offering his son for a sacrifice as Abraham would have offered Isaac. But though my father appeared to consent to the sacrifice, as did Isaac, yet his mind was not altogether set on altars

and faggots; in short, as he himself told me in after years, his plans were already laid.

Thus it chanced that when he had sailed from Yarmouth a year and six months, there came a letter from the abbot of the monastery in Seville to his brother, the prior of St. Mary's at Bungay, saying that my father had fled from the monastery, leaving no trace of where he had gone. My grandfather was grieved at this tidings, but said little about it.

Two more years passed away, and there came other news, namely, that my father had been captured, that he had been handed over to the power of the Holy Office, as the accursed Inquisition was then named, and tortured to death at Seville. When my grandfather heard this he wept, and bemoaned himself that his folly in forcing one into the Church who had no liking for that path, had brought about the shameful end of his only son. After that date also he broke his friendship with the prior of St. Mary's at Bungay, and ceased his offerings to the priory. Still he did not believe that my father was dead in truth, since on the last day of his own life, that ended two years later, he spoke of him as a living man, and left messages to him as to the management of the lands which now were his.

And in the end it became clear that this belief was not ill-founded, for one day three years after the old man's death, there landed at the port of Yarmouth none other than my father, who had been absent some eight years in all. Nor did he come alone, for with him he brought a wife, a young and very lovely lady, who afterwards was my mother. She was a Spaniard of noble family, having been born at Seville, and her maiden name was Donna Luisa de Garcia.

Now of all that befell my father during his eight years of wandering I cannot speak certainly, for he was very silent on the matter, though I may have need to touch on some of his adventures. But I know it is true that he fell under the power of the Holy Office, for once when as a little lad I bathed with him in the Elbow Pool, where the river Waveney bends some three hundred yards above this house, I saw that his breast and arms were scored with long white scars, and asked him what had caused them. I remember well how his face changed as I spoke, from kindliness to the hue of blackest hate, and how he answered speaking to himself rather than to me.

“Devils,” he said, “devils set on their work by the chief of all devils that live upon the earth and shall reign in hell. Hark you, my son Thomas, there is a country called Spain where your mother was born, and there these devils abide who torture men and women, aye, and burn them living in the name of Christ. I was betrayed into their hands by him whom I name the chief of the devils, though he is younger than I am by three years, and their pincers and hot irons left these marks upon me. Aye, and they would have burnt me alive also, only I escaped, thanks to your mother—but such tales are not for a little lad’s hearing; and see you never speak of them, Thomas, for the Holy Office has a long arm. You are half a Spaniard, Thomas, your skin and eyes tell their own tale, but whatever skin and eyes may tell, let your heart give them the lie. Keep your heart English, Thomas; let no foreign devilments enter there. Hate all Spaniards except your mother, and be watchful lest her blood should master mine within you.”

I was a child then, and scarcely understood his words or what he meant by them. Afterwards I learned to understand them but too well. As for my father’s counsel, that I should conquer my Spanish blood, would that I could always have followed it, for I know that from this blood springs the most of such evil as is in me. Hence come my fixedness of purpose or rather obstinacy, and my powers of unchristian hatred that are not small towards those who have wronged me. Well, I have done what I might to overcome these and other faults, but strive as we may, that which is bred in the bone will out in the flesh, as I have seen in many signal instances.

There were three of us children, Geoffrey my elder brother, myself, and my sister Mary, who was one year my junior, the sweetest child and the most beautiful that I have ever known. We were very happy children, and our beauty was the pride of our father and mother, and the envy of other parents. I was the darkest of the three, dark indeed to swarthiness, but in Mary the Spanish blood showed only in her rich eyes of velvet hue, and in the glow upon her cheek that was like the blush on a ripe fruit. My mother used to call me her little Spaniard, because of my swarthiness, that is when my father was not near, for such names angered him. She never learned to speak English very well, but he would suffer her to talk in no other tongue before him. Still, when he was not there she spoke in Spanish, of which language, however, I alone of the family

became a master—and that more because of certain volumes of old Spanish romances which she had by her, than for any other reason. From my earliest childhood I was fond of such tales, and it was by bribing me with the promise that I should read them that she persuaded me to learn Spanish. For my mother's heart still yearned towards her old sunny home, and often she would talk of it with us children, more especially in the winter season, which she hated as I do. Once I asked her if she wished to go back to Spain. She shivered and answered no, for there dwelt one who was her enemy and would kill her; also her heart was with us children and our father. I wondered if this man who sought to kill my mother was the same as he of whom my father had spoken as "the chief of the devils," but I only answered that no man could wish to kill one so good and beautiful.

"Ah! my boy," she said, "it is just because I am, or rather have been, beautiful that he hates me. Others would have wedded me besides your dear father, Thomas." And her face grew troubled as though with fear.

Now when I was eighteen and a half years old, on a certain evening in the month of May it happened that a friend of my father's, Squire Bozard, late of the Hall in this parish, called at the Lodge on his road from Yarmouth, and in the course of his talk let it fall that a Spanish ship was at anchor in the Roads, laden with merchandise. My father pricked up his ears at this, and asked who her captain might be. Squire Bozard answered that he did not know his name, but that he had seen him in the market-place, a tall and stately man, richly dressed, with a handsome face and a scar upon his temple.

At this news my mother turned pale beneath her olive skin, and muttered in Spanish:

"Holy Mother! grant that it be not he."

My father also looked frightened, and questioned the squire closely as to the man's appearance, but without learning anything more. Then he bade him adieu with little ceremony, and taking horse rode away for Yarmouth.

That night my mother never slept, but sat all through it in her nursing chair, brooding over I know not what. As I left her when I went to my bed, so I found her when I came from it at dawn. I can remember well pushing the door ajar

to see her face glimmering white in the twilight of the May morning, as she sat, her large eyes fixed upon the lattice.

“You have risen early, mother,” I said.

“I have never lain down, Thomas,” she answered.

“Why not? What do you fear?”

“I fear the past and the future, my son. Would that your father were back.”

About ten o’clock of that morning, as I was making ready to walk into Bungay to the house of that physician under whom I was learning the art of healing, my father rode up. My mother, who was watching at the lattice, ran out to meet him.

Springing from his horse he embraced her, saying, “Be of good cheer, sweet, it cannot be he. This man has another name.”

“But did you see him?” she asked.

“No, he was out at his ship for the night, and I hurried home to tell you, knowing your fears.”

“It were surer if you had seen him, husband. He may well have taken another name.”

“I never thought of that, sweet,” my father answered; “but have no fear. Should it be he, and should he dare to set foot in the parish of Ditchingham, there are those who will know how to deal with him. But I am sure that it is not he.”

“Thanks be to Jesu then!” she said, and they began talking in a low voice.

Now, seeing that I was not wanted, I took my cudgel and started down the bridle-path towards the common footbridge, when suddenly my mother called me back.

“Kiss me before you go, Thomas,” she said. “You must wonder what all this may mean. One day your father will tell you. It has to do with a shadow which has hung over my life for many years, but that is, I trust, gone for ever.”

“If it be a man who flings it, he had best keep out of reach of this,” I said, laughing, and shaking my thick stick.

“It is a man,” she answered, “but one to be dealt with otherwise than by blows, Thomas, should you ever chance to meet him.”

“May be, mother, but might is the best argument at the last, for the most cunning have a life to lose.”

“You are too ready to use your strength, son,” she said, smiling and kissing me. “Remember the old Spanish proverb: ‘He strikes hardest who strikes last.’”

“And remember the other proverb, mother: ‘Strike before thou art stricken,’” I answered, and went.

When I had gone some ten paces something prompted me to look back, I know not what. My mother was standing by the open door, her stately shape framed as it were in the flowers of a white creeping shrub that grew upon the wall of the old house. As was her custom, she wore a mantilla of white lace upon her head, the ends of which were wound beneath her chin, and the arrangement of it was such that at this distance for one moment it put me in mind of the wrappings which are placed about the dead. I started at the thought and looked at her face. She was watching me with sad and earnest eyes that seemed to be filled with the spirit of farewell.

I never saw her again till she was dead.

CHAPTER III
THE COMING OF THE SPANIARD

And now I must go back and speak of my own matters. As I have told, it was my father's wish that I should be a physician, and since I came back from my schooling at Norwich, that was when I had entered on my sixteenth year, I had studied medicine under the doctor who practised his art in the neighbourhood of Bungay. He was a very learned man and an honest, Grimstone by name, and as I had some liking for the business I made good progress under him. Indeed I had learned almost all that he could teach me, and my father purposed to send me to London, there to push on my studies, so soon as I should attain my twentieth year, that is within some five months of the date of the coming of the Spaniard.

But it was not fated that I should go to London.

Medicine was not the only thing that I studied in those days, however. Squire Bozard of Ditchingham, the same who told my father of the coming of the Spanish ship, had two living children, a son and a daughter, though his wife had borne him many more who died in infancy. The daughter was named Lily and of my own age, having been born three weeks after me in the same year. Now the Bozards are gone from these parts, for my great-niece, the granddaughter and sole heiress of this son, has married and has issue of another name. But this is by the way.

From our earliest days we children, Bozards and Wingfields, lived almost as brothers and sisters, for day by day we met and played together in the snow or in the flowers. Thus it would be hard for me to say when I began to love Lily or when she began to love me; but I know that when first I went to school at Norwich I grieved more at losing sight of her than because I must part from my mother and the rest. In all our games she was ever my partner, and I would search the country round for days to find such flowers as she chanced to love. When I came back

from school it was the same, though by degrees Lily grew shyer, and I also grew suddenly shy, perceiving that from a child she had become a woman. Still we met often, and though neither said anything of it, it was sweet to us to meet.

Thus things went on till this day of my mother's death. But before I go further I must tell that Squire Bozard looked with no favour on the friendship between his daughter and myself—and this, not because he disliked me, but rather because he would have seen Lily wedded to my elder brother Geoffrey, my father's heir, and not to a younger son. So hard did he grow about the matter at last that we two might scarcely meet except by seeming accident, whereas my brother was ever welcome at the Hall. And on this account some bitterness arose between us two brothers, as is apt to be the case when a woman comes between friends however close. For it must be known that my brother Geoffrey also loved Lily, as all men would have loved her, and with a better right perhaps than I had—for he was my elder by three years and born to possessions. It may seem indeed that I was somewhat hasty to fall into this state, seeing that at the time of which I write I was not yet of age; but young blood is nimble, and moreover mine was half Spanish, and made a man of me when many a pure-bred Englishman is still nothing but a boy. For the blood and the sun that ripens it have much to do with such matters, as I have seen often enough among the Indian peoples of Anahuac, who at the age of fifteen will take to themselves a bride of twelve. At the least it is certain that when I was eighteen years of age I was old enough to fall in love after such fashion that I never fell out of it again altogether, although the history of my life may seem to give me the lie when I say so. But I take it that a man may love several women and yet love one of them the best of all, being true in the spirit to the law which he breaks in the letter.

Now when I had attained nineteen years I was a man full grown, and writing as I do in extreme old age, I may say it without false shame, a very handsome youth to boot. I was not over tall, indeed, measuring but five feet nine inches and a half in height, but my limbs were well made, and I was both deep and broad in the chest. In colour I was, and my white hair notwithstanding, am still extraordinarily dark hued, my eyes also were large and dark, and my hair, which was wavy, was coal black. In my deportment I was reserved

and grave to sadness, in speech I was slow and temperate, and more apt at listening than in talking. I weighed matters well before I made up my mind upon them, but being made up, nothing could turn me from that mind short of death itself, whether it were set on good or evil, on folly or wisdom. In those days also I had little religion, since, partly because of my father's secret teaching and partly through the workings of my own reason, I had learned to doubt the doctrines of the Church as they used to be set out. Youth is prone to reason by large leaps as it were, and to hold that all things are false because some are proved false; and thus at times in those days I thought that there was no God, because the priest said that the image of the Virgin at Bungay wept and did other things which I knew that it did not do. Now I know well that there is a God, for my own story proves it to my heart. In truth, what man can look back across a long life and say that there is no God, when he can see the shadow of His hand lying deep upon his tale of years?

On this sad day of which I write I knew that Lily, whom I loved, would be walking alone beneath the great pollard oaks in the park of Ditchingham Hall. Here, in Grubswell as the spot is called, grew, and indeed still grow, certain hawthorn trees that are the earliest to blow of any in these parts, and when we had met at the church door on the Sunday, Lily said that there would be bloom upon them by the Wednesday, and on that afternoon she should go to cut it. It may well be that she spoke thus with design, for love will breed cunning in the heart of the most guileless and truthful maid. Moreover, I noticed that though she said it before her father and the rest of us, yet she waited to speak till my brother Geoffrey was out of hearing, for she did not wish to go maying with him, and also that as she spoke she shot a glance of her grey eyes at me. Then and there I vowed to myself that I also would be gathering hawthorn bloom in this same place and on that Wednesday afternoon, yes, even if I must play truant and leave all the sick of Bungay to Nature's nursing. Moreover, I was determined on one thing, that if I could find Lily alone I would delay no longer, but tell her all that was in my heart; no great secret indeed, for though no word of love had ever passed between us as yet, each knew the other's hidden thoughts. Not that I was in the way to become affianced to a maid, who had my path to cut in the world, but I feared that if I delayed to make sure of her affection my brother would be

before me with her father, and Lily might yield to that to which she would not yield if once we had plighted troth.

Now it chanced that on this afternoon I was hard put to it to escape to my tryst, for my master, the physician, was ailing, and sent me to visit the sick for him, carrying them their medicines. At the last, however, between four and five o'clock, I fled, asking no leave. Taking the Norwich road I ran for a mile and more till I had passed the Manor House and the church turn, and drew near to Ditchingham Park. Then I dropped my pace to a walk, for I did not wish to come before Lily heated and disordered, but rather looking my best, to which end I had put on my Sunday garments. Now as I went down the little hill in the road that runs past the park, I saw a man on horseback who looked first at the bridle-path, that at this spot turns off to the right, then back across the common lands towards the Vineyard Hills and the Waveney, and then along the road as though he did not know which way to turn. I was quick to notice things—though at this moment my mind was not at its swiftest, being set on other matters, and chiefly as to how I should tell my tale to Lily—and I saw at once that this man was not of our country.

He was very tall and noble-looking, dressed in rich garments of velvet adorned by a gold chain that hung about his neck, and as I judged about forty years of age. But it was his face which chiefly caught my eye, for at that moment there was something terrible about it. It was long, thin, and deeply carved; the eyes were large, and gleamed like gold in sunlight; the mouth was small and well shaped, but it wore a devilish and cruel sneer; the forehead lofty, indicating a man of mind, and marked with a slight scar. For the rest the cavalier was dark and southern-looking, his curling hair, like my own, was black, and he wore a peaked chestnut-coloured beard.

By the time that I had finished these observations my feet had brought me almost to the stranger's side, and for the first time he caught sight of me. Instantly his face changed, the sneer left it, and it became kindly and pleasant looking. Lifting his bonnet with much courtesy he stammered something in broken English, of which all that I could catch was the word Yarmouth; then perceiving that I did not understand him, he cursed the English tongue and all those who spoke it, aloud and in good Castilian.

“If the señor will graciously express his wish in Spanish,” I said, speaking in that language, “it may be in my power to help him.”

“What! you speak Spanish, young sir,” he said, starting, “and yet you are not a Spaniard, though by your face you well might be. Caramba! but it is strange!” and he eyed me curiously.

“It may be strange, sir,” I answered, “but I am in haste. Be pleased to ask your question and let me go.”

“Ah!” he said, “perhaps I can guess the reason of your hurry. I saw a white robe down by the streamlet yonder,” and he nodded towards the park. “Take the advice of an older man, young sir, and be careful. Make what sport you will with such, but never believe them and never marry them—lest you should live to desire to kill them!”

Here I made as though I would pass on, but he spoke again.

“Pardon my words, they were well meant, and perhaps you may come to learn their truth. I will detain you no more. Will you graciously direct me on my road to Yarmouth, for I am not sure of it, having ridden by another way, and your English country is so full of trees that a man cannot see a mile?”

I walked a dozen paces down the bridle-path that joined the road at this place, and pointed out the way that he should go, past Ditchingham church. As I did so I noticed that while I spoke the stranger was watching my face keenly and, as it seemed to me, with an inward fear which he strove to master and could not. When I had finished again he raised his bonnet and thanked me, saying,

“Will you be so gracious as to tell me your name, young Sir?”

“What is my name to you?” I answered roughly, for I disliked this man. “You have not told me yours.”

“No, indeed, I am travelling incognito. Perhaps I also have met a lady in these parts,” and he smiled strangely. “I only wished to know the name of one who had done me a courtesy, but who it seems is not so courteous as I deemed.” And he shook his horse’s reins.

“I am not ashamed of my name,” I said. “It has been an honest one so far, and if you wish to know it, it is Thomas Wingfield.”

“I thought it,” he cried, and as he spoke his face grew like the face of a fiend. Then before I could find time even to wonder, he had sprung from his horse and stood within three paces of me.

“A lucky day! Now we will see what truth there is in prophecies,” he said, drawing his silver-mounted sword. “A name for a name; Juan de Garcia gives you greeting, Thomas Wingfield.”

Now, strange as it may seem, it was at this moment only that there flashed across my mind the thought of all that I had heard about the Spanish stranger, the report of whose coming to Yarmouth had stirred my father and mother so deeply. At any other time I should have remembered it soon enough, but on this day I was so set upon my tryst with Lily and what I should say to her, that nothing else could hold a place in my thoughts.

“This must be the man,” I said to myself, and then I said no more, for he was on me, sword up. I saw the keen point flash towards me, and sprang to one side having a desire to fly, as, being unarmed except for my stick, I might have done without shame. But spring as I would I could not avoid the thrust altogether. It was aimed at my heart and it pierced the sleeve of my left arm, passing through the flesh —no more. Yet at the pain of that cut all thought of flight left me, and instead of it a cold anger filled me, causing me to wish to kill this man who had attacked me thus and unprovoked. In my hand was my stout oaken staff which I had cut myself on the banks of Hollow Hill, and if I would fight I must make such play with this as I might. It seems a poor weapon indeed to match against a Toledo blade in the hands of one who could handle it well, and yet there are virtues in a cudgel, for when a man sees himself threatened with it, he is likely to forget that he holds in his hand a more deadly weapon, and to take to the guarding of his own head in place of running his adversary through the body.

And that was what chanced in this case, though how it came about exactly I cannot tell. The Spaniard was a fine swordsman, and had I been armed as he was would doubtless have overmatched me, who at that age had no practice in the art, which was almost unknown in England. But when he saw the big stick flourished over him he forgot his own advantage, and raised his arm to ward away the blow. Down it came upon the back of his hand, and lo! his

sword fell from it to the grass. But I did not spare him because of that, for my blood was up. The next stroke took him on the lips, knocking out a tooth and sending him backwards. Then I caught him by the leg and beat him most unmercifully, not upon the head indeed, for now that I was victor I did not wish to kill one whom I thought a madman as I would that I had done, but on every other part of him.

Indeed I thrashed him till my arms were weary and then I fell to kicking him, and all the while he writhed like a wounded snake and cursed horribly, though he never cried out or asked for mercy. At last I ceased and looked at him, and he was no pretty sight to see—indeed, what with his cuts and bruises and the mire of the roadway, it would have been hard to know him for the gallant cavalier whom I had met not five minutes before. But uglier than all his hurts was the look in his wicked eyes as he lay there on his back in the pathway and glared up at me.

“Now, friend Spaniard,” I said, “you have learned a lesson; and what is there to hinder me from treating you as you would have dealt with me who had never harmed you?” and I took up his sword and held it to his throat.

“Strike home, you accursed whelp!” he answered in a broken voice; “it is better to die than to live to remember such shame as this.”

“No,” I said, “I am no foreign murderer to kill a defenceless man. You shall away to the justice to answer for yourself. The hangman has a rope for such as you.”

“Then you must drag me thither,” he groaned, and shut his eyes as though with faintness, and doubtless he was somewhat faint.

Now as I pondered on what should be done with the villain, it chanced that I looked up through a gap in the fence, and there, among the Grubswell Oaks three hundred yards or more away, I caught sight of the flutter of a white robe that I knew well, and it seemed to me that the wearer of that robe was moving towards the bridge of the “watering” as though she were weary of waiting for one who did not come.

Then I thought to myself that if I stayed to drag this man to the village stocks or some other safe place, there would be an end of meeting with my love that day, and I did not know when I might find another chance. Now I would not have missed that hour’s talk with Lily to bring a score of murderous-minded foreigners to their deserts, and,

moreover, this one had earned good payment for his behaviour. Surely, thought I, he might wait a while till I had done my love-making, and if he would not wait I could find a means to make him do so. Not twenty paces from us the horse stood cropping the grass. I went to him and undid his bridle rein, and with it fastened the Spaniard to a small wayside tree as best I was able.

"Now, here you stay," I said, "till I am ready to fetch you;" and I turned to go.

But as I went a great doubt took me, and once more I remembered my mother's fear, and how my father had ridden in haste to Yarmouth on business about a Spaniard. Now to-day a Spaniard had wandered to Ditchingham, and when he learned my name had fallen upon me madly trying to kill me. Was not this the man whom my mother feared, and was it right that I should leave him thus that I might go maying with my dear? I knew in my breast that it was not right, but I was so set upon my desire and so strongly did my heartstrings pull me towards her whose white robe now fluttered on the slope of the Park Hill, that I never heeded the warning.

Well had it been for me if I had done so, and well for some who were yet unborn. Then they had never known death, nor I the land of exile, the taste of slavery, and the altar of sacrifice.

CHAPTER IV
THOMAS TELLS HIS LOVE

Having made the Spaniard as fast as I could, his arms being bound to the tree behind him, and taking his sword with me, I began to run hard after Lily and caught her not too soon, for in one more minute she would have turned along the road that runs to the watering and over the bridge by the Park Hill path to the Hall.

Hearing my footsteps, she faced about to greet me, or rather as though to see who it was that followed her. There she stood in the evening light, a bough of hawthorn bloom in her hand, and my heart beat yet more wildly at the sight of her. Never had she seemed fairer than as she stood thus in her white robe, a look of amaze upon her face and in her grey eyes, that was half real half feigned, and with the sunlight shifting on her auburn hair that showed beneath her little bonnet. Lily was no round-checked country maid with few beauties save those of health and youth, but a tall and shapely lady who had ripened early to her full grace and sweetness, and so it came about that though we were almost of an age, yet in her presence I felt always as though I were the younger. Thus in my love for her was mingled some touch of reverence.

“Oh! it is you, Thomas,” she said, blushing as she spoke. “I thought you were not—I mean that I am going home as it grows late. But say, why do you run so fast, and what has happened to you, Thomas, that your arm is bloody and you carry a sword in your hand?”

“I have no breath to speak yet,” I answered. “Come back to the hawthorns and I will tell you.”

“No, I must be wending homewards. I have been among the trees for more than an hour, and there is little bloom upon them.”

“I could not come before, Lily. I was kept, and in a strange manner. Also I saw bloom as I ran.”

“Indeed, I never thought that you would come, Thomas,” she answered, looking down, “who have other things to do

than to go out maying like a girl. But I wish to hear your story, if it is short, and I will walk a little way with you."

So we turned and walked side by side towards the great pollard oaks, and by the time that we reached them, I had told her the tale of the Spaniard, and how he strove to kill me, and how I had beaten him with my staff. Now Lily listened eagerly enough, and sighed with fear when she learned how close I had been to death.

"But you are wounded, Thomas," she broke in; "see, the blood runs fast from your arm. Is the thrust deep?"

"I have not looked to see. I have had no time to look."

"Take off your coat, Thomas, that I may dress the wound. Nay, I will have it so."

So I drew off the garment, not without pain, and rolled up the shirt beneath, and there was the hurt, a clean thrust through the fleshy part of the lower arm. Lily washed it with water from the brook, and bound it with her kerchief, murmuring words of pity all the while. To say truth, I would have suffered a worse harm gladly, if only I could find her to tend it. Indeed, her gentle care broke down the fence of my doubts and gave me a courage that otherwise might have failed me in her presence. At first, indeed, I could find no words, but as she bound my wound, I bent down and kissed her ministering hand. She flushed red as the evening sky, the flood of crimson losing itself at last beneath her auburn hair, but it burned deepest upon the white hand which I had kissed.

"Why did you do that, Thomas?" she said, in a low voice.

Then I spoke. "I did it because I love you, Lily, and do not know how to begin the telling of my love. I love you, dear, and have always loved as I always shall love you."

"Are you so sure of that, Thomas?" she said, again.

"There is nothing else in the world of which I am so sure, Lily. What I wish to be as sure of is that you love me as I love you."

For a moment she stood quiet, her head sunk almost to her breast, then she lifted it and her eyes shone as I had never seen them shine before.

"Can you doubt it, Thomas?" she said.

And now I took her in my arms and kissed her on the lips, and the memory of that kiss has gone with me through my long life, and is with me yet, when, old and withered, I

stand upon the borders of the grave. It was the greatest joy that has been given to me in all my days. Too soon, alas! it was done, that first pure kiss of youthful love—and I spoke again somewhat aimlessly.

"It seems then that you do love me who love you so well."

"If you doubted it before, can you doubt it *now?*" she answered very softly. "But listen, Thomas. It is well that we should love each other, for we were born to it, and have no help in the matter, even if we wished to find it. Still, though love be sweet and holy, it is not all, for there is duty to be thought of, and what will my father say to this, Thomas?"

"I do not know, Lily, and yet I can guess. I am sure, sweet, that he wishes you to take my brother Geoffrey, and leave me on one side."

"Then his wishes are not mine, Thomas. Also, though duty be strong, it is not strong enough to force a woman to a marriage for which she has no liking. Yet it may prove strong enough to keep a woman from a marriage for which her heart pleads—perhaps, also, it should have been strong enough to hold me back from the telling of my love."

"No, Lily, the love itself is much, and though it should bring no fruit, still it is something to have won it for ever and a day."

"You are very young to talk thus, Thomas. I am also young, I know, but we women ripen quicker. Perhaps all this is but a boy's fancy, to pass with boyhood."

"It will never pass, Lily. They say that our first loves are the longest, and that which is sown in youth will flourish in our age. Listen, Lily; I have my place to make in the world, and it may take a time in the making, and I ask one promise of you, though perhaps it is a selfish thing to seek. I ask of you that you will be faithful to me, and come fair weather or foul, will wed no other man till you know me dead."

"It is something to promise, Thomas, for with time come changes. Still I am so sure of myself that I promise—nay I swear it. Of you I cannot be sure, but things are so with us women that we must risk all upon a throw, and if we lose, good-bye to happiness."

Then we talked on, and I cannot remember what we said, though these words that I have written down remain in my mind, partly because of their own weight, and in part because of all that came about in the after years.