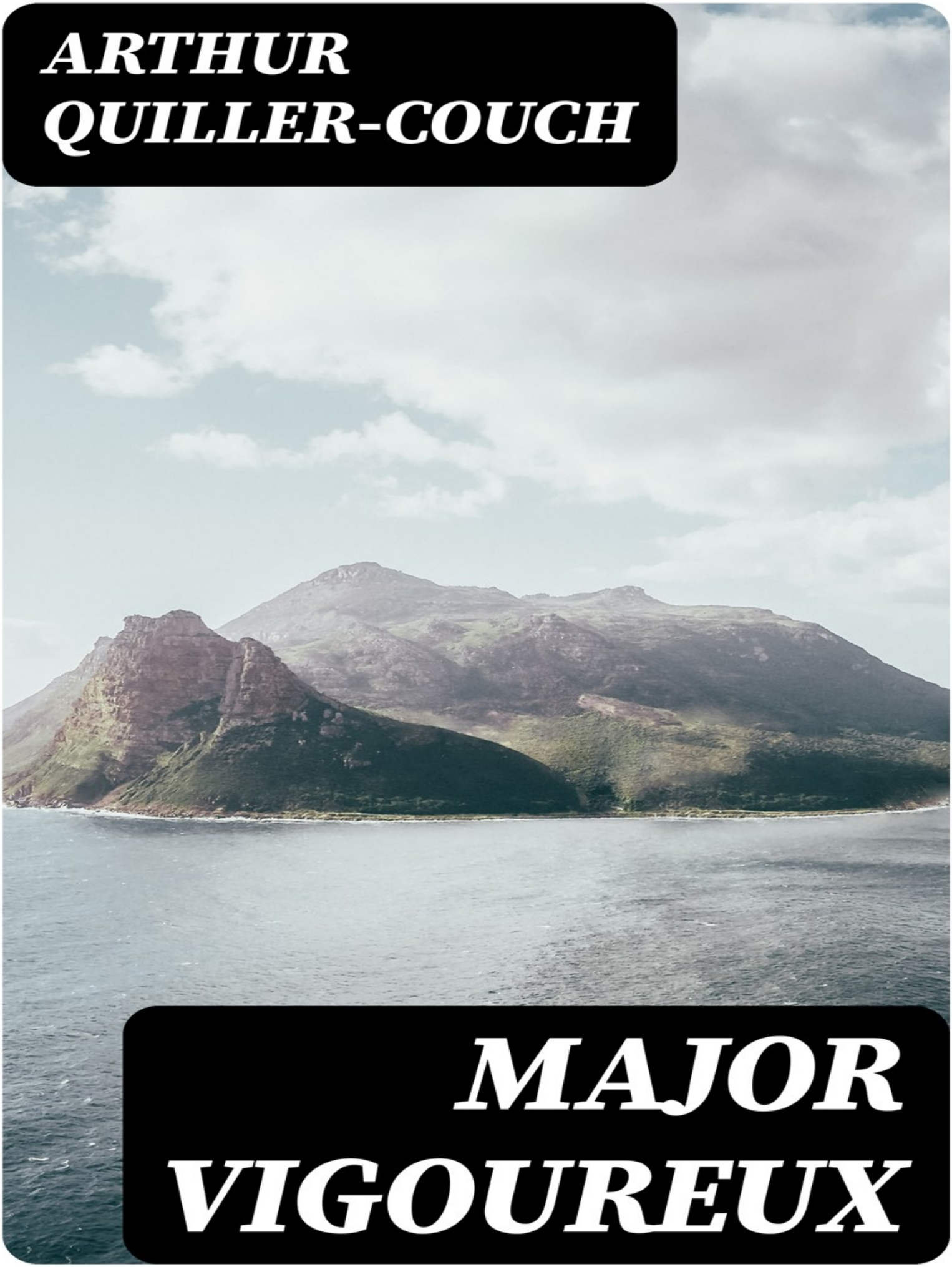
ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH



MAJOR VIGOUREUX

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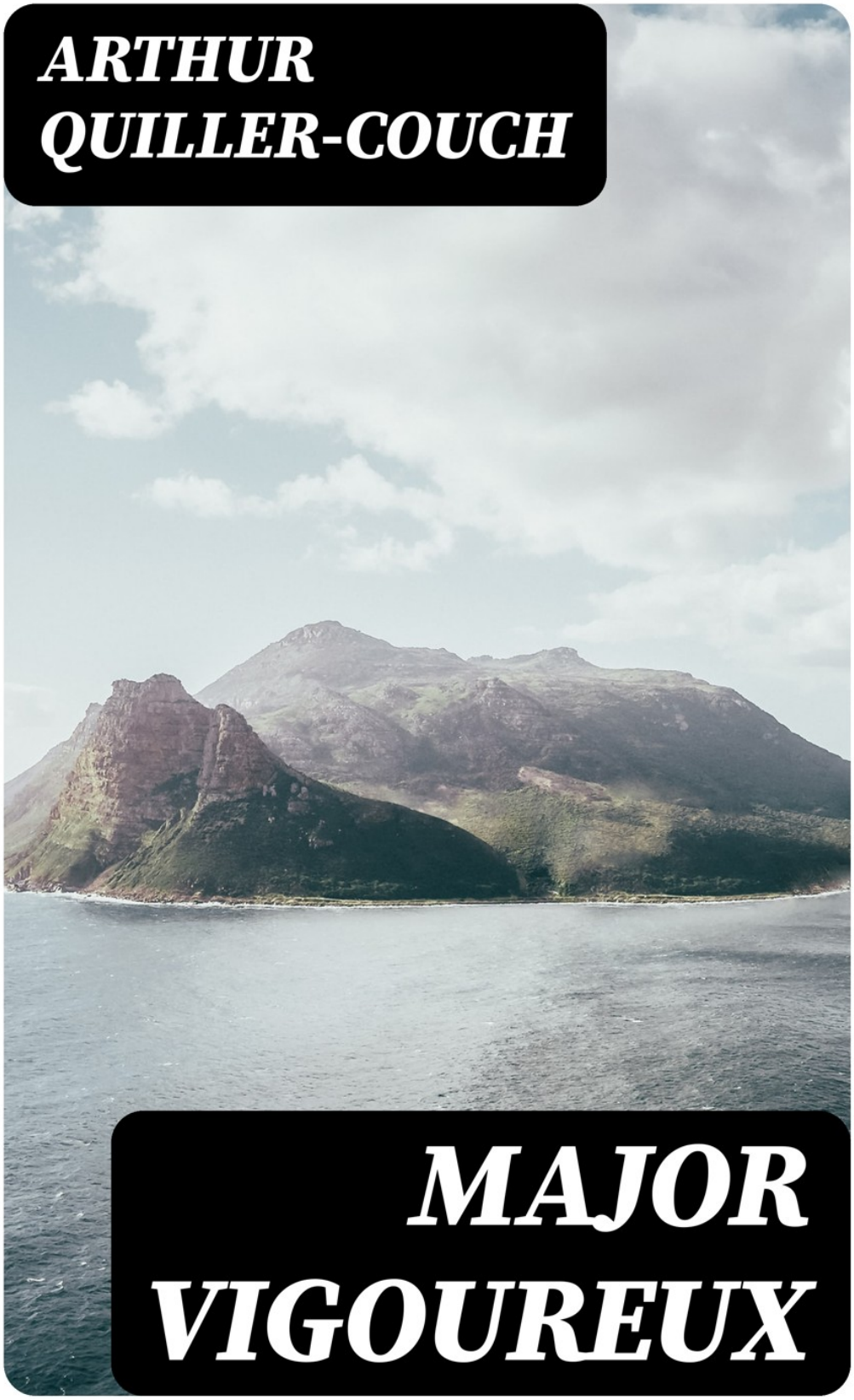

MAJOR VIGOUREUX

Arthur Quiller-Couch

Major Vigoureux

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MAJOR VIGOUREUX

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CHAPTER I

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IN THE GARRISON GARDEN

"Archelaus," said the Commandant, "where did you get those trousers?" Sergeant Archelaus, who, as he dug in the neglected garden, had been exposing a great quantity of back-view (for he was a long man), straightened himself up, faced about, and, grounding his long-handled spade as it were a musket, stood with palms crossed over the top of it.

"Off the Lord Proprietor," he answered.

The Commandant, seated on a bench under the veronica hedge, a few yards higher up the slope, laid down his book, took off his spectacles, wiped them, and replaced them very deliberately.

"The Lord Proprietor? I do not understand—" His face had reddened a little, as it usually did at mention of the Lord Proprietor.

"Made me a present of 'em," explained Sergeant Archelaus, curtly. "You don't mean to say you haven't noticed 'em till this minute?"

The Commandant put the question aside. "The Lord Proprietor has no right to be offering presents to my men—least of all, presents of clothes."

"If the Government won't send over stores, nor you write for any, I don't see how the man can help himself. 'Tisn't regulation pattern for the R'yal Artillery, I'll grant you: not the sort of things you'd wear on the right of the line. In fact, he told me 'tis an old pair he used to carry when he went deer-stalkin'."

"They are hideous, Archelaus; not to mention that they don't fit you in the least."

"They don't look so bad when I'm sitting down," said Archelaus, after a moment's thought, and with an air of forced cheerfulness.

"If that's all you can say in extenuation!——"

"Well, 'twas kindly meant, any way; for the old ones were a scandal—yes, be sure. What with sea-water and scrambling after gulls' eggs, they was becoming a byword all over the Islands."

The Commandant winced, not for the first time in this conversation.

"Treacher makes his clothes last," he objected.

"Sam Treacher's a married man, and gets his bad luck different."

"But—but couldn't you ask Mrs. Treacher to take your old ones in hand and put in a patch or two? That might carry you on for a few months, and if you grudge the expense, I don't mind subscribing a shilling or so."

Sergeant Archelaus shook his head. "What's the use?" he asked. "'Tis but puttin' off the evil day. If Her Majesty won't send us clothes, we must fall back on Providence. Besides which, I've taken the edge off these things, and don't want to begin over again. Last Wednesday I wore 'em over to the Off Islands, to practise 'em on the sea-birds; and last evening after dusk I walked through the town with 'em—yes, sir, right out past the church and back again, my blood being up, and came home and cut a square out of the old ones to wrap round the bung of the water-butt."

The Commandant eyed the sergeant's legs in silence, choking down half-a-dozen angry criticisms. No; he could not trust himself to speak; and, after a minute, cramming his clenched fists into the pockets of his frayed fatigue-jacket, he swung about on his heel and walked out of the garden with angry strides.

Was the Lord Proprietor making sport of him?—purposely making him and his garrison the laughing-stock of the Islands?

The Commandant walked up the road with a hot heart: past the Barracks and beyond them to the down, where a ruined windmill overlooked the sea. He wanted to be alone, and up here he could count upon solitude. He wanted to walk off his ill-humour. But the ascent was steep, and he, alas! no longer a young man; and at the windmill he was forced to stand still and draw breath.

At his feet lay the Islands, bathed in the light of a fast-reddening October sunset. Against such a sunset, if the air be very clear, you may see them from the cliffs of the mainland—a low, dark cloud out in the Atlantic; and in old days the Commandant had repined often enough at the few

leagues which then had cut him off from the world, from active service, from promotion.

Gradually, as time went on, he had grown resigned, and with resignation he had learnt to be proud of his kingdom—for his kingdom *de facto* it was. The Islanders had used to speak of him sometimes as The Commandant, but oftener as The Governor. (They never called him The Governor nowadays.) His military establishment, to be sure—consisting of a master-gunner, four other gunners, and two or three aged sergeants—scarcely accorded with his rank of major; but by way of compensation he was, as President of the Council of Twelve, the chief civil magistrate of the Islands.

This requires a word or two of explanation. The Reigning Sovereign of England retained, as he yet retains, military authority over the Islands, and from him, through the Commander-in-chief, our friend held his appointment as military governor. But His Majesty King William III and his successors, by a lease two or three times renewed, had granted "all those His Majesty's territories and rocks"—so the wording ran—to a great and unknown person of whom the Islanders spoke reverentially as The Duke, "together with all sounds, harbours, and sands within the circuit of the said Isles; and all lands, tenements, meadows, pastures, grounds, feedings, fishing places, mines of tin, lead, and coals, and all profits of the same, and full power to dig, work, and mine in the premises; and also all the marshes, void grounds, woods, under-woods, rents, reservoirs, services, and all other profits, rights, commodities, advantages, and emoluments within the said Isles; and a moiety of all shipwreck, the other moiety to be received by the Lord High Admiral; as also all His Majesty's Liberties, Franchises, Authorities, and Jurisdictions, as had before been used in the said Islands; with full power to hear,

examine, and finally determine all plaints, suits, matters, actions, controversies, contentions, and demands whatever, moved and depending between party and party inhabiting the said Isle (all business, treason, matters touching life or member of man, or title of land; and also all controversies and causes touching ships, and other things belonging to the High Court of Admiralty always excepted)"—all this for an annual rent of Forty Pounds.

The Duke, in short, was by his lease made Lord Proprietor, with all civil jurisdiction. But, being far too great a man to reside in the Islands, or even to visit them, he entrusted his business to a resident Agent, and deputed his magistracy to an elective Council of Twelve, over which the Commandant for the time being invariably presided. But this custom (it should be explained) rested on courtesy and not upon right. Based upon compromise—for the boundaries between the civil and military jurisdictions were at some points not precisely determined—it had been found to work smoothly enough in practice, it had stood the test of a hundred and fifty years when, in the year after Sevastopol, Major Narcisse Vigoureux arrived in the Islands to take over the military command, and the Duke nominated him for the Presidency quite as a matter of course.

As President, he had power, with the assent of the Court, to inflict fines, whippings, and imprisonment—this last with the limitation that he could not commit to any prison on the mainland, but only to the Island lock-up; and also, if he chose, to prescribe the ducking-stool for refractory or scolding women. The office carried no salary; but as Governor under the Lord Proprietor he enjoyed a valuable perquisite in the harbour dues collected from the shipping. Every vessel visiting the port or hoisting the Queen's colours was liable, on coming to anchor or grounding, to pay the sum of two shillings and two pence. All foreigners paid

double. And since, in addition to ships putting in from abroad, it sometimes happened that two hundred sail of coasters would be driven by easterly gales to shelter in St. Lide's Harbour, or roadstead, or in Cromwell's Sound, you may guess that this made a very pleasant addition to the Commandant's military pay.

In short, for a dozen years Major Narcisse Vigoureux had been, for an unmarried man, an exceedingly happy one. If you ask me how an officer bearing such a name happened in command of a British garrison, I answer that he was not a Frenchman, but a Channel Islander of good Jersey descent; and this again helped him to understand the folk over whom he ruled. The wrong-doers feared him; but they were few. By the rest of the population, including his soldiers, he was beloved, respected, not a little envied. For a bachelor he mingled with zest in the small social amusements of Garland Town, the capital of the Islands. He shone at picnics and water-parties. He played a fair hand at whist. His manner towards ladies was deferential; towards men, dignified without a trace of patronage or self-conceit. All voted him a good fellow. At first, indeed—for he practised small economies, and his linen, though clean, was frayed—they suspected him of stinginess, until by accident the Vicar discovered that a great part of his pay went to support his dead brother's family—a widow and two girls who lived at Notting Hill, London, in far from affluent circumstances.

In spite of this the Commandant's lot might fairly have been called enviable until the day which terminated the ninety-nine years' lease upon which the Duke held the Islands. Everyone took it for granted that he would apply, as his predecessors had twice applied, for a renewal. But, no; like a bolt from the blue came news that the Duke, an old man, had waived his application in favour of an unknown purchaser—unknown, that is to say, in the Islands—a

London banker, recently created a baronet, by name Sir Cæsar Hutchins.

In general, all Garland Town relied for information about persons of rank and title upon Miss Elizabeth Gabriel, a well-to-do spinster lady, daughter of a former agent of the Duke's. But Miss Gabriel's copy of "The Peerage and Baronetage of Great Britain and Ireland" dated from 1845, and Sir Cæsar's title being of more recent—or, as she put it, of mushroom—creation, the curious had to wait until a newer volume arrived from the mainland. Meanwhile, at their whist parties twice a week, the gentry of Garland Town indulged in a hundred brisk surmises, but without alarm —"unconscious of their doom, the little victims played." It was agreed, of course, that the new Lord Proprietor would not take up his abode in the Islands. For where was a suitable residence? On the whole the Commandant had little doubt that things would go on as before, but he felt some uneasiness for Mr. Pope, the Duke's agent.

Within a fortnight, however, came two fresh announcements, of which the first—a letter from Sir Cæsar, continuing Mr. Pope in his office—gratified everyone. But the second was terrible indeed. The War Office had decided to disband the garrison and remove its guns!

Major Vigoureux' face had whitened as he read that letter, five years ago. It whitened yet at the remembrance of it. As for his hair, it had been whitening ever since.

For dreadful things had happened in those five years. To begin with, the new Lord Proprietor had upset prophecy by coming into residence, and had reared himself a handsome house on the near island of Inniscaw.… But here for a while let us forbear to retrace those five years with their humiliating memories. It is enough that the Commandant

now walked with a stoop; that he wore not only his linen frayed but a frayed coat also; and that he who of old had so often wished that England would take note of his Islands against the western sun, now prayed rather that the fogs would cover them and cut them off from sight forever. He had practical reasons, too, for such a prayer; but of these he was not thinking as he turned there by the windmill, and spied Sergeant Treacher approaching along the ridge, and trundling a wheel-barrow full of manure. The level sun-rays, painting the turf to a green almost unnaturally vivid, and gilding the straw of the manure, passed on to flame upon Sergeant Treacher's breast as though beneath his unbuttoned tunic he wore a corslet of burnished brass. The Commandant blinked, again removed his glasses, and, having repolished, resumed them.

"Treacher, what are you wearing?"

"Meanin' the weskit, sir?" asked Treacher.

"Is it a waistcoat?"

"Well, sir, it used to be an antimacassar; but Miss Gabriel had it made up for me, all the shirts in store bein' used up, so to speak."

Too well the Commandant recognised it; an abomination of crochet work in stripes, four inches wide, of scarlet, green, orange-yellow, and violet. For years—in fact ever since he remembered Miss Gabriel's front parlour—it had decorated the back of Miss Gabriel's sofa.

"She said, sir, that with the autumn drawing on, and the winter coming, it would cut up nicely for a weskit," Treacher explained.

"Miss Gabriel," began the Commandant, "Miss Gabriel has no business——"

"No, sir?" suggested Treacher, after a pause.

"You will take it off. You will take it off this instant, and hand it to me."

"Yes, sir." Treacher obediently slipped off his tunic. "I don't like the thing myself; it's too noticeable, though warming. Miss Gabriel called it a Chesterfield."

"It's a conspiracy!" said the Commandant.

CHAPTER II

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SERGEANT ARCHELAUS IS RE-FITTED

The Commandant, still with a hot heart, walked for a little way beside Sergeant Treacher. He carried the offending waistcoat slung across his arm, and once or twice hesitated on the verge of indignant speech; but by-and-by seemed to recollect himself, halted, turned, and, parting from Treacher without more words, marched off for his customary evening walk around the fortifications.

Let us follow him.

The garrison occupied the heights of a peninsula connected with St. Lide's by a low sandy isthmus, across which it looked towards the "country side" of the island, though this country side was in fact concealed by rising ground, for the most part uncultivated, where sheets of mesembryanthemum draped the outcropping ledges of granite. At the foot of the hill, around the pier and harbour to the north and east, clustered St. Hugh's town, and climbed by one devious street to the garrison gate. From where he stood the Commandant could almost look down its chimneys. Along the isthmus straggled a few houses in double line, known as New Town, and beyond, where the isthmus widened, lay the Old Town around its Parish Church.

These three together made Garland Town, the capital of the Islands; and the population of St. Lide's—town, garrison, and country side—numbered a little over fourteen hundred. Garrison Hill, rising (as we have seen) with a pretty steep acclivity, attains the height of a hundred and ten feet above sea level. It measures about three-quarters of a mile in length and a quarter of a mile in breadth, and the lines of fortification extended around the whole hill (except upon the north-west side, which happened to be the most important); a circuit of one mile and a quarter.

You entered them beneath a massive but ruinous gateway, surmounted by a bell, which Sergeant Treacher rang regularly at six, nine, and twelve o'clock in the morning, and at three, six, and nine p.m., and struck to announce the intervening hours: for the Islands had no public clock. To the left of this gateway the Commandant

always began his round, starting from King George's Battery, to which in old days the Islanders had looked for warning of the enemy's approach. Then it had mounted seven long eighteen-pounders: now—The Commandant sighed and moved on; past the Duke's Battery (four eighteen-pounders), the Vixen (one eighteen and one nine-pounder), and along by a breastwork pierced with embrasures to the important battery on Day Point, at the extreme south-east. Here five thirty-two pounders—and, three hundred yards away to the west, in the great Windlass Battery, no fewer than eleven guns of the same calibre—had grinned defiance at the ships of France. To-day the grass grew on their empty platforms, the nettles sprouted from their angles… and the Commandant—what was he doing here?

I fear the answer may provoke a smile. He was drawing his pay.

The guns, the garrison, were gone these five years; but by some oversight of the War Office neither the Commandant nor his two sergeants had been retired. Regularly, month by month, his pay-sheet had been accepted; regularly the full amount had been handed to him by Mr. Fossell, agent at Garland Town for Messrs. Curtis' Bank on the mainland. Clearly there was a mistake somewhere, and often enough his conscience smote him, urging that he ought, in honour, to call attention to it. He was defrauding the Government, and, through the Government, the taxpayer.

Yes; conscience put this plainly enough, and he felt it to be unanswerable. But if he obeyed conscience and published the mistake—good Heavens! what would happen to him? Already, three years ago, the Lord Proprietor had resumed the shipping dues which had made so welcome an addition to his income. On the strength of them he had

made a too liberal allowance to his brother's widow; and now to maintain it he was driven to deny himself all but the barest necessary expenses. Yet how could he cut it down? The two girls were growing up. Their mother had sent them to a costly school. As it was, her letters burdened him with complaints of her poverty: for she was a peevish, grasping woman—poor soul!

Again, if he published the mistake, he impoverished not himself only but his two sergeants: and Treacher was a married man. He often drugged his conscience with this. But his conscience, being healthy, was soon awake and tormenting him.

It humiliated him, too. Government, which sent him his full pay, never sent him stores, ammunition, or clothing for his men. He wanted no ammunition; but his men needed clothing—and he dared not ask for it. Their uniforms were (as Miss Gabriel had more than once pointedly asserted in his hearing) a scandal to the Islands. Moreover, the price of hens' eggs ruling high in Garland Town, he had discovered that gulls' eggs made a tolerable substitute. It was in scrambling after gulls' eggs for his Commanding Officer that Sergeant Archelaus had ruined his small-clothes.… And now you know why in the course of his discussion with Sergeant Archelaus the Commandant had winced more than once.

Worst of all, the fatal secret tied his tongue under all the many slights (as he reckoned them) which the Lord Proprietor put on him. No; worst of all was the self-reproach he carried about in his own breast. But none the less the Commandant, as a sensitive man, chafed under the Lord Proprietor's tyranny, which was the harder to bear for being slightly contemptuous. He felt that all his old friends pitied him while they turned to worship the rising sun; while, as for

Miss Gabriel (who had never been his friend), he feared her caustic tongue worse than the devil.

But to attack him thus through his men! Had Miss Gabriel and the Lord Proprietor conspired to inflict this indignity?

The Commandant was a sincere Christian: ever willing to believe the best of his kind, incapable of harbouring malice, or, except in the brief heat of temper, of imputing it to others. In the short three hundred yards between the Day Point and Windlass Batteries he repented his worst thoughts. He acquitted his enemies—if enemies they were—of conspiracy. The coincidence of the two gifts was fortuitous: they had been offered without guile, if also without sufficient care for his feelings. But this kind of thing must not happen again, and obviously the most tactful way to prevent it was, not to remonstrate with Miss Gabriel or with the Lord Proprietor, but to provide (somehow) his two sergeants with a re-fit.

The Commandant had arrived at this conclusion and at the Sand Pit Battery (five thirty-two pounders) almost simultaneously, when, across the breastwork, he was aware of Mr. Rogers, Lieutenant R. N., and Inspecting Commander of the Coast-guard, standing at the head of the slope just outside the fortifications, and conning the sea through a telescope.

"Hullo!" said Mr. Rogers—a short man with a jolly smile—lowering his glass and facing suddenly about at the sound of the Commandant's footfall. "Hullo! and good evening!"

"Good evening!" responded Major Vigoureux.

"Queer-looking sky out yonder."

"So it is, now you come to mention it." The Commandant, shaken out of his brown study, slowly concentrated his gaze on the western horizon.

"See that bank of fog? I don't know what to make of it. No wind at all; the glass steady as a rock; and a heavy swell rolling up from westward. Take hold of my glass and bring it to bear on the Monk"—this was the lighthouse guarding the westernmost reef of the Off Islands. "Every now and then a sea'll hide half the column."

"For my part," said the Commandant, "I've been out of all calculation with the weather for a week past. It's uncanny for the time of year."

"There's the devil of a rumpus going on somewhere, to account for the sea that's running," said Mr. Rogers, and checked himself in the act of handing the telescope across the breastwork, as he caught sight of Sergeant Treacher's waistcoat, which the Commandant was nervously shifting from his right arm to his left.

"Hullo!" said Mr. Rogers, again.

"It's—it's a sort of waistcoat," explained the Commandant.

"It may be," said Mr. Rogers. "But unless I'm a Dutchman, it used to be The Gabriel's antimacassar"—and with that Mr. Rogers winked, for he had (as the other knew to his cost) an artless, primitive sense of pleasantry. "A *gage d'amour*, I'll bet any man a sovereign. Come now!"

"I assure you——"

"And you two pretending before everyone that you're at daggers drawn! Trust an old one for slyness!"

(Once again this afternoon the Commandant winced.)

"Oh, but this is too rich!" Mr. Rogers continued, and the Commandant felt that only the intervening breastwork protected him from a nudge under the ribs. "I must take a rise out of the old lady to-night, when we meet at old Fossell's."

"I—I beg you will do nothing of the sort." The Commandant's voice shook with apprehension.

Mr. Rogers, mistaking the tremor in the appeal, recoiled suddenly from the extremely gay to the extremely grave. "My good fellow! Of course, if it's serious!——"

"'Serious!'" The Commandant stared at him for a moment. "Oh, damn the woman!" he broke out in sudden wrath, and went his way with long strides, while the Inspecting Commander looked after him with a broad grin.

The next battery, the Keg of Butter—so called from a barrel-shaped rock which it overlooked—was built of sods, and had mounted a single eighteen-pounder, on a traversing platform. Here, on the north-west side of the hill, the fortifications broke off, or were continued only by a low wall along the edge of the cliff; and here the path, or *via militaris*, turned off at a sharp angle and led back towards the Castle, under the walls of which the Commandant passed, as a rule, to complete his inspection by visiting the three batteries on the northern cliffs. But to-day he broke his custom, and returned to the Garrison Garden.

As he opened the gate, five o'clock sounded from the garrison bell, and at the first stroke of it he saw Sergeant Archelaus drive his spade into the soil, draw the back of his wrist across his forehead, and walk towards the veronica hedge for his tunic.

"Archelaus!"

"Sir!"

"I have been thinking over those trousers—" began the Commandant, picking his way between the briers that threatened to choke the path.

"And so have I," said Sergeant Archelaus; "and the upshot is, Do you spell 'em with a 'u' or a 'w'?"

"Now you mention it, I don't feel able to answer you off-hand; not without writing it down," said the Commandant. "But what on earth does it matter?"

"Nothin'—except that I was thinkin' to write him a letter, to thank him."

"For Heaven's sake—" the Commandant began, and checked himself. "I wouldn't do that, if I were you. In fact, I've been thinking the matter over, and it occurs to me that I have an old pair of dress trousers that might serve your turn; that is to say, if you could manage to unpick the red stripe off your old ones and get someone to sew it on. They are black, to be sure; but the difference between black and dark blue is not so very noticeable. And the cut of them inclines to the peg-top, that being the fashionable shape when I bought them—let me see—in fifty-seven, I think it was."

"I know 'em," said Sergeant Archelaus. "They were sound enough two months back, when I sprinkled 'em over with camphor, against the moth."

"I think they will do excellently."

"They'll do, fast enough," Sergeant Archelaus asserted; "though it seems like deprivin' you."

"Not at all, Archelaus; not in the least. Why, I haven't put on evening dress half a dozen times since I came to the Islands."

"And that's a long time, to be sure, sir. But one never knows. The Lord Proprietor might take it into his head, one o' these days, to invite you to dinner."

"Few things are less likely. And even if he did, and the worst came to the worst, I might borrow Mr. Rogers', you know," added the Commandant—and with a smile; for he stood six feet, and Mr. Rogers a bare five feet five, in their respective socks.

"He might ask you both together. 'Twould be just of a piece with his damned thoughtlessness."

"Hush, Archelaus!" his master commanded sternly, and reproached himself afterwards for having felt not altogether ill-pleased.

"Well, sir, I thank you kindly; and I won't deny 'twill be a comfort to go about with the lower half of me looking a bit less like a pen-wiper. But what be I to do with the pesky things? Return 'em?"

"On no account. You might even thank him—by word of mouth—if you have not already done so."

"I haven't. To tell the truth, the pattern took me so aback at first going off…. But when you came in by the gate, there, I was turning it over in my mind that the garrison oughtn't to be beholden to a civilian——"

"Quite right, Archelaus."

"And, that bein' so, it might be dignified-like to return gift for gift. Now, the Lord Proprietor's terrible fond of bulbs; 'tis a new craze with him; and in spading over the border here I'd a-turned up a dozen or so of those queer-looking Lent-lilies you set such store by——" Sergeant Archelaus pointed towards a little heap of daffodil bulbs carelessly strewn on the up-turned soil.

These bulbs had a history.

Close on thirty years before, a certain Dutch skipper—his name is forgotten—happened to be sailing for Bordeaux with a general cargo, which included some thousands of tulips, and a few almost priceless ones, for a rich purchaser who wished to introduce tulip-culture into the Gironde. The Dutchman's vessel was a flat-bottomed galliot, fitted with lee-boards, but liable to fall away from the wind; and, encountering a strong southerly gale as he attempted to round Ushant, he was blown northward into the fogs, and, through the fogs, upon the Islands.

Against what followed, the chances were at least a thousand to one. His vessel, blind as to her whereabouts, and helpless among the tide-races, missed rock after rock, blundered her way past every sunken peril—to be sure, she was flat-bottomed, but the soundings varied so from moment to moment that the crew, after running a dozen times to the boats in the certainty of striking, fully believed themselves bewitched; until, in St. Lide's Pool, as they made seven fathoms and hoped for open water, the fog lifted suddenly, and they saw Garrison Hill right above them.

This befell them a short hour before sunset. The skipper rounded up to the wind, dropped anchor, got out a boat, and

groped his way shoreward—for the fog had descended again, even more speedily than it had lifted.

Groping his way, and still attended by his amazing good luck, the Dutchman, where he had expected rocks, came plump on a pier of hewn masonry. At the pier-head, which loomed high above them, a man struck a light and displayed a lantern; and, looking up, the crew were aware of many people standing there and chattering in the dusk—chattering in the low soft tone peculiar to the Islanders. The skipper hailed them in Dutch, and again in French, these being the only languages he spoke. The Islanders, helping him ashore, made signs that they could not answer, but took him and his men up the hill to the Garrison, then commanded by a Colonel Bartlemy.

Colonel Bartlemy could speak French after a fashion, and so could his excellent wife. Between them they entertained the wanderers hospitably for the space of five days, at the end of which the Dutchman went his way before a clear north wind, and in charge of an Island pilot. But before departing he presented his hosts—it was all that either he could give or they would permit themselves to accept—with a quantity of remarkably fine bulbs from his cargo.

Now, possibly, being a Dutchman, he took it for granted that anyone could recognise these bulbs for what they were. But Mrs. Bartlemy did not; for she had spent the most of her life in various garrisons, which afford few opportunities for gardening. None the less, she was, for a soldier's wife, a first-rate housekeeper; and, supposing these bulbs to be onions of peculiar rarity, she forthwith issued invitations to the *elite* of the Island, and ordered over a leg of Welsh mutton from the mainland. I will not attempt to tell of the dinner that ensued: for Miss Gabriel made the story her own, and everyone who heard her relate it after one of

Garland Town's *petits soupers*—as she frequently did by special request—declared it to be inimitable. Suffice it to say that the tulips were boiled, but not eaten.

A few bulbs, of smaller size, escaped the pot, and Mrs. Bartlemy, in her mortification, ordered the cook to throw them away, or (in the language of the Islands) to "heave them to cliff." The cook cast them out upon a bed of rubbish in a corner of the garrison garden, where by-and-by they were covered with fresh rubbish, under which they sprouted; and, next spring, lo! the midden heap had become a mound of glorious trumpet daffodils!

So they were left to blossom, refreshing the eyes of successive Commandants year after year as March came round and the March nor'-westers set their yellow bells waving against the blue sea. Major Vigoureux delighted in them—were they not his name-flower? But no one took pains to cultivate them, as no one suspected their great destiny. They bloomed year by year, and waited. Their hour was not yet.

"By all means, Archelaus, let us do it tactfully," agreed the Commandant. "We must suppress those trousers of his at all costs. Yet I would avoid anything in the nature of a rebuff, and if you think the Lord Proprietor would be gratified, you are welcome to take him as many of the bulbs as you please. Only leave me a few; for God knows our garden has few ornaments to spare."

"I'll take 'em over to Inniscaw and thank him by word o' mouth," said Sergeant Archelaus, hopefully. "It'll save me the trouble of spelling 'trousers,' anyway."

"It would be easier, as well as more accurate," said the Commandant, pensively regarding the Sergeant's legs, "to

call them trews. Not," he went on inconsequently, "that I have anything to say against the Highland Regiments. I was brigaded once for three months with the Forth-Second, and capital fellows I found them."

With a mind relieved, the Commandant walked off towards the Barracks, pausing on his way to pick up Miss Gabriel's antimacassar-waistcoat, which he had taken the precaution to leave outside the gate.

Three-quarters of an hour later he emerged in clean shirt and threadbare, but well-brushed, uniform, arrayed for Mr. and Mrs. Fossell's whist-party. As he passed the Garrison gate, Mrs. Treacher, who sometimes acted deputy for her husband, began to ring the six o'clock bell. He halted and waited for her to finish.

"Mrs. Treacher," he said, "can you tell me the price of flannel?"

"Flannel," answered Mrs. Treacher, "is all prices, according to quality."

"But I am talking of good ordinary flannel, fit to make up into a man's shirt."

"Then you couldn't say less than one-three-farthings, or one-and-a-ha'penny at the lowest."

"And how much would be required?"

"Good Lord!" said Mrs. Treacher. "As if that didn't all depend on the man!"

"I was thinking, Mrs. Treacher, to present your husband with one: that is to say, with the material, if you will not mind making it up."

Mrs. Treacher curtsied. "And I thank you kindly, sir, for 'tis not before he needs one, which, being under average size and the width just a yard, as you may reckon, he oughtn't to take more than three-and-a-half yards at the outside."

"Three-and-a-half at one-three-farthings—that makes—Oh, confound these fractions!" said the Commandant. "We'll make it four shillings, and you had best step down to Tregaskis' shop to-morrow and choose the stuff yourself." He counted out the money into Mrs. Treacher's hand, and left her curtseying. As he went, he jingled the few coins remaining in his breeches pocket. They amounted to two-and-seven-pence in all—and almost a week stood between him and pay-day.