

J. S. FLETCHER

A portrait of John Smith, a man with a mustache and goatee, wearing a dark, ornate Elizabethan-style jacket with a high collar and a sword at his waist. The background is dark.

***IN THE DAYS
OF DRAKE***

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

OF MY HOME, FRIENDS, AND SURROUNDINGS.

CHAPTER II.

PHARAOH NANJULIAN.

CHAPTER III.

ROSE.

CHAPTER IV.

FOUL PLAY.

CHAPTER V.

PHARAOH NANJULIAN AGAIN.

CHAPTER VI.

SCHEMES AND STRATAGEMS.

CHAPTER VII.

WE ESCAPE THE SPANIARDS.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNKNOWN LAND.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ADVENTURE OF SOME IMPORTANCE.

CHAPTER X.

THE BLACK SHADOWS.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTIVE.

CHAPTER XII.

MORE CRUEL THAN WILD BEASTS.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE AUTO-DA-FE.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON BOARD THE GALLEY.

CHAPTER XV.

NUNEZ IN A NEW GUISE.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FLAG OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER XVII.

FRANCIS DRAKE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FATE OF NUNEZ AND FREY BARTOLOMEO.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOME WITH DRAKE.

CHAPTER XX.

BEEHCOT ONCE MORE.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW THEY RANG THE BELLS AT BEEHCOT CHURCH.

THE END.

INTRODUCTION.

[Table of Contents](#)

In the whole history of the English people there is no period so absolutely heroic, so full of enthralling interest, as that in which the might of England made itself apparent by land and sea—the period which saw good Queen Bess mistress of English hearts and Englishmen and sovereign of the great beginnings which have come to such a magnificent fruition under Victoria. That was indeed a golden time—an age of great venture and enterprise—a period wherein men’s hearts were set on personal valor and bravery—the day of great deeds and of courage most marvelous. To write down a catalogue of all the names that then were glorious, to make a list of all the daring deeds that then were done—this were an impossible task for the most painstaking of statisticians, the most conscientious of historians and chroniclers. For there were men in those days who achieved world-wide fame, such as Drake, Frobisher, Hawkins, Raleigh, Grenville, and Gilbert—but there were also other men, the rough “sea-dogs” of that time, whose names have never been remembered, or even recorded, and who were yet heroes of a quality not inferior to their commanders and leaders. All men of that age whose calling led them to adventure and enterprise could scarcely fail to find opportunity for heroism, self-denial, and sacrifice, and thus the Elizabethan Englishman of whatever station stands out to us of these later days as a great figure—the type and emblem of the England that was to be. It is this fact that makes the Elizabethan period so fascinating and so full of

romance and glamour. Whenever we call it up before our mind's eye it is surrounded for us with all those qualities which go toward making a great picture. There is the awful feud 'twixt England, the modern spirit making toward progress and civilization, and Spain, the well-nigh worn-out retrogressive force that would dam the river of human thought. There is the spectacle of the Armada, baffled and beaten, and of the English war-ships under men like Drake and Frobisher, dropping like avenging angels upon some Spanish port and working havoc on the Spanish treasure galleons. There, too, are the figures of men like Grenville and Raleigh, born adventurers, leaders of men, who knew how to die as bravely and fearlessly as they had lived. And beyond all the glory and adventure there looms in the background of the picture the black cruelties of Spain, practiced in the dark corners of the earth, against which the English spirit of that day never ceased from protesting with speech and sword. It was well for the world that in that fierce contest England triumphed. Had Spain succeeded in perpetuating its hellish system, how different would life in east and west have been! But it was God's will that not Spain but England should win—and so to-day we find the English-speaking peoples of the world in Great Britain and America, in Australia and Africa, free, enlightened, full of great purpose and noble aims, working out in very truth their own salvation. It is when one comes to think of this, that one first realizes the immeasurable thanks due to the heroes, known and unknown, of the Elizabethan age. Whether they stand high on the scroll of fame or lie forgotten in some quiet graveyard or in the vast oceans

which they crossed, it was they, and they only, who laid the great foundations of the England and the United States of to-day.

J. S. FLETCHER.

IN THE DAYS OF DRAKE.

CHAPTER I.

[Table of Contents](#)

OF MY HOME, FRIENDS, AND SURROUNDINGS.

[Table of Contents](#)

Now that I am an old man, and have some leisure, which formerly I did not enjoy, I am often minded to write down my memories of that surprising and remarkable adventure of mine, which began in the year 1578, and came to an end, by God's mercy, two years later.

There are more reasons than one why I should engage in this task. Every Christmas brings a houseful of grandchildren and young folks about me, and they, though they have heard it a dozen times already, are never tired of hearing me re-tell the story which seems to them so wonderful.

Then, again, I am often visited by folk who have heard of my travels, and would fain have particulars of them from my own lips; so that ofttimes I have to tell my tale, or part of it, a dozen times in the year. Nay, upon one occasion I even told it to the King's majesty, which was when I went up to London on some tiresome law business. Sir Ralph Wood, who is my near neighbor and a Parliament man, had mentioned me to the King, and so I had to go to Whitehall and tell my story before the court, which was a hard matter for a plain-spoken country gentleman, as you may well believe.

Now all these matters have oft prompted me to write down my story, so that when any visitor of mine might ask me for it, I could satisfy him without trouble to myself, by simply putting the manuscript into his hand and bidding him read what I had there written. But until this present time I have never seemed to have opportunity such as I desired, for my duties as magistrate and church-warden have been neither light nor unimportant. Now that I have resigned them to younger hands, I have leisure time of my own, and therefore I shall now proceed to carry out the intention which has been in my mind for many years.

I was born at York, in the year 1558. My father, Richard Salkeld, was the youngest son of Oliver Salkeld, lord-of-the-manor of Beehcot-on-the-Wold, and he practiced in York as an attorney. Whether he did well or ill in this calling I know not, for at the early age of six years I was left an orphan. My father being seized by a fever, my mother devoted herself to nursing him, which was a right and proper thing to do; but the consequence was disastrous, for she also contracted the disease, and they both died, leaving me alone in the world.

However, I was not long left in this sad condition, for there presently appeared my uncle, Sir Thurstan Salkeld of Beehcot, who settled my father's affairs and took me away with him. I was somewhat afraid of him at first, for he was a good twenty years older than my father, and wore a grave, severe air. Moreover, he had been knighted by the Queen for his zealous conduct in administering the law. But I presently found him to be exceeding kind of heart, and ere many months were over I had grown fond of him, and of

Beehcot. He had never married, and was not likely to, and so to the folks round about his home he now introduced me as his adopted son and heir. And thus things went very pleasantly for me, and, as children will, I soon forgot my early troubles.

I think we had nothing to cause us any vexation or sorrow at Beehcot until Dame Barbara Stapleton and her son Jasper came to share our lot. Jasper was then a lad of my own age, and like me an orphan, and the nephew of Sir Thurstan. His mother, Sir Thurstan's sister, had married Devereux Stapleton, an officer in the Queen's household, and when she was left a widow she returned to Beehcot and quartered herself and her boy on her brother. Thereafter we had trouble one way or another, for Dame Barbara could not a-bear to think that I was preferred before her own boy as Sir Thurstan's heir. Nor did she scruple to tell Sir Thurstan her thoughts on the matter, on one occasion at any rate, for I heard them talking in the great hall when they fancied themselves alone.

"'Tis neither right nor just," said Dame Barbara, "that you should make one nephew your son and heir to the exclusion of the other. What! is not Jasper as much your own flesh and blood as Humphrey?"

"You forget that Humphrey is a Salkeld in name as well as in blood," said Sir Thurstan. "If the lad's father, my poor brother Richard, had lived, he would have succeeded me as lord of Beehcot. Therefore, 'tis but right that Dick's boy should step into his father's place."

"To the hurt of my poor Jasper!" sighed Dame Barbara.

“Jasper is a Stapleton,” answered Sir Thurstan. “However, sister, I will do what is right as regards your lad. I will charge myself with the cost of his education and training, and will give him a start in life, and maybe leave him a goodly sum of money when I die. Therefore, make your mind easy on that point.”

But I knew, though I was then but a lad, that she would never give over fretting herself at the thought that I was to be lord of all the broad acres and wide moors of Beechcot, and that Jasper would be but a landless man. And so, though she never dare flout or oppress me in any way, for fear of Sir Thurstan’s displeasure, she, without being openly unfavorable, wasted no love on me, and no doubt often wished me out of the way.

At that time Jasper and I contrived to get on very well together. We were but lads, and there was no feeling of rivalry between us. Indeed, I do not think there would ever have been rivalry between us if that foolish woman, my Aunt Barbara, had not begun sowing the seeds of discord in her son’s mind. But as soon as he was old enough to understand her, she began talking to him of Beechcot and its glories, pointing out to him the wide park and noble trees, the broad acres filled with golden grain, and the great moors that stretched away for miles towards the sea; and she said, no doubt, how grand a thing it would be to be lord of so excellent an estate, and how a man might enjoy himself in its possession. Then she told him that I was to have all these things when Sir Thurstan died, and thereafter my cousin Jasper hated me. But he let his hate smoulder within him a good while before he showed it openly. One

day, however, when we were out in the park with our bows, he began to talk of the matter, and after a time we got to high words.

"My mother tells me, Humphrey," said he, "that when my uncle Thurstan dies all these fair lands will pass to thee. That is not right."

"'Tis our uncle's land to do with as he pleases," I answered. "We have naught to do with it. If he likes to leave it to me, what hast thou to say in the matter? 'Tis his affair; not thine, Master Jasper. Besides, I am a Salkeld, and you are not."

"Is not my mother a Salkeld?" he asked.

"It counts not by the mother," I answered. "And, moreover, my father would have heired the estate had he lived. But be not down-hearted about it, Jasper, I will see that thou art provided for. When I am lord of Beehcot I will make thee my steward."

Now, that vexed him sore, and he flew into a violent rage, declaring that he would serve no man, and me last of all; and so violent did he become that he was foolish to look at, and thereupon I laughed at him. At that his rage did but increase, and he presently fitted an arrow to his bow and shot at me meaning, I doubt not, to put an end to me forever. But by good fortune his aim mischanced, and the arrow did no more than pin me to the tree by which I stood, passing through my clothes between the arm and the body. And at that we were both sobered, and Jasper cooled his hot temper.

"What wouldst thou have done if the arrow had passed through my heart, as it might easily have chanced to do?" I

inquired of him.

“I would have gone home and told them that I had killed thee by accident,” he answered readily enough. “Thou wouldst have been dead, and therefore no one could have denied my tale.”

I said naught to that, but I there and then made up my mind that if ever I went shooting with him again I would keep my eyes open. For I now saw that he was not only false, but also treacherous. Indeed, I was somewhat minded to go to my uncle and tell him what had taken place between us, but I remembered that the good knight was not fond of carried tales, and therefore I refrained.

After that there was peace for some years, Dame Barbara having evidently made up her mind to take things as they were. She was mortally afraid of offending Sir Thurstan, for she had no jointure or portion of her own, and was totally dependent upon his charity for a sustenance. This made her conduct herself towards me with more consideration than I should otherwise have received from her. Possibly she thought that it might be well to keep in good favor with me in view of my succeeding Sir Thurstan at no distant period. At any rate I had no more trouble with Jasper, and I overheard no more unpleasant discussions between Dame Barbara and the knight.

From our tenth year upwards Jasper and myself daily attended the vicarage, in order to be taught Greek, Latin, and other matters by the Reverend Mr. Timotheus Herrick, vicar of Beechcot. He was a tall, thin, spindle-shanked gentleman, very absent-minded, but a great scholar. It was said of him, that if he had not married a very managing

woman in the shape of Mistress Priscilla Horbury, he would never have got through the world. He had one child, Rose, of whom you will hear somewhat in this history, and she was three years younger than myself. When Jasper and I were thirteen and Rose ten years of age, she began to learn with us, and presently made such progress that she caught up to us, and then passed us, and so made us ashamed of ourselves. After that she was always in advance of us, and we used to procure her help in our lessons; then she lorded it over us, as little maidens will over big lads, and we were her humble slaves in everything.
