

**MARY
JOHNSTON**



**SIR
MORTIMER**

Mary Johnston

Sir Mortimer

A Novel

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

IX

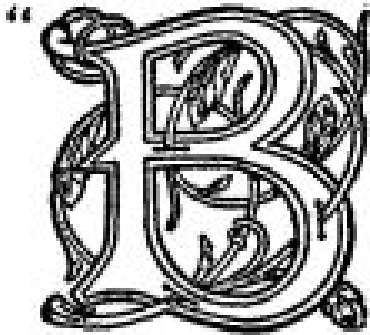
X

XI

XII

THE END

Table of Contents



ut if we return not from our adventure," ended Sir Mortimer, "if the sea claims us, and upon his sandy floor, amid his Armida gardens, the silver-singing mermaiden marvel at that wreckage which was once a tall ship and at those bones which once were animate,--if strange islands know our resting-place, sunk for evermore in huge and most unkindly forests,--if, being but pawns in a mighty game, we are lost or changed, happy, however, in that the white hand of our Queen hath touched us, giving thereby consecration to our else unworthiness,--if we find no gold, nor take one ship of Spain, nor any city treasure-stored,--if we suffer a myriad sort of sorrows and at the last we perish miserably--"

He paused, being upon his feet, a man of about thirty years, richly dressed, and out of reason good to look at. In his hand was a great wine-cup, and he held it high. "I drink to those who follow after!" he cried. "I drink to those who fail--pebbles cast into water whose ring still wideneth, reacheth God knows what unguessable shore where loss may yet be counted gain! I drink to Fortune her minions, to Francis Drake and John Hawkins and Martin Frobisher; to all adventurers and their deeds in the far-off seas! I drink to merry England and to

the day when every sea shall bring her tribute!--to England, like Aphrodite, new-risen from the main! Drink with me!"

The tavern of the Triple Tun rang with acclamation, and, the windows being set wide because of the warmth of the June afternoon, the noise rushed into the street and waylaid the ears of them who went busily to and fro, and of them who lounged in the doorway, or with folded arms played Atlas to the tavern walls. "Who be the roisterers within?" demanded a passing citizen of one of these supporters. The latter made no answer; he was a ragged retainer of Melpomene, and he awaited the coming forth of Sir Mortimer Ferne, a notable encourager of all who would scale Parnassus. But his neighbor, a boy in blue and silver, squatted upon a sunny bench, vouchsafed enlightenment.

"Travellers to strange places," quoth he, taking a straw from his mouth and stretching long arms. "Tall men, swingers in Brazil-beds, parcel-gilt with the Emperor of Manoa, and playfellows to the nymphs of Don Juan Ponce de Leon his fountain,--in plain words, my master, Sir Mortimer Ferne, Captain of the *Cygnets*, and his guests to dinner, to wit, Sir John Nevil, Admiral of our fleet, with sundry of us captains and gentlemen adventurers to the Indies, and, for seasoning, a handful of my master's poor friends, such as courtiers and great lords and poets."

"Thinkest to don thy master's wit with his livery?" snapped the poetaster. "'Tis a chain for a man,--too heavy for thy wearing."

The boy stretched his arms again. "'Master' no more than in reason," quoth he. "I also am a gentleman. Heigho! The sun shineth hotter here than in the doldrums!"

"Well, go thy ways for a sprightly crack!" said the citizen, preparing to go his. "I know them now, for my cousin Parker hath a venture in the *Mere Honour*, and that is the great ship the Queen hath lent Sir John, his other ships being the *Marigold*, the *Cygnets*, and the *Star*, and they're all a-lying above Greenwich, ready to sail on the morrow for the Spanish Main."

"You've hit it in the clout," yawned the boy. "I'll bring you an emerald hollowed out for a reliquary--if I think on't."

Within-doors, in the Triple Tun's best room, where much sherris sack was being drunk, a gentleman with a long face, and mustachios twirled to a point, leaned his arm upon the table and addressed him whose pledge had been so general. "*Armida gardens and silver-singing mermaiden and Aphrodite England* quotha! *Pike and cutlass and good red gold!* saith the plain man. O Apollo, what a thing it is to be learned and a maker of songs!"

Athwart his laughing words came from the lower end of the board a deep and harsh voice. The speaker was Captain Robert Baldry of the *Star*, and he used the deliberation of one who in his drinking had gone far and fast. "I pledge all scholars turned soldiers," he said, "all courtiers who stay not at court, all poets who win tall ships at the point of a canzonetta! Did Sir Mortimer Ferne make verses--elegies and epitaphs and such toys--at Fayal in the Azores two years ago?"

There followed his speech, heard of all in the room, a moment of amazed silence. Mortimer Ferne put his tankard softly down and turned in his seat so that he might more closely observe his fellow adventurer.

"For myself, when an Armada is at my heels, the cares of the moon do not concern me," went on Baldry, with the

gravity of an oracle. "Had Nero not fiddled, perhaps Rome had not burned."

"And where got you that information, sir?" asked his host, in a most courtier-like voice.

"Oh, in the streets of Rome, a thousand years ago! 'Twas common talk." The Captain of the *Star* tilted his cup and was grieved to find it empty.

"I have later news," said the other, as smoothly as before. "At Fayal in the Azores--"

He was interrupted by Sir John Nevil, who had risen from his chair, and beneath whose stare of surprise and anger Baldry, being far from actual drunkenness, moved uneasily.

"I will speak, Mortimer," said the Admiral, "Captain Baldry not being my guest. Sir, at Fayal in the Azores that disastrous day we did what we could--mortal men can do no more. Taken by surprise as we were, ships were lost and brave men tasted death, but there was no shame. He who held command that lamentable day was Captain--now Sir Mortimer--Ferne; for I, who was Admiral of the expedition, must lie in my cabin, ill almost unto death of a calenture. I dare aver that no wiser head ever drew safety for many from such extremity of peril, and no readier sword ever dearly avenged one day's defeat and loss. Your news, sir, was false. I drink to a gentleman of known discretion, proved courage, unstained honor--"

It needed not the glance of his eye to bring men to their feet. They rose, courtiers and university wits, soldiers home from the Low Countries, kinsmen and country friends, wealthy merchants who had staked their gold in this and other voyages, adventurers who with Frobisher and Gilbert had sailed the icy seas, or with Drake and Hawkins had gazed upon the Southern Cross, Captain Baptist Manwood, of the *Marigold*,

Lieutenant Ambrose Wynch, Giles Arden, Anthony Paget, good men and tall, who greatly prized the man who alone kept his seat, smiling upon them from the head of the long table in the Triple Tun's best room. Baldry, muttering in his beard that he had made a throw amiss and that the wine was to blame, stumbled to his feet and stood with the rest. "Sir Mortimer Ferne!" cried they all, and drank to the seated figure. The name was loudly called, and thus it was no slight tide of sound which bore it, that high noon in the year 158-, into the busy London street. Bow Bells were ringing, and to the boy in blue and silver upon the bench without the door they seemed to take the words and sound them again and again, deeply, clearly, above the voices of the city.

Mortimer Ferne, his hand resting upon the table before him, waited until there was quiet in the tavern of the Triple Tun, then, because he felt deeply, spoke lightly.

"My lords and gentlemen," he said, "and you, John Nevil, whom I reverence as my commander and love as my friend, I give you thanks. Did we lose at Fayal? Then, this voyage, at some other golden island, we shall win! Honor stayed with us that bloody day, and shall we not now bring her home enthroned? Ay, and for her handmaidens fame and noble service and wealth,--wealth with which to send forth other ships, hounds of the sea which yet may pull down this Spanish stag of ten! By my faith, I sorrow for you whom we leave behind!"

"Look that I overtake you not, Mortimer!" cried Sidney. "Walter Raleigh and I have plans for next year. You and I may yet meet beneath a palm-tree!"

"And I also, Sir Mortimer," exclaimed Captain Philip Amadas. "Sir Walter hath promised me a ship--"

"When the old knight my father dies, and I come into my property," put in, loudly, a fancy-fired youth from Devon, "I'll go out over bar in a ship of my own! I'll have all my mariners dressed like Sir Hugh Willoughby's men in the picture, and when I come home--"

"Towing the King of Spain his plate-fleet behind you," quoth the mustachioed gentleman.

"--all my sails shall be cloth of gold," continued wine-flushed one-and-twenty. "The main-deck shall be piled with bars of silver, and in the hold shall be pearls and pieces of gold, doubloons, emeralds as great as filberts--"

"At Panama saw I an emerald greater than a pigeon's egg!" cried one who had sailed in the *Golden Hind*.

Sir Mortimer laughed. "Why, our very speech grows rich--as did thine long since, Philip Sidney! And now, Giles Arden, show these stay-at-home gentlemen the stones the *Bonaventure* brought in the other day from that coast we touched at two years ago. If we miss the plate-fleet, my masters, if we find Cartagena or Santa Marta too strong for us, there is yet the unconquered land, the Hesperidian garden whence came these golden apples! Deliver, good dragon!"

He of the mustachios laid side by side upon the board three pieces of glittering rock, whereat every man bent forward.

"Marcasite?" said one, doubtfully.

"El madre del oro?" suggested another.

"White spar," said Arden, authoritatively, "and containeth of gold ten pounds to the hundredweight. Moreover--" He sifted down upon the dark wood beside the stones a thimbleful of dull yellow grains. "The sands of Pactolus, gentlemen! Sure 'twas in no Grecian river that King Midas bathed himself!"

Those of the company to whom had never before been exhibited these samples of imperial riches craned their necks, and the looks of some were musing and of others keenly eager. The room fell silent, and still they gazed and gazed at the small heap of glistening stones and those few grains of gold. They were busy men in the vanguard of a quickened age, and theirs were its ardors, its Argus-eyed fancy and potent imagination. Show them an acorn, and straightway they saw a forest of oaks; an inch of a rainbow, and the mind grasped the whole vast arch, zenith-reaching, seven-colored, enclosing far horizons. So now, in addition to the gleaming fragments upon the table before them, they saw mountain ranges with ledges of rock all sparkling like this ore, deep mines with Indian workers, pack-trains, and burdened holds of ships.

After a time one lifted a piece of the ore, hesitatingly, as though he made to take up all the Indies, scrutinized it closely, weighed it, passed it to his neighbor. It went the round of the company, each man handling it, each with the talisman between his fingers gazing through the bars of this present hour at a pageant and phantasmagoria of his own creating. At last it came to the hand of an old merchant, who held it a moment or two, looking steadfastly upon it, then slowly put it down.

"Well," said he, "may God send you furthering winds, Sir Mortimer and Sir John, and make their galleons and galliasses, their caravels and carracks, as bowed corn before you! Those of your company who are to die, may they die cleanly, and those who are to live, live nobly, and may not one of you fall into the hands of the Holy Office."

"Amen to that, Master Hudson," quoth Arden.

"The Holy Office!" cried a Banbury man. "I had a cousin, sirs,--an honest fellow, with whom I had gone bird's-nesting when we were boys together! He was master of a merchantman--the *Red Lion*--that by foul treachery was taken by the Spaniards at Cales. The priests put forth their hands and clutched him, who was ever outspoken, ever held fast to his own opinion!... To die! that is easy; but when I learned what was done to him before he was let to die--" The speaker broke off with an oath and sat with fixed gaze, his hand beating upon the table a noiseless tattoo.

"To die," said Mortimer Ferne slowly. "To die cleanly, having lived nobly--it is a good wish, Master Hudson! To die greatly--as did your cousin, sir,--a good knight and true, defending faith and loyalty, what more consummate flower for crown of life? What loftier victory, supreamer triumph? Pain of body, what is it? Let the body cry out, so that it betray not the mind, cheat not the soul into a remediless prison of perdition and shame!"

He drank of his wine, then with a slight laugh and wave of his hand dismissed a subject too grave for the hour. A little later he arose with his guests from the table, and since time was passing and for some there was much to do, men began to exchange farewells. To-morrow would see the adventurers gone from England; to-day kinsmen and friends must say good-by, warmly, with clasping of hands and embracing, even with tears, for it was an age when men did not scorn to show emotion. A thousand perils awaited those who went, nor for those who stayed would time or tide make tarrying. It was most possible that they who parted now would find, this side eternity, no second inn of meeting.

From his perch beside the door, the boy in blue and silver watched his master's guests step into the sunlight and go away. A throng had gathered in front of the tavern, for the most part of those within were men of note, and Sir John Nevil's adventure to the Indies had long been general talk. Singly or in little groups the revellers issued from the tavern, and for this or that known figure and favorite the crowd had its comment and cheering. At last all were gone save the adventurers themselves, who, having certain final arrangements to make, stayed to hold council in the Triple Tun's long room.

Their conference was not long. Presently came forth Captain Baptist Manwood of the *Marigold* with his lieutenants, Wynch and Paget, and Captain Robert Baldry of the *Star*. The four, talking together, started towards the waterside where they were to take boat for the ships that lay above Greenwich, but ere they had gone forty paces Baldry felt his sleeve twitched. Turning, he found at his elbow the blue and silver sprig who served Sir Mortimer Ferne.

"Save you, sir," said the boy. "There's a gentleman at the Triple Tun desires your honor would give him five minutes of your company."

"I did expect a man of my acquaintance, a Paul's man with a good rapier to sell," quoth Baldry. "Boy, is the gentleman a lean gentleman with a Duke Humphrey look? Wait for me, sirs, at the stairs!"

Within the Triple Tun, Sir John Nevil yet sat at table pondering certain maps and charts spread out before him, while Mortimer Ferne, having re-entered the room after a moment's absence, leaned over his commander's shoulder and watched the latter's forefinger tracing the coastline from

the Cape of Three Points to Golden Castile. By the window stood Arden, while on a settle near him lounged Henry Sedley, lieutenant to the Captain of the *Cygnets*; moreover a young gentleman of great promise, a smooth, dark, melancholy beauty, and a pretty taste in dress. In his hands was a gittern which had been hanging on the wall above him, and he played upon it, softly, a sweet and plaintive air.

In upon these four burst Baldry, who, not finding the Paul's man and trader in rapiers, drew himself up sharply. Sir Mortimer came forward and made him a low bow, which he, not to be outdone in courtesy, any more than in weightier matters, returned in his own manner, fierce and arrogant as that of a Spanish conquistador.

"Captain Robert Baldry, I trusted that you would return," said Ferne. "And now, since you are no longer guest of mine, we will resume our talk of Fayal in the Azores. Your gossips lied, sir; and he who, not staying to examine a quarrel, becomes a repeater of lies, may chance upon a summer day, in a tavern such as this, to be called a liar. My cartel, sir!"

He flung his glove, which scarce had felt the floor before the other snatched it up. "God's death! you shall be accommodated!" he cried. "Here and now, is't not? and with sword and dagger? Sir, I will spit you like a lark, or like the Spaniard I did vanquish for a Harry shilling at El Gran' Canario, last Luke's day--"

The three witnesses of the challenge sprang to their feet, the gittern falling from Sedley's hands, and Sir John's papers fluttering to the floor. The latter thrust himself between the two who had bared their weapons. "What is this, gentlemen? Mortimer Ferne, put up your sword! Captain Baldry, your valor may keep for the Spaniards! Obey me, sirs!"

"Let be, John Nevil," said Ferne. "To-morrow I" become your sworn man. To-day my honor is my Admiral!"

"Will you walk, Sir Mortimer Ferne?" demanded Baldry. "The Bull and Bear, just down the street, hath a little parlor--a most sweet retired place, and beareth no likeness to the poop of the *Mere Honour*. Sir John Nevil, your servant, sir--to-morrow!"



"SIR JOHN THRUST HIMSELF BETWEEN THE TWO"

"My servant to-day, sir," thundered the Admiral, "in that I will force you to leave this quarrel! Death of my life! shall this get abroad? Not that common soldiers or mariners ashore fall out and cudgel each other until the one cannot handle a rope nor the other a morris-pike! not that wild gallants, reckless and broken adventurers whose loss the next daredevil scamp may supply, choose the eve of sailing for a duello, in which one or

both may be slain; but that strive together my captains, men vowed to noble service, loyal aid, whose names are in all mouths, who go forth upon this adventure not (I trust in God) with an eye single to the gain of the purse, but thinking, rather, to pluck green laurels for themselves, and to bring to the Queen and England gifts of waning danger, waxing power! What reproach--what evil augury--nay, perhaps, what maiming of our enterprise! Leaders and commanders that you are, with your goodly ships, your mariners and soldiers awaiting you, and above us all the lode-star of noblest duty, truest honor--will you thus prefer to the common good your private quarrel? Nay, now, I might say 'you shall not'; but, instead, I choose to think you will not!"

The speech was of the longest for the Admiral, who was a man of golden silences. His look had been upon Baldry, but his words were for Mortimer Ferne, at whom he looked not at all. "I have been challenged, sir," cried Baldry, roughly. "Draw back? God's wounds, not I!"

His antagonist bit his lip until the blood sprang. "The insult was gross," he said, with haughtiness, "but since I may not deny the truth of your words, John Nevil, I will reword my cartel. Captain Robert Baldry, I do solemnly challenge you to meet me with sword and dagger upon that day which sees our return to England!"

"A far day that, perhaps!" cried Baldry. "But so be it! I'll not fail you, Sir Mortimer Ferne. Look that you fail not me!"

"Sir!" cried Ferne, sharply.

The Admiral struck the table a great blow. "Gentlemen, no more of this! What! will you in this mood go forth side by side to meet a common foe? Nay, I must have you touch hands!"

The Captain of the *Cygnets* held out his hand. He of the *Star* first swore, then burst into a great laugh; finally laid his own upon it.

"Now we are turtle-doves, Sir John, nothing less! and the *Star* and the *Cygnets* may bill and coo from the Thames to Terra Firma!" Suddenly he ceased to laugh, and let fall his hand. "But I have not forgotten," he said, "that at Fayal in the Azores I had a brother slain."

He was gone, swinging from the room with scant ceremony, loudly ordering from his path the loiterers at the inn door. They whose company he had quitted were silent for a moment; then said Sir Mortimer, slowly: "I remember now--there was a Thomas Baldry, master of the *Speedwell*. Well, it was a sorry business that day! If from that muck of blood and horror was born Detraction--"

"The man was mad!" thrust in young Sedley, hotly. "Detraction and you have no acquaintance."

Ferne, with a slight laugh, stooped to pick up the fallen gittern. "She kept knighthood and me apart for a year, Henry. 'Tis a powerful dame, a most subtle and womanish foe, who knoweth not or esteemeth not the rules of chivalry. Having yielded to plain Truth, she yet, as to-day, raiseth unawares an arm to strike." He hung the gittern upon its peg, then went across to the Admiral and put both hands upon his shoulders. The smile was yet upon his lips, but his voice had a bitter ring. "John, John," he said, "old wounds leave not their aching. That tall, fanfaronading fellow hath a power to anger me,--not his words alone, but the man himself... Well, let him go until the day we come sailing back to England! For his words--" He paused and a shadow came over his face. "Who knows himself?" he said. "There are times when I look within and

doubt my every quality that men are pleased to give me. God smiles upon me--perhaps He smiles with contempt!... I would that I had followed, not led, that day at Fayal!"

Arden burst into a laugh. The Admiral turned and stared at him who had spoken with a countenance half severity, half deep affection. "What! stings that yet?" he said. "I think you may have that knowledge of yourself that you were born to lead, and that knowledge of higher things that shame is of the devil, but defeat oftentimes of God. How idly do we talk to-day!"

"Idly enough," agreed Ferne with a quick sigh. He lifted his hands from the other's shoulders, and with an effort too instantaneous to be apparent shook off his melancholy. Arden took up his hat and swung his short cloak over his shoulder.

"Since we may not fight," he said, "I'll e'en go play. There's a pretty lady hard by who loves me dearly. I'll go tell her tales of the Carib beauties. Master Sedley, you are for the court, I know. Would the gods had sent me such a sister! Do you go to Leicester House, Mortimer? If not, my fair Discretion hath a mate--"

"I," answered Ferne, "am also for Greenwich."

Arden laughed again. "Her Grace gives you yet another audience? Or is it that hath come to court that Nonpareil, that radiant Incognita, that be-rhymed Dione at whose real name you keep us guessing? I thought the violet satin was not for naught!"

"In that you speak with truth," said the other, coolly, "for thirty acres of good Devon land went to its procuring. Since you are for the court, Henry Sedley, one wherry may carry the two of us."

When the two adventurers and the boy in blue and silver had made half the distance to the pleasant palace where, like

a flight of multicolored birds, had settled for the moment Elizabeth's migratory court, the gentlemen became taciturn and fell at length to silent musing, each upon his own affairs. The boy liked it not, for their discourse had been of armor and devices, of war-horses and Spanish swords, and such knightly matters as pleased him to the marrow. He himself (Robin-a-dale they called him) meant to be altogether such a one as his master in violet satin. Not a sea-dog simply and terrible fighter like Captain Manwood or Ambrose Wynch, nor a ruffler like Baldry, nor even a high, cold gentleman like Sir John, who slew Spaniards for the good of God and the Queen, and whose slow words when he was displeased cut like a rope's end. But he would fight and he would sing; he would laugh with his foe and then courteously kill him; he would know how to enter the presence, how to make a great Queen smile and sigh; and then again, amid the thunder and reek of the fight, on decks slippery with blood, he would strain, half naked, with the mariners, he would lead the boarders, he would deal death with a flashing sword and a face that seen through the smoke wreaths was so calm and high!--And the Queen might knight him--one day the Queen might knight him. And the people at home, turning in the street, would look and cry, "'Tis Sir Robert Dale!" as now they cry "Sir Mortimer Ferne!"

Robin-a-dale drew in his breath and clenched his hands with determination; then, the key being too high for long sustaining, came down to earth and the contemplation of the bright-running Thames, its shifting banks, and the shipping on its bosom. The river glided between tall houses, and there were voices on the water, sounding from stately barges, swift-plying wherries, ships at anchor, both great and small. Over all played mild sunshine, hung pale blue skies. The boy thought

of other rivers he had seen and would see again, silent streams gliding through forests of a fearful loveliness, miles of churned foam rushing between black teeth of jagged rock to the sheer, desperate, earth-shaking cataract, liquid highways to the realms of strange dreams! He turned involuntarily and met his master's eye. Between these two, master and boy, knave and knight, there was at times so strange a comprehension that Robin-a-dale was scarcely startled to find that his thoughts had been read.

"Ay, Robin," said Ferne, smiling, "other and stranger waters than those of Father Thames! And yet I know not. Life is one, though to-day we glide through the sunshine to a fair Queen's palace, and to-morrow we strive like fiends from hell for those two sirens, Lust of Gold and Lust of Blood. Therefore, Robin, an you toss your silver brooch into the Thames it may come to hand on the other side of the world, swirling towards you in some Arethusa fountain."

"I see the ships, master!" cried the boy. "Ho, the *Cygnets*, the bonny white *Cygnets*!"

They lay in a half-moon, with the westering sun striking full upon the windows of their high, castellated poops. Their great guns gleamed; mast and spar and rigging made network against the blue; high in air floated bright pennants and the red cross in the white field. To and fro plied small boats, while over the water to them in the wherry came a pleasant hum of preparation for the morrow's sailing. Upon the *Cygnets*, lying next to the *Mere Honour*, and a very noble ship, the mariners began to sing.

"Shall we not row more closely?" cried Sedley. "The *Cygnets* knows not that it is you who pass!"

Sir Mortimer laughed. "No, no; I come to her arms from the Palace to-night! Trouble her not now with genuflections and salutings." His eyes dwelt with love upon his ship. "How clearly sounds the singing!" he said.

So clearly did it sound over the water that it kept with them when the ships were passed. Robin-a-dale had his fancies, to which at times he gave voice, scarce knowing that he had spoken. "'Tis the ship herself that sings," he now began to say to himself in a low voice, over and over again. "'Tis the ship singing, the ship singing because she goes on a voyage--a long voyage!"

"Sirrah!" cried his master, somewhat sharply. "Know you not that the swan sings but upon one voyage, and that her last? 'Tis not the *Cygnets* that sings, but upon her sing my mariners and soldiers, for that they go forth to victory!"

He put his hands behind his head, and with a light in his eyes looked back to the dwindling ships. "Victory!" he repeated beneath his breath. "Such fame, such service, as that earthworm, that same Detraction, shall raise no more her lying head!" He turned to Sedley: "I am glad, Harry, that your lot is cast with mine. For we go forth to victory, lad!"

The younger man answered him impetuously, a flush of pride mounting to his smooth, dark cheek. "I doubt it not, Sir Mortimer, nor of my gathering laurels, since I go with you! I count myself most fortunate." He threw back his head and laughed. "I have no lady-love," he said, "and so I will heap the laurels in the lap of my sister Damaris."

By now, the tide being with them, they were nearing Greenwich House. Ferne dipped his hand into the water, then, straightening himself, shook from it the sparkling drops, and

looked in the face of the youth who was to make with him his maiden voyage.

"You could heap laurels in the lap of no sweeter lady," he said, courteously. "I thought you went on yesterday to say farewell to Mistress Damaris Sedley."

"Why, so I did," said the other, simply. "We said farewell with our eyes in the presence, while the Queen talked with my Lord of Leicester; in the antechamber with our hands; in the long gallery with our lips; and when we reached the gardens, and there was none at all to see, we e'en put our arms about each other and wept. It is a right noble wench, my sister, and loves me dearly. And then, while we talked, one of her fellow maids came hurriedly to call her, for her Grace would go a-hawking, and Damaris was in attendance. So I swore I would see her again to-day though 'twere but for a moment."

The rowers brought the wherry to the Palace landing. Sir Mortimer, stepping out upon the broad stairs, began to mount them somewhat slowly, Sedley and Robin-a-dale following him. Half-way up, Sedley, noting the rich suit worn so point-device, and aware of how full in the sunshine of the Queen's favor stood for the moment his Captain, asked if he were for the presence. Ferne shook his head: "Not now... May I know, Henry, where you and your sister meet?"

"In the little covert of the park where we said good-by on yesterday." There were surprise and some question in the youth's upward glance at the man in violet satin, standing a step or two above him, his hand resting upon the stone balustrade, a smile in his eyes, but none upon the finely cut lips, quite grave and steady beneath the slight mustache.

Ferne, reading the question, gave, after just a moment's pause, the answer. "My dear lad," he said, and the smile in his

eyes grew more distinct and kindly, "to Mistress Damaris Sedley I also would say farewell." He laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder. "For I would know, Henry--I would know if through all the days and nights that await us over the brim of to-morrow I may dream of an hour to come when that dear and fair lady shall bid me welcome." His eyes looked into the distance, and the smile had crept to his lips. "It was my meaning to speak to her to-night before I left the Palace, but this chance offers better. Will you give me precedence, Henry? let me see and speak to your sister alone in that same covert of which you tell me?"

"But--but--" stammered Sedley.

Sir Mortimer laughed. "'But ... Dione!' you would say. 'Ah, faithless poet, forsworn knight!' you would say. Not so, my friend." He looked far away with shining eyes. "That unknown nymph, that lady whom I praise in verse, whose poet I am, that Dione at whose real name you all do vainly guess--it is thy sister, lad! Nay,--she knows me not for her worshipper, nor do I know that I can win her love. I would try ..."

Sedley's smooth cheek glowed and his eyes shone. He was young; he loved his sister, orphaned like himself and the neglected ward of a decaying house; while to his ardent fancy the man above him, superb in his violet dress, courteous and excellent in all that he did, was a very Palmerin or Amadis de Gaul. Now, impetuously, he put his hand upon that other hand touching his shoulder, and drew it to his lips in a caress, of which, being Elizabethans, neither was at all ashamed. In the dark, deeply fringed eyes that he raised to his leader's face there was a boyish and poetic adoration for the sea-captain, the man of war who was yet a courtier and a scholar, the

violet knight who was to lead him up the heights which long ago the knight himself had scaled.

"Damaris is a fair maid, and good and learned," he said in a whisper, half shy, half eager. "May you dream as you wish, Sir Mortimer! For the way to the covert--'tis by yonder path that's all in sunshine."



Table of Contents



eneath a great oak-tree, where light and shadow made a checkered round, Mistress Damaris Sedley sat upon the earth in a gown of rose-colored silk. Across her knee, under her clasped hands, lay a light racket, for she had strayed this way from battledore and shuttlecock and the sprightly company of maids of honor and gentlemen pensioners engaged thereat. She was a fair lady, of a clear pallor, with a red mouth very subtly charming, and dark eyes beneath level brows. Her eyes had depths on depths: to one player of battledore and

shuttlecock they were merely large brown orbs; another might find in them worlds below worlds; a third, going deeper, might, Actæon-like, surprise the bare soul. A curiously wrought net of gold caught her dark hair in its meshes, and pearls were in her ears, and around the white column of her throat rising between the ruff's gossamer walls. She fingered the racket, idly listening the while for a foot-fall beyond her round of trees. Hearing it at last, and taking it for her brother's, she looked up with a proud and tender smile.

"Fie upon thee for a laggard, Henry!" she began: "I warrant thy Captain meets not his Dione with so slow a step!" Then, seeing who stood before her, she left her seat between the oak roots and curtsied low. "Sir Mortimer Ferne," she said, and rising to her full height, met his eyes with that deeper gaze of hers.

Ferne advanced, and bending his knee to the short turf, took and kissed her hand. "Fair and sweet lady," he said, "I made suit to your brother, and he has given me, his friend, this happy chance. Now I make my supplication to you, to whom I would be that, and more. All this week have I vainly sought for speech with you alone. But now these blessed trees hem us round; there is none to spy or listen--and here is a mossy bank, fit throne for a faery queen. Will you hear me speak?"

The maid of honor looked at him with rose bloom upon her cheeks, and in her eyes, although they smiled, a moisture as of half-sprung tears. "Is it of Henry?" she asked. "Ah, sir, you have been so good to him! He is very dear to me.... I would that I could thank you--"

As she spoke she moved with him to the green bank, sat down, and clasped her hands about her knees. The man who