

CHAPTER TWO

The entrance to the common prison of Havana was a sort of lofty tunnel, finished by great, iron-rusted, wooden gates. A civil guard was exhibiting the judge's warrant for my committal to a white-haired man, with a red face and blue eyes, that seemed to look through tumbled bushes of silver eyebrows--the alcaide of the prison. He bowed, and rattled two farcically large keys. A practicable postern was ajar on the yellow wood of the studded gates. It was as if it afforded a glimpse of the other side of the world. The venerable turnkey, a gnome in a steeple-crowned hat, protruded a blood-red hand backwards in the direction of the postern.

"Señor Caballero," he croaked, "I pray you to consider this house your own. My servants are yours."

Within was a gravel yard, shut in by portentous lead-white house-sides with black window holes. Under each row of windows was a vast vaulted tunnel, caged with iron bars, for all the world like beasts' dens. It being day, the beasts were out and lounging about the patio. They had an effect of infinite tranquillity, as if they were ladies and gentlemen parading in a Sunday avenue. Perhaps twenty of them, in snowy white shirts and black velvet knee-breeches, strutted like pigeons in a knot, some with one woman on the arm, some with two. Bundles of variegated rags lay against the walls, as if they were sweepings. Well, they were the sweepings of Havana jail. The men in white and black were the great thieves... and there were children, too--the place was the city orphanage. For the fifth part of a second my advent made no difference. Then, at the far end, one of the men in black and white separated himself, and came swiftly to me across the sunny patio. The others followed slowly, with pea-fowl steps, their women hanging to them and whispering. The bundles of rags rose up towards me; others slunk furtively out of the barred dens. The man who was approaching had the head of a Julius Cæsar of fifty, for all the world as if he had stolen a bust and endowed it with yellow skin and stubby gray and silver hair. He saluted me with intense gravity and an imperial glance of yellow eyes along a hooked nose. His linen was the most spotless brodered and embossed stuff; from the crimson scarf round his waist protruded the shagreen and silver handle of a long dagger. He said:

"Señor, I have the honour to salute you. I am Crisostomo Garcia. I ask the courtesy of your trousers."

I did not answer him. I did not see what he wanted with my trousers, which weren't anyway as valuable as his own. The others were closing in on me like a

solid wall. I leant back against the gate; I was not frightened, but I was mightily excited. The man like Cæsar looked fiercely at me, swayed a long way back on his haunches, and imperiously motioned the crowd to recede.

"Señor Inglesito," he said, "the gift I have the honour to ask of you is the price of my protection. Without it these, my brothers, will tear you limb from limb, there will nothing of you remain."

His brothers set up a stealthy, sinister growl, that went round among the heads like the mutter of an obscene echo among the mountain-tops. I wondered whether this, perhaps, was the man who, O'Brien said, would put a knife in my back. I hadn't any knife; I might knock the fellow's teeth down his throat, though.

The alcaide thrust his immense hat, blood-red face, and long, ragged, silver locks out of the little door. His features were convulsed with indignation. He had been whispering with the Civil Guard.

"Are you mad, gentlemen?" he said. "Do you wish to visit hell before your times? Do you know who the señor is? Did you ever hear of Carlos el Demonio? This is the Inglesito of Rio Medio!"

It was plain that my deeds, such as they were, reported by O'Brien spies, by the Lugareños, by all sorts of credulous gossipers, had got me the devil of a reputation in the patio of the jail. Men detached themselves from the crowd, and went running about to announce my arrival. The alcaide drew his long body into the patio, and turned to lock the little door with an immense key. In the crowd all sorts of little movements happened. Women crossed themselves, and furtively thrust pairs of crooked, skinny, brown, black-nailed fingers in my direction. The man like Cæsar said:

"I ask your pardon, Señor Caballero. I did not know. How could I tell? You are free of all the patios in this land."

The tall alcaide finished grinding the immense key in the lock, and touched me on the arm.

"If the señor will follow me," he said. "I will do the honours of this humble mansion, and indicate a choice of rooms where he may be free from the visits of these gentry."

We went up steps, and through long, shadowy corridors, with here and there a dark, lounging figure, like a stag seen in the dim aisles of a wood. The alcaide threw open a door.

The room was like a blazing oblong-box, filled with light, but without window or chimney. Two men were fencing in the illumination of some twenty candles stuck all round the mildewed white walls on lumps of clay. There was a blaze of silver things, like an altar of a wealthy church, from a black, carved table in the far corner. The two men, in shirts and breeches, revolved round each other, their rapiers clinking, their left arms scarved, holding buttoned daggers. The alcaide proclaimed:

"Don Vincente Salazar, I have the honour to announce an English senior."

The man with his face to me tossed his rapier impatiently into a corner. He was a plump, dark Cuban, with a brooding truculence. The other faced round quickly. His cheeks shone in the candle-light like polished yellow leather, his eyes were narrow slits, his face lugubrious. He scrutinized me intently, then drawled:

"My! You?... Hang me if I didn't think it would be you!"

He had the air of surveying a monstrosity, and pulled the neck of his dirty print shirt open, panting. He slouched out into the corridor, and began whispering eagerly to the alcaide. The little Cuban glowered at me; I said I had the honour to salute him.

He muttered something contemptuous between his teeth. Well, if he didn't want to talk to me, I didn't want to talk to him. It had struck me that the tall, sallow man was undoubtedly the second mate of the Thames. Nicholas, the real Nikola el Escoces! The Cuban grumbled suddenly:

"You, Señor, are without doubt one of the spies of that friend of the priests, that O'Brien. Tell him to beware--that I bid him beware. I, Don Vincente Salazar de Valdepeñas y Forli y..."

I remembered the name; he was once the suitor of Seraphina--the man O'Brien had put out of the way. He continued with a grotesque frown of portentous significance:

"To-morrow I leave this place. And your compatriot is very much afraid, Señor. Let him fear! Let him fear! But a thousand spies should not save him."

The tall alcaide came hurriedly back and stood bowing between us. He apologized abjectly to the Cuban for intruding me upon him. But the room was the best in the place at the disposal of the prisoners of the Juez O'Brien. And I was a noted caballero. Heaven knows what I had not done in Rio Medio. Burnt, slain,

ravished.... The Señor Juez was understood to be much incensed against me. The gloomy Cuban at once rushed upon me, as if he would have taken me into his arms.

"The Inglesito of Rio Medio!" he said. "Ha, ha! Much have I heard of you. Much of the señor's valiance! Many tales! That foul eater of the carrion of the priests wishes your life! Ah, but let him beware! I shall save you, Señor--I, Don Vincente Salazar."

He presented me with the room--a remarkably bare place but for his properties: silver branch candlesticks, a silver chafing-dish as large as a basin. They might have been chased by Cellini--one used to find things like that in Cuba in those days, and Salazar was the person to have them. Afterwards, at the time of the first insurrection, his eight-mule harness was sold for four thousand pounds in Paris--by reason of the gold and pearls upon it. The atmosphere, he explained, was fetid, but his man was coming to burn sandal-wood and beat the air with fans.

"And to-morrow!" he said, his eyes rolling. Suddenly he stopped. "Señor," he said, "is it true that my venerated friend, my more than father, has been murdered--at the instigation of that fiend? Is it true that the señorita has disappeared? These tales are told."

I said it was very true.

"They shall be avenged," he declared, "to-morrow! I shall seek out the señorita. I shall find her. I shall find her! For me she was destined by my venerable friend."

He snatched a black velvet jacket from the table and put it on.

"Afterwards, Señor, you shall relate. Have no fear. I shall save you. I shall save all men oppressed by this scourge of the land. For the moment afford me the opportunity to meditate." He crossed his arms, and dropped his round head. "Alas, yes!" he meditated.

Suddenly he waved towards the door. "Señor," he said swiftly, "I must have air; I stifle. Come with me to the corridor...."

He went towards the window giving on to the patio; he stood in the shadow, his arms folded, his head hanging dejectedly. At the moment it grew suddenly dark, as if a veil had been thrown over a lamp. The sun had set outside the walls. A drum began to beat. Down below in the obscurity the crowd separated into three strings and moved slowly towards the barren tunnels. Under our feet the white

shirts disappeared; the ragged crowd gravitated to the left; the small children strung into the square cage-door. The drum beat again and the crowd hurried. Then there was a clang of closing grilles and lights began to show behind the bars from deep recesses. In a little time there was a repulsive hash of heads and limbs to be seen under the arches vanishing a long way within, and a little light washed across the gravel of the patio from within.

"Señor," the Cuban said suddenly, "I will pronounce his panegyric. He was a man of a great gentleness, of an inevitable nobility, of an invariable courtesy. Where, in this degenerate age, shall we find the like!" He stopped to breathe a sound of intense exasperation.

"When I think of these Irish,..." he said. "Of that O'Brien...." A servant was arranging the shining room that we had left. Salazar interrupted himself to give some orders about a banquet, then returned to me. "I tell you I am here for introducing my knife to the spine of some sort of Madrid embustero, a man who was insolent to my amiga Clara. Do you believe that for that this O'Brien, by the influence of the priests whose soles he licks with his tongue, has had me inclosed for many months? Because he feared me! Aha! I was about to expose him to the noble don who is now dead! I was about to wed the Señorita who has disappeared. But to-morrow... I shall expose his intrigue to the Captain-General. You, Señor, shall be my witness! I extend my protection to you...." He crossed his arms and spoke with much deliberation. "Señor, this Irishman incommodes me, Don Vincente Salazar de Valdepeñas y Forli...." He nodded his head expressively. "Señor, we offered these Irish the shelter of our robe for that your Government was making martyrs of them who were good Christians, and it behoves us to act in despite of your Government, who are heretics and not to be tolerated upon God's Christian earth. But, Señor, if they incommoded your Government as they do us, I do not wonder that there was a desire to remove them. Señor, the life of that man is not worth the price of eight mules, which is the price I have paid for my release. I might walk free at this moment, but it is not fitting that I should slink away under cover of darkness. I shall go out in the daylight with my carriage. And I will have an offering to show my friends who, like me, are incommoded by this...." The man was a monomaniac; but it struck me that, if I had been O'Brien, I should have felt uncomfortable.

In the dark of the corridor a long shape appeared, lounging. The Cuban beside me started hospitably forward.

"Vamos," he said briskly; "to the banquet...." He waved his hand towards the shining door and stood aside. We entered.

The other man was undoubtedly the Nova Scotian mate of the Thames, the man

who had dissuaded me from following Carlos on the day we sailed into Kingston Harbour. He was chewing a toothpick, and at the ruminant motion of his knife-jaws I seemed to see him, sitting naked to the waist in his bunk, instead of upright there in red trousers and a blue shirt--an immense lank-length of each. I pieced his history together in a sort of flash. He was the true Nikola el Escoces; his name was Nichols, and he came from Nova Scotia. He had been the chief of O'Brien's Lugareños. He surveyed me now with a twinkle in his eyes, his yellow jaws as shiny-shaven as of old; his arms as much like a semaphore. He said mockingly:

"So you went there, after all?"

But the Cuban was pressing us towards his banquet; there was gaspacho in silver plates, and a man in livery holding something in a napkin. It worried me. We surveyed each other in silence. I wondered what Nichols knew; what it would be safe to tell him; how much he could help me? One or other of these men undoubtedly might. The Cuban was an imbecile; but he might have some influence--and if he really were going out on the morrow, and really did go to the Captain-General, he certainly could further his own revenge on O'Brien by helping me.... But as for Nichols....

Salazar began to tell a long, exaggerated story about his cook, whom he had imported from Paris.

"Think," he said; "I bring the fool two thousand miles--and then--not even able to begin on a land-crab. A fool!"

The Nova Scotian cast an uninterested side glance at him, and said in English, which Salazar did not understand:

"So you went there, after all? And now he's got you." I did not answer him. "I know all about you," he added.

"It's more than I do about you," I said.

He rose and suddenly jerked the door open, peered on each side of the corridor, and then sat down again.

"I'm not afraid to tell," he said defiantly. "I'm not afraid of anything. I'm safe."

The Cuban said to me in Spanish: "This senor is my friend. Everyone who hates that devil is my friend."

"I'm safe," Nichols repeated. "I know too much about our friend the raparee." He lowered his voice. "They say you're to be given up for piracy, eh?" His eyes had an extraordinarily anxious leer. "You are now, eh? For how much? Can't you tell a man? We're in the same boat! I kin help you!"

Salazar accidentally knocked a silver goblet off the table and, at the sound, Nichols sprang half off his chair. He glared in a wild stare around him then grasped at a flagon of aguardiente and drank.

"I'm not afraid of any damn thing" he said. "I've got a hold on that man. He dursen't give me up. I kin see! He's going to give you up and say you're responsible for it all."

"I don't know what he's going to do," I answered.

"Will you not, Señor," Salazar said suddenly, "relate, if you can without distress, the heroic death of that venerated man?"

I glanced involuntarily at Nichols. "The distress," I said, "would be very great. I was Don Balthasar's kinsman. The Señor O'Brien had a great fear of my influence in the Casa. It was in trying to take me away that Don Balthasar, who defended me, was slain by the Lugareños of O'Brien."

Salazar said, "Aha! Aha! We are kindred spirits. Hated and loved by the same souls. This fiend, Señor. And then...."

"I escaped by sea--in an open boat, in the confusion. When I reached Havana, the Juez had me arrested."

Salazar raised both hands; his gestures, made for large, grave men, were comic in him. They reduced Spanish manners to absurdity. He said:

"That man dies. That man dies. To-morrow I go to the Captain-General. He shall hear this story of yours, Señor. He shall know of these machinations which bring honest men to this place. We are a band of brothers...."

"That's what I say." Nichols leered at me. "We're all in the same boat."

I expect he noticed that I wasn't moved by his declaration. He said, still in English:

"Let us be open. Let's have a council of war. This O'Brien hates me because I wouldn't fire on my own countrymen." He glanced furtively at me. "I wouldn't," he

asserted; "he wanted me to fire into their boats; but I wouldn't. Don't you believe the tales they tell about me! They tell worse about you. Who says I would fire on my countrymen? Where's the man who says it?" He had been drinking more brandy and glared ferociously at me. "None of your tricks, my hearty," he said. "None of your getting out and spreading tales. O'Brien's my friend; he'll never give me up. He dursen't. I know too much. You're a pirate! No doubt it was you who fired into them boats. By God I'll be witness against you if they give me up. I'll show you up."

All the while the little Cuban talked swiftly and with a saturnine enthusiasm. He passed the wine rapidly.

"My own countrymen!" Nichols shouted. "Never! I shot a Yankee lieutenant--Allen he was--with my own hand. That's another thing. I'm not a man to trifle with. No, sir. Don't you try it.... Why, I've papers that would hang O'Brien. I sent them home to Halifax. I know a trick worth his. By God, let him try it! Let him only try it. He dursen't give me up...."

The man in livery came in to snuff the candles. Nichols sprang from his seat in a panic and drew his knife with frantic haste. He continued, glaring at me from the wall, the knife in his hand:

"Don't you dream of tricks. I've cut more throats than you've kissed gals in your little life."

Salazar himself drew an immense pointed knife with a shagreen hilt. He kissed it rapturously.

"Aha!... Aha!" he said, "bear this kiss into his ribs at the back." His eyes glistened with this mania. "I swear it; when I next see this dog; this friend of the priests." He threw the knife on the table. "Look," he said, "was ever steel truer or more thirsty?"

"Don't you make no mistake," Nichols continued to me. "Don't you think to presume. O'Brien's my friend. I'm here snug and out of the way of the old fool of an admiral. That's why he's kept waiting off the Morro. When he goes, I walk out free. Don't you try to frighten me. I'm not a man to be frightened."

Salazar bubbled: "Ah, but now the wine flows and is red. We are a band of brothers, each loving the other. Brothers, let us drink."

The air of close confinement, the blaze, the feel of the jail, pressed upon me, and I felt sore, suddenly, at having eaten and drunk with those two. The idea of

Seraphina, asleep perhaps, crying perhaps, something pure and distant and very blissful, came in upon me irresistibly.

The little Cuban said, "We have had a very delightful conversation. It is very plain this O'Brien must die."

I rose to my feet. "Gentlemen," I said in Spanish, "I am very weary; I will go and sleep in the corridor."

The Cuban sprang towards me with an immense anxiety of hospitableness. I was to sleep on his couch, the couch of cloth of gold. It was impossible, it was insulting, that I should think of sleeping in the corridor. He thrust me gently down upon it, making with his plump hands the motions of smoothing it to receive me. I lay down and turned my face to the wall.

It wasn't possible to sleep, even though the little Cuban, with a tender solicitude, went round the walls blowing out the candles. He might be useful to me, might really explain matters to the Captain-General, or might even, as a last resource, take a letter from me to the British Consul. But I should have to be alone with him. Nichols was an abominable scoundrel; bloodthirsty to the defenceless; a liar; craven before the ghost of a threat. No doubt O'Brien did not want to give him up. Perhaps he had papers. And no doubt, once he could find a trace of Seraphina's whereabouts, O'Brien would give me up. All I could do was to hope for a gain of time. And yet, if I gained time, it could only mean that I should in the end be given up to the admiral.

And Seraphina's whereabouts. It came over me lamentably that I myself did not know. The Lion might have sailed. It was possible. She might be at sea. Then, perhaps, my only chance of ever seeing her again lay in my being given up to the admiral, to stand in England a trial, perhaps for piracy, perhaps for treason. I might meet her only in England, after many years of imprisonment. It wasn't possible. I would not believe in the possibility. How I loved her! How wildly, how irrationally--this woman of another race, of another world, bound to me by sufferings together, by joys together. Irrationally! Looking at the matter now, the reason is plain enough. Before then I had not lived. I had only waited--for her and for what she stood for. It was in my blood, in my race, in my tradition, in my training. We, all of us for generations, had made for efficiency, for drill, for restraint. Our Romance was just this very Spanish contrast, this obliquity of vision, this slight tilt of the convex mirror that shaped the same world so differently to onlookers at different points of its circle.

I could feel a little of it even then, when there was only the merest chance of my going back to England and getting back towards our old position on the rim of the

mirror. The deviousness, the wayward passion, even the sempiternal abuses of the land were already beginning to take the aspect of something like quaint impotence. It was charm that, now I was on the road away, was becoming apparent. The inconveniences of life, the physical discomforts, the smells of streets, the heat, dropped into the background. I felt that I did not want to go away, irrevocably from a land sanctioned by her presence, her young life. I turned uneasily to the other side. At the heavy black table, in the light of a single candle, the Cuban and the Nova Scotian were discussing, their heads close together.

"I tell you no," Nichols was saying in a fluent, abominable, literal translation into Spanish. "Take the knife so... thumb upwards. Stab down in the soft between the neck and the shoulder-blade. You get right into the lungs with the point. I've tried it: ten times. Never stick the back. The chances are he moves, and you hit a bone. There are no bones there. It's the way they kill pigs in New Jersey."

The Cuban bent his brows as if he were reflecting over a chessboard. "Ma...." he pondered. His knife was lying on the table. He unsheathed it, then got up, and moved behind the seated Nova Scotian.

"You say... there?" he asked, pressing his little finger at the base of Nichols' skinny column of a neck. "And then..." He measured the length of the knife on Nichols's back twice with elaborate care, breathing through his nostrils. Then he said with a convinced, musing air, "It is true. It would go down into the lungs."

"And there are arteries and things," Nichols said.

"Yes, yes," the Cuban answered, sheathing the knife and thrusting it into his belt.

"With a knife that length it's perfect." Nichols waved his shadowy hand towards Salazar's scarf. Salazar moved off a little.

"I see the advantages," he said. "No crying out, because of the blood in the lungs. I thank yous Señor Escoces."

Nichols rose, lurching to his full height, and looked in my direction. I closed my eyes. I did not wish him to talk to me. I heard him say:

"Well, hasta mas ver. I shall get away from here. Good-night."

He swayed an immense shadow through the door. Salazar took the candle and followed him into the corridor.

Yes, that was it, why she was so great a part, a whole wall, a whole beam of my

life's house. I saw her suddenly in the blackness, her full red lips, her quivering nostrils, the curve of her breasts, her lithe movements from the hips, the way she set her feet down, the white flower waxen in the darkness of her hair, and the robin-wing flutter of her lids over her gray eyes when she smiled. I moved convulsively in my intense desire. I would have given my soul, my share of eternity, my honour, only to see that flutter of the lids over the shining gray eyes. I never felt I was beneath the imponderable pressure of a prison's wall till then. She was infinite miles away; I could not even imagine what inanimate things surrounded her. She must be talking to someone else; fluttering her lids like that. I recognized with a physical agony that was more than jealousy how slight was my hold upon her. It was not in her race, in her blood as in mine, to love me and my type. She had lived all her life in the middle of Romance, and the very fire and passion of her South must make me dim prose to her. I remember the flicker of Salazar's returning candle, cast in lines like an advancing scythe across the two walls from the corridor. I slept.

I had the feeling of appalled horror suddenly invading my sleep; a vast voice seemed to be exclaiming:

"Tell me where she is!"

I looked at the glowing horn of a lanthorn. It was O'Brien who held it. He stood over me, very sombre.

"Tell me where she is," he said, the moment my eyes opened.

I said, "She's... she's-----I don't know."

It appalls me even now to think how narrow was my escape. It was only because I had gone to sleep in the thought that I did not know, that I answered that I did not know. Ah--he was a cunning devil! To suddenly wake one; to get one's thoughts before one had had time to think! I lay looking at him, shivering. I couldn't even see much of his face.

"Where is she?" he said again. "Where? Dead? Dead? God have mercy on your soul if the child is dead!"

I was still trembling. If I had told him!--I could hardly believe I had not. He continued bending over me with an attitude that hideously mocked solicitude.

"Where is she?" he asked again.

"Ransack the island," I said. He glared at me, lifting the lamp. "The whole earth, if

you like."

He ground his teeth, bending very low over me; then stood up, raising his head into the shadow above the lamp.

"What do I care for all the admirals?" he was speaking to himself. "No ship shall leave Havana till..." He groaned. I heard him slap his forehead, and say distractedly, "But perhaps she is not in a ship."

There was a silence in which I heard him breathe heavily, and then he amazed me by saying:

"Have pity."

I laughed, lying on my back. "On you!"

He bent down. "Fool! on yourself."

A vast and towering shadow ran along the wall.

There wasn't a sound. The face of Salazar appeared behind him, and an uplifted hand grasping a knife. O'Brien saw the horror in my eyes. I gasped to him: "Look..." and before he could move the knife went softly home between neck and shoulder. Salazar glided to the door and turned to wave his hand at me. O'Brien's lips were pressed tightly together, the handle of the knife was against his ear, the lanthorn hung at the end of his rigid arm for a moment. As he lowered it, the blood spurted from his shoulder as if from a burst stand-pipe, only black and warm. It fell over my face, over my hands, everywhere. For a minute of eternity his agonized eyes searched my features, as if to discern whether I had connived, whether I condoned.

I had started up, my face coming right against his. I felt an immense horror. What did it mean? What had he done? He had been such a power for so long, so inevitably, over my whole life that I could not even begin to understand that this was not some new subtle villainy of his. He shook his head slowly, his ear disturbing the knife.

Then he turned jerkily on his heel, the lanthorn swinging round and leaving me in his shadow. There were ten paces to reach the door. It was like the finish of a race whether he would cover the remaining seven after the first three steps. The dangling lanthorn shed small patches of light through the holes in the metal top, like sunlight through leaves, upon the gloom of the remote ceiling. At the fifth step he pressed his hand spasmodically to his mouth; at the sixth he wavered to

one side. I made a sudden motion as if to save him from falling. He was dying! He was dying! I hardly realized what it meant. This immense weight was being removed from me. I had no need to fear him any more. I couldn't understand, I could only look. This was his passing. This....

He sank, knelt down, placing the Ian thorn on the floor. He covered his face with his hands and began to cough incessantly, like a man dying of consumption. The glowing top of the lanthorn hissed and sputtered out in little sharp blows, like hammer strokes... Carlos had coughed like that. Carlos was dead. Now O'Brien! He was going. I should escape. It was all over. Was it all over? He bowed stiffly forward, placing his hands on the stones, then lay over on his side with his face to the light, his eyes glaring at it. I sat motionless, watching him. The lanthorn lit the carved leg of the black table and a dusty circle of the flags. The spurts of blood from his shoulder grew less long in answer to the pulsing of his heart; his fists unclenched, he drew his legs up to his body, then sank down. His eyes looked suddenly at mine and, as the features slowly relaxed, the smile seemed to come back, enigmatic, round his mouth.

He was dead; he was gone; I was free! He would never know where she was; never! He had gone, with the question on his lips; with the agony of uncertainty in his eyes. From the door came an immense, grotesque, and horrible chuckle.

"Aha!-Aha! I have saved you, Señor, I have protected you. We are as brothers."

Against the tenuous blue light of the dawn Salazar was gesticulating in the doorway. I felt a sudden repulsion; a feeling of intense disgust. O'Brien lying there, I almost wished alive again--I wanted to have him again, rather than that I should have been relieved of him by that atrocious murder. I sat looking at both of them.

Saved! By that lunatic? I suddenly appreciated the agony of mind that alone could have brought O'Brien, the cautious, the all-seeing, into this place--. to ask me a question that for him was answered now. Answered for him more than for me.

Where was Seraphina? Where? How should I come to her? O'Brien was dead. And I.... Could I walk out of this place and go to her? O'Brien was dead. But I...

I suddenly realized that now I was the pirate Nikola el Escoces--that now he was no more there, nothing could save me from being handed over to the admiral. Nothing.

Salazar outside the door began to call boastfully towards the sound of

approaching footsteps.'

"Aha! Aha! Come all of you! See what I have done! Come, Señor Alcayde! Come, brave soldiers..."

In that way died this man whose passion had for so long hung over my life like a shadow. Looking at the matter now, I am, perhaps, glad that he fell neither by my hand nor in my quarrel. I assuredly had injured him the first; I had come upon his ground; I had thwarted him; I had been a heavy weight at a time when his fortunes had been failing. Failing they undoubtedly were. He had run his course too far.

And, if his death removed him out of my path, the legacy of his intrigue caused me suffering enough. Had he lived, there is no knowing what he might have done. He was bound to deliver someone to the British--either myself or Nichols. Perhaps, at the last moment, he would have kept me in Havana. There is no saying.

Undoubtedly he had not wished to deliver Nichols; either because he really knew too much or because he had scruples. Nichols had certainly been faithful to him. And, with his fine irony, it was delightful to him to think that I should die a felon's death in England. For those reasons he had identified me with Nikola el Escoces, intending to give up whichever suited him at the last moment.

Now that was settled for him and for me. The delivery was to take place at dawn, and O'Brien not to be found, the old Judge of the First Instance had been sent to identify the prisoner. He selected me, whom, of course, he recognized. There was no question of Nichols, who had been imprisoned on a charge of theft trumped up by O'Brien.

Salazar, whether he would have gone to the Captain-General or not, was now entirely useless. He was retained to answer the charge of murder. And to any protestations I could make, the old Juez was entirely deaf.

"The senor must make representations to his own authorities," he said. "I have warrant for what I have done."

It was impossible to expose O'Brien to him. The soldiers of the escort, in the dawn before the prison gates, simply laughed at me.

They marched me down through the gray mists, to the water's edge. Two soldiers held my arms; O'Brien's blood was drying on my face and on my clothes. I was, even to myself, a miserable object. Among the *négresses* on the slimy boat-steps a

thick, short man was asking questions. He opened amazed eyes at the sight of me. It was Williams--the Lion was not yet gone then. If he spoke to me, or gave token of connection with Seraphina, the Spaniards would understand. They would take her from him certainly; perhaps immure her in a convent. And now that I was bound irrevocably for England, she must go, too. He was shouldering his way towards my guards.

"Silence!" I shouted, without looking at him. "Go away, make sail.... Tell Sebright...."

My guards seemed to think I had gone mad; they laid hands upon me. I didn't struggle, and we passed down towards the landing steps, brushing Williams aside. He stood perturbedly gazing after me; then I saw him asking questions of a civil guard. A man-of-war's boat, the ensign trailing in the glassy water, the glazed hats of the seamen bobbing like clockwork, was flying towards us. Here was England! Here was home! I should have to clear myself of felony, to strain every nerve and cheat the gallows. If only Williams understood, if only he did not make a fool of himself. I couldn't see him any more; a jabbering crowd all round us was being kept at a distance by the muskets of the soldiers. My only chance was Sebright's intelligence. He might prevent Williams making a fool of himself. The commander of the guard said to the lieutenant from the flagship, who had landed, attended by the master-at-arms:

"I have the honour to deliver to your worship's custody the prisoner promised to his excellency the English admiral. Here are the papers disclosing his crimes to the justice. I beg for a receipt."

A shabby escrivano from the prison advanced bowing, with an inkhorn, shaking a wet goose-quill. A guardia civil offered his back. The lieutenant signed a paper hastily, then looking hard at me, gave the order:

"Master-at-arms, handcuff one of the prisoner's hands to your own wrist. He is a desperate character."