

CHAPTER XIV

AT THE PLACE OF ARMS

Notwithstanding all that has been told, Hugh and Dick never slept more soundly than they did that night, nor was their rest broken by any dreams. At half past five in the morning--for they must be stirring early--David came to call them. He too, it seemed, had slept well. Also in the light of day the worst of his fear had left him.

"I am wondering, Sir Hugh," he said, looking at him curiously, "whether I saw certain things last night down yonder at the Place of Arms and in the boat, or whether I thought I saw them."

"Doubtless you thought you saw them, David," answered Hugh, adding with meaning, "and it is not always well to talk of things we think that we have seen."

The lad, who was sharp enough, nodded. But as he turned to hand Hugh some garment his eye fell upon the swan-crested helm that was still nailed by the long war-shaft with two black feathers and one white to the carved olivewood post of the bed.

"It must have been a mighty arm that shot this arrow, Sir Hugh," he said reflectively, "which could pierce a casque of Milan steel from side to side and a hardwood post beyond. Well for the owner of the helm that his

head was not inside of it."

"Very well, and a very mighty arm, David. So mighty that I should say nothing about it for fear lest it should set another arrow upon another string and shoot again."

"God's truth, not I!" exclaimed David, "and for your comfort, sir, know that none saw us leave this house or reënter it last night."

Then Hugh and Dick clothed themselves and saw to their weapons and mail, but this they did not don as yet, fearing lest the weight of it should weary them in that great heat. Although the day was so young, this heat was terrible, more oppressive indeed than any they had yet known in Venice.

When they were ready David left them to see to the horse which de Cressi would ride in his combat with Cattrina. Hugh, as became a God-fearing knight whom Sir Andrew Arnold had instructed from childhood, crossed himself, knelt down and said his prayers, which that morning were long and earnest. Indeed he would have confessed himself also if he could, only there was no priest at hand who knew his language, Sir Geoffrey's chaplain being away. After watching him a while even Grey Dick, whose prayers were few, followed his example, kneeling in front of his bow as though it were an image that he worshipped. When they had risen again, he said:

"You grieve that there is none to shrive us, master, but I hold otherwise, since when it was told what company we kept last night absolution might be lacking. This would weigh on you if not on me, who, after what I have learned of Father Nicholas and others, love but one priest, and he far away."

"Yet it is well to have the blessings of Holy Church ere such a business as ours, Dick; that is, if it can be come by."

"Mayhap, master. But for my part I am content with that of Murgh, which he gave us, you may remember, or so I understood him. Moreover, did he not teach that he and all are but ministers of Him above? Therefore I go straight to the head of the stair," and he nodded toward the sky. "I am content to skip all those steps which are called priests and altars and popes and saints and such-like folk, living or dead. If Murgh's wisdom be true, as I think, these are but garnishings to the dish which can well be spared by the hungry soul."

"That may be," Hugh answered dubiously, for his faith in such matters was that of his time. "Yet were I you, Dick, I'd not preach that philosophy too loud lest the priests and popes should have something to say to it. The saints also, for aught I know, since I have always heard that they love not to be left out of our account with heaven."

"Well, if so," answered Dick, "I'll quote St. Murgh to them, who is a very fitting patron for an archer." Then once again he glanced at the

helm and the arrow with something not unlike fear in his cold eye.

Presently they went down to the eating chamber where they had been told that breakfast would be ready for them at seven of the clock. There they found Sir Geoffrey awaiting them.

"I trust that you have slept well, Sir Hugh," he said. "You were a wise knight to go to rest so early, having before you such a trial of your strength and manhood, and, so to speak, the honour of our King upon your hands."

"Very well indeed; thank you, sir," answered Hugh. "And you?"

"Oh, ill, extremely ill. I do not know what is the matter with me or Venice either, whereof the very air seems poisoned. Feel the heat and see the haze! It is most unnatural. Moreover, although in your bed doubtless you saw it not, a great ball of fire blazed and burnt over the city last night. So bright was it that even in a darkened room each of us could see the colour of the other's eyes. Later, too, as I watched at the window, there came a thin streak of flame that seemed to alight on or about this very house. Indeed I thought I heard a sound as of iron striking upon iron, but could find no cause for it."

"Wondrous happenings, sir," said Grey Dick. "Glad am I that we were not with you, lest the sight of them should have made us fearful on this morning of combat."

"Wondrous happenings indeed, friend Richard," said Sir Geoffrey excitedly, "but you have not heard the half of them. The herald, who has just been here with the final articles of your fray signed by the Doge and Cattrina, has told me much that I can scarce believe. He says that the great galley from this port which is called Light of the East drifted up to the quay at the Place of Arms last night on her return voyage from Cyprus, filled with dead and with no living thing aboard her save the devil himself in a yellow robe and a many-hued head-dress like a cock's-comb with a red eye. He swears that this fiend landed and that the mob set on him, whereon two, some say three, other devils clad in long black gowns appeared out of the water and drove them back. Also, it seems that this same cock's-combed Satan stole a boat and rowed about the city afterward, but now none can find him, although they have got the boat."

"Then they should be well satisfied," said Hugh, "since its owner has lost nothing but the hire, which with Satan at the oars is better than might be hoped. Perhaps he was not there after all, Sir Geoffrey."

"I know not, but at least the galley Light of the East is there, for ever since the dawn they have been taking the dead out of her to bury them. Of these they say things too terrible to repeat, for no doctor can tell of what sickness they died, never having seen its like. For my part I pray it may not be catching. Were I the Doge I would have towed her out to sea and scuttled her, cargo and all. Well, well, enough of these

wild tales, of which God alone knows the truth. Come, eat, if you can in this heat. We must be on the Place of Arms by half-past eight. You and the captain go thither in my own boat, Sir Hugh; your horse David Day takes on presently. Now, while you breakfast, I'll explain to you these articles, one by one, for they are writ in Italian, which you cannot read. See you forget them not. These Venetians are punctilious of such forms and ceremonies, especially when the case is that of combat to the death, which is rare among them."

The articles, which were lengthy, had been read, and the breakfast, or so much as they could eat of it, consumed. At last Hugh, accompanied by a Venetian squire of high birth sent by the Doge to bear his casque and other armour, stood in the vestibule waiting for the ambassador's barge of state. With him was Grey Dick, accompanied by no one and carrying the mail shirt in which he was to fight, like a housewife's parcel beneath his arm, although he wore bow on back, axe and dagger at side and iron cap upon his head.

Presently, while they lingered thus, out from a side-door appeared Lady Carleon, clothed in a white garment such as women wear when their dressing is half done, down which her grey hair hung dishevelled.

"I am come thus unkempt, Sir Hugh," she said, "for, not feeling well, I could not rise early, to bid you good-bye, since I am sure that we shall

not meet again. However much that black-browed Doge may press it, I cannot go down yonder to see my countrymen butchered in this heat. Oh! oh!" and she pressed her hand upon her heart.

"What's the matter, madam?" asked Hugh anxiously.

"A pain in my breast, that is all, as though some one drove a dagger through me. There, there, 'tis gone."

"I thank you for your goodness, Lady Carleon," said Hugh when she was herself again; then paused, for he knew not what to add.

"Not so, Sir Hugh, not so; 'tis for your sakes in truth since you remember you never told me what you would wish done--afterward. Your possessions also--where are they to be sent? Doubtless you have money and other things of value. Be sure that they shall be sealed up. I'll see to it myself, but--how shall I dispose of them?"

"Madame, I will tell you when I return," said Hugh shortly.

"Nay, nay, Sir Hugh; pray do not return. Those who are gone had best keep gone, I think, who always have had a loathing of ghosts. Therefore, I beg you, tell me now, but do not come back shining like a saint and gibbering like a monkey at dead of night, because if you do I am sure I shall not understand, and if there is an error, who will set it straight?"

Hugh leaned against a marble pillar in the hall and looked at his hostess helplessly, while Sir Geoffrey, catching her drift at length, broke in:

"Cease such ill-omened talk, wife. Think you that it is of a kind to give brave men a stomach in a fight to the end?"

"I know not, Geoffrey, but surely 'tis better to have these matters settled, for, as you often say, death is always near us."

"Ay, madam," broke in Grey Dick, who could bear no more of it, "death is always near to all of us, and especially so in Venice just now.

Therefore, I pray you tell me--in case we should live and you should die, you and all about you--whether you have any commands to give as to what should be done with your gold and articles of value, or any messages to leave for friends in England."

Then, having uttered this grim jest, Dick took his master by the arm and drew him through the door.

Afterward, for a reason that shall be told, he was sorry that it had ever passed his lips. Still in the boat Sir Geoffrey applauded him, saying that his lady's melancholy had grown beyond all bearing, and that she did little but prate to him about his will and what colour of marble he desired for his tomb.

After a journey that seemed long to Hugh, who wished to have this business over, they came to the Place of Arms. Their route there, however, was not the same which they had followed on the previous night. Leaving the short way through the low part of the town untraversed, they rowed from one of the canals into the harbour itself, where they were joined by many other boats which waited for them and so on to the quay. Hugh saw at once that the death ship, Light of the East, was gone, and incautiously said as much to Sir Geoffrey.

"Yes," he answered, "one of my rowers tells me that they have towed her to an island out at sea, since the stench from her holds was more than could be borne. But how did you know that she lay at this particular quay, Sir Hugh?"

"I thought you said so," he answered carelessly, adding, to change the subject: "Look, our fray will not lack for spectators," and he pointed to the thousands gathered upon the great tilting-ground.

"No, no, all Venice will be there, for these people love a show, especially if there be death in it."

"Mayhap they will see more of him than they wish before all is done," muttered Grey Dick, pausing from the task of whetting his axe's edge with a little stone which he carried in his pouch. Then he replaced the axe in its hanger, and, drawing Hugh's sword from its sheath, began to

give some final touches to its razor edge, saying: "Father Sir Andrew Arnold blessed it, which should be enough, but Milan steel is hard and his old battle blade will bite none the worse for an extra sharpening. Go for his throat, master, go for his throat, the mail is always thinnest there."

"God above us, what a grim man!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey, and so thought all in that boat and in those around them. At least they looked at Dick askance as he whetted and whetted, and then, plucking out one of the pale hairs from his head, drew it along the edge of the steel, which severed it in twain.

"There! That'll do," said Grey Dick cheerfully, as he returned the long sword to its sheath, "and God help this Catrina, I say, for he comes to his last battle. That is, unless he runs away," he added after reflection.

Now they landed and were received by heralds blowing trumpets, and conducted through a great multitude of people with much pomp and ceremony to a pavilion which had been pitched for them, where they must arm and make ready.

This then they did, helped or hindered by bowing squires whose language they could not understand.

At length, when it lacked but a quarter to the hour of nine, David Day

led Hugh's horse into the wide entrance of the pavilion, where they examined its armour, bridle, selle and trappings.

"The beast sweats already," said Hugh, "and so do I, who, to tell truth, dread this heat more than Cattrina's sword. Pray that they get to the business quickly, or I shall melt like butter on a hot plate."

Then his lance was given to him, a lance that was sharp and strong. When they had been tested by them both, Hugh mounted the grey and at the agreed signal of a single blast upon a trumpet, walked it slowly from the pavilion, Dick going at his side on foot.

At their coming a shout went up from the assembled thousands, for in truth it seemed, as Sir Geoffrey had said, as though all the folk in Venice were gathered on that place. When they had finished shouting the people began to criticise, finding much in the appearance of this pair that moved their ready wit. Indeed there was little show about them, for Hugh's plain armour, which lacked all ornament or inlay, was worn with war and travel, and his horse came along as soberly as if it were going out to plough. Nor was there anything fine about the apparel of Grey Dick, who wore a loose chain shirt much out of fashion--it was that which Sir Andrew had given to Hugh--an iron cap with ear-pieces, and leather buskins on his legs. In his hand was his axe, heavy but not over large; at his side hung a great knife, and on his back was the long black bow and a quiver of arrows.

Thus arrayed, taking no heed of the jests and chatter of the multitude, they were led to the front of the bedecked timber stand which they had seen on the previous night. In the centre of this stand, occupying a kind of tribune, sat the Doge Dandolo in state, and with him many nobles and captains, while to right and left the whole length of the course, for the stand was very long, were packed a countless number of the best-born men and women in Venice. These, however, were but a tithe of the spectators, who encircled the Place of Arms in one serried horde which was kept back by a line of soldiers.

Arriving in front of the Doge's tribune, the pair halted and saluted him, whereon he and his escort rose and saluted them in turn. Then another trumpet blew and from a second pavilion at the other end of the course appeared Cattrina, wearing a splendid suit of white armour, damascened in gold, with a silver swan upon the helm and a swan painted on his shield.

"Very fine, isn't it?" said Grey Dick to his master, "only this time I hope he's inside the steel. Ask to see his face before you fight, master."

On came Cattrina on a noble black horse, which pawed and caracoled notwithstanding the heat, while after him strode a gigantic figure also clad from top to toe in white mail, who fiercely brandished a long-handled battle-axe.

"Ambrosio!" said Dick. "Now I ought to feel as much afraid as though that fellow wore a yellow cap and fur cape and pearls like another warrior whom we met last night. Yet, to speak the truth, I believe he has the fainter heart of the two. Also if he swings that chopper about so much he'll grow tired."

To the multitude, however, the gallant appearance of this pair, whom they looked on as the champions of Venice against foreigners, appealed not a little. Amidst clapping of hands and "evvivas!" they advanced to the Doge's tribune and there made their salutations, which the Illustrious acknowledged as he had those of the Englishmen.

Then the heralds intervened and again all the articles of combat were read and translated, although to these, of which they were weary, Hugh and Dick listened little. Next they were asked if they had any objections to make and with one voice answered, "None." But on the same question being put to their adversaries, the Swiss, Ambrosio, said that he with whom he must fight appeared to be armed with a bow, which was against the articles. Thereon Dick handed the bow and quiver to David, bidding him guard them until he asked for them again as he would his own life. In the event of his death, however, David was to give them to Sir Hugh, or if they both should die, to his own master, Sir Geoffrey. All of these things David promised to do.

Next followed a long discussion as to whether the four of them were to fight in pairs, Cattrina and Ambrosio against Hugh and Dick

simultaneously, or whether Ambrosio was to fight alone with Dick, and Cattrina with Hugh. Upon Cattrina and Ambrosio being asked their wishes, the former said that he desired to fight alone, as he feared lest the English archer, if he overcame Ambrosio, should turn on him also, or perhaps hamstring his horse.

Then the Englishmen were asked what they wished, and replied that they did not care how it was arranged, being ready to fight either together or separately, as the Doge might decree.

The end of it was that after long consultations with sundry experts in such matters, the Most Illustrious decided that the Captains Ambrosio and Richard the Archer should first engage on foot, and when that business was settled the two knights should take their place in the arena.

So the end of it was that more than half an hour after the combat should have begun, Dick and the gigantic Ambrosio found themselves standing face to face waiting for the signal to engage, the Swiss shouting threats and defiance and Grey Dick grinning and watching him out of his half-shut eyes.

At length it came in the shape of a single blast upon a trumpet. Now seeing that Dick stood quite still, not even raising his axe, the Swiss advanced and struck a mighty blow at him, which Dick avoided by stepping aside. Recovering himself, again Ambrosio struck. This blow Dick caught

upon his shield, then, as though he were afraid, began to retreat, slowly at first, but afterward faster till his walk broke into a run.

At this sight all that mighty audience set up a hooting. "Coward! Dog! Pig of an Englishman!" they yelled; and the louder they yelled the more quickly did Grey Dick run, till at last even Hugh grew puzzled wondering what was in his mind and hoping that he would change it soon. So the audience hooted, and Grey Dick ran and the giant Swiss lumbered along after him, bellowing triumphantly and brandishing his battle-axe, which, it was noted, never seemed to be quite long enough to reach his flying foe.

When this had gone on for two or three minutes, Grey Dick stumbled and fell. The Swiss, who was following fast, likewise tripped and fell over him heavily, whereon the multitude shouted:

"Foul play! A dirty, foreign trick!"

In an instant Dick was up again, and had leapt upon the prostrate Swiss, as all thought, to kill him. But instead the only thing he did was to get behind him and kick him with his foot until he also rose. Thereat some laughed, but others, who had bets upon their champion, groaned.

Now the Swiss, having lost his shield in his fall, rushed at Dick, grasping his axe with both hands. As before, the Englishman avoided the blow, but for the first time he struck back, catching the giant on the

shoulder though not very heavily. Then with a shout of "St. George and England!" he went in at him.

Hither and thither sprang Dick, now out of reach of the axe of the Swiss and now beneath his guard. But ever as he sprang he delivered blow upon blow, each harder than the last, till there appeared scars and rents in the fine white mail. Soon it became clear that the great Swiss was overmatched and spent. He breathed heavily, his strokes grew wild, he over-balanced, recovered himself, and at last in his turn began to fly in good earnest.

Now after him went Dick, battering at his back, but, as all might see, with the flat of his axe, not with its edge. Yes, he was beating him as a man might beat a carpet, beating him till he roared with pain.

"Fight, Ambrosio, fight! Don't fly!" shouted the crowd, and he tried to wheel round, only to be knocked prostrate by a single blow upon the head which the Englishman delivered with the hammer-like back of his axe.

Then Dick was seen to kneel upon him and cut the lashings of his helmet with his dagger, doubtless to give the coup de grâce, or so they thought.

"Our man is murdered!" yelled the common people, while those of the better sort remained shamed and silent.

Dick rose, and they groaned, thinking that all was done. But lo! stooping down he helped the breathless Swiss, whom he had disarmed, to his feet. Then, taking him by the nape of the neck, which was easy, as his helmet was off, with one hand, while in the other he held his bared knife, Dick thrust him before him till they reached the tribune of the Doge.

"Be pleased to tell the Illustrious," he said, to Sir Geoffrey, "that this braggart having surrendered, I spared his life and now return him to his brother the Page quite unharmed, since I did not wish to wound one who was in my power from the first. Only when he gets home I pray that he will look at his back in a glass and judge which of us it is that has been 'beaten to a pulp.' Let him return thanks also to his patron saint, who put pity in my heart, so that I did not cut him into collops, as I promised. For know, sir, that when I walked out yonder it was my purpose to hew off his hands and shorten him at the knees. Stay--one word more. If yonder boaster has more brothers who really wish to fight, I'll take them one by one and swear to them that this time I'll not give back a step unless I'm carried."

"Do you indeed yield and accept the Englishman's mercy?" asked the Doge in a stern voice.

The poor Ambrosio, making no answer, blundered forward among the crowd and there vanished, and this was the last that Dick ever saw or heard of him. But, although he waited there a while, feeling the edge of his axe

and glaring about him, none of the captain's companions came forward to accept his challenge.

At length, with a shrug of his shoulders, Dick turned. Having taken his bow and quiver from David, who could not conceal his indecent joy at the utter humiliation of Ambrosio, whom he hated with a truly British hate, he walked slowly to where Hugh sat upon his horse.

"The jest is done, master, and now for good earnest, since 'tis your turn. The Saints save me such another cow hunt in this hell's heat. Had I killed him at once I should be cooler now, but it came into my mind to let the hound live. Indeed, to speak truth, I thought that I heard the voice of Murgh behind me, saying, 'Spare,' and knew that I must obey."

"I hope he will say nothing of the sort to me presently," answered Hugh, "if he is here, which I doubt. Why, what is it now? Those gold-coated marshals are talking again."

Talking they were, evidently at the instance of Cattrina, or his counsellors, who had raised some new objections, which Sir Geoffrey stepped forward to explain to them. But Hugh would not even hear him out.

"Tell the man and all whom it may concern," he said in an angry voice, "that I am ready to fight him as he will, on horse or on foot, with lance or sword or axe or dagger, or any or all of them, in mail or

without it; or, if it pleases him, stripped to the shirt. Only let him settle swiftly, since unless the sweat runs into my eyes and dims them, it seems to me that night is coming before it is noon."

"You are right," answered Sir Geoffrey, "this gathering gloom is ominous and fearful. I think that some awesome tempest must be about to burst. Also it seems to me that Cattrina has no stomach for this fray, else he would not raise so many points of martial law and custom."

Then wiping his brow with a silken handkerchief he returned to deliver the message.

Now Hugh and Dick, watching, saw that Cattrina and those who advised him could find no further loophole for argument. They saw, moreover, that the Doge grew angry, for he rose in his seat, throwing off his velvet robe of office, of which it appeared that he could no longer bear the weight, and spoke in a hard voice to Cattrina and his squires. Next, once more the titles of the combatants were read, and their cause of combat, and while this went on Hugh bade Dick bind about his right arm a certain red ribbon that Eve had given him, saying that he wished to fight wearing his lady's favour.

Dick obeyed, muttering that he thought such humours foolish and that a knight might as well wear a woman's petticoat as her ribbon. By now, so dim had the light grown, he could scarce see to tie the knot.

Indeed, the weather was very strange.

From the dark, lowering sky above a palpable blackness sank downward as though the clouds themselves were falling of their own weight, while from the sea great rolls of vapour came sweeping in like waves. Also this sea itself had found a voice, for, although it was so calm, it moaned like a world in pain. The great multitude began to murmur, and their faces, lifted upward toward the sky, grew ghastly white. Fear, they knew not of what, had got hold of them. A voice cried shrilly:

"Let them fight and have done. We would get home ere the tempest bursts."

The first trumpet blew and the horses of the knights, which whinnied uneasily, were led to their stations. The second trumpet blew and the knights laid their lances in rest. Then ere the third trumpet could sound, suddenly the darkness of midnight swallowed all the scene.

Dick groped his way to Hugh's side. "Bide where you are," he said, "the end of the world is here; let us meet it like men and together."

"Ay," answered Hugh, and his voice rang hollow through his closed visor, "without doubt it is the end of the world, and Murgh, the Minister, has been sent to open the doors of heaven and hell. God have mercy on us all!"

So they stayed there, hearkening to the groans and prayers of the terrified multitude about them, Dick holding the bridle of the horse, which shook from head to foot, but never stirred. For some minutes they remained thus, till suddenly the sky began to lighten, but with no natural light. The colour of it, of the earth beneath and of the air between was a deep, terrible red, that caused all things to seem as though they were dyed in blood. Lighter and lighter and redder and redder it grew, the long stand and the pavilions became visible, and after them the dense, deep ring of spectators. Many of these were kneeling, while others, who could find no space to kneel, held their hands upstretched toward heaven, or beat their breasts and wept in the emotional fashion of the country.

Yet not on them were the eyes of Hugh and Grey Dick fixed, but rather on a single figure which stood quite alone in the midst of that great arena where Cattrina and his horse should have been, where they had been indeed but a little while before. The figure was clothed in a red and yellow cap shaped like a cock's-comb, in black furs, a yellow robe and white gloves and sandals. Yonder it stood, fantastic, fearful, its bare and brawny arms crossed upon its breast, its head bowed as though it contemplated the ground. There was not an eye of all the tens of thousands of those who were present that did not see it; there was not a voice that did not break into a yell of terror and hate, till the earth shook with such a sound as might reverberate through the choked abyss of hell.

"The fiend! The fiend! The fiend!" said the shout. "Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!"

The figure looked up, the red light shone upon its stony face that seemed one blotch of white amidst its glow. Then it stooped down and lifted from the sand a knight's lance such as Cattrina had held. It raised the lance and with it pointed four times, east and west and north and south, holding it finally for a while in the direction of the tribune, where sat the Doge with all his noble company, and of Venice beyond. Lastly, with a quick and easy motion, it cast the lance toward the sky, whence it fell, remaining fixed point downward in the earth. Then a tongue of mist that had crept up from the sea enveloped it, and when that mist cleared away the shape was gone.

Now the red haze thinned, and for the first time that morning the sun shone out in a sickly fashion. Although their nerves were torn by the unnatural darkness and the apparition that followed it, which all saw, yet none quite believed that they had seen, the multitude shouted for the combat to proceed.

Once more Hugh laid his lance in rest, thinking that Cattrina was there, although he could not see him.

Then the third trumpet rang out--in that silence it sounded like the blast of doom--and Hugh spurred his horse forward a little way, but halted, for he could perceive no foe advancing against him. He stared

about him, and at last in a rage threw his lance to a squire, and, turning his horse, galloped to the tribune. There he pulled it to his haunches and shouted out in a great voice:

"Where is Cattrina? Am I to be fooled, who appear here as the champion of the King of England? Where is Cattrina? Produce Cattrina that I may slay him or be slain, or, Chivalry of Venice, be forever shamed!"

The Doge rose, uttering swift commands, and heralds ran here and there. Knights and captains searched the pavilions and every other place where a mounted man might hide. But they never found Cattrina, and, returning at length, confessed as much with bowed heads.

The Doge, maddened by this ignominy, seized the great gold chain upon his beast and burst it in two.

"Cattrina has fled!" he shouted. "Or Satan himself has carried him away! At the least let his name be erased from the Golden Book of Venice, and until he prove himself innocent, let no noble of Venice stretch out to him the hand of fellowship. Men of Venice, for you Cattrina and his House are dead."

"Will none take up his cause and fight for him?" asked Hugh through Sir Geoffrey, and presently, at the Doge's command, the challenge was repeated thrice by the herald. But to it no answer came. Of this afterward Hugh was glad, since it was Cattrina's life he sought, not

that of any other man. Then Hugh spoke again, saying:

"I claim, O Illustrious, that I be written down as victor in this combat to the death, bloodless through no fault of mine."

"It shall be so written, noble Hugh de Cressi," said the Doge. "Let all Venice take notice thereof."

As the words left his lips the solid earth began to heave and rock.

At the first heave Hugh leaped from his horse, which screamed aloud and fled away, and gripped hold of Grey Dick. At the second, the multitude broke out into wild cries, prayers and blasphemies, and rushed this way and that. At the third, which came quite slowly and was the greatest of them all, the long stand of timber bent its flags toward him as though in salute, then, with a slow, grinding crash, fell over, entangling all within it beneath its ruin. Also in the city beyond, houses, whole streets of them, gabled churches and tall towers, sank to the earth, while where they had been rose up wreathed columns of dust. To the south the sea became agitated. Spouts of foam appeared upon its smooth face; it drew back from the land, revealing the slime of ages and embedded therein long-forgotten wrecks. It heaped itself up like a mountain, then, with a swift and dreadful motion, advanced again in one vast wave.

In an instant all that multitude were in full flight.

Hugh and Dick fled like the rest, and with them David, though whither they went they knew not.

All they knew was that the ground leapt and quivered beneath their feet, while behind them came the horrible, seething hiss of water on the crest of which men were tossed up and down like bits of floating wood.