

CHAPTER XV

THE DEATH AT WORK

Presently Hugh halted, taking shelter with his two companions behind the stone wall of a shed that the earthquake had shattered, for here they could not be trodden down by the mob of fugitives.

"The wave has spent itself," he said, pointing to the line of foam that now retreated toward the ocean, taking with it many drowned or drowning men. "Let us return and seek for Sir Geoffrey. It will be shameful if we leave him trapped yonder like a rat."

Dick nodded, and making a wide circuit to avoid the maddened crowd, they came safely to the wrecked stand where they had last seen Sir Geoffrey talking with the Doge. Every minute indeed the mob grew thinner, since the most of them had already passed, treading the life out of those who fell as they went.

From this stand more than three fourths of those who were seated there had already broken out, since it had not fallen utterly, and by good fortune was open on all sides. Some, however, tangled in the canvas roof, were still trying to escape. Other poor creatures had been crushed to death, or, broken-limbed, lay helpless, or, worse still, were held down beneath the fallen beams.

Several of these they freed, whereon those who were unharmed at once ran away without thanking them. But for a long while they could find no trace of Sir Geoffrey. Indeed, they were near to abandoning their search, for the sights and sounds were sickening even to men who were accustomed to those of battlefields, when Dick's quick ears caught the tones of an English voice calling for help. Apparently it came from the back of the Doge's tribune, where lay a heap of dead. Gaily dressed folk who had fallen in the flight and been crushed, not by the earthquake, but by the feet of their fellows. These blackened and disfigured men and women they dragged away with much toil, and at last, to their joy, beneath them all found Sir Geoffrey Carleon. In another few minutes he must have died, for he was almost suffocated.

Indeed he would certainly have perished with the others had he not been thrown under a fixed bench, whence one leg projected, which, as they could see at once, was crushed and broken. They drew him out as gently as they could and gave him water to drink, whereof, mercifully for them all, since by now they were utterly parched with thirst, they had discovered a large silver pitcher full, standing in the corner of a little ante-chamber to the tribune. It was half hidden with fragments of fine dresses and even jewels torn from the persons of the lords and ladies.

"I thank you, friends," he said faintly. "I prayed them to keep seated, but they went mad and would not listen. Those behind trod down those in front, till that doorway was choked and I was hurled beneath the bench.

Oh, it was terrible to hear them dying about me and to know that soon I must follow! This, had it not been for you, I should have done, for my leg is crushed and there was no air."

Then, having drunk and drunk until even their raging thirst was satisfied, they found a plank. Laying Sir Geoffrey on it, they departed from that human shambles, whence the piteous cries of those still imprisoned there, whom they could not reach, pursued them horribly.

Thus, slowly enough, for there were but three of them, two hampered by their mail, they bore Sir Geoffrey across the Place of Arms. Save for the dead and dying, and some ghoul-like knaves who plundered them, by this time it was almost deserted.

Indeed, a large band of these wretches, who had emerged like wolves from their lairs in the lowest quarters of the great city, catching sight of the gold chain Sir Geoffrey wore, ran up with drawn daggers to kill and rob them.

Seeing them come Grey Dick slipped the black bow from its case and sent an arrow singing through the heart of the one-eyed villain who captained them. Thereon the rest left him where he fell and ran off to steal and slay elsewhere. Then without a word Dick unstrung the bow and once more laid hold of an end of the plank.

They came to the mouth of that street where the bravoes had waylaid them

on the previous night, only to find that they could not pass this way. Here most of the houses were thrown down, and from their ruins rose smoke and the hideous screams of those who perished. It was this part of Venice, the home of the poorer folk, which suffered most from the earthquake, that had scarcely touched many of the finer quarters. Still, it was reckoned afterward that in all it took a toll of nearly ten thousand lives.

Turning from this street, they made their way to the banks of a great canal that here ran into the harbour, that on which they had been rowed to the Place of Arms. Here by good luck they found a small boat floating keep uppermost, for it had been overturned by the number of people who crowded into it. This boat they righted with much toil and discovered within it a drowned lady, also an oar caught beneath the seat. After this their dreadful journey was easy, at least by comparison. For now all the gloom had rolled away, the sun shone out and a fresh and pleasant wind blew from the sea toward the land.

So, at last, passing many sad and strange scenes that need not be described, they came safely to the steps of the ambassador's beautiful house which was quite uninjured. Here they found several of his servants wringing their hands and weeping, for word had been brought to them that he was dead. Also in the hall they were met by another woe, for there on a couch lay stretched the Lady Carleon smitten with some dread sickness which caused blood to flow from her mouth and ears. A physician was bending over her, for by good fortune one had been found.

Sir Geoffrey asked him what ailed his wife. He answered that he did not know, having never seen the like till that morning, when he had been called in to attend three such cases in houses far apart, whereof one died within ten minutes of being struck.

Just then Lady Carleon's senses returned, and opening her eyes she saw Sir Geoffrey, whom they had laid down upon another couch close to her.

"Oh, they told me that you were dead, husband," she said, "crushed or swallowed in the earthquake! But I thank God they lied. Yet what ails you, sweetheart, that you do not stand upon your feet?"

"Little, dear wife, little," he answered in a cheerful voice. "My foot is somewhat crushed, that is all. Still 'tis true that had it not been for this brave knight and his squire I must have lain where I was till I perished."

Now Lady Carleon raised herself slightly and looked at Hugh and Dick, who stood together, bewildered and overwhelmed.

"Heaven's blessings be on your heads," she exclaimed, "for these Venetians would surely have left him to his doom. Ah, I thought that it was you who must die to-day, but now I know it is I, and perchance my lord. Physician," she added after a pause, "trouble not with me, for my hour has come; I feel it at my heart. Tend my lord there, who, unless

this foul sickness takes him also, may yet be saved."

So they carried them both to their own large sleeping chamber on the upper floor. There the surgeon set Sir Geoffrey's broken bone skilfully enough, though when he saw the state of the crushed limb, he shook his head and said it would be best to cut it off. This, however, Sir Geoffrey would not suffer to be done.

"It will kill me, I am sure, or if not, then the pest which that ship, Light of the East, has brought here from Cyprus, will do its work on me. But I care nothing, for since you say that my wife must die I would die with her and be at rest."

At sunset Lady Carleon died. Ere she passed away she sent for Hugh and Dick. Her bed by her command had been moved to an open window, for she seemed to crave air. By it was placed that of Sir Geoffrey so that the two of them could hold each other's hand.

"I would die looking toward England, Sir Hugh," she said, with a faint smile, "though alas! I may not sleep in that churchyard on the Sussex downs where I had hoped that I might lie at last. Now, Sir Hugh, I pray this of your Christian charity and by the English blood which runs in us, that you will swear to me that you and your squire will not leave my lord alone among these Southern folk, but that you will bide with him and nurse him till he recovers or dies, as God may will. Also that you will see me buried by the bones of my child--they will tell you where."

"Wife," broke in Sir Geoffrey, "this knight is not of our kin. Doubtless he has business elsewhere. How can he bide with me here, mayhap for weeks?"

But Lady Carleon, who could speak no more, only looked at Hugh, who answered:

"Fear nothing. Here we will stay until he recovers--unless," he added, "we ourselves should die."

She smiled at him gratefully, then turned her face toward Sir Geoffrey and pressed his hand. So presently she passed away, the tears running from her faded eyes.

When it was over and the women had covered her, Hugh and Dick left the room, for they could bear no more.

"I have seen sad sights," said Hugh, with something like a sob, "but never before one so sad."

"Ay," answered Dick, "that of the wounded dying on Crecy field was a May Day revel compared to this, though it is but one old woman who has gone. Oh, how heavily they parted who have dwelt together these forty years! And 'twas my careless tongue this morning that foretold it as a jest!"

In the hall they met the physician, who rushed wild-eyed through the doorway to ask how his patients fared.

"Ah!" he said to them in French when he knew. "Well, signors, that noble lady has not gone alone. I tell you that scores of whom I know are already dead in Venice, swept off by this swift and horrible plague. Death and all his angels stalk through the city. They say that he himself appeared last night, and this morning on the tilting ground by the quay, and by God's mercy--if He has any left for us--I can well believe it. The Doge and his Council but now have issued a decree that all who perish must be buried at once. See to it, signors, lest the officers come and bear her away to some common grave, from which her rank will not protect her."

Then he went to visit Sir Geoffrey. Returning presently, he gave them some directions as to his treatment, and rushed out as he had rushed in. They never saw him again. Two days later they learned that he himself was dead of the pest.

That night they buried Lady Carleon in her son's grave, which Dick had helped to prepare for her, since no sexton could be bribed to do the work. Indeed these were all busy enough attending to the interment of the great ones of Venice. In that churchyard alone they saw six burying in progress. Also after the priest had read his hurried Office, as they left the gates, whence Lady Carleon's bearers had already fled affrighted, they met more melancholy processions heralded by a torch or

two whereof the light fell upon some sheeted and uncoffined form.

"'Twixt earthquake and plague Murgh the Helper is helping very well," said Grey Dick grimly, and Hugh only groaned in answer.

Such was the beginning of the awful plague which travelled from the East to Venice and all Europe and afterward became known by the name of the Black Death. Day by day the number of its victims increased; the hundreds of yesterday were the thousands of the morrow. Soon the graveyards were full, the plague pits, long and deep, were full, and the dead were taken out to sea by shiploads and there cast into the ocean. At length even this could not be done, since none were forthcoming who would dare the task. For it became known that those who did so themselves would surely die.

So where folk fell, there they lay. In the houses were many of them; they cumbered and poisoned the streets and the very churches. Even the animals sickened and perished, until that great city was turned into an open tomb. The reek of it tainted the air for miles around, so that even those who passed it in ships far out to sea turned faint and presently themselves sickened and died. But ere they died they bore on the fatal gift to other lands.

Moreover, starvation fell upon the place. Though the houses were full of

riches, these would scarce suffice to buy bread for those who remained alive. The Doge and some of his Council passed laws to lighten the misery of the people, but soon few heeded these laws which none were left to enforce. The vagabonds and evil-minded men who began by robbing the deserted houses of jewels, money and plate, ended by searching them for food and casting aside their treasures as worthless dross. It was even said that some of them did worse things, things not to be named, since in its extremities nature knows no shame. Only if bread and meat were scarce, wine remained in plenty. In the midst of death men--yes, and women--who perhaps had deserted their wives, their husbands or their children, fearing to take the evil from them, made the nights horrible by their drunken blasphemies and revellings, as sailors sometimes do upon a sinking ship. Knowing that they must die, they wished to die merry.

Sir Geoffrey Carleon lived a long while after the death of his wife.

When he passed away at last, ten days or so later, it was painlessly of the mortification of his broken limb, not of the pest, which went by him as though it knew that he was already doomed.

All this time Hugh, Grey Dick, and David Day nursed him without ceasing.

Indeed with the exception of a woman so ancient and shrivelled that nothing seemed able to harm her any more, no one else was left in the great palazzo, for all the rest of the household had perished or fled

away. This woman, who was the grandmother of one of the servants, now dead of the plague, cooked their food. Of such provision fortunately there was much laid up in the storerooms for use in the winter, since Lady Carleon had been a good and provident housewife.

So those three did not starve, although Sir Geoffrey would touch little of the salted stuff. He existed on a few fruits when they could get them, and after these were gone, on wine mingled with water.

At length came the end. For two days he had lain senseless. One night, however, David, who was watching in his chamber, crept into the room where Hugh slept hard by and told them that Sir Geoffrey was awake and calling them. They rose and went to him. By the light of the moon which shone in at the open window, that same window through which Lady Carleon had looked toward England ere she passed away, they saw him lying quietly, a happy smile upon his face.

"Friends," he said in a weak voice, "by the mercy of God, I go out of this hell to heaven, or so I think. But, if indeed this be not the end of the world, I hope that you who have lived so long will continue to live, and I have sent for you to bless you and to thank you both. In yonder case are certain papers that have to do with the King's business. I pray you deliver them to his Grace if you can and with them my homage and my thanks for the trust that he has reposed in me. Tell him what I have not written in the letters"--and here he smiled faintly--"that I think that few of his creditors in Venice will trouble him at present,

though afterward their heirs, if they have left any, may do so. Say, too, to the Doge, who, I believe, still lives, that I send him my good wishes and respects. Also that I grieve that I have not been able to hand him my letters of recall in person, since the King who summons me sends none.

"So much for business, but there are two things more: I have no relatives living save my wife's sister. Therefore, Sir Hugh and Captain Richard, I have made you my joint heirs with her; my testament duly signed and witnessed is in that case with the other papers. My wealth is not great. Still there are certain land and manors in England, a sum of money placed with a merchant in London, whose name you will find written in the testament, my plate and gold coin here, though the former you may not be able to move. Therefore I charge you to bury it and return for it later on, if you can. It is of value, since all my life I have collected such trinkets. I beg you to make provision also for this good lad, David, should he be spared."

He paused a while, for he was growing very weak, then added:

"Another thing is that I ask you, if it be possible, to row my body out to sea and there sink it in deep water, deep, clean water, far from this place of stench and pestilence, for I would not lie in the common pit at last. Now kneel down and pray for my passing soul, since there is no priest to give me absolution, and I must seek it straight from God. Nay, thank me not. I have done with the world and its affairs. Kneel down and

pray, as I pray for you, that you may be spared on earth and that we may meet again in heaven, where my wife and others await me."

They obeyed, weeping, yes, even Grey Dick wept a little. Presently when they looked up they saw that Sir Geoffrey was dead, dead without pain or sorrow. Of the first he had suffered none for days, and the second was far from him who wished to die.

Leaving the ancient woman in charge of the house, which she barred and bolted, next morning they took a boat, and the three of them rowed the body of the old knight a league out into the quiet sea. There, after a brief prayer, they cast him into the deep, weighted with stones, so that he might never rise again.

Then they returned, not too soon, for they found thieves in the act of breaking into the house, probably in search of food. These miserable, half-starved men they spared, though they could have killed them easily enough. They even gave them a pouch full of biscuit and dried meat ere they dismissed them. This they did quickly, since one of them, as they could see, was already stricken by the plague and had not long to live. When they were gone, the old woman being out of the house, whence she had fled on hearing the robbers, they collected all Sir Geoffrey's and his lady's jewels and plate, of which there was much, for he lived in state in Venice, as became an ambassador. These they buried in three large iron boxes beneath the flagstones of the cellar, the safest place that they could find. Having thrown the excavated earth into the canal

under cover of the dark, they replaced these stones and strewed dust over them.

Wondering whether it would ever be their lot to look upon these chests and their contents again, they left the cellar, to find the old woman knocking at the back door of the house, whither she had returned, frightened by the sights and sounds in the city. They bade her bring them food, which they needed much who had laboured so hard on that sorrowful day, and after they had eaten took counsel together.

"Seeing that all three of us are still in health, as if there is anything in the promises of Murgh we should remain, is it not time, master," asked Grey Dick, "that we left this accursed Venice? Now that Sir Geoffrey is gone, there is naught to keep us here."

"One thing I have to do first," answered Hugh, "and it is to learn whether Sir Edmund Acour, lord of Cattrina, is dead or living, and if living where he hides himself away. While Sir Geoffrey lay dying we could not leave him to make search, but now it is otherwise."

"Ay, master, though I think you'll find the task hard in this hive of pestilence and confusion."

"I have heard that the plague is at work in Cattrina's palace," broke in David, "but when I asked whether he were there or no, none could tell me. That is not a house where you'll be welcomed, Sir Hugh."

"Still I will make bold to knock at his doors to-morrow," answered Hugh.
"Now let us seek what we all need--sleep."

So on the following morning shortly after sunrise Hugh and Grey Dick, guided by David, took boat and rowed through most fearful scenes and sounds to the Palazzo Cattrina, a splendid but somewhat dilapidated building situated in a part of the city that, like itself, had seen more prosperous times. The great doors of the place set in a marble archway stood half open. Over them were cut the cognizance of the floating swan, and beneath, in letters of faded gold, the titles of Acour, de Noyon, and Cattrina. No wonder they were open, since the porter's lodge was occupied only by a grisly corpse that lay rotting on the floor, a heavy key in its hand. The courtyard beyond was empty and so, save for a dead horse, were the stables to the right. Passing up the steps of the hall that also stood open, they entered.

Here the place was in confusion, as though those who dwelt there had left in haste. The mouldering remains of a meal lay on the broad oak table; a great dower-chest inlaid with ivory, but half filled with arms and armour, stood wide. A silver crucifix that had hung above was torn down and cast upon the floor, perchance by thieves who had found it too heavy to bear away. The earthquake had thrown over a carved cabinet and some bowls of glazed ware that stood upon it. These lay about shattered amidst shields and swords thrown from the walls, where pictures of saints or perchance of dead Cattrinas hung all awry. In short, if an

army had sacked it this stately hall could scarce have seemed more ruined.

Hugh and Dick crossed it to a stairway of chestnut wood whereof every newel-post was surmounted by the crest of a swan, and searched the saloons above, where also there was wreck and ruin. Then, still mounting the stair, they came to the bed-chambers. From one of these they retreated hastily, since on entering it hundreds of flies buzzing in a corner advised them that something lay there which they did not wish to see.

"Let us be going. I grow sick," exclaimed Hugh.

But Dick, who had the ears of a fox, held up his hand and said:

"Hark! I hear a voice."

Following the sound, he led his master down two long corridors that ended in a chapel. There, lying before the altar, they found a man clad in a filthy priest's robe, a dying man who still had the strength to cry for help or mercy, although in truth he was wasted to a skeleton, since the plague which had taken him was of the most lingering sort. Indeed, little seemed to be left of him save his rolling eyes, prominent nose and high cheekbones covered with yellow parchment that had been skin, and a stubbly growth of unshaven hair.

Dick scanned him. Dick, who never forgot a face, then stepped forward and said:

"So once more we meet in a chapel, Father Nicholas. Say, how has it fared with you since you fled through the chancel door of that at Blythburgh Manor? No, I forgot, that was not the last time we met. A man in a yellow cap ripped off your mask in a by-street near the Place of Arms one night and said something which it did not please you to hear."

"Water!" moaned Nicholas. "For Christ's sake give me water!"

"Why should I give you water in payment for your midnight steel yonder in the narrow street? What kind of water was it that you gave Red Eve far away at Blythburgh town?" asked Dick in his hissing voice which sounded like that of an angry snake.

But Hugh, who could bear no more of it, ran down to the courtyard, where he had seen a pitcher standing by a well, and brought water.

"Thank God that you have come again," said the wretched priest, as he snatched at it, "for I cannot bear to die with this white-faced devil glaring at me," and he pointed to Grey Dick, who leaned against the chancel wall, his arms folded on his breast, smiling coldly.

Then he drank greedily, Hugh holding the pitcher to his lips, for his wasted arms could not bear its weight.

"Now," said Hugh, when his thirst was satisfied, "tell me, where is your master, Cattrina?"

"God or the fiend can say alone. When he found that I was smitten with the plague he left me to perish, as did the others."

"And as we shall do unless you tell me whither my enemy has gone," and Hugh made as though to leave the place.

The priest clutched at him with his filthy, claw-like hand.

"For Christ's sake do not desert me," he moaned. "Let one Christian soul be near me at the last ere the curse of that wizard with the yellow cap is fulfilled on me. For the sake of Jesus, stay! I'll tell all I know."

"Speak then, and be swift. You have no time to spare, I think."

"When the darkness fell there in the Place of Arms," began Nicholas, "while you knights were waiting for the third blast of the trumpet, Cattrina fled under cover it."

"As I thought, the accursed coward!" exclaimed Hugh bitterly.

"Nay, to be just, it was not all cowardice. The wizard in the yellow cap, he who showed himself to the people afterward and called down

this Black Death on Venice, appeared to him in the darkness and said something to him that turned his heart to water. I think it was that if he stayed, within five short minutes he'd be dead, who otherwise, if he fled, had yet a breathing space of life. So he went."

"Ay. But whither, man? Whither?"

"Here to his house, where he disguised himself and bade me prepare to travel with him. Only then the sickness took me and I could not. So he went with some of his people, riding for Avignon."

"What to do at Avignon?"

"To obtain the confirmation of his marriage with the lady Eve Clavering. It has been promised to him by certain cardinals at Court who have the ear of his Holiness the Pope."

"Ah, I thought it! What more?"

"Only this: tidings reached him that the lady Clavering, with the old Templar, Sir Andrew Arnold, journeys to Avignon from England, there to obtain the dissolution of their marriage with Sir Edmund Acour, Count de Noyon, Lord of Cattrina. In Avignon, however the cause may go, Cattrina purposes to snare and make her his, which will be easy, for there he has many friends and she has none."

"Except God!" exclaimed Hugh, grinding his teeth.

"And Sir Andrew Arnold," broke in Dick, "who, like some others, is, I think, one of His ministers. Still, we had better be riding, master."

"Nay, nay," cried Nicholas in a hoarse scream. "Tarry a while and I'll tell you that which will force the Pope to void this marriage. Yes, it shall be set in writing and signed by me and witnessed ere I die. There is ink and parchment in yonder little room."

"That's a good thought," said Hugh. "Dick, fetch the tools, for if we try to move this fellow he will go farther than we can follow him."

Dick went and returned presently with an ink-horn, a roll of parchment, pens and a little table. Then Hugh sat himself down on the altar rail, placing the table in front of him and said:

"Say on. I'll write, since you cannot."

Now Nicholas, having before his glazing eyes the vision of imminent judgment, briefly but clearly told all the truth at last. He told how he had drugged Red Eve, giving the name of the bane which he mixed in the milk she drank. He told how when her mind was sleeping, though her body was awake, none knowing the wickedness that had been wrought save he and Acour, and least of all her father, they had led her to the altar like a lamb to the slaughter, and there married her to the man she hated. He

told how, although he had fled from England to save his life, Acour had never ceased to desire her and to plot to get her into his power, any more than he had ceased to fear Hugh's vengeance. For this reason, he said, he had clad himself in the armour of another knight at Crecy, and in that guise accepted mercy at Hugh's hand, leaving de la Roche to die in his place beneath that same hand. For this reason also he had commanded him, Nicholas, to bring about the death of Hugh de Cressi and his squire beneath the daggers of assassins in the streets of Venice, a fate from which they had been saved only by the wizard in the yellow cap, whom no steel could harm.

"The black-hearted villain!" hissed Dick. "Well, for your comfort, holy priest, I'll tell you who that wizard is. He is Death himself, Death the Sword, Death the Fire, Death the Helper, and presently you'll meet him again."

"I knew it, I knew it," groaned the wretched man. "Oh! such is the end of sin whereof we think so little in our day of strength."

"Nay," broke in Hugh, "you'll meet, not the minister, but Him whom he serves and in His hand are mercies. Be silent, Dick, for this wretch makes confession and his time is short. Spare the tool and save your wrath for him who wielded it. Go now and fetch David Day that he may witness also."

So Dick went, and Nicholas continued his tale, throwing light into many

a dark place, though there was little more that Hugh thought worthy of record.

Presently David came and started back in horror at the sight of that yellow tortured face set upon a living skeleton. Then the writing was read and Nicholas, held up by Dick, set his signature with a trembling hand to this his confession of the truth. This done they signed as witnesses, all three of them.

Now Hugh, whose pity was stirred, wished to move Nicholas and lay him on a bed in some chamber, and if they could, find someone to watch him till the end. But the priest refused this charity.

"Let me die before the altar," he said, "where I may set my eyes upon Him whom I have betrayed afresh," and he pointed to the carved ivory crucifix which hung above it. "Oh! be warned, be warned, my brethren," he went on in a wailing voice. "You are all of you still young; you may be led astray as I was by the desire for power, by the hope of wealth. You may sell yourselves to the wicked as I did, I who once was good and strove toward the right. If Satan tempts you thus, then remember Nicholas the priest, and his dreadful death, and see how he pays his servants. The plague has taken others, yet they have died at peace, but I, I die in hell before I see its fires."

"Not so," said Hugh, "you have repented, and I, against whom you have sinned perhaps more than all, forgive you, as I am sure my lady would,

could she know."

"Then it is more than I do," muttered Grey Dick to himself. "Why should I forgive him because he rots alive, as many a better man has done, and goes to reap what he has sown, who if he had won his way would have sent us before him at the dagger's point? Yet who knows? Each of us sins in his own fashion, and perchance sin is born of the blood and not of the will. If ever I meet Murgh again I'll ask him. But perhaps he will not answer."

Thus reflected Dick, half to David, who feared and did not understand him, and half to himself. Ere ever he had finished with his thoughts, which were not such as Sir Andrew would have approved, Father Nicholas began to die.

It was not a pleasant sight this death of his, though of its physical part nothing shall be written. Let that be buried with other records of the great plague. Only in this case his mind triumphed for a while over the dissolution of his body. When there was little left of him save bone and sinew, still he found strength to cry out to God for mercy. Yes, and to raise himself and cast what had been arms about the ivory rood and kiss its feet with what had been lips, and in his last death struggle to drag it down and pant out his ultimate breath beneath its weight.

So there they left him, a horrible, huddled heap upon which gleamed the ivory crucifix, and went their way, gasping, into the air.