CHAPTER XXV

HOW THE MARGARET WON OUT TO SEA

It was night. Peter, faint with loss of blood and stiff with bruises, had bade his farewell to their Majesties of Spain, who spoke many soft words to him, calling him the Flower of Knighthood, and offering him high place and rank if he would abide in their service. But he thanked them and said No, for in Spain he had suffered too much to dwell there. So they kissed his bride, the fair Margaret, who clung to her wounded husband like ivy to an oak, and would not be separated from him, even for a moment, that husband whom living she had scarcely hoped to clasp again. Yes, they kissed her, and the queen threw about her a chain from her own neck as a parting gift, and wished her joy of so gallant a lord.

"Alas! your Majesty," said Margaret, her dark eyes filling with tears, "how can I be joyous, who must think of to-morrow?"

Thereon Isabella set her face and answered:

"Dona Margaret Brome, be thankful for what to-day has brought you, and forget to-morrow and that which it must justly take away. Go now, and God be with you both!"

So they went, the little knot of English sailormen, who, wrapped in Spanish cloaks, had sat together in the amphitheatre and groaned when

the Eagle struck, and cheered when the Falcon swooped, leading, or rather carrying Peter under cover of the falling night to a boat not far from this Place of Bulls. In this they embarked unobserved, for the multitude, and even Peter's own squires believed that he had returned with his wife to the palace, as he had given out that he would do. So they were rowed to the Margaret, which straightway made as though she were about to sail, and indeed dropped a little way down stream. Here she anchored again, just round a bend of the river, and lay there for the night.

It was a heavy night, and in it there was no place for love or lovers' tenderness. How could there be between these two, who for so long had been tormented by doubts and fears, and on this day had endured such extremity of terror and such agony of joy? Peter's wound also was deep and wide, though his shield had broken the weight of Morella's sword, and its edge had caught upon his shoulder-piece, so that by good chance it had not reached down to the arteries, or shorn into the bone; yet he had lost much blood, and Smith, the captain, who was a better surgeon than might have been guessed from his thick hands, found it needful to wash out the cut with spirit that gave much pain, and to stitch it up with silk. Also Peter had great bruises on his arms and thighs, and his back was hurt by that fall from the white charger with Morella in his arms.

So it came about that most of that night he lay outworn, half-sleeping and half-waking, and when at sunrise he struggled from his berth, it was

but to kneel by the side of Margaret and join her in her prayers that her father might be rescued from the hands of these cruel priests of Spain.

Now during the night Smith had brought his ship back with the tide, and laid her under the shelter of those hulks whereof Peter had spoken, having first painted out her name of Margaret, and in its place set that of the Santa Maria, a vessel of about the same build and tonnage, which, as they had heard, was expected in port. For this reason, or because there were at that time many ships in the river, it happened that none in authority noted her return, or if they did, neglected to report the matter as one of no moment. Therefore, so far all went well.

According to the tale of Henriques, confirmed by what they had learned otherwise, the great procession of the Act of Faith would turn on to the quay at about eight o'clock, and pass along it for a hundred yards or so only, before it wound away down a street leading to the plaza where the theatre was prepared, the sermon would be preached, the Mass celebrated, and the "relaxed" placed in cages to be carried to the Quemadero.

At six in the morning Smith mustered those twelve men whom he had chosen to help him in the enterprise, and Peter, with Margaret at his side, addressed them in the cabin, telling them all the plan, and praying them for the sake of their master and of the Lady Margaret, his daughter, to do what men might to save one whom they loved and honoured from so

horrible a death.

They swore that they would, every one of them, for their English blood was up, nor did they so much as speak of the great rewards that had been promised to those who lived through this adventure, and to the families of those who fell. Then they breakfasted, girded their swords and knives about them, and put on their Spanish cloaks, though, to speak truth, these lads of Essex and of London made but poor Spaniards. Now, at length the boat was ready, and Peter, although he could scarcely stand, desired to be carried into it that he might accompany them. But the captain, Smith, to whom perhaps Margaret had been speaking, set down his flat foot on the deck and said that he, who commanded there, would suffer no such thing. A wounded man, he declared, would but cumber them who had little room to spare in that small boat, and could be of no service, either on land or water. Moreover, Master Peter's face was known to thousands who had watched it yesterday, and would certainly be recognised, whereas none would take note at such a time of a dozen common sailors landed from some ship to see the show. Lastly, he would do best to stop on board the vessel, where, if anything went wrong, they must be short-handed enough, who, if they could, ought to get her away to sea and across it with all speed.

Still Peter would have gone, till Margaret, throwing her arms about him, asked him if he thought that she would be the better if she lost both her father and her husband, as, if things miscarried, well might happen. Then, being in pain and very weak, he yielded, and Smith, having given

his last directions to the mate, and shaken Peter and Margaret by the hand, asking their prayers for all of them, descended with his twelve men into the boat, and dropping down under shelter of the hulks, rowed to the shore as though they came from some other vessel. Now the quay was not more than a bowshot from them, and from a certain spot upon the Margaret there was a good view of it between the stern of one hulk and the bow of another. Here, then, Peter and Margaret sat themselves down behind the bulwark, and watched with fears such as cannot be told, while a sharp-eyed seaman climbed to the crow's-nest on the mast, whence he could see over much of the city, and even the old Moorish castle that was then the Holy House of the Inquisition. Presently this man reported that the procession had started, for he saw its banners and the people crowding to the windows and to the roof-tops; also the cathedral bell began to toll slowly. Then came a long, long wait, during which their little knot of sailors, wearing the Spanish cloaks, appeared upon the quay and mingled with the few folk that were gathered there, since the most of the people were collected by thousands on the great plaza or in the adjacent streets.

At length, just as the cathedral clock struck eight, the "triumphant" march, as it was called, began to appear upon the quay. First came a body of soldiers with lances; then a crucifix, borne by a priest and veiled in black crape; then a number of other priests, clad in snow-white robes to symbolise their perfect purity. Next followed men carrying wood or leather images of some man or woman who, by flight to a foreign land or into the realms of Death, had escaped the clutches of

the Inquisition. After these marched other men in fours, each four of them bearing a coffin that contained the body or bones of some dead heretic, which, in the absence of his living person, like the effigies, were to be committed to the flames as a token of what the Inquisition would have done to him if it could--to enable it also to seize his property.

Then came many penitents, their heads shaven, their feet bare, and clad, some in dark-coloured cloaks, some in yellow robes, called the sanbenito, which were adorned with a red cross. These were followed by a melancholy band of "relaxed" heretics, doomed to the fire or strangulation at the stake, and clothed in zamarras of sheepskin, painted all over with devils and the portraits of their own faces surrounded by flames. These poor creatures wore also flame-adorned caps called corozas, shaped like bishops' mitres, and were gagged with blocks of wood, lest they should contaminate the populace by some declaration of their heresy, while in their hands they bore tapers, which the monks who accompanied them relighted from time to time if they became extinguished.

Now the hearts of Peter and Margaret leaped within them, for at the end of this hideous troop rode a man mounted on an ass, clothed in a zamarra and coroza, but with a noose about his neck. So the Fray Henriques had told the truth, for without doubt this was John Castell. Like people in a dream, they saw him advance in his garb of shame, and after him, gorgeously attired, civil officers, inquisitors, and

familiars of noble rank, members of the Council of Inquisition, behind whom was borne a flaunting banner, called the Holy Standard of the Faith.

Now Castell was opposite to the little group of seamen, and, or so it seemed, something went wrong with the harness of the ass on which he sat, for it stopped, and a man in the garb of a secretary stepped to it, apparently to attend to a strap, thus bringing all the procession behind to a halt, while that in front proceeded off the quay and round the corner of a street. Whatever it might be that had happened, it necessitated the dismounting of the heretic, who was pulled roughly off the brute's back, which, as though in joy at this riddance of its burden, lifted its head and brayed loudly.

Men from the thin line of crowd that edged the quay came forward as though to help, and among them were several in capes, such as were worn by the sailors of the Margaret. The officers and grandees behind shouted, "Forward!--forward!" whereon those attending to the ass hustled it and its rider a little nearer to the water's edge, while the guards ran back to explain what had happened. Then suddenly a confusion arose, of which it was impossible to distinguish the cause, and next instant Margaret and Peter, still gripping each other, saw the man who had been seated on the ass being dragged rapidly down the steps of the quay, at the foot of which lay the boat of the Margaret.

The mate at the helm saw also, for he blew his whistle, a sign at which

the anchor was slipped--there was no time to lift it--and men who were waiting on the yards loosed the lashings of certain sails, so that almost immediately the ship began to move.

Now they were fighting on the quay. The heretic was in the boat, and most of the sailors; but others held back the crowd of priests and armed familiars who strove to get at him. One, a priest with a sword in his hand, slipped past them and tumbled into the boat also. At last all were in save a single man, who was attacked by three adversaries--John Smith, the captain. The oars were out, but his mates waited for him. He struck with his sword, and some one fell. Then he turned to run. Two masked familiars sprang at him, one landing on his back, one clinging to his neck. With a desperate effort he cast himself into the water, dragging them with him. One they saw no more, for Smith had stabbed him, the other floated up near the boat, which already was some yards from the quay, and a sailor battered him on the head with an oar, so that he sank.

Smith had vanished also, and they thought he must be drowned. The sailors thought it too, for they began to give way, when suddenly a great brown hand appeared and clasped the stern-sheets, while a bull-voice roared:

"Row on, lads, I'm right enough."

Row they did indeed, till the ashen oars bent like bows, only two of

them seized the officer who had sprung into the boat and flung him screaming into the river, where he struggled a while, for he could not swim, gripping at the air with his hands, then disappeared. The boat was in mid-stream now, and shaping her course round the bow of the first hulk beyond which the prow of the Margaret began to appear, for the wind was fresh, and she gathered way every moment.

"Let down the ladder, and make ready ropes," shouted Peter.

It was done, but not too soon, for next instant the boat was bumping on their side. The sailors in her caught the ropes and hung on, while the captain, Smith, half-drowned, clung to the stern-sheets, for the water washed over his head.

"Save him first," cried Peter. A man, running down the ladder, threw a noose to him, which Smith seized with one hand and by degrees worked beneath his arms. Then they tackled on to it, and dragged him bodily from the river to the deck, where he lay gasping and spitting out foam and water. By now the ship was travelling swiftly, so swiftly that Margaret was in an agony of fear lest the boat should be towed under and sink.

But these sailor men knew their trade. By degrees they let the boat drop back till her bow was abreast of the ladder. Then they helped Castell forward. He gripped its rungs, and eager hands gripped him. Up he staggered, step by step, till at length his hideous, fiend-painted cap,

his white face, whence the beard had been shaved, and his open mouth, in which still was fixed the wooden gag, appeared above the bulwarks, as the mate said afterwards, like that of a devil escaped from hell. They lifted him over, and he sank fainting in his daughter's arms. Then one by one the sailors came up after him--none were missing, though two had been wounded, and were covered with blood. No, none were missing--God had brought them, every one, safe back to the deck of the Margaret.

Smith, the captain, spat up the last of his river water and called for a cup of wine, which he drank; while Peter and Margaret drew the accursed gag from her father's mouth, and poured spirit down his throat. Shaking the water from him like a great dog, but saying never a word, Smith rolled to the helm and took it from the mate, for the navigation of the river was difficult, and none knew it so well as he. Now they were abreast the famous Golden Tower, and a big gun was fired at them; but the shot went wide. "Look!" said Margaret, pointing to horsemen galloping southwards along the river's bank.

"Yes," said Peter, "they go to warn the ports. God send that the wind holds, for we must fight our way to sea."

The wind did hold, indeed it blew ever more strongly from the north; but oh! that was a long, evil day. Hour after hour they sped forward down the widening river; now past villages, where knots of people waved weapons at them as they went; now by desolate marshes, plains, and banks clothed with pine.

When they reached Bonanza the sun was low, and when they were off San Lucar it had begun to sink. Out into the wide river mouth, where the white waters tumbled on the narrow bar, rowed two great galleys to cut them off, very swift galleys, which it seemed impossible to escape.

Margaret and Castell were sent below, the crew went to quarters, and Peter crept stiffly aft to where the sturdy Smith stood at the helm, which he would suffer no other man to touch. Smith looked at the sky, he looked at the shore, and the safe, open sea beyond. Then he bade them hoist more sail, all that she could carry, and looked grimly at the two galleys lurking like deerhounds in a pass, that hung on their oars in the strait channel, with the tumbling breakers on either side, through which no ship could sail. "What will you do?" asked Peter. "Master Peter," he answered between his teeth, "when you fought the Spaniard yesterday I did not ask you what you were going to do. Hold your tongue, and leave me to my own trade."

The Margaret was a swift ship, but never yet had she moved so swiftly. Behind her shrilled the gale, for now it was no less. Her stout masts bent like fishing poles, her rigging creaked and groaned beneath the weight of the bellying canvas, her port bulwarks slipped along almost level with the water, so that Peter must lie down on the deck, for stand he could not, and watch it running by within three feet of him.

The galleys drew up right across her path. Half a mile away they lay bow by bow, knowing well that no ship could pass the foaming shallows; lay bow by bow, waiting to board and cut down this little English crew when the Margaret shortened sail, as shorten sail she must. Smith yelled an order to the mate, and presently, red in the setting sun, out burst the flag of England upon the mainmast top, a sight at which the sailors cheered. He shouted another order, and up ran the last jib, so that now from time to time the port bulwarks dipped beneath the sea, and Peter felt salt water stinging his sore back.

Thus did the Margaret shorten sail, and thus did she yield her to the great galleys of Spain.

The captains of the galleys hung on. Was this foreigner mad, or ignorant of the river channel, they wondered, that he would sink with every soul there upon the bar? They hung on, waiting for that leopard flag and those bursting sails to come down; but they never stirred; only straight at them rushed the Margaret like a bull. She was not two furlongs away, and she held dead upon her course, till at last those galleys saw that she would not sink alone. Like a bull with shut eyes she held dead upon her furious course!

Confusion arose upon the Spanish ships, whistles were blown, men shouted, overseers ran down the planks flogging the slaves, lifted oars shone red in the light of the dying sun as they beat the water wildly. The prows began to back and separate, five feet, ten feet, a dozen feet

perhaps; then straight into that tiny streak of open water, like a stone from the hand of the slinger, like an arrow from a bow, rushed the wind-flung Margaret.

What happened? Go ask it of the fishers of San Lucar and the pirates of Bonanza, where the tale has been told for generations. The great oars snapped like reeds, the slaves were thrown in crushed and mangled heaps, the tall deck of the port galley was ripped out of her like rent paper by the stout yards of the stooping Margaret, the side of the starboard galley rolled up like a shaving before a plane, and the Margaret rushed through.

Smith, the captain, looked aft to where, ere they sank, the two great ships, like wounded swans, rolled and fluttered on the foaming bar. Then he put his helm about, called the carpenter, and asked what water she made.

"None, Sir," he answered; "but she will want new tarring. It was oak against eggshells, and we had the speed."

"Good!" said Smith, "shallows on either side; life or death, and I thought I could make room. Send the mate to the helm. I'll have a sleep."

Then the sun vanished beneath the roaring open sea, and, escaped from all the power of Spain, the Margaret turned her scarred and splintered

bow for Ushant and for England.

ENVOI

Ten years had gone by since Captain Smith took the good ship Margaret across the bar of the Guadalquiver in a very notable fashion. It was late May in Essex, and all the woods were green, and all the birds sang, and all the meadows were bright with flowers. Down in the lovely vale of Dedham there was a long, low house with many gables--a charming old house of red brick and timbers already black with age. It stood upon a little hill, backed with woods, and from it a long avenue of ancient oaks ran across the park to the road which led to Colchester and London. Down that avenue on this May afternoon an aged, white-haired man, with quick black eyes, was walking, and with him three children--very beautiful children--a boy of about nine and two little girls, who clung to his hand and garments and pestered him with questions.

"Where are we going, Grandfather?" asked one little girl.

"To see Captain Smith, my dear," he answered.

"I don't like Captain Smith," said the other little girl; "he is so fat, and says nothing."

"I do," broke in the boy, "he gave me a fine knife to use when I am a sailor, and Mother does, and Father, yes, and Grandad too, because he saved him when the cruel Spaniards wanted to put him in the fire. Don't you, Grandad?"

"Yes, my dear," answered the old man. "Look! there is a squirrel running over the grass; see if you can catch it before it reaches that tree."

Off went the children at full pelt, and the tree being a low one, began to climb it after the squirrel. Meanwhile John Castell, for it was he, turned through the park gate and walked to a little house by the roadside, where a stout man sat upon a bench contemplating nothing in particular. Evidently he expected his visitor, for he pointed to the place beside him, and, as Castell sat down, said:

"Why didn't you come yesterday, Master?"

"Because of my rheumatism, friend," he answered. "I got it first in the vaults of that accursed Holy House at Seville, and it grows on me year by year. They were very damp and cold, those vaults," he added reflectively.

"Many people found them hot enough," grunted Smith, "also, there was generally a good fire at the end of them. Strange thing that we should never have heard any more of that business. I suppose it was because our

Margaret was such a favourite with Queen Isabella who didn't want to raise questions with England, or stir up dirty water."

"Perhaps," answered Castell. "The water was dirty, wasn't it?"

"Dirty as a Thames mud-bank at low tide. Clever woman, Isabella. No one else would have thought of making a man ridiculous as she did by Morella when she gave his life to Betty, and promised and vowed on his behalf that he would acknowledge her as his lady. No fear of any trouble from him after that, in the way of plots for the Crown, or things of that sort. Why, he must have been the laughing-stock of the whole land--and a laughing-stock never does anything. You remember the Spanish saying, 'King's swords cut and priests' fires burn, but street-songs kill quickest!' I should like to learn more of what has become of them all, though, wouldn't you, Master? Except Bernaldez, of course, for he's been safe in Paris these many years, and doing well there, they say."

"Yes," answered Castell, with a little smile--"that is, unless I had to go to Spain to find out."

Just then the three children came running up, bursting through the gate all together.

"Mind my flower-bed, you little rogues," shouted Captain Smith, shaking his stick at them, whereat they got behind him and made faces.

"Where's the squirrel, Peter?" asked Castell.

"We hunted it out of the tree, Grandad, and right across the grass, and got round it by the edge of the brook, and then--"

"Then what? Did you catch it?"

"No, Grandad, for when we thought we had it sure, it jumped into the water and swam away."

"Other people in a fix have done that before," said Castell, laughing, and bethinking him of a certain river quay.

"It wasn't fair," cried the boy indignantly. "Squirrels shouldn't swim, and if I can catch it I will put it in a cage."

"I think that squirrel will stop in the woods for the rest of its life, Peter."

"Grandad!--Grandad!" called out the youngest child from the gate, whither she had wandered, being weary of the tale of the squirrel, "there are a lot of people coming down the road on horses, such fine people. Come and see."

This news excited the curiosity of the old gentlemen, for not many fine people came to Dedham. At any rate both of them rose, somewhat stiffly,

and walked to the gate to look. Yes, the child was right, for there, sure enough, about two hundred yards away, advanced an imposing cavalcade. In front of it, mounted on a fine horse, sat a still finer lady, a very large and handsome lady, dressed in black silks, and wearing a black lace veil that hung from her head. At her side was another lady, much muffled up as though she found the climate cold, and riding between them, on a pony, a gallant looking little boy. After these came servants, male and female, six or eight of them, and last of all a great wain, laden with baggage, drawn by four big Flemish horses.

"Now, whom have we here?" ejaculated Castell, staring at them.

Captain Smith stared too, and sniffed at the wind as he had often done upon his deck on a foggy morning.

"I seem to smell Spaniards," he said, "which is a smell I don't like. Look at their rigging. Now, Master Castell, of whom does that barque with all her sails set remind you?"

Castell shook his head doubtfully.

"I seem to remember," went on Smith, "a great girl decked out like a maypole running across white sand in that Place of Bulls at Seville--but I forgot, you weren't there, were you?"

Now a loud, ringing voice was heard speaking in Spanish, and commanding

some one to go to yonder house and inquire where was the gate to the Old Hall. Then Castell knew at once.

"It is Betty," he said. "By the beard of Abraham, it is Betty."

"I think so too; but don't talk of Abraham, Master. He is a dangerous man, Abraham, in these very Christian lands; say, 'By the Keys of St. Peter,' or, 'By St. Paul's infirmities.'"

"Child," broke in Castell, turning to one of the little girls, "run up to the Hall and tell your father and mother that Betty has come, and brought half Spain with her. Quickly now, and remember the name, Betty!"

The child departed, wondering, by the back way; while Castell and Smith walked towards the strangers.

"Can we assist you, Señora?" asked the former in Spanish.

"Marchioness of Morella, if you please--" she began in the same language, then suddenly added in English, "Why, bless my eyes! If it isn't my old master, John Castell, with white wool instead of black!"

"It came white after my shaving by a sainted barber in the Holy House," said Castell. "But come off that tall horse of yours, Betty, my dear--I beg your pardon--most noble and highly born Marchioness of Morella, and

give me a kiss."

"That I will, twenty, if you like," she answered, arriving in his arms so suddenly from on high, that had it not been for the sturdy support of Smith behind, they would both of them have rolled upon the ground.

"Whose are those children?" she asked, when she had kissed Castell and shaken Smith by the hand. "But no need to ask, they have got my cousin Margaret's eyes and Peter's long nose. How are they?" she added anxiously.

"You will see for yourself in a minute or two. Come, send on your people and baggage to the Hall, though where they will stow them all I don't know, and walk with us."

Betty hesitated, for she had been calculating upon the effect of a triumphal entry in full state. But at that moment there appeared Margaret and Peter themselves--Margaret, a beautiful matron with a child in her arms, running, and Peter, looking much as he had always been, spare, long of limb, stern but for the kindly eyes, striding away behind, and after him sundry servants and the little girl Margaret.

Then there arose a veritable babel of tongues, punctuated by embracings; but in the end the retinue and the baggage were got off up the drive, followed by the children and the little Spanish-looking boy, with whom they had already made friends, leaving only Betty and her closely

muffled-up attendant. This attendant Peter contemplated for a while, as though there were something familiar to him in her general air.

Apparently she observed his interest, for as though by accident she moved some of the wrappings that hid her face, revealing a single soft and lustrous eye and a few square inches of olive-coloured cheek. Then Peter knew her at once.

"How are you, Inez?" he said, stretching out his hand with a smile, for really he was delighted to see her.

"As well as a poor wanderer in a strange and very damp country can be, Don Peter," she answered in her languorous voice, "and certainly somewhat the better for seeing an old friend whom last she met in a certain baker's shop. Do you remember?"

"Remember!" answered Peter. "It is not a thing I am likely to forget. Inez, what became of Fray Henriques? I have heard several different stories."

"One never can be sure," she answered as she uncovered her smiling red lips; "there are so many dungeons in that old Moorish Holy House, and elsewhere, that it is impossible to keep count of their occupants, however good your information. All I know is that he got into trouble over that business, poor man. Suspicions arose about his conduct in the procession which the captain here will recall," and she pointed to

Smith. "Also, it is very dangerous for men in such positions to visit Jewish quarters and to write incautious letters--no, not the one you think of; I kept faith--but others, afterwards, begging for it back again, some of which miscarried."

"Is he dead then?" asked Peter.

"Worse, I think," she answered--"a living death, the 'Punishment of the Wall.'"

"Poor wretch!" said Peter, with a shudder.

"Yes," remarked Inez reflectively, "few doctors like their own medicine."

"I say, Inez," said Peter, nodding his head towards Betty, "that marquis isn't coming here, is he?"

"In the spirit, perhaps, Don Peter, not otherwise."

"So he is really dead? What killed him?"

"Laughter, I think, or, rather, being laughed at. He got quite well of the hurts you gave him, and then, of course, he had to keep the queen's gage, and take the most noble lady yonder, late Betty, as his marchioness. He couldn't do less, after she beat you off him with your

own sword and nursed him back to life. But he never heard the last of it. They made songs about him in the streets, and would ask him how his godmother, Isabella, was, because she had promised and vowed on his behalf; also, whether the marchioness had broken any lances for his sake lately, and so forth."

"Poor man!" said Peter again, in tones of the deepest sympathy. "A cruel fate; I should have done better to kill him."

"Much; but don't say so to the noble Betty, who thinks that he had a very happy married life under her protecting care. Really, he ate his heart out till even I, who hated him, was sorry. Think of it! One of the proudest men in Spain, and the most gallant, a nephew of the king, a pillar of the Church, his sovereigns' plenipotentiary to the Moors, and on secret matters--the common mock of the vulgar, yes, and of the great too!"

"The great! Which of them?"

"Nearly all, for the queen set the fashion--I wonder why she hated him so?" Inez added, looking shrewdly at Peter; then without waiting for an answer, went on: "She did it very cleverly, by always making the most of the most honourable Betty in public, calling her near to her, talking with her, admiring her English beauty, and so forth, and what her Majesty did, everybody else did, until my exalted mistress nearly went off her head, so full was she of pride and glory. As for the marquis, he

fell ill, and after the taking of Granada went to live there quietly. Betty went with him, for she was a good wife, and saved lots of money. She buried him a year ago, for he died slow, and gave him one of the finest tombs in Spain--it isn't finished yet. That is all the story. Now she has brought her boy, the young marquis, to England for a year or two, for she has a very warm heart, and longed to see you all. Also, she thought she had better go away a while, for her son's sake. As for me, now that Morella is dead, I am head of the household--secretary, general purveyor of intelligence, and anything else you like at a good salary."

"You are not married, I suppose?" asked Peter.

"No," Inez answered; "I saw so much of men when I was younger that I seem to have had enough of them. Or perhaps," she went on, fixing that mild and lustrous eye upon him, "there was one of them whom I liked too well to wish----"

She paused, for they had crossed the drawbridge and arrived opposite to the Old Hall. The gorgeous Betty and the fair Margaret, accompanied by the others, and talking rapidly, had passed through the wide doorway into its spacious vestibule. Inez looked after them, and perceived, standing like a guard at the foot of the open stair, that scarred suit of white armour and riven shield blazoned with the golden falcon, Isabella's gift, in which Peter had fought and conquered the Marquis of Morella. Then she stepped back and contemplated the house critically.

At each end of it rose a stone tower, built for the purposes of defence, and all around ran a deep moat. Within the circle of this moat, and surrounded by poplars and ancient yews, on the south side of the Hall lay a walled pleasaunce, or garden, of turf pierced by paths and planted with flowering hawthorns and other shrubs, and at the end of it, almost hidden in drooping willows, a stone basin of water. Looking at it, Inez saw at once that so far as the circumstances of climate and situation would allow, Peter, in the laying out of this place, had copied another in the far-off, southern city of Granada, even down to the details of the steps and seats. She turned to him and said innocently:

"Sir Peter, are you minded to walk with me in that garden this pleasant evening? I do not see any window in yonder tower."

Peter turned red as the scar across his face, and laughed as he answered:

"There may be one for all that. Get you into the house, dear Inez, for none can be more welcome there; but I walk no more alone with you in gardens."

THE END