

## CHAPTER XIV

### SWORD SILENCE RECEIVES THE SECRET

For half an hour or more they glided down the canal unmolested and in silence. Now it ran into a broader waterway along which they slid towards the sea, keeping as much as possible under the shadow of one bank, for although the night was moonless a faint grey light lay upon the surface of the stream. At length Foy became aware that they were bumping against the sides of a long line of barges and river boats laden with timber and other goods. To one of these--it was the fourth--the pilot Hans made fast, tying their row-boat to her stern. Then he climbed to the deck, whispering to them to follow.

As they scrambled on board, two grey figures arose and Foy saw the flash of steel. Then Hans whistled like a plover, and, dropping their swords they came to him and fell into talk. Presently Hans left them, and, returning to Foy and Martin, said:

"Listen: we must lie here a while, for the wind is against us, and it would be too dangerous for us to try to row or pole so big a boat down to the sea and across the bar in the darkness, for most likely we should set her fast upon a shoal. Before dawn it will turn, and, if I read the sky aright, blow hard off land."

"What have the bargemen to say?" asked Foy.

"Only that for these four days they have been lying here forbidden to move, and that their craft are to be searched to-morrow by a party of soldiers, and the cargo taken out of them piecemeal."

"So," said Foy, "well, I hope that by then what they seek will be far away. Now show us this ship."

Then Hans took them down the hatchway, for the little vessel was decked, being in shape and size not unlike a modern Norfolk herring boat, though somewhat more slightly built. Then having lit a lantern, he showed them the cargo. On the top were bags of salt. Dragging one or two of these aside, Hans uncovered the heads of five barrels, each of them marked with the initial B in white paint.

"That is what men will die for before to-morrow night," he said.

"The treasure?" asked Foy.

He nodded. "These five, none of the others." Then still lower down he pointed out other barrels, eight of them, filled with the best gunpowder, and showed them too where the slow matches ran to the little cabin, the cook's galley, the tiller and the prow, by means of any one of which it could be fired. After this and such inspection of the ropes and sails as the light would allow, they sat in the cabin waiting till the wind should change, while the two watching men unmoored the vessel

and made her sails ready for hoisting. An hour passed, and still the breeze blew from the sea, but in uncertain chopping gusts. Then it fell altogether.

"Pray God it comes soon," said Martin, "for the owner of that finger in your pocket will have laid the hounds on to our slot long ago, and, look! the east grows red."

The silent, hard-faced Hans leant forward and stared up the darkling water, his hand behind his ear.

"I hear them," he said presently.

"Who?" asked Foy.

"The Spaniards and the wind--both," he answered. "Come, up with the mainsail and pole her out to midstream."

So the three of them took hold of the tackle and ran aft with it, while the rings and booms creaked and rattled as the great canvas climbed the mast. Presently it was set, and after it the jib. Then, assisted by the two watchmen thrusting from another of the boats, they pushed the Swallow from her place in the line out into mid-stream. But all this made noise and took time, and now men appeared upon the bank, calling to know who dared to move the boats without leave. As no one gave them any answer, they fired a shot, and presently a beacon began to burn upon a

neighbouring mound.

"Bad business," said Hans, shrugging his shoulders. "They are warning the Government ship at the harbour mouth. Duck, masters, duck; here comes the wind," and he sprang to the tiller as the boom swung over and the little vessel began to gather way.

"Yes," said Martin, "and here with it come the Spaniards."

Foy looked. Through the grey mist that was growing lighter every moment, for the dawn was breaking, he caught sight of a long boat with her canvas spread which was sweeping round the bend of the stream towards them and not much more than a quarter of a mile away.

"They had had to pole down stream in the dark, and that is why they have been so long in coming," said Hans over his shoulder.

"Well, they are here now at any rate," answered Foy, "and plenty of them," he added, as a shout from a score of throats told them that they were discovered.

But now the Swallow had begun to fly, making the water hiss upon either side of her bows.

"How far is it to the sea?" asked Foy.

"About three miles," Hans called back from the tiller. "With this wind we should be there in fifteen minutes. Master," he added presently, "bid your man light the fire in the galley."

"What for," asked Foy, "to cook breakfast?"

The pilot shrugged his shoulders and muttered, "Yes, if we live to eat it." But Foy saw that he was glancing at the slow-match by his side, and understood.

Ten minutes passed, and they had swept round the last bend and were in the stretch of open water which ran down to the sea. By now the light was strong, and in it they saw that the signal fire had not been lit in vain. At the mouth of the cutting, just where the bar began, the channel was narrowed in with earth to a width of not more than fifty paces, and on one bank of it stood a fort armed with culverins. Out of the little harbour of this fort a large open boat was being poled, and in it a dozen or fifteen soldiers were hastily arming themselves.

"What now?" cried Martin. "They are going to stop the mouth of the channel."

The hard-featured Hans set his teeth and made no answer. Only he looked backward at his pursuers and onward at those who barred the way. Presently he called aloud:

"Under hatches, both of you. They are going to fire from the fort," and he flung himself upon his back, steering with his uplifted arms.

Foy and Martin tumbled down the hatchway, for they could do no good on deck. Only Foy kept one eye above its level.

"Look out!" he said, and ducked.

As he spoke there was a puff of white smoke from the fort, followed by the scream of a shot which passed ahead of them. Then came another puff of smoke, and a hole appeared in their brown sail. After this the fort did not fire again, for the gunners found no time to load their pieces, only some soldiers who were armed with arquebuses began to shoot as the boat swept past within a few yards of them. Heedless of their bullets, Hans the pilot rose to his feet again, for such work as was before him could not be done by a man lying on his back. By now the large open boat from the fort was within two hundred yards of them, and, driven by the gathering gale, the Swallow rushed towards it with the speed of a dart. Foy and Martin crawled from the hatchway and lay down near the steersman under the shelter of the little bulwarks, watching the enemy's boat, which was in midstream just where the channel was narrowest, and on the hither side of the broken water of the bar.

"See," said Foy, "they are throwing out anchors fore and aft. Is there room to go past them?"

"No," answered Hans, "the water is too shallow under the bank, and they know it. Bring me a burning brand."

Foy crept forward, and returned with the fire.

"Now light the slow-match, master."

Foy opened his blue eyes and a cold shiver went down his back. Then he set his teeth and obeyed. Martin looked at Hans, muttering,

"Good for a young one!"

Hans nodded and said, "Have no fear. Till that match burns to the level of the deck we are safe. Now, mates, hold fast. I can't go past that boat, so I am going through her. We may sink on the other side, though I am sure that the fire will reach the powder first. In that case you can swim for it if you like, but I shall go with the Swallow."

"I will think about it when the time comes. Oh! that cursed astrologer," growled Martin, looking back at the pursuing ship, which was not more than seven or eight hundred yards away.

Meanwhile the officer in command of the boat, who was armed with a musket, was shouting to them to pull down their sail and surrender; indeed, not until they were within fifty yards of him did he seem to understand their desperate purpose. Then some one in the boat called

out: "The devils are going to sink us," and there was a rush to bow and stern to get up the anchors. Only the officer stood firm, screaming at them like a madman. It was too late; a strong gust of wind caught the Swallow, causing her to heel over and sweep down on the boat like a swooping falcon.

Hans stood and shifted the tiller ever so little, calculating all things with his eye. Foy watched the boat towards which they sprang like a thing alive, and Martin, lying at his side, watched the burning match.

Suddenly the Spanish officer, when their prow was not more than twenty paces from him, ceased to shout, and lifting his piece fired. Martin, looking upwards with his left eye, thought that he saw Hans flinch, but the pilot made no sound. Only he did something to the tiller, putting all his strength on to it, and it seemed to the pair of them as though the Swallow was for an instant checked in her flight--certainly her prow appeared to lift itself from the water. Suddenly there was a sound of something snapping--a sound that could be heard even through the yell of terror from the soldiers in the boat. It was the bowsprit which had gone, leaving the jib flying loose like a great pennon.

Then came the crash. Foy shut his eyes for a moment, hanging on with both hands till the scraping and the trembling were done with. Now he opened again, and the first thing he saw was the body of the Spanish officer hanging from the jagged stump of the bowsprit. He looked behind. The boat had vanished, but in the water were to be seen the heads of



three or four men swimming. As for themselves they seemed to be clear and unhurt, except for the loss of their bowsprit; indeed, the little vessel was riding over the seas on the bar like any swan. Hans glanced at the slow-match which was smouldering away perilously near to the deck, whereon Martin stamped upon it, saying:

"If we sink now it will be in deep water, so there is no need to fly up before we go down."

"Go and see if she leaks," said Hans.

They went and searched the forehold but could not find that the Swallow had taken any harm worth noting. Indeed, her massive oaken prow, with the weight of the gale-driven ship behind it, had crashed through the frail sides of the open Spanish boat like a knife through an egg.

"That was good steering," said Foy to Hans, when they returned, "and nothing seems to be amiss."

Hans nodded. "I hit him neatly," he muttered. "Look. He's gone." As he spoke the Swallow gave a sharp pitch, and the corpse of the Spaniard fell with a heavy splash into the sea.

"I am glad it has sunk," said Foy; "and now let's have some breakfast, for I am starving. Shall I bring you some, friend Hans?"

"No, master, I want to sleep."

Something in the tone of the man's voice caused Foy to scrutinise his face. His lips were turning blue. He glanced at his hands. Although they still grasped the tiller tightly, these also were turning blue, as though with cold; moreover, blood was dropping on the deck.

"You are hit," he said. "Martin, Martin, Hans is hit!"

"Yes," replied the man, "he hit me and I hit him, and perhaps presently we shall be talking it over together. No, don't trouble, it is through the body and mortal. Well, I expected nothing less, so I can't complain. Now, listen, while my strength holds. Can you lay a course for Harwich in England?"

Martin and Foy shook their heads. Like most Hollanders they were good sailormen, but they only knew their own coasts.

"Then you had best not try it," said Hans, "for there is a gale brewing, and you will be driven on the Goodwin Sands, or somewhere down that shore, and drowned and the treasure lost. Run up to the Haarlem Mere, comrades. You can hug the land with this small boat, while that big devil after you," and he nodded towards the pursuing vessel, which by now was crossing the bar, "must stand further out beyond the shoals. Then slip up through the small gut--the ruined farmstead marks it--and

so into the mere. You know Mother Martha, the mad woman who is nicknamed the Mare? She will be watching at the mouth of it; she always is. Moreover, I caused her to be warned that we might pass her way, and if you hoist the white flag with a red cross--it lies in the locker--or, after nightfall, hang out four lamps upon your starboard side, she will come aboard to pilot you, for she knows this boat well. To her also you can tell your business without fear, for she will help you, and be as secret as the dead. Then bury the treasure, or sink it, or blow it up, or do what you can, but, in the name of God, to whom I go, I charge you do not let it fall into the hands of Ramiro and his Spanish rats who are at your heels."

As Hans spoke he sank down upon the deck. Foy ran to support him, but he pushed him aside with a feeble hand. "Let me be," he whispered. "I wish to pray. I have set you a course. Follow it to the end."

Then Martin took the tiller while Foy watched Hans. In ten minutes he was dead.

Now they were running northwards with a fierce wind abeam of them, and the larger Spanish ship behind, but standing further out to sea to avoid the banks. Half an hour later the wind, which was gathering to a gale, shifted several points to the north, so that they must beat up against it under reefed canvas. Still they held on without accident, Foy attending to the sail and Martin steering. The Swallow was a good sea

boat, and if their progress was slow so was that of their pursuer, which dogged them continually, sometimes a mile away and sometimes less. At length, towards evening, they caught sight of a ruined house that marked the channel of the little gut, one of the outlets of the Haarlem Mere.

"The sea runs high upon the bar and it is ebb tide," said Foy.

"Even so we must try it, master," answered Martin. "Perhaps she will scrape through," and he put the Swallow about and ran for the mouth of the gut.

Here the waves were mountainous and much water came aboard. Moreover, three times they bumped upon the bar, till at length, to their joy, they found themselves in the calm stream of the gut, and, by shifting the sail, were able to draw it up, though very slowly.

"At least we have got a start of them," said Foy, "for they can never get across until the tide rises."

"We shall need it all," answered Martin; "so now hoist the white flag and let us eat while we may."

While they ate the sun sank, and the wind blew so that scarcely could they make a knot an hour, shift the sail as they might. Then, as there was no sign of Mother Martha, or any other pilot, they hung out the four lamps upon the starboard side, and, with a flapping sail, drifted on

gradually, till at length they reached the mouth of the great mere, an infinite waste of waters--deep in some places, shallow in others, and spotted everywhere with islets. Now the wind turned against them altogether, and, the darkness closing in, they were forced to drop anchor, fearing lest otherwise they should go ashore. One comfort they had, however: as yet nothing could be seen of their pursuers.

Then, for the first time, their spirits failed them a little, and they stood together near the stern wondering what they should do. It was while they rested thus that suddenly a figure appeared before them as though it had risen from the deck of the ship. No sound of oars or footsteps had reached their ears, yet there, outlined against the dim sky, was the figure.

"I think that friend Hans has come to life again," said Martin with a slight quaver in his voice, for Martin was terribly afraid of ghosts.

"And I think that a Spaniard has found us," said Foy, drawing his knife.

Then a hoarse voice spoke, saying, "Who are you that signal for a pilot on my waters?"

"The question is--who are you?" answered Foy, "and be so good as to tell us quickly."

"I am the pilot," said the voice, "and this boat by the rig of her and

her signals should be the Swallow of The Hague, but why must I crawl aboard of her across the corpse of a dead man?"

"Come into the cabin, pilot, and we will tell you," said Foy.

"Very well, Mynheer." So Foy led the way to the cabin, but Martin stopped behind a while.

"We have found our guide, so what is the use of the lamps?" he said to himself as he extinguished them all, except one which he brought with him into the cabin. Foy was waiting for him by the door and they entered the place together. At the end of it the light of the lamp showed them a strange figure clad in skins so shapeless and sack-like that it was impossible to say whether the form beneath were male or female. The figure was bareheaded, and about the brow locks of grizzled hair hung in tufts. The face, in which were set a pair of wandering grey eyes, was deep cut, tanned brown by exposure, scarred, and very ugly, with withered lips and projecting teeth.

"Good even to you, Dirk van Goorl's son, and to you, Red Martin. I am Mother Martha, she whom the Spaniards call the Mare and the Lake-witch."

"Little need to tell us that, mother," said Foy, "although it is true that many years have gone by since I set eyes on you."

Martha smiled grimly as she answered, "Yes, many years. Well, what

have you fat Leyden burghers to do with a poor old night-hag, except of course in times of trouble? Not that I blame you, for it is not well that you, or your parents either, should be known to traffic with such as I. Now, what is your business with me, for the signals show that you have business, and why does the corpse of Hendrik Brant's foster-brother lie there in the stern?"

"Because, to be plain, we have Hendrik Brant's treasure on board, mother, and for the rest look yonder--" and he pointed to what his eye had just caught sight of two or three miles away, a faint light, too low and too red for a star, that could only come from a lantern hung at the masthead of a ship.

Martha nodded. "Spaniards after you, poling through the gut against the wind. Come on, there is no time to lose. Bring your boat round, and we will tow the Swallow to where she will lie safe to-night."

Five minutes later they were all three of them rowing the oar boat in which they had escaped from The Hague towards some unknown point in the darkness, slowly dragging after them the little ship Swallow. As they went, Foy told Martha all the story of their mission and escape.

"I have heard of this treasure before," she said, "all the Netherlands has heard of Brant's hoard. Also dead Hans there let me know that perhaps it might come this way, for in such matters he thought that I

could be trusted," and she smiled grimly. "And now what would you do?"

"Fulfil our orders," said Foy. "Hide it if we can; if not, destroy it."

"Better the first than the last," interrupted Martin. "Hide the treasure, say I, and destroy the Spaniards, if Mother Martha here can think of a plan."

"We might sink the ship," suggested Foy.

"And leave her mast for a beacon," added Martin sarcastically.

"Or put the stuff into the boat and sink that."

"And never find it again in this great sea," objected Martin.

All this while Martha steered the boat as calmly as though it were daylight. They had left the open water, and were passing slowly in and out among islets, yet she never seemed to be doubtful or to hesitate. At length they felt the Swallow behind them take the mud gently, whereon Martha led the way aboard of her and threw out the anchor, saying that here was her berth for the night.

"Now," she said, "bring up this gold and lay it in the boat, for if you would save it there is much to do before dawn."



So Foy and Martin went down while Martha, hanging over the hatchway, held the lighted lamp above them, since they dared not take it near the powder. Moving the bags of salt, soon they came to the five barrels of treasure marked B, and, strong though they were, it was no easy task for the pair of them by the help of a pulley to sling them over the ship's side into the boat. At last it was done, and the place of the barrels having been filled with salt bags, they took two iron spades which were provided for such a task as this, and started, Martha steering as before. For an hour or more they rowed in and out among endless islands, at the dim shores of which Martha stared as they passed, till at length she motioned to them to ship their oars, and they touched ground.

Leaping from the boat she made it fast and vanished among the reeds to reconnoitre. Presently she returned again, saying that this was the place. Then began the heavy labour of rolling the casks of treasure for thirty yards or more along otter paths that pierced the dense growth of reeds.

Now, having first carefully cut out reed sods in a place chosen by Martha, Foy and Martin set to their task of digging a great hole by the light of the stars. Hard indeed they toiled at it, yet had it not been for the softness of the marshy soil, they could not have got done while the night lasted, for the grave that would contain those barrels must be both wide and deep. After three feet of earth had been removed, they came to the level of the lake, and for the rest of the time worked in water, throwing up shovelfuls of mud. Still at last it was done, and

the five barrels standing side by side in the water were covered up with soil and roughly planted over with the reed turf.

"Let us be going," said Martha. "There is no time to lose." So they straightened their backs and wiped the sweat from their brows.

"There is earth lying about, which may tell its story," said Martin.

"Yes," she replied, "if any see it within the next ten days, after which in this damp place the mosses will have hidden it."

"Well, we have done our best," said Foy, as he washed his mud-stained boots in the water, "and now the stuff must take its chance."

Then once more they entered the boat and rowed away somewhat wearily, Martha steering them.

On they went and on, till Foy, tired out, nearly fell asleep at his oar. Suddenly Martha tapped him on the shoulder. He looked up and there, not two hundred yards away, its tapering mast showing dimly against the sky, was the vessel that had pursued them from The Hague, a single lantern burning on its stern. Martha looked and grunted; then she leant forward and whispered to them imperiously.

"It is madness," gasped Martin.

"Do as I bid you," she hissed, and they let the boat drift with the wind till it came to a little island within thirty yards of the anchored vessel, an island with a willow tree growing upon its shore. "Hold to the twigs of the tree," she muttered, "and wait till I come again." Not knowing what else to do, they obeyed.

Then Martha rose and they saw that she had slipped off her garment of skins, and stood before them, a gaunt white figure armed with a gleaming knife. Next she put the knife to her mouth, and, nipping it between her teeth, slid into the water silently as a diving bird. A minute passed, not more, and they saw that something was climbing up the cable of the ship.

"What is she going to do?" whispered Foy.

"God in Heaven knows," answered Martin, "but if she does not come back good-bye to Heer Brant's treasure, for she alone can find it again."

They waited, holding their breaths, till presently a curious choking sound floated to them, and the lantern on the ship vanished. Two minutes later a hand with a knife in it appeared over the gunwale of the boat, followed by a grey head. Martin put out his great arm and lifted, and, lo! the white form slid down between them like a big salmon turned out of a net.

"Put about and row," it gasped, and they obeyed while the Mare clothed

herself again in her skin garment.

"What have you done?" asked Foy.

"Something," she replied with a fierce chuckle. "I have stabbed the watchman--he thought I was a ghost, and was too frightened to call out. I have cut the cable, and I think that I have fired the ship. Ah! look! but row--row round the corner of the island."

They gave way, and as they turned the bank of reeds glanced behind them, to see a tall tongue of fire shooting up the cordage of the ship, and to hear a babel of frightened and angry voices.

Ten minutes later they were on board the Swallow, and from her deck watching the fierce flare of the burning Spanish vessel nearly a mile away. Here they ate and drank, for they needed food badly.

"What shall we do now?" asked Foy when they had finished.

"Nothing at present," answered Martha, "but give me pen and paper."

They found them, and having shrouded the little window of the cabin, she sat at the table and very slowly but with much skill drew a plan, or rather a picture, of this portion of the Haarlem Mere. In that plan were

marked many islands according to their natural shapes, twenty of them

perhaps, and upon one of these she set a cross.

"Take it and hide it," said Martha, when it was finished, "so that if I die you may know where to dig for Brant's gold. With this in your hand you cannot fail to find it, for I draw well. Remember that it lies thirty paces due south of the only spot where it is easy to land upon that island."

"What shall I do with this picture which is worth so much?" said Foy helplessly, "for in truth I fear to keep the thing."

"Give it to me, master," said Martin; "the secret of the treasure may as well lie with the legacy that is charged on it." Then once more he unscrewed the handle of the sword Silence, and having folded up the paper and wrapped it round with a piece of linen, he thrust it away into the hollow hilt.

"Now that sword is worth more than some people might think," Martin said as he restored it to the scabbard, "but I hope that those who come to seek its secret may have to travel up its blade. Well, when shall we be moving?"

"Listen," said Martha. "Would you two men dare a great deed upon those Spaniards? Their ship is burnt, but there are a score or over of them, and they have two large boats. Now at the dawn they will see the mast of this vessel and attack it in the boats thinking to find the treasure."

Well, if as they win aboard we can manage to fire the matches----"

"There may be fewer Spaniards left to plague us," suggested Foy.

"And believing it to be blown up no one will trouble about that money further," added Martin. "Oh! the plan is good, but dangerous. Come, let us talk it over."

The dawn broke in a flood of yellow light on the surface of the Haarlem Mere. Presently from the direction of the Spanish vessel, which was still burning sullenly, came a sound of beating oars. Now the three watchers in the Swallow saw two boatloads of armed men, one of them with a small sail set, swooping down towards them. When they were within a hundred yards Martha muttered, "It is time," and Foy ran hither and thither with a candle firing the slow-matches; also to make sure he cast the candle among a few handfuls of oil-soaked shreds of canvas that lay ready at the bottom of the hatchway. Then with the others, without the Spaniards being able to see them, he slipped over the side of the little vessel into the shallow water that was clothed with tall reeds, and waded through it to the island.

Once on firm land, they ran a hundred yards or so till they reached a clump of swamp willows, and took shelter behind them. Indeed, Foy did more, for he climbed the trunk of one of the willows high enough to see

over the reeds to the ship Swallow and the lake beyond. By this time the Spaniards were alongside the Swallow, for he could hear their captain hailing him who leant over the taffrail, and commanding all on board to surrender under pain of being put to death. But from the man in the stern came no answer, which was scarcely strange, seeing that it was the dead pilot, Hans, to whom they talked in the misty dawn, whose body Martin had lashed thus to deceive them. So they fired at the pilot, who took no notice, and then began to clamber on board the ship. Presently all the men were out of the first boat--that with the sail set on it--except two, the steersman and the captain, whom, from his dress and demeanour, Foy took to be the one-eyed Spaniard, Ramiro, although of this he was too far off to make sure. It was certain, however, that this man did not mean to board the Swallow, for of a sudden he put his boat about, and the wind catching the sail soon drew him clear of her.

"That fellow is cunning," said Foy to Martin and Martha below, "and I was a fool to light the tarred canvas, for he has seen the smoke drawing up the hatchway."

"And having had enough fire for one night, thinks that he will leave his mates to quench it," added Martin.

"The second boat is coming alongside," went on Foy, "and surely the mine should spring."

"Scarcely time yet," answered Martin, "the matches were set for six

minutes."

Then followed a silence in which the three of them watched and listened with beating hearts. In it they heard a voice call out that the steersman was dead, and the answering voice of the officer in the boat, whom Foy had been right in supposing to be Ramiro, warning them to beware of treachery. Now suddenly arose a shout of "A mine! a mine!" for they had found one of the lighted fuses.

"They are running for their boat," said Foy, "and the captain is sailing farther off. Heavens! how they scream."

As the words passed his lips a tongue of flame shot to the very skies. The island seemed to rock, a fierce rush of air struck Foy and shook him from the tree. Then came a dreadful, thunderous sound, and lo! the sky was darkened with fragments of wreck, limbs of men, a grey cloud of salt and torn shreds of sail and cargo, which fell here, there, and everywhere about and beyond them.

In five seconds it was over, and the three of them, shaken but unhurt, were clinging to each other on the ground. Then as the dark pall of smoke drifted southward Foy scrambled up his tree again. But now there was little to be seen, for the Swallow had vanished utterly, and for many yards round where she lay the wreckage-strewn water was black as ink with the stirred mud. The Spaniards had gone also, nothing of them was left, save the two men and the boat which rode unhurt at a distance.



Foy stared at them. The steersman was seated and wringing his hands, while the captain, on whose armour the rays of the rising sun now shone brightly, held to the mast like one stunned, and gazed at the place where, a minute before, had been a ship and a troop of living men. Presently he seemed to recover himself, for he issued an order, whereon the boat's head went about, and she began to glide away.

"Now we had best try to catch him," said Martha, who, by standing up, could see this also.

"Nay, let him be," answered Foy, "we have sent enough men to their account," and he shuddered.

"As you will, master," grumbled Martin, "but I tell you it is not wise. That man is too clever to be allowed to live, else he would have accompanied the others on board and perished with them."

"Oh! I am sick," replied Foy. "The wind from that powder has shaken me. Settle it as you will with Mother Martha and leave me in peace."

So Martin turned to speak with Martha, but she was not there. Chuckling to herself in the madness of her hate and the glory of this great revenge, she had slipped away, knife in hand, to discover whether perchance any of the powder-blasted Spaniards still lived. Fortunately for them they did not, the shock had killed them all, even those who at the first alarm had thrown themselves into the water. At length

Martin found her clapping her hands and crooning above a dead body, so shattered that no one could tell to what manner of man it had belonged, and led her away.

But although she was keen enough for the chase, by now it was too late, for, travelling before the strong wind, Ramiro and his boat had vanished.