

the snow, but glad shall be my welcome and golden my reward, for the good information I bear,' he continued in a burst of confidence. 'Aha, nothing pleases Master Topcliffe so much as to be told where he may swiftly and surely lay his rough hands on a Popish priest.'

'Soho, so it is blood money you seek?' contemptuously inquired Langhorne.

'Perhaps it is no more blood money than are the doubloons and pistoles which you have taken, my scandalised master mariner, from the dead Spaniards,' retorted the apprentice. 'Yet seek I more than blood money; I covet sweet revenge on a tyrant master who whipped me naked till the blood ran down; my only offence going to the playhouse and remaining out all night despite his sovereign command. Master of mine he shall be no more, but the gibbet shall be his when it gets its own. It's a piece of rank treason, you know, and a hanging matter, continued the fellow, with a vindictive grin, 'for a man to receive a priest of Rome into his house.'

The buccaneer's eyes flashed with recognition. 'Already have I seen thee this night, sirrah. Thy name is Simon.'

'Simon Stokes, at your fair and honorable service.'

'A runaway poltroon, who in danger abandoned his master's daughter?'

'Small chance, bold sailor, had my poor cudgel against two robbers' swords.'

'And who would now bring trouble to the bed of his dying mistress?'

'She was kind to me, 'tis true, but—well, by this time, belike, the old lady is dead.'

'Out, reptile of infamy!' cried Langhorne in anger and disgust. 'Curs and traitors such as thou are too vile to be let breathe and pollute the air. Ho, tapster, the score, for fain would I forget in sleep this tale of choicest villainy.' As he opened his wallet to pay he inadvertently drew forth the crucifix he had found. It was of rich ornamentation, peculiar make. At sight of it the malignant apprentice uttered an exclamation of surprise and sarcasm.

'Save me, I have seen that emblem of idolatry before—ay, a score, a hundred times! So, virtuous master mariner, thou hast ceased buccaneering on the Spanish Main to become a cutpurse in London. That golden article is the property of my master's daughter—my late master's daughter—stolen from her, as I swear I know how, even this very night.'

'Who is thy mistress, viper?'

'Mistress Cicely Langhorne, daughter of Adam Langhorne, the mercer.'

'Judgment of heaven—my sister!'

Guy Langhorne sprang to his feet with livid face and blazing eyes, at sight of whose dreadful glare, in which was concentrated a decade of buccaneering ferocity, the malignant craven Simon Stokes with a cry of alarm fled out into the night. Quickly after the apprentice, without waiting to pick up hat or cloak, plunged Langhorne.

But for a few moments did the incident cause the customers of the Mermaid to suspend their drinking and chatter; only an ordinary brawl they considered, that had best end in bloodshed if there were to be any, on the outside.

Terror lent speed to the apprentice, who almost immediately disappeared in the darkness and the whirling snow. The pursuer, baffled, bewildered, with despair gnawing at his vitals and his bosom chilly and shuddering with greater fear than he had felt in all his fights on sea and land, rushed blindly, wildly, hither and thither, his eager gaze vainly trying to pierce the black shroud of night for a flying form, his voice frantically calling with threats and pleadings on the invisible fugitive to stop. At length he stood defeated, tense with despairful thought of the immediate grim shadow of ruin and death that hovered over those he held dearest on earth: His mother dying, his father in peril of the gibbet! A gentle old clergyman doomed to inhuman butchery! He ground his teeth with impotent rage, while the snow fell on his uncovered head and beat with cold fingers on his burning temples.

'I shall go and warn them,' he thought. 'Heaven grant I get there before the bloodhounds of the penal law.'

But where to find the house? Where lived his father, the mercer, Adam Langhorne? He had taken imperfect note of the location, and now he might not be able to find it until—too late!

Anxiously he hurried through street after street, looking eagerly to right and left, but to no avail. How was it, he asked himself bitterly, that he had not recognised his only and fondly-loved sister Cicely on meeting her, nor Cicely him? He

felt accursed. A deep-voiced clock struck three. It sounded to him like a knell of doom.

At length he met two guardians of the night. Adam Langhorne? Yes, they well knew the worthy merchant and his dwelling, and they showed the house and thankfully received largesse. A girl's voice challenged when he knocked.

'Open, Cicely, open—it is I, your brother Guy, from over the sea.'

Small time was there for words of greeting, either warm, cold or indifferent.

'Father, get the priest away from here at once, or you and he are lost. Your apprentice Simon has gone to spy on you to Topcliffe. Get the Father hence quickly—anywhere! Where is he?'

'He is still here, my son. Welcome be the shelter of our humble roof to the man of God.'

'More welcome than safe, father; hasten him forth, for the bloodhounds are coming. How fares my mother?'

'She has returned from the valley of the shadow, Guy. Great has been her improvement this night, with her mind eased by her happy receiving of the last sacraments.'

In a few moments Guy Langhorne was kneeling by his mother's bedside, filled with poignant emotion, yet rejoicing at the great happiness beaming on her face as with her worn hands she fondly stroked his dark, wet hair.

'Guy, Guy, after all those years of weary waiting! Oh, my son, my own and only boy, I knew you would come!'

'Yes, mother, to the bygone life never to return. Pardon me, mother, for a while. All is lost,' he thought, as he descended the stairs.

For at the front door of his house there was a loud and peremptory knocking. Downstairs, the mercer and the grey-haired priest stood cloaked and prepared for departure when came that blood-chilling summons.

'Ho, within there, open the door, open at once to officers of the law,' commanded a loud voice, and the knocking was repeated.

Guy stepped to the front and drew his Spanish blade. 'Fly by the back way,' he said; 'I'll keep them at bay till you escape.'

But now the door, which, by accident, had been left unfastened, swung open. Four of the night watch walked in, bearing a burthen which they deposited in the passage. It was the body of a stout young man, with blood clotting the hair and streaking the white face.

'It is one of your apprentices, Master Langhorne,' explained the leader.

'Yes, it is Simon Stokes,' said the mercer.

'We found him on the street leading to the Tower, lying unconscious in a deep and dangerous pit, into which, storm-blinded, he stumbled and fell. His skull is seriously fractured, and it will take him many weeks to recover, if he ever does.'

'The unfortunate youth shall be duly attended to,' said the mercer. 'Cicely, wine for the faithful nightwatch.'

Great, even to the point of exhilaration, was the scene of relief and joy that asserted itself in the household when the watch, refreshed, departed.

'Verily, the Lord is kind to-night to this good home,' remarked the old priest. 'The prodigal son has returned, and the angel of death has passed us by.'

While the ex-buccaneer made an impulsive and fervent act of faith by taking out and kissing a golden crucifix.—Rosary Magazine.

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