



# THE DARK FRIGATE

CHARLES BOARDMAN HAWES

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Wherein is told the story of *Philip Marsham*  
who lived in the time of King Charles  
and was bred a sailor  
but came home to England after many hazards  
by sea and land and fought for the King at Newbury  
and lost a great inheritance and departed for Barbados  
in the same ship, by curious chance, in which  
he had long before adventured  
with the pirates.

by **CHARLES BOARDMAN HAWES**

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TO  
GEORGE W. CABLE  
WITH WARM ADMIRATION AND FILIAL AFFECTION

*From curious old books, many of them forgotten save  
by students of archaic days at sea, I have taken  
words and phrases and incidents. The words and phrases  
I have put into the talk of the men of the Rose of Devon;  
the incidents I have shaped and fitted anew to serve my purpose.*

C. B. H.

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# **THE DARK FRIGATE**



## CHAPTER I FLIGHT

Philip Marsham was bred to the sea as far back as the days when he was cutting his milk teeth, and he never thought he should leave it; but leave it he did, once and again, as I shall tell you.

His father was master of a London ketch, and they say that before the boy could stand unaided on his two feet he would lean himself, as a child does, against the waist in a seaway, and never pipe a whimper when she thrust her bows down and shipped enough water to douse him from head to heels. He lost his mother before he went into breeches and he was climbing the rigging before he could walk alone. He spent two years at school to the good Dr. Josiah Arber at Roehampton, for his father, being a clergyman's son who had run wild in his youth, hoped to do better by the lad than he had done by himself, and was of a mind to send Philip home a scholar to make peace with the grandparents, in the vicarage at Little Grimsby, whom Tom Marsham had not seen in twenty years. But the boy was his father over again, and taking to books with an ill grace, he endured them only until he had learned to read and write and had laid such foundation of mathematics as he hoped would serve his purpose when he came to study navigation. Then, running away by night from his master's house, he joined his father on board the Sarah ketch, who laughed mightily to see how his son took after him, do what he would to make a scholar of the lad. And but for the mercy of God, which laid Philip Marsham on his back with a fever in the spring of his nineteenth year, he had gone down with his father in the ketch Sarah, the night she foundered off the North Foreland.

Moll Stevens kept him, while he lay ill with the fever, in her alehouse in High Street, in the borough of Southwark, and she was good to him after her fashion, for her heart was set on marrying his father. But though she had brought Tom Marsham to heel and had named the day, nothing is sure till the words are said.



When they had news which there was no doubting that Tom Marsham was lost at sea, she was of a mind to send the boy out of her house the hour he was able to walk thence; and so she would have done, if God's providence had not found means to renew his strength before the time and send him packing in wonderful haste, with Moll Stevens and certain others after him in full cry.

For the third day he had come down from his chamber and had taken the great chair by the fire, when there entered a huge-bellied countryman who carried a gun of a kind not familiar to those in the house.

"Ah," Phil heard them whispering, as he sat in the great chair, "here's Jamie Barwick come back again." Then they called out, "Welcome, Jamie, and good-morrow!"

Philip Marsham would have liked well to see the gun himself, since a taste for such gear was born in him; but he had been long bedridden, and though he could easily have walked over to look at it, he let well enough alone and stayed where he was.

They passed it from one to another and marvelled at the craftsmanship, and when they let the butt fall on the floor, the pots rang and the cans tinkled. And now one cried, "Have care which way you point the muzzle." But the countryman who brought it laughed and declared there was no danger, for though it was charged he had spent all his powder and had not primed it.

At last he took it from them all and, spying Moll Stevens, who had heard the bustle and had come to learn the cause, he called for a can of ale. There was no place at hand to set down his gun so he turned to the lad in the chair and cried, "Here, whiteface with the great eyes, take my piece and keep it for me. I am dry—Oh, so dry! Keep it till I have drunk, and gramercy. A can of ale, I say! Hostess! Moll! Moll! Where art thou? A can of ale!"

He flung himself down on a bench and mopped his forehead with his sleeve. He was a huge great man with a vast belly and a deep voice and a fat red face that was smiling one minute and frowning the next.

"Ho! Hostess!" he roared again. "Ale, ale! A can of ale! Moll, I say! A can of ale!"

A hush had fallen upon the room at his first summons, for he had been quiet so long after entering that his clamour amazed all who were present, unless they had known him before, and they now stole glances at him and at one another and at Moll Stevens, who came bustling in again, her face as red as his own, for she was his match in girth and temper.

"Here then!" she snapped, and thumped the can down before him on the great oaken table.

He blew off the topmost foam and thrust his hot face into the ale, but not so deep that he could not send Phil Marsham a wink over the rim.

This Moll perceived and in turn shot at the lad a glance so ill-tempered that any one who saw it must know she rued the day she had taken him under her roof in his illness. He had got many such a glance since word came that his father was lost, and more than glances, too, for as soon as Moll knew there was nothing to gain by keeping his good will she had berated him like the vixen she was at heart, although he was then too ill to raise his head from the sheet.

It was a sad plight for a lad whose grandfather was a gentleman (although he had never seen the old man), and there had been times when he would almost have gone back to school and have swallowed without a whimper the Latin and Greek. But he was stronger now and nearer able to fend for himself and it was in his mind, as he sat in the great chair with the gun, that after a few days at longest he would pay the score in silver from his chest upstairs, and take leave for ever of Moll Stevens and her alehouse. So now, giving her no heed, he began fondling the fat countryman's piece.

The stock was of walnut, polished until a man could see his face in it, and the barrel was of steel chased from breech to muzzle and inlaid with gold and silver. Small wonder that all had been eager to handle it, the lad thought. He saw others in the room furtively observing the gun, and he knew there were men not a hundred leagues away who would have killed the owner to take it.

He even bethought himself, having no lack of conceit in such matters, that the man had done well to pick Phil Marsham to keep it while he drank his ale.

The fellow had gone to the opposite corner of the room and had taken a deep seat just beneath the three long shelves on which stood the three rows of fine platters that were the pride of Moll Stevens's heart.

The platters caught the lad's eye and, raising the gun, he presented it at the uppermost row. Supposing it were loaded and primed, he thought, what a stir and clatter it would make to fire the charge! He smiled, cocked the gun, and rested his finger on the trigger; but he was over weak to hold the gun steady. As he let the muzzle fall, his hand slipped. His throat tightened like a cramp. His hair, he verily believed, rose on end. The gun—primed or no—went off.

He had so far lowered the muzzle that not a shot struck the topmost row of platters, but of the second lower row, not one platter was left standing. The splinters flew in a shower over the whole room, and a dozen stray shots—for the gun was charged to shoot small birds—peppered the fat man about the face and ear. Worst of all, by far, to make good measure of the clatter and clamour, the great mass of the charge, which by grace of God avoided the fat man's head although the wind of it raised his hair, struck fairly a butt of Moll Stevens's richest sack, which six men had raised on a frame to make easier the labour of drawing from it, and shattered a stave so that the goodly wine poured out as if a greater than Moses had smitten a rock with his staff.

Of all in the room, mind you, none was more amazed than Philip Marsham, and indeed for a moment his wits were quite numb. He sat with the gun in his hands, which was still smoking to show who had done the wicked deed, and stared at the splintered platters and at the countryman's furious face, on which rivulets of blood were trickling down, and at the gurgling flood of wine that was belching out on Moll Stevens's dirty floor.

Then in rushed Moll herself with such a face that he hoped never to see the like again. She swept the room at a single glance and bawling, "As I live, 't is that tike, Philip Marsham! Paddock! Hound! Devil's imp!"—at him she came, a billet of Flanders brick in her hand.

He was of no mind to try the quality of her scouring, for although she knew not the meaning of a clean house, she was a brawny wench and her hand and her brick were as rough as her tongue. Further, he perceived that there were others to reckon with, for the countryman was on his feet with a murderous look in his eye and there were six besides him who had started up. Although Phil had little wish to play hare to their hounds, since the fever had left him fit for neither fighting nor running, there was urgent need that he act soon and to a purpose, for Moll and her Flanders brick were upon him.

Warmed by the smell of the good wine run to waste, and marvellously strengthened by the danger of bodily harm if once they laid hands on him, he got out of the great chair as nimbly as if he had not spent three weeks in bed, and, turning like a fox, slipped through the door.

God was good to Philip Marsham, for the gun, as he dropped it, tripped Moll Stevens and sent her sprawling on the threshold; the fat countryman, thinking more of his property than his injury, stooped for the gun; and those two so filled the door that the six were stoppered in the alehouse until with the whoo-bub ringing in his ears Phil had got him out of sight. He had the craft, though they then came after him like hounds let slip, to turn aside and take to earth in a trench hard by, and to lie in hiding there until the hue and cry had come and gone. In faith, he had neither the wind nor the strength to run farther.

It was "Stop thief!"—"Murder's done!"—"Attach the knave!"—"Help! Help!"

Who had dug the trench that was his hiding-place he never knew, but it lay not a furlong from the alehouse door, and as he tumbled into it and sprawled flat on the wet earth he gave the man an orphan's blessing. The hue and cry passed him and went racing down the river; and when the yells had grown fainter, and at last had died quite away, he got up out of the trench and walked as fast as he could in the opposite direction, stopping often to rest, until he had left Moll Stevens's alehouse a good mile behind him. He passed a parish beadle, but the fellow gave him not a single glance; he passed the crier calling for sale the household goods of a man who desired to take his fortune and depart for New England, and the crier (who, one would suppose, knew

everything of the public weal) brushed his coat but hindered him not. In the space of a single furlong he met two Puritans on foot, without enough hair to cover their ears, and two fine gentlemen on horseback whose curls flowed to their shoulders; but neither one nor other gave him let. The rabble of higglers and waggoners from the alehouse, headed by the countryman, Jamie Barwick, and by Moll Stevens herself, had raced far down the river, and Phil Marsham was free to go wherever else his discretion bade him.

Now it would have been his second nature to have fled to the docks, for he was bred a sailor and could haul and reef and steer with any man; but they whom he had no wish to meet had gone that way and in his weakness it had been worse than folly to beard them. His patrimony was forfeit, for although his father had left him a bag of silver, it lay in his chest in Moll Stevens's alehouse, and for fear of hanging he dared not go back after it. She was a vindictive shrew and would have taken his heart's blood to pay him for his blunder. His father was gone and the ketch with him, and, save for a handful of silver the lad had about him, he was penniless. So what would a sailor do, think you, orphaned and penniless and cut off from the sea, but set himself up for a farmer? Phil clapped his hand on his thigh and quietly laughed. That a man needed money and skill for husbandry never entered his foolish head. Were not husbandmen all fond fellows whom a lively sailor man might flier as he pleased? Nay, they knew not so much as one rope from another. Why, then, he would go into the country and set him up as a kind of prince among husbandmen, who had, by all reports, plenty of good nappy liquor to drink and bread and cheese and meat to eat.

With that he turned his back on the sea and London and on Moll Stevens, whom he never saw again. His trafficking with her was well ended, and as well ended his father's affair, in my belief; for the woman had a bitter temper and a sharp tongue, and there are worse things for a free-hearted, jovial man such as Tom Marsham was, than drowning. The son owed her nought that the bag in his chest would not repay many times over, so he set out with all good courage and with the handful of silver that chanced to be in his pocket and, though his legs were weak and he must stop often to rest, by nightfall he had gone miles upon his way.

## CHAPTER II

### A LEAL MAN AND A FOOL

Clouds obscured the sun and a gusty wind set the road-side grasses nodding and rustled the leaves of oak and ash. Phil passed between green fields into a neat village, where men and women turned to look after him as he went, and on into open country, where he came at last to a great estate and a porter's lodge and sat him down and rested. There was a hoarse clamour from a distant rookery, and the wind whispered in two pine trees that grew beside the lodge where a gentleman of curious tastes had planted them. A few drops of rain, beating on the road and rattling on the leaves of a great oak, increased the loneliness that beset him. Where he should lie the night he had no notion, or whence his supper was to come; but the shower blew past and he pressed on till he came to a little hamlet on the border of a heath, where there was a smithy, with a silent man standing by the door.

As he passed the smithy the lad stumbled.

The man looked hard at him as if suspecting some trickery; but when Phil was about to press on without a word the man asked in a low voice, who the de'il gaed yonder on sic like e'en and at sic like hoddin' gait.

At this Phil sat down on a stone, for his weakness had grown on him sorely, and replied that whither he was going he neither knew nor cared. Whereupon the man, whom he knew by his tongue to be a Scot, cried out, "Hech! The lad's falling!" And catching the youth by the arm, he lifted him off the stone and led him into the smithy.

Phil found himself in a chair with straight back and sides, but with seat and backing woven of broad, loose straps, which seemed as easy as the best goose-feathers. "It is nought," he said. "A spell of faintness caught me. I'll be going; I must find an inn; I'll be going now."

"Be still. Ye'll na be off sae soon."

The man thrust a splinter of wood into the coals, and lighting therewith a candle in a lantern, he began rummaging in a cupboard behind the forge, whence he drew out a quarter loaf, a plate of cheese, a jug, and a deep dish in which there was the half of a meat pie. Placing before his guest a table of rough boards blackened with smoke, a great spoon, and a pint pot, he poured from the jug a brimming potful of cider, boiled with good spices and fermented with yeast.

"A wee healsome drappy," said he, "an' then the guid vittle. Dinna be laithfu'."

Raising the pot to his lips the lad drank deep and became aware he was famished for food, although he had not until then thought of hunger. As he ate, the quarter loaf, the cheese, and the half of a meat pie fell victims to his trenchering, and though his host plied the jug to fill his cup, when at last he leaned back he had left no morsel of food nor drop of drink.

Now, for the first time, he looked about him and gave heed to the smoking lantern, the dull glow of the dying sea-coals in the forge, the stern face of the smith who sat opposite him, and the dark recesses of the smithy. Outside was a driving rain and the screech of a gusty wind.

It was strange, he thought, that after all his doubts, he was well fed and dry and warm. The rain rattled against the walls of the smithy and the wind howled. Only to hear the storm was enough to make a man shiver, but warmed by the fire in the forge the lad smiled and nodded. In a moment he was asleep.

"Cam' ye far?" his host asked in a rough voice.

The lad woke with a start. "From London," he said and again he nodded.

The man ran his fingers through his red beard. "God forgie us!" he whispered. "The laddie ha grapit a' the way frae Lon'on."

He got up from his chair and led Phil to a kind of bed in the darkest corner, behind the forge, and covered him and left him there. Going to the door he



looked out into the rain and stood so for a long time.

Two boys, scurrying past in the rain, saw him standing there against the dim light of the lanthorn, and hooted in derision. The wind swept away their voices so that the words were lost, but one stooped and, picking up a stone, flung it at the smithy. It struck the lintel above the man's head and the boys with a squeal of glee vanished into the rain and darkness. The blood rushed to the man's face and his hand slipped under the great leathern apron that he wore.

By morning the storm was gone. The air was clean and cool, and though puddles of water stood by the way, the road had so far dried as to give good footing. All this Philip Marsham saw through the smithy door, upon waking, as he raised himself on his elbow.

He had slept that night with his head behind the cupboard and with his feet under the great bellows of the forge, so narrow was the space in which the smith had built the cot; and where his host had himself slept there was no sign.

The smith now stood in the door. "Na, na," he was saying, "'tis pitch an' pay—siller or nought. For the ance ye hae very foully deceived me. Ye shall hence-forth hae my wark for siller; or, an ye like—"

A volley of rough laughter came booming into the smithy, and then a clatter of hoofs as the man without rode away; but the face of the smith was hot as flame when he turned to the forge, and, as he thrust his fingers through his red beard, an angry light was in his eyes. Reaching for the handle of the bellows, he blew the fire so fiercely that the rockstaff and the whole frame swayed and creaked. He then took up a bar of metal and, breaking it on the anvil with a great blow of the up-hand sledge, studied the grey surface and smiled. He thrust the bar into the white coals and with the slicer he clapped the coals about it.

Now drawing out the bar a little way to see how it was taking its heat, and now thrusting it quickly back again, he brought it to the colour of white flame, and, snatching it out with his pliers and laying it on the face of the

anvil, he shaped it with blow after blow of the hand hammer, thrust it again into the coals and blew up the fire, again laid it on the anvil, and, smiting it until the sparks flew in showers, worked it, with a deftness marvellous in the eyes of the lad, who sat agape at the fury of his strokes, into the shape of a dagger or dirk.

At last, heating it in the coals to the redness of blood and throwing it on the floor to cool, he paced the smithy, muttering to himself. After a time he took it up again and with the files in their order—the rough, the bastard, the fine and the smooth—worked it down, now trying the surface with fingertips, now plying his file as if the Devil were at his elbow and his soul's salvation depended upon haste, until the shape and surface pleased him.

He then thrust it again into the coals and blew up the fire softly, watching the metal with great care till it came to blood-red heat, when he quenched it in a butt of water and, laying it on the bench, rubbed it with a whetstone until the black scurf was gone and the metal was bright. Again he laid it in the coals and slowly heated it, watching with even greater care while the steel turned to the colour of light gold and to the colour of dark gold; then with a deft turn of the pliers he snatched it out and thrust it deep into the water.

As he had worked, his angry haste had subsided and now, drawing out the metal, he studied it closely and smiled. Then he looked up and meeting the eyes of Philip Marsham, who had sat for an hour watching him, he gave a great start and cried, "God forgie us! I hae clean forgot the lad!"

Laying aside his work he pushed before the chair the smoke-stained table he had used the night before, placed on it a bowl and a spoon, and, setting a small kettle on the forge, blew up the fire until the kettle steamed. He then poured porridge from the kettle into the bowl, and bringing from the cupboard a second quarter-loaf, nodded at the lad and, as an afterthought, remarked, "There's a barrel o' water ahint the smiddy, an ye'd wash."

Rising, Phil went out and found the barrel, into which he thrust head and hands to his great refreshment; and returning, he sat down to the bread and porridge.

While Phil ate, the smith worked at a bit of bone which he shaped to his desire as a handle for the dirk.

With light taps of the riveting-hammer he drove it into place and bound it fast with ferules chosen from a box under the cot. He then sat looking a long time at Phil, nodded, smiled, ran his fingers through his beard, smiled again and, with a fine tool, fell to working on the ferules. There had been a friendly look in the lad's eyes, and of friendly looks the smith had got few in England. People bought his work because he was a master craftsman, but the country folk of England had little love for the Scots who came south in King James's time and after, and a man had need to look sharp lest he fall victim to theft or worse than theft. He stopped and again looked at his guest, ran his fingers through his beard and demanded suddenly, "Thy name, laddie?"

"Philip Marsham."

"Ye'll spell it out for me?"

This Phil did.

After working a while longer he said as if in afterthought, "Ye'll bide wi' me a while?"

"No, I must be on my way."

The man sighed heavily but said only, "I hae ta'en a likin' to ye."

Rising, the lad thrust his hand into his bosom and stood as if to take his leave.

"Na, na! Dinna haste! I'll ask ye to gie me help wi' a bit that's yet to be done."

The smith turned his work over and over. He had made a dirk with a handle of bone bound with silver, and, as he turned it, he examined it with utmost care. "'Twill do," he said at last, "and noo for the wark that takes twa pair o' hands."

He pointed to a great grindstone.

'He that will a guid edge win,  
Maun forge thick an' grind thin.'

Sitting down at the grindstone, the lad began to turn it while the smith, now dashing water over it, now putting both hands to the work, ground the dirk. An hour passed, and a second, with no sound save the whir of steel on stone and now and again the muttered words:—

'He that will a guid edge win,  
Maun forge thick an' grind thin.'

Leaning back at last, he said "'Tis done! An' such wark is better suited to a man o' speerit than priggin' farriery."

He tried the edge with his thumb and smiled. From a chip he sliced a thin circular shaving that went with and across and against the grain. Laying a bit of iron on a board, he cut it clean in two with the dirk and the edge showed neither nick nor mark.

Phil rose now, and drew from inside his shirt his small pouch of silver. "I'll pay the score," he said.

The Scot stared at him as if he would not believe his ears, then got up as if to thrust the dirk between the lad's ribs.

"Those are very foul words," he said thickly. "Nae penny nor plack will I take, and were ye a man bearded, I'd leave ye a pudding for the hoodie-craw."

The lad reddened and stammered, "I—I—why, I give you thanks and ask your pardon."

The smith drew himself up and was about to speak harshly, but he saw the lad's eyes filling and knew no harm was intended. He caught his breath and bit his beard. "'Tis forgi'en an' forgot," he cried. "I hae ta'en a likin' to ye an' here's my hand on't. I hae made ye the dirk for a gift an' sin ye maun be on your way, ye shall hae my ane sheath, for I've no the time to mak' ye the mate to it e'er ye'll be leavin' me."

With that he drew out his dirk, sheath and all, and placing the new blade in the old leather, handed it to the lad, saying, "'Tis wrought o' Damascus steel and there's not twa smiths in England could gi'e ye the like."

So with few words but with warm friendliness they parted, and Philip Marsham went away over the heath, wondering how a Scottish smith came to be dwelling so many long leagues south of the border. In those days there were many Scots to be found in England, who had sought long since to better their fortunes by following at the heels of their royal countryman; but he had chanced to meet with few of them.

Not until he had gone miles did he draw the dirk and read, cut in fine old script on the silver ferule, the legend, *Wrought by Colin Samson for Philip Marsham*. There are those who would say it was a miracle out of Bible times, but neither Philip Marsham nor I ever saw a Scot yet who would not share his supper with a poorer man than himself.

At the end of the day he bought food at a cottage where the wife did not scruple to charge him three times the worth of the meal, and that night he lay under a hedge; the day thereafter he chanced upon a shepherd with whom he passed the night on the hills, and the third day he came to an inn where the reckoning took all but a few pence of his silver. So as he set out upon his way in the morning, he knew not whence his supper was to come or what roof should cover his head.

It was a fine day, with white clouds blowing across a blue sky and all the colors as bright as in a painted picture, and there was much for a sailor to marvel at. The grass in the meadows waved in the great wind like running water. The river in the valley was so small and clear and still that, to a man bred at sea, it appeared to be no water at all but a toy laid between hills, with toy villages for children on its banks. Climbing with light quick steps a knoll from which there was a broader prospect, Phil came unawares upon a great thick adder, which lay sunning its tawny flanks and black-marked back but which slipped away into a thicket at the jar of footsteps. The reptile gave him a lively start, but it was soon gone, and from the knoll he saw the valley spread before him for miles.

It was a day to be alive and, though Philip Marsham was adrift in a strange world, with neither chart nor compass to show the way, his strength had at last come back to him and he had the blithe spirit that seasons a journey well. His purse was light but he was no lad to be stayed for lack of wind, and seeing now a man far ahead of him on the road, and perceiving an opportunity to get sailing directions for the future, he leaped down from the knoll and set off after the fellow as hard as he could post.

The man had gone another mile before Phil overhauled him and by then Phil was puffing so loudly that the fellow, who carried a huge book under his arm and bore himself very loftily, turned to see what manner of creature was at his heels. Although he had the air of a great man, his coat was now revealed as worn and spotted and his wristbands were dirty. He frowned, bent his head, and pursued his journey in silence.

"Good morrow to you!" Phil cried and fell into step beside him.

The man answered not a word but frowned and hugged his book and walked the faster.

At that Phil bustled up and laid hand on his dirk. "Good morrow, I say. Hast no tongue between thy teeth?"

The fellow hugged his book the tighter and frowned the darker and fiercely shook his head. "Never," he cried, "was a man assaulted with such diversity of thoughts! Yet here must come a lobcock lapwing and cry 'Good morrow!' I will have you know I am one to bite sooner than to bark."

Already he was striding at a furious gait, yet now, giving a hitch to his mighty book, he made shift to lengthen his stride and go yet faster.

Unhindered by any such load, Phil pressed at his heels.

"A lobcock'? 'A lapwing'?" he cried. "Thou puddling quacksalver—"

Stopping short and giving him a look of dark resentment, the fellow sadly shook his head. "That was a secret and most venomous blow."

"I gave you good morrow and you returned me nought but ill words."

"The shoe must be made for the foot. I have no desire to go posting about the country with a roustering coxcomb but—well—as I say, I have no liking for thy company, which consorts ill with the pressure of many thoughts; but since you know what you know (and the Devil take him who learned you it!), like it or not, I must even keep thy company with such grace as may be. Yea, though thou clappest hand to thy weapon with such facility that I believe thee sunk to thy neck in the Devil's quagmire, bogged in thy sin, and thy hands red with blood."

With that, he set out again but at an ordinary pace, and Phil, wonderfully perplexed by his words, fell into his step.

Again the fellow shook his head very sadly. "A secret and most venomous blow! Th' art a Devon man?"

"Nay, I never saw Devon."

The fellow shot him a strange glance and shifted the book from one arm to the other.

"And have never seen Devon? Never laid foot in Bideford, I'll venture." There was a cunning look in his eyes and again he shifted the book.

"'Tis even so."

"A most venomous blow! This wonderfully poseth me." After a time he said in a very low voice, "There is only one other way. Either you have told me a most wicked lie or Jamie Barwick told you."

The fellow, watching like a cat at a rat-hole, saw Phil start at the sound of Jamie Barwick's name.

"I knew it!" he cried. "He'd tell, he'd tell! He's told before—'twas he took the tale to Devon. He's a tall fellow but I'll hox him yet. It was no fault of mine—though I suppose you'll not believe that."



Upon the mind of Philip Marsham there descended a baffling array of memories. The name of the big countryman with the gun carried him back to that afternoon in Moll Stevens's alehouse, whence with good cause he had fled for his life. And now this stray wight, with a great folio volume under his arm, out of a conglomeration of meaningless words had suddenly thrown at the lad's head the name of Jamie Barwick.

"We must have this out between us," the fellow said at last, breathing hard. "I'll not bear the shadow longer. Come, let us sit while we talk, for thereby we may rest from our travels. You see, 'twas thus and so. Jamie Barwick and I came out of Devon and took service with Sir John—Jamie in the stables, for he has a way with horses, and I as under-steward till my wits should be appreciated, which I made sure, I'd have you know, would be soon, for there are few scholars that can match my curious knowledge of the moon's phases and when to plant corn or of the influence of the planets on all manner of husbandry; and further, I have kept the covenant of the living God, which should make all the devils in hell to tremble; and if England keeps it she shall be saved from burning. So when I made shift to get the ear of Sir John, who hath a sharp nose in all affairs of his estate, said I,—and it took a stout heart, I would have you know, for he is a man of hot temper,—said I, if he would engage a hundred pounds at my direction I would return him in a year's time a gain of a fourth again as much as all he would engage.

"Aha!" quoth he, "'this is speech after mine own heart. A hundred pounds, sayest thou? 'Tis thine to draw upon, and the man who can turn his talents thus shall be steward of all mine estates. But mind,'—and here he put his finger to his nose, for he hath keen scent for a jest,—'thou shalt go elsewhere to try the meat on the dog, for I'll be no laughingstock; and if thou fail'st then shalt thou go packing, bag and baggage, with the dogs at thy heels. Is 't a bargain?'

"Now there was that in his way of speech which liked me little, for I am used to dealing with quieter men and always I have given my wits to booklearning and to Holy Writ rather than to bickering. But I could not then say him nay, for he held his staff thus and so and laughed in his throat in a way that I have a misliking of. So I said him yea, and took in my own name fifty acres of

marsh land, and paid down more than thirty pound sterling, and expended all of eight pound sterling for the ploughing and twice that for the burning, and sowed it with rape-seed at ninepence the acre, and paid twelve pound for the second ploughing and eleven pound for the fencing—all this did I draw from Sir John, who, to pay the Devil his due, gave it me with a free hand; and if God had been pleased to send the ordinary blessing upon mine acres I should have got from it at harvest three hundred or four hundred or even five hundred quarters of good rape-seed. And what with reaping and threshing and all, at four and twenty shillings the quarter I should have repaid him his hundred pounds, threefold or fourfold. All this by the blessing of God should I have done but for some little bugs that came upon mine acres in armies, and the fowls of the air that came in clouds and ate up my rape-seed and my tender young rape, so that I lost all that I laid out. And Sir John would not see that in another year I ought, God favouring me, to get him back his silver I had lost, even as the book says. He is a man of his word and, crying that the jest was worth the money, he sent me out the gate with the dogs at my heels and with Jamie Barwick laughing till his fat belly shook, to see me go; for I was always in terror of the dogs, which are great tall beasts that delight to bark and snap at me. And the last word to greet my ears, ere I thought they would have torn me limb from limb, was Sir John bawling at me, 'Thou puddling quacksalver!' which Jamie Barwick hath told in Bideford, making thereby such mirth that I can no longer abide there but must needs flit about the country. And lo! even thou, who by speech and coat are not of this country at all, dost challenge me by the very words he used."

Phil lay meditating on the queer fate that had placed those words in his mouth. "Who," he said at last, "is this Sir John?"

"Who is Sir John?" The fellow turned and looked at him. "You have come from farther than I thought, not to know Sir John Bristol."

"Sir John Bristol? I cannot say I have heard that name."

"Hast never heard of Sir John Bristol? In faith, thou art indeed a stranger hereabouts. He is a harsh man withal, and doubtless my ill harvest was the judgment of God upon me for hiring myself to serve a cruel, blasphemous

knight who upholdeth episcopacy and the Common Prayer book."

"And whom," asked the lad, "do you serve now?"

"Ah! I, who would make a skillful, faithful, careful steward, am teaching a school of small children, and erecting horoscopes for country bumpkins, so low has that harsh knight's ill-considered jest cast me. 'Twas worth the money,' quoth he; but it had paid him in golden guineas had he had the wit and patience to wait another year." The fellow closed his eyes, tossed back his long hair, and pressed his hands on his forehead. "Never, never," he cried, "was a man assaulted with such diversity of thoughts!"

Philip Marsham contemplated him as if from a distance and thought that never was there a long-haired scarecrow better suited for the butt of a thousand jests.

There were people passing on the road, an old man in a cart, a woman, and two men carrying a jug between them, but Phil was scarcely aware of them, or even of the lank man beside him, so absorbing were his thoughts, until the man rose, clasping his book in both hands and running his tongue over his lips.

His mouth worked nervously. "I must be off, I must be off. There they are again, and the last time I thought I should perish ere I got free of them. O well-beloved, O well-beloved! they have spied me already. If I go by the road, they'll have me; I must go by wood and field."

Turning abruptly, he plunged through a copse and over a hill, whence, his very gait showing his fear, he speedily disappeared.

And the two men, having set their jug down beside the road, were laughing till they reeled against each other, to see him go.