



CHAPTER X

HOW THE MAYOR OF BIDEFORD BAITED HIS HOOK WITH HIS OWN FLESH

And therewith he blent, and cried ha !
As though he had been stricken to the harte.

Palamon and Arcite.

So it befell to Chaucer's knight in prison ; and so it befell also to Don Guzman ; and it befell on this wise.

He settled down quietly enough at Bideford on his parole, in better quarters than he had occupied for many a day, and took things as they came, like a true soldier of fortune ; till, after he had been with Grenvile hardly a month, old Salterne the Mayor came to supper.

Now Don Guzman, however much he might be puzzled at first at our strange English ways of asking burghers and such low-bred folk to eat and drink above the salt, in the company of noble persons, was quite gentleman enough to know that Richard Grenvile was gentleman enough to do only what was correct, and according to the customs and proprieties. So after shrugging the shoulders of his spirit, he submitted to eat and drink at the same board with a tradesman who sat at a desk, and made up ledgers, and took apprentices ; and hearing him talk with Grenvile neither

unwisely nor in a vulgar fashion, actually before the evening was out condescended to exchange words with him himself. Whereon he found him a very prudent and courteous person, quite aware of the Spaniard's superior rank, and making him feel in every sentence that he was aware thereof; and yet holding his own opinion, and asserting his own rights as a wise elder in a fashion which the Spaniard had only seen before among the merchant princes of Genoa and Venice.

At the end of supper, Salterne asked Grenville to do his humble roof the honour, etc. etc., of supping with him the next evening, and then turning to the Don, said quite frankly, that he knew how great a condescension it would be on the part of a nobleman of Spain to sit at the board of a simple merchant: but that if the Spaniard deigned to do him such a favour, he would find that the cheer was fit enough for any rank, whatsoever the company might be; which invitation Don Guzman, being on the whole glad enough of anything to amuse him, graciously condescended to accept, and gained thereby an excellent supper, and, if he had chosen to drink it, much good wine.

Now Mr. Salterne was, of course, as a wise merchant, as ready as any man for an adventure to foreign parts, as was afterwards proved by his great exertions in the settlement of Virginia; and he was, therefore, equally ready to rack the brains of any guest whom he suspected of knowing anything concerning strange lands; and so he thought no shame, first to try to loose his guest's tongue by much good sack, and next to ask him prudent and well-concocted questions concerning the Spanish Main, Peru, the Moluccas, China, the Indies, and all parts.

The first of which schemes failed; for the Spaniard was as abstemious as any monk, and drank little but water; the second succeeded not over well, for the Spaniard was as cunning as any fox, and answered little but wind.

In the midst of which tongue-fence in came the Rose of Torridge, looking as beautiful as usual; and hearing what they were upon, added, artlessly enough, her questions to her father's: to her Don Guzman could not but answer;

and without revealing any very important commercial secrets, gave his host and his host's daughter a very amusing evening.

Now little Eros, though spirits like Frank Leigh's may choose to call him (as, perhaps, he really is to them) the eldest of the gods, and the son of Jove and Venus, yet is reported by other equally good authorities, as Burton has set forth in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, to be after all only the child of idleness and fulness of bread. To which scandalous calumny the thoughts of Don Guzman's heart gave at least a certain colour; for he being idle (as captives needs must be), and also full of bread (for Sir Richard kept a very good table), had already looked round for mere amusement's sake after some one with whom to fall in love. Lady Grenville, as nearest, was, I blush to say, thought of first; but the Spaniard was a man of honour, and Sir Richard his host; so he put away from his mind (with a self-denial on which he plumed himself much) the pleasure of a chase equally exciting to his pride and his love of danger. As for the sinfulness of the said chase, he of course thought no more of that than other Southern Europeans did then, or than (I blush again to have to say it) the English did afterwards in the days of the Stuarts. Nevertheless, he had put Lady Grenville out of his mind; and so left room to take Rose Salterne into it, not with any distinct purpose of wronging her: but, as I said before, half to amuse himself, and half, too, because he could not help it. For there was an innocent freshness about the Rose of Torridge, fond as she was of being admired, which was new to him and most attractive. 'The train of the peacock,' as he said to himself, 'and yet the heart of the dove,' made so charming a combination, that if he could have persuaded her to love no one but him, perhaps he might become fool enough to love no one but her. And at that thought he was seized with a very panic of prudence, and resolved to keep out of her way; and yet the days ran slowly, and Lady Grenville when at home was stupid enough to talk and think about nothing but her husband; and when she went to Stow, and left the Don alone in one corner of the

great house at Bideford, what could he do but lounge down to the butt-gardens to show off his fine black cloak and fine black feather, see the shooting, have a game or two of rackets with the youngsters, a game or two of bowls with the elders, and get himself invited home to supper by Mr. Salterne?

And there, of course, he had it all his own way, and ruled the roast (which he was fond enough of doing) right royally, not only on account of his rank, but because he had something to say worth hearing, as a travelled man. For those times were the day-dawn of English commerce; and not a merchant in Bideford, or in all England, but had his imagination all on fire with projects of discoveries, companies, privileges, patents, and settlements; with gallant rivalry of the brave adventures of Sir Edward Osborne and his new London Company of Turkey Merchants; with the privileges just granted by the Sultan Murad Khan to the English; with the worthy Levant voyages of Roger Bodenham in the great bark *Aucher*, and of John Fox, and Lawrence Aldersey, and John Rule; and with hopes from the vast door for Mediterranean trade, which the crushing of the Venetian power at Famagusta in Cyprus, and the alliance made between Elizabeth and the Grand Turk, had just thrown open. So not a word could fall from the Spaniard about the Mediterranean but took root at once in right fertile soil. Besides, Master Edmund Hogan had been on a successful embassy to the Emperor of Morocco; John Hawkins and George Fenner had been to Guinea (and with the latter Mr. Walter Wren, a Bideford man), and had traded there for musk and civet, gold and grain; and African news was becoming almost as valuable as West Indian. Moreover, but two months before had gone from London Captain Hare in the bark *Mission*, for Brazil, and a company of adventurers with him, with Sheffield hardware, and 'Devonshire and Northern kersies,' hollands and 'Manchester cottons,' for there was a great opening for English goods by the help of one John Whithall, who had married a Spanish heiress, and had an ingenio and slaves in Santos. (Don't smile, reader,

or despise the day of small things, and those who sowed the seed whereof you reap the mighty harvest.) In the meanwhile, Drake had proved not merely the possibility of plundering the American coasts, but of establishing an East Indian trade; Frobisher and Davis, worthy forefathers of our Parrys and Franklins, had begun to bore their way upward through the Northern ice, in search of a passage to China which should avoid the dangers of the Spanish seas; and Anthony Jenkinson, not the least of English travellers, had, in six-and-twenty years of travel in behalf of the Muscovite Company, penetrated into not merely Russia and the Levant, but Persia and Armenia, Bokhara, Tartary, Siberia, and those waste Arctic shores where, thirty years before, the brave Sir Hugh Willoughby,

In Arzina caught,
Perished with all his crew.

Everywhere English commerce, under the genial sunshine of Elizabeth's wise rule, was spreading and taking root; and as Don Guzman talked with his new friends, he soon saw (for he was shrewd enough) that they belonged to a race which must be exterminated if Spain intended to become (as she did intend) the mistress of the world; and that it was not enough for Spain to have seized in the Pope's name the whole new world, and claimed the exclusive right to sail the seas of America; not enough to have crushed the Hollanders; not enough to have degraded the Venetians into her bankers, and the Genoese into her mercenaries; not enough to have incorporated into herself, with the kingdom of Portugal, the whole East Indian trade of Portugal, while these fierce islanders remained to assert, with cunning policy and texts of Scripture, and, if they failed, with sharp shot and cold steel, free seas and free trade for all the nations upon earth. He saw it, and his countrymen saw it too; and therefore the Spanish Armada came: but of that hereafter. And Don Guzman knew also, by hard experience, that these same islanders, who sat in Salterne's parlour, talking broad Devon through their noses, were no mere counters of money and

hucksters of goods: but men who, though they thoroughly hated fighting, and loved making money instead, could fight, upon occasion, after a very dogged and terrible fashion, as well as the bluest blood in Spain; and who sent out their merchant ships armed up to the teeth, and filled with men who had been trained from childhood to use those arms, and had orders to use them without mercy if either Spaniard, Portugal, or other created being dared to stop their money-making. And one evening he waxed quite mad, when, after having civilly enough hinted that if Englishmen came where they had no right to come, they might find themselves sent back again, he was answered by a volley of—

‘We’ll see that, sir.’

‘Depends on who says “No right.”’

‘You found might right,’ said another, ‘when you claimed the Indian seas; we may find right might when we try them.’

‘Try them, then, gentlemen, by all means, if it shall so please your worships; and find the sacred flag of Spain as invincible as ever was the Roman eagle.’

‘We have, sir. Did you ever hear of Francis Drake?’

‘Or of George Fenner and the Portugals at the Azores, one against seven?’

‘Or of John Hawkins, at St. Juan d’Ulloa?’

‘You are insolent burghers,’ said Don Guzman, and rose to go.

‘Sir,’ said old Salterne, ‘as you say, we are burghers and plain men, and some of us have forgotten ourselves a little, perhaps; we must beg you to forgive our want of manners, and to put it down to the strength of my wine; for insolent we never meant to be, especially to a noble gentleman and a foreigner.’

But the Don would not be pacified; and walked out, calling himself an ass and a blinkard for having demeaned himself to such a company, forgetting that he had brought it on himself.

Salterne (prompted by the great devil Mammon) came up to him next day, and begged pardon again; promising, moreover, that none of those who had been so rude should

he henceforth asked to meet him, if he would deign to honour his house once more. And the Don actually was appeased, and went there the very next evening, sneering at himself the whole time for going.

‘ Fool that I am ! that girl has bewitched me, I believe. Go I must, and eat my share of dirt, for her sake.’

So he went; and, cunningly enough, hinted to old Salterne that he had taken such a fancy to him, and felt so bound by his courtesy and hospitality, that he might not object to tell him things which he would not mention to every one; for that the Spaniards were not jealous of single traders, but of any general attempt to deprive them of their hard-earned wealth: that, however, in the meanwhile, there were plenty of opportunities for one man here and there to enrich himself, etc.

Old Salterne, shrewd as he was, had his weak point, and the Spaniard had touched it; and delighted at this opportunity of learning the mysteries of the Spanish monopoly, he often actually set Rose on to draw out the Don, without a fear (so blind does money make men) lest she might be herself drawn in. For, first, he held it as impossible that she would think of marrying a Popish Spaniard as of marrying the man in the moon; and, next, as impossible that he would think of marrying a burgher’s daughter as of marrying a negress; and trusted that the religion of the one, and the family pride of the other, would keep them as separate as beings of two different species. And as for love without marriage, if such a possibility ever crossed him, the thought was rendered absurd; on Rose’s part by her virtue, on which the old man (and rightly) would have staked every farthing he had on earth; and on the Don’s part, by a certain human fondness for the continuity of the carotid artery and the parts adjoining, for which (and that not altogether justly, seeing that Don Guzman cared as little for his own life as he did for his neighbour’s) Mr. Salterne gave him credit. And so it came to pass, that for weeks and months the merchant’s house was the Don’s favourite haunt, and he saw the Rose of Torridge daily, and the Rose of Torridge heard him.

And as for her, poor child, she had never seen such a man. He had, or seemed to have, all the high-bred grace of Frank, and yet he was cast in a manlier mould; he had just enough of his nation's proud self-assertion to make a woman bow before him as before a superior, and yet tact enough to let it very seldom degenerate into that boastfulness of which the Spaniards were then so often and so justly accused. He had marvels to tell by flood and field as many and more than Amyas; and he told them with a grace and an eloquence of which modest, simple, old Amyas possessed nothing. Besides, he was on the spot, and the Leighs were not, nor indeed were any of her old lovers; and what could she do but amuse herself with the only person who came to hand?

So thought, in time, more ladies than she; for the country, the north of it at least, was all but bare just then of young gallants, what with the Netherland wars and the Irish wars; and the Spaniard became soon welcome at every house for many a mile round, and made use of his welcome so freely, and received so much unwonted attention from fair young dames, that his head might have been a little turned, and Rose Salterne have thereby escaped, had not Sir Richard delicately given him to understand that in spite of the free and easy manners of English ladies, brothers were just as jealous, and ladies' honours at least as inexpugnable, as in the land of demureness and Duennas. Don Guzman took the hint well enough, and kept on good terms with the country gentlemen as with their daughters; and to tell the truth, the cunning soldier of fortune found his account in being intimate with all the ladies he could, in order to prevent old Salterne from fancying that he had any peculiar predilection for Mistress Rose.

Nevertheless, Mr. Salterne's parlour being nearest to him, still remained his most common haunt; where, while he discoursed for hours about

Antres vast and deserts idle,
And of the cannibals that each other eat,
Of Anthropophagi and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders,

to the boundless satisfaction of poor Rose's fancy, he took care to season his discourse with scraps of mercantile information, which kept the old merchant always expectant and hankering for more, and made it worth his while to ask the Spaniard in again and again.

And his stories, certainly, were worth hearing. He seemed to have been everywhere, and to have seen everything: born in Peru, and sent home to Spain at ten years old; brought up in Italy; a soldier in the Levant; an adventurer to the East Indies; again in America, first in the islands, and then in Mexico. Then back again to Spain, and thence to Rome, and thence to Ireland. Shipwrecked; captive among savages; looking down the craters of volcanoes; hanging about all the courts of Europe; fighting Turks, Indians, lions, elephants, alligators, and what not, at five-and-thirty he had seen enough for three lives, and knew how to make the best of what he had seen.

He had shared, as a lad, in the horrors of the memorable siege of Famagusta, and had escaped, he hardly knew himself how, from the hands of the victorious Turks, and from the certainty (if he escaped being flayed alive or impaled, as most of the captive officers were) of ending his life as a Janissary at the Sultan's court. He had been at the Battle of the Three Kings; had seen Stukely borne down by a hundred lances, unconquered even in death; and had held upon his knee the head of the dying King of Portugal.

And now, as he said to Rose one evening, what had he left on earth, but a heart trampled as hard as the pavement? Whom had he to love? Who loved him? He had nothing for which to live but fame: and even that was denied to him, a prisoner in a foreign land.

'Had he no kind-*ed*, then?' asked pitying Rose.

'My two sisters are in a convent;—they had neither money nor beauty; so they are dead to me. My brother is a Jesuit, so he is dead to me. My father fell by the hands of Indians in Mexico; my mother, a penniless widow, is companion, duenna—whatsoever they may choose to call it—carrying fans and lapdogs for some princess or other there

in Seville, of no better blood than herself; and I—devil! I have lost even my sword—and so fares the house of De Soto.’

Don Guzman, of course, intended to be pitied, and pitied he was accordingly. And then he would turn the conversation, and begin telling Italian stories, after the Italian fashion, according to his auditory: the pathetic ones when Rose was present, the racy ones when she was absent; so that Rose had wept over the sorrows of Juliet and Desdemona, and over many another moving tale, long before they were ever enacted on an English stage, and the ribs of the Bideford worthies had shaken to many a jest which Cinthio and Bandello’s ghosts must come and make for themselves over again if they wish them to be remembered, for I shall lend them no shove toward immortality.

And so on, and so on. What need of more words? Before a year was out, Rose Salterne was far more in love with Don Guzman than he with her; and both suspected each other’s mind, though neither hinted at the truth; she from fear, and he, to tell the truth, from sheer Spanish pride of blood. For he soon began to find out that he must compromise that blood by marrying the heretic burgher’s daughter, or all his labour would be thrown away.

He had seen with much astonishment, and then practised with much pleasure, that graceful old English fashion of saluting every lady on the cheek at meeting, which (like the old Dutch fashion of asking young ladies out to feasts without their mothers) used to give such cause of brutal calumny and scandal to the coarse minds of Romish visitors from the Continent; and he had seen, too, fuming with jealous rage, more than one Bideford burgher, redolent of onions, profane in that way the velvet cheek of Rose Salterne.

So, one day, he offered his salute in like wise; but he did it when she was alone; for something within (perhaps a guilty conscience) whispered that it might be hardly politic to make the proffer in her father’s presence: however, to his astonishment, he received a prompt though quiet rebuff.

‘No, sir; you should know that my cheek is not for you.’

‘Why,’ said he, stifling his anger, ‘it seems free enough to every counter-jumper in the town!’

Was it love, or simple innocence, which made her answer apologetically?

‘True, Don Guzman; but they are my equals.’

‘And I?’

‘You are a nobleman, sir; and should recollect that you are one.’

‘Well,’ said he, forcing a sneer, ‘it is a strange taste to prefer the shopkeeper!’

‘Prefer?’ said she, forcing a laugh in her turn; ‘it is a mere form among us. They are nothing to me, I can tell you.’

‘And I, then, less than nothing?’

Rose turned very red; but she had nerve to answer—

‘And why should you be anything to me? You have condescended too much, sir, already to us, in giving us many a—many a pleasant evening. You must condescend no farther. You wrong yourself, sir, and me too. No, sir; not a step nearer!—I will not! A salute between equals means nothing: but between you and me—I vow, sir, if you do not leave me this moment, I will complain to my father.’

‘Do so, madam! I care as little for your father’s anger, as you for my misery.’

‘Cruel!’ cried Rose, trembling from head to foot.

‘I love you, madam!’ cried he, throwing himself at her feet. ‘I adore you! Never mention differences of rank to me more; for I have forgotten them; forgotten all but love, all but you, madam! My light, my lodestar, my princess, my goddess! You see where my pride is gone; remember I plead as a suppliant, a beggar—though one who may be one day a prince, a king! ay, and a prince now, a very Lucifer of pride to all except to you; to you a wretch who grovels at your feet, and cries, “Have mercy on me, on my loneliness, my homelessness, my friendlessness.” Ah, Rose (madam I should have said, forgive the madness of my passion), you know not the heart which you break. Cold Northerners, you little dream how a Spaniard can love.

Love? Worship, rather; as I worship you, madam; as I bless the captivity which brought me the sight of you, and the ruin which first made me rich. Is it possible, Saints and Virgin! do my own tears deceive my eyes, or are there tears, too, in those radiant orbs?’

‘Go, sir!’ cried poor Rose, recovering herself suddenly; ‘and let me never see you more.’ And, as a last chance for life, she darted out of the room.

‘Your slave obeys you, madam, and kisses your hands and feet for ever and a day,’ said the cunning Spaniard, and drawing himself up, walked serenely out of the house; while she, poor fool, peeped after him out of her window upstairs, and her heart sank within her as she watched his jaunty and careless air.

How much of that rhapsody of his was honest, how much premeditated, I cannot tell: though she, poor child, began to fancy that it was all a set speech, when she found that he had really taken her at her word, and set foot no more within her father’s house. So she reproached herself for the cruellest of women; settled, that if he died, she should be his murderess; watched for him to pass at the window; in hopes that he might look up, and then hid herself in terror the moment he appeared round the corner; and so forth, and so forth:—one love-making is very like another, and has been so, I suppose, since that first blessed marriage in Paradise, when Adam and Eve made no love at all, but found it ready-made for them from heaven; and really it is fiddling while Rome is burning, to spend more pages over the sorrows of poor little Rose Salterne, while the destinies of Europe are hanging on the marriage between Elizabeth and Anjou: and Sir Humphry Gilbert is stirring heaven and earth, and Devonshire, of course, as the most important portion of the said earth, to carry out his dormant patent, which will give to England in due time (we are not jesting now) Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Canada, and the Northern States; and to Humphrey Gilbert himself something better than a new world, namely, another world, and a crown of glory therein which never fades away.