

The Heart's Highway

By MARY E. WILKINS

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SYNOPSIS OF STORY.

Chapter I.—Harry Wingfield, narrator of the story, is tutor to Mary Cavendish, a belle of the colony of Virginia in 1652, and accompanies her on ride to church. He discovers her implication in a conspiracy against the king. She has impounded arms and ammunition to aid in the plot.

II and III.—Wingfield's past life in England. Although heir to large estates and well educated, he is now a deported convict in Virginia. Wingfield is devoted to his pupil.

IV and V.—Sir Humphrey Hyde, in love with Mary, is with her in the plot, which is laid for the purpose of cutting down the young tobacco plants and thus depriving the king of his revenue under the unjust navigation act.

VI and VII.—Mayday frolics at Drake Hill, home of Wingfield and Mary. Catherine Cavendish beseeches the tutor to save her sister from participation in the conspiracy.

"Came any man save Ralph Drake with her then?" I asked.

"The saints forbid," he replied. "A secret is a secret only when in the keeping of one; with two it findeth legs, but with three it unfoldeth the swiftest wings of flight in all creation and is everywhere with no alighting. Had three come to me with that mad order to bring powder and shot in the stead of silk stockings and garters and cambric shifts and kerchiefs I would have clapped full sail on the Golden Horn, though—he hesitated, then spoke in a whisper—"my mind is against tyranny, to speak you true, though I care not a farthing whether men pray on their knees or their feet, or in gowns or the fashion of Eden. And I care not if they pray at all, nor would I for the sake of that ever have forsaken, had I stood in my grandfather's shoes, the fleshpots of old England for that howling wilderness of Plymouth. But for the sake of doing as I willed, and not as any other man, would I have sailed or swam the seas had they been blood instead of water. And so am I now with a due regard to the wind and the trim of my sails and the ears of talebearers, for a man hath but one head to lose with you of Virginia. But, the Lord, to make a little mide like that run the risk of imprisonment or worse—know you aught of this, sir?"

I shook my head.

Captain Tabor laughed. "And yet she rode straight to the wharf with you yesterday," said he. "Lord, what hidden springs move a woman! I'll warrant, sir, had you known, you might have battened down the hatches fast enough on her will, convict though you are, and, taunt, sir, out you took to me like one who is convict or master at his own choosing and not by the will of any other." So saying, he gave me a look so sharp that for a second I half surmised that he guessed my secret, but knew better at once and said that our business was to deal not with what had been, but with what might be.

"Well," said he, "and what may that be, Master Wingfield, in your opinion? You surely do not mean to hold the Golden Horn in midstream with her cargo undischarged until the day of doom lest your old bedfellow offer up her fair granddaughter on the altar of her loyalty, with me and my hearties for kindling, to say naught of yourself and a few of the best gentlemen of Virginia. I forfeit my head if I set sail for England; naught is left for me that I see that shall save my neck but to turn pirate and king it over the high seas. Having swallowed a small morsel of my Puritan misgivings, what is to hinder my bolting the whole like an exceeding bitter pill, to my complete purging of danger? What say you, Master Wingfield? Small reputation have you to lose, and sure thy reckoning with powers that be leaves thee large creditor. Will you sell with me? My first Lieutenant shall you be, and we will share the booty."

He laughed, and I stared at him that he should stoop to jest, yet having a ready leap of comradeship toward him for it. Then suddenly his mood changed. Close to me he edged and began talking with a serious shrewdness which showed his mind brought fully to bear upon the situation. "You say, sir," said he, "that Mistress Mary Cavendish, in a spirit of youthful daring and levity, gave her grandmother a list of the goods which my Lady Culpeper ordered from England, and which even now is due?" I nodded.

"Know you by what ship?"

"The Earl of Fairfax," I replied, and recalled as I spoke a rumor that my Lord Culpeper designed his daughter Cate for the eldest son of the earl and had so named his ship in honor of him.

"You say that the Earl of Fairfax is even now due?" said Captain Tabor.

I replied that she was hourly expected by what I had learned. Then Captain Tabor, sitting loosely hunched with that utter abandon of all the muscles which one sees in some when they are undergoing a fierce strain of thought, remained silent for a space, his brows knitted. Then suddenly my shoulder tingled with the clasp which he gave it and the cabin rang and rang again with a laugh so loud and gay that it seemed a very note of the May day. "You are merry," I said. But I laughed myself, though somewhat doubtfully, when he unfolded his scheme to me, which was indeed both bold and humorous. He knew well the captain of the Earl of Fairfax, who had been shipmate with him.

"Many a lark ashore have we had together," said Captain Tabor, "and, faith, but I know things about him now which compel him to my turn—the devil's mess have we both been in—

seen the maid for whom you run the risk, Dick," said he. "Tis the fairest—

"What care I for fair maids?" de-

manded he other. "Have I not a wife and seven little ones in old England? What think you dimple or a bright eye hath of weight with me?"

"Time was, Dick," laughed Captain Tabor.

"Time that was no longer is," answered the other crossly; then to me, "Send down my goods by some of those black fellows, and no more parleying, sir."

"But, sir," I said, "twill be a good fifteen pounds for Mistress Watson and the little ones when the merchant be paid."

Never saw I such a rich assortment, and, calling to mind my Lady Culpeper's thin and sour visage, I wondered within myself whether such fine feathers might in her case suffice to make a fine bird, though some of them were for her daughter Cate, who was fair enough. Nothing would do but Mistress Mary, with her lovely face still strange to see with her consternation of puzzlement, should never display every piece to her grandmother and hold against her complexion the rich stuffs to see if the colors suited her.

Madam Cavendish was pleased to express her satisfaction with them all, though with some demur at the extravagance. "Tis rich enough a wardrobe for my Lady Culpeper," said she, at which innocent shrewdness I was driven to hard straits to keep my face grave, but Mistress Catherine was looking on with a countenance as calm as the moon which was just then rising.

Madam Cavendish was pleased especially with one gown of a sky color, shot with silver threads, and ordered that Mistress Mary should wear it to the ball which was to be given at the governor's house the next night.

When I heard that I started, and Catherine shot a pale glance of consternation at me, but Mistress Mary flushed rosy red with rebellion.

"I have no desire to attend my Lord Culpeper's ball, madam," said she.

"Faith, and I'd face a dozen like her for fifteen pounds," declared Captain Tabor. Then, with another great laugh, "I have it; send thy mate, send thy deaf mate, Jack Tarbox, man."

"But she will demand to see the captain."

"Faith, and the captain will be on board the Earl of Fairfax seeing to a leak which she hath sprung and cannot leave her," said Tabor.

"Tis easy to advise. Would you face her thyself without the goods in hand, Captain Tabor?"

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