

The Heart's Highway

By
MARY E.
WILKINS

Copyright, 1906, by DOUGLEDAY, PAGE & CO.

SYNOPSIS OF STORY.

Chapter I—Harry Wingfield, narrator of the story, is tutor to Mary Cavendish, a belle of the colony of Virginia in 1682, and accompanies her on a ride to church. He discovers her implication in a conspiracy against the king. She has imported 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 plantations 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.

"Name any man save Ralph Arden with her then?" I asked.

"The saints forbid," she 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

ramie 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

forsoaken, had I stood in my grand-

fathers' shoes, the feshpots of old

England for that howling wilderness

of Plymouth. But for the sake of do-

ing as I willed, and not as any other

man, would I have blood or swam the

seas had they been siled 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 maid like that run

the risk of imprisonment or worse—

knew you ought 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 battered down the hatches

fast enough on her will, convict though

you be, and, I say, but you look

to me like one who is convict or mas-

ter 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 suspected 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 you old beladone 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 but to see that she sails with 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 sail 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

that I saw that she was not a mere

Close to me he edged and began talk-

shation if I know honest Dick Wat-

son.

The scheme of which Captain Tabor

delivered himself with bursts of laugh-

ter enough to wake the ship was to

keep close to bank and taking ad-

vantage of eddies, and meet the Earl

of Fairfax before she reached James-

town, board her and persuade her cap-

tain to send the cases of my Lady Cul-

peper's goods under cover of night to

the Golden Horn, whence he would un-

load them next morning, and Mistress

Mary could show them to her grand-

mother, and then they were to be re-

shipped with all possible speed and se-

crecy, the Earl of Fairfax meanwhile

lying at anchor at the mouth of the

river, and then delivered to my Lady

Culpeper.

There was but one doubt as to the

success of this curious scheme in my

mind, and that was that Mistress Mary

might not easily lend herself to such

deception. However, Captain Tabor,

with a skill of devising concerning

which I have often wondered whether

it may be more common in the descend-

ants of those who settled in New Eng-

land, who were in such sore straits to

get their own wills, than with us of

Virginia, provided a way through that

difficulty.

"Tis full easy," said he. "You say

that the maid's sister will say naught

against it—and you?"

"I will say naught against her safe-

ty," said I. "What think you I care

for any little quibbles of the truth

when that be in question?"

"Well," said Captain Tabor, "then

must you and Mistress Catherine Cav-

endish show the goods to the maid and

say naught as to the means by which

you came by them; tell her they are

landed from the Golden Horn, as in-

deed they will be; let her think aught

she chooses, that they are indeed her

own, purchased for her by her sister or

her lovers, if she choose to think so, and

bid her display them with no ado to

Madam Cavendish if she value the

safety of the others who are concerned

in this. Betwixt the mystery and the

fright and the sight of the trinkets, if

she be caught on the pattern of any

other maid, show them she will and

hold her tongue till she be out of her

grandmother's presence."

"It can be tried," said I.

"Then the captain sprang out on deck

and ordered a boat lowered and pre-

sently had set me ashore and was him-

self, with a half dozen sailors, fighting

way down stream.

I found my horse on the bank where

I had left him, and by him, waiting

anxiously, Catherine Cavendish. She

listened with deepening eyes while I

told her Captain Tabor's scheme, and

when I had done looked at me with

her beautiful mouth set and her face

as white as a white flower on a bush

beside her. "Mary shall show the

goods," said she. "Such a story will I

tell her as will make her innocent of

aught save bewilderment, and as for

you and me, we are both of us ready to

lie for the sake of her."

CHAPTER IX.

KNOW not how Captain Calvin

Tabor managed his part in

transferring those goods with-

out discovery, but he had a

shrewd head, and no doubt the captain

of the Earl of Fairfax another, and by

8 o'clock that May day the Golden

Horn lay at her wharf discharging her

cargo right lustily with such openness

and shouts of encouragement and

groans of labor 'twas enough to

acquaint all the colony. And straight-

way to the great house they brought

my Lady Culpeper's fallals and clamped

them in the hall where we were all

at supper. Mistress Mary sprang over

her feet and ran to them and bent over

them. "What are these?" she said, all

in a quiver.

"The goods which you ordered, mad-

am," spoke up one of the sailors, with

a grin which he had copied from Cap-

tain Tabor, and pulled a forelock and

ducked his head.

"The goods," said she, speaking faint-

ly, for hers was rather the headlong

course of enthusiasm than the secret

windings of diplomacy.

"Art thou gone daft, sweetheart?"

The goods of which you gave the list

this morning, which have but now

come in on the Golden Horn," spoke up

Catherine sharply.

Madam Cavendish was at table that

night, though moving with graces from

the stiffness of her rheumatic joints,

and she ordered that the sailors be

given cider, the which they drank

with some haste and were gone. Then

Madam Cavendish asked Mistress

Mary, with her wonderful keenness of

gaze, which I never saw excelled, "Are

those the goods which you ordered by

the Golden Horn?" But I answered

for her, knowing that Madam Cav-

endish would pardon such presumption

from me. "Madam, those are the

goods. I have it from Captain Calvin

Tabor himself."

Mistress Mary gave a little gasp and

looked at me and looked at her sister

Catherine, and well I knew it was on

the tip of her tongue to ask with the

whole to her grandmother. And so

she would doubtless have done had

not her wonderment and suspicion that

maybe in some wise Catherine had

conspired to buy for her in England

the goods of which she had cheated

herself and the terror of doing harm

to her sister and me. But never saw I

a maid go so white and red and make

the strife within her so evident.

We were well nigh through supper

when the goods arrived, and Madam

Cavendish ordered some of the slaves

to open the cases, which they did

forthwith, and all my Lady Culpeper's

finery was displayed.

Never saw I such a rich assortment,

and, calling to mind my Lady Cul-

peper's thin and sour visage, I won-

dered 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 with her constancy, to

show in puzzlement, should severally

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 ex-

press her satisfaction with them all,

though with some demur at the ex-

travagance. "Tis rich enough a ward-

robe 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 ris-

ing.

Madam Cavendish was pleased es-

pecially 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 con-

temperance at me, but Mistress Mary