IN THE IRISH BRIGADE

BY

G. A. HENTY

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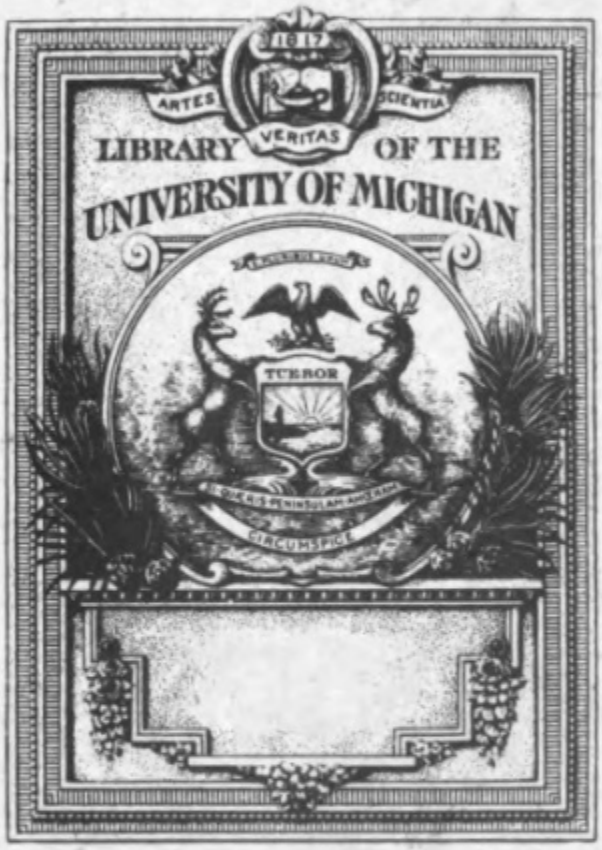

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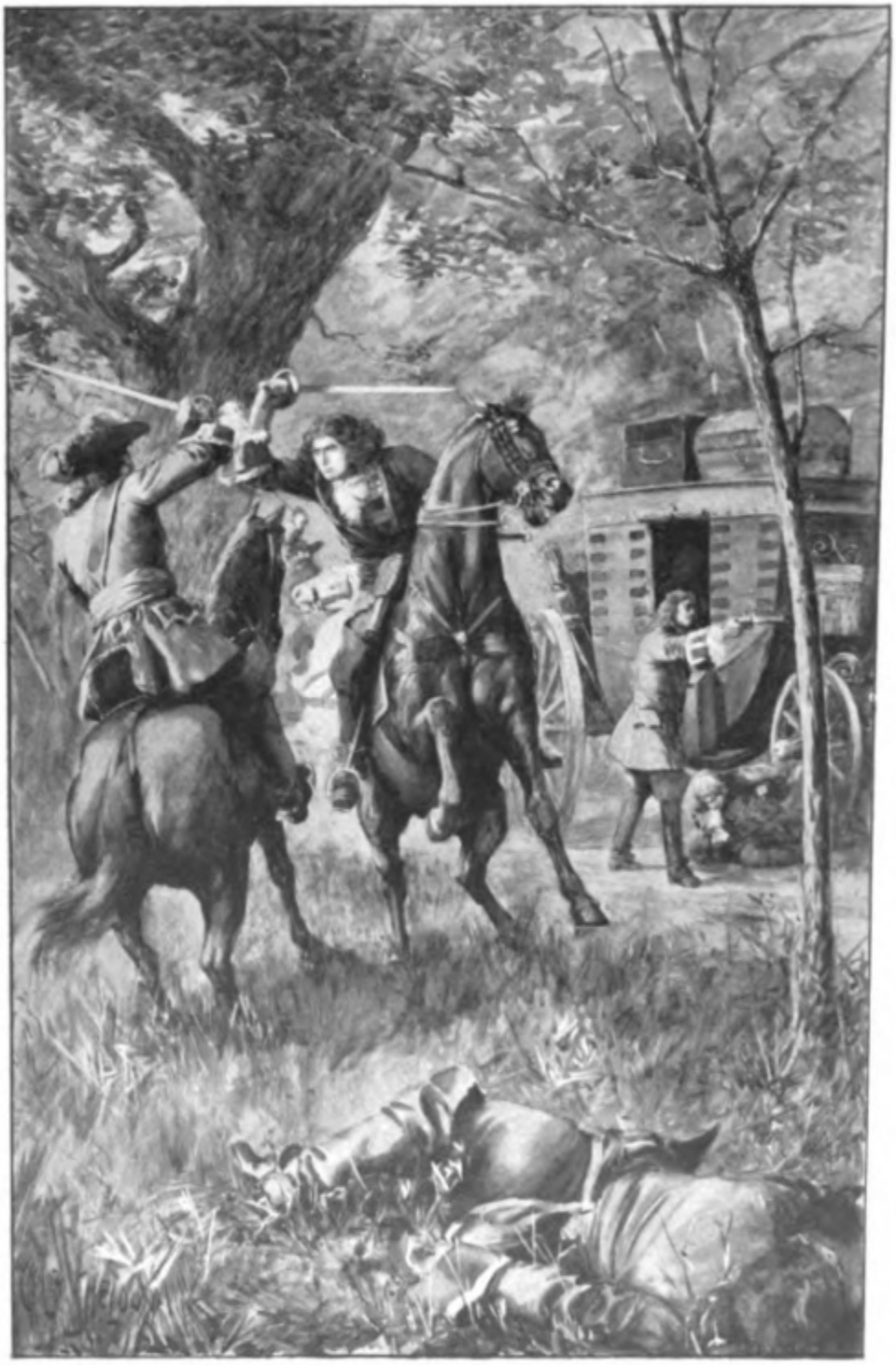

HIS OPPONENT HAD ENOUGH TO DO TO GUARD HIS HEAD.

(PAGE III.)

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IN THE IRISH BRIGADE

A TALE OF
WAR IN FLANDERS AND SPAIN

BY

G. A. HENTY

**Author of "Won by the Sword" "For Name and Fame"
"The Young Colonists" &c.**

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLES M. SHELDON

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1900

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PREFACE

The evils arising from religious persecution, sectarian hatred, ill-government, and oppression were never more strongly illustrated than by the fact that for a century Ireland, which has since that time furnished us with a large proportion of our best soldiers, should have been among our bitterest and most formidable foes, and her sons fought in the ranks of our greatest continental enemy. It was not because they were adherents of the house of Stuart that Irishmen left their native country to take service abroad, but because life in Ireland was rendered well-nigh intolerable for Catholics on account of the nature and severity of the laws against them, and the bitterness with which those laws were carried into effect.

An Irish Catholic had no prospects of employment or advancement at home. He could hold no civil appointment of any kind; he could not serve as an officer, nor even enlist as a private, in the army; he could not hold land; he was subject to imprisonment, and even death, on the most trifling and frivolous accusations brought against him by the satellites of the Irish Government. Not only could he not sit in the parliament of Dublin, but he could not even vote at elections. It was because they believed that the return of the Stuarts would mean relief from at least some of their disabilities, and liberty to carry out the offices of their religion openly, and

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to dwell in peace, free from denunciation and persecution, that the Irish remained so long faithful to the Jacobite cause.

It was not indeed until 1774 that the Catholics in Ireland were admitted to qualify themselves as subjects of the crown, and not until the following year that they were permitted to enlist in the army. Irish regiments had enlisted in France previous to the Convention of Limerick, but it was the Irish army that defended that town, and having been defeated passed over to France, that raised the Irish Brigade to the position of an important factor in the French army, which it held for nearly a hundred years, bearing a prominent part in every siege and battle in Flanders, Germany, Italy, and Spain. A long succession of French marshals and generals have testified to the extraordinary bravery of these troops, and to their good conduct under all circumstances. Not only in France did Irishmen play a prominent part in military matters, but they were conspicuous in every continental army, and their descendants are still to be found bearing honoured names throughout Europe.

Happily those days are past, and for over a hundred years the courage and military capacity of Irishmen have been employed in the service of Great Britain. For records of the doings of some of the regiments of the Irish Brigade during the years 1706-1710, I am indebted to the painstaking account of the Irish Brigade in the service of France by J. C. O'Callaghan; while the accounts of the war in Spain are drawn from the official report given in Boyer's *Annals of the Reign of Queen Anne*, which contains a mine of information of the military and civil events of the time.

G. A. HENTY.

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CONTENTS

Chap.		Page
I.	Fresh from Ireland	1
II.	A Valiant Band	22
III.	A Strange Adventure	40
IV.	At Versailles	61
V.	A New Friend	82
VI.	An Ambuscade	101
VII.	In Paris again	121
VIII.	To Scotland	138
IX.	An Escape from Newgate	157
X.	Kidnapping a Minister	176
XI.	On The Frontier	191
XII.	Oudenarde	210
XIII.	Convalescent	232
XIV.	A Mission	247
XV.	Treachery	267
XVI.	Captured	286
XVII.	An Old Friend	306
XVIII.	War	325
XIX.	In Search of a Family	341
XX.	Gerald O'Carroll	356

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Page

"HIS OPPONENT HAD ENOUGH TO DO TO GUARD HIS HEAD" *Frontispiece*

"JAMES FELT THAT THE WORDS WERE A REPROOF" 24

"DESMOND'S WEAPON PIERCED HIS THROAT" 56

"TAKING A DIAMOND RING FROM HIS FINGER HE HANDED IT TO DESMOND" 86

"THE ENGLISH OFFICER . . . RECEIVED THE SWORDS OF THE FRENCH OFFICERS" 150

"LORD GODOLPHIN . . . WAS SEIZED AND BOUND" . . 182

"THE BRIDLE FELL FROM HIS LEFT HAND" 234

"DESMOND . . . WAS ABLE TO JOIN IN A CHEERFUL CONVERSATION" 240

"ONE OF THE SOLDIERS GAVE AN EXCLAMATION" 264

"CROFTON'S CAVALRY ATTACK THE PORTUGUESE INFANTRY" 318

"THAT EXPLAINS IT ALL!" HE EXCLAIMED 356

"'YOUR UNCLE MUST BE A THOROUGH VILLAIN,' THE DUKE SAID HOTLY" 364

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IN THE IRISH BRIGADE

CHAPTER I

FRESH FROM IRELAND

A NUMBER of officers of O'Brien's regiment of foot, forming a part of the Irish Brigade in the service of France, were gathered in a handsome apartment in the Rue des Fosses on the 20th of June, 1703, when the door opened and their colonel entered with a young officer in the uniform of the regiment.

"I have asked you here, gentlemen all," he said, "to present to you a new comrade, Desmond Kennedy, who, through the good offices of the Marshal de Noailles, has been appointed by His Gracious Majesty to a cornetcy in our regiment. Now, gentlemen, I have known, and doubtless you can all of you recall, instances where the harmony of a regiment has been grievously disturbed and bad blood caused, owing to the want of a clear understanding upon matters connected with a family, which might have been avoided had proper explanations been given at the commencement. I have spoken frankly to Mr. Kennedy, and he has stated to me certain particulars, and has not only authorized me but requested me to repeat them to you, feeling that you had a right to know who it was that had come among you, and so to avoid questioning on matters that are of all others prone to lead to trouble among gentlemen.

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"Beyond the fact that he is a Kennedy, and that his father had to fly from Ireland two years after the siege of Limerick owing to a participation in some plot to bring about a fresh rising in favour of King James, he is unacquainted with his family history. He has never heard from his father, and only knows that he made for France after throwing the usurper's spies off his track, and there can be little doubt that it was his intention to take service in this brigade. There have been several Kennedys in the service, and I have little doubt that this young gentleman's father was the Murroch Kennedy who joined the third regiment about that time and was killed a few months afterwards at the battle of Breda. His death would account for the fact that his son never received a letter from him. At the time when he left Ireland the child was some two years old, and as communication was difficult, and the boy so young, Murroch might very well have put off writing until the boy grew older, not thinking that death might intervene, as it did, to prevent his doing so.

"This is all simple and straightforward enough, and you will, I am sure, have no hesitation in extending the hand of friendship to the son of a gallant Irishman who died fighting in the ranks of the Irish Brigade, exiled, like the rest of us, for loyalty to our king. Still, gentlemen, you might perhaps wonder how it is that he knows no more of his family, and it was that this question might be disposed of once for all, that I am making this statement to you on his behalf. He was not brought up, as you might expect, with some of his father's connections. Whether the family were so scattered that there was no one to whom he could safely entrust the child, I know not, but in point of fact he sent him to one of the last houses where a loyal gentleman would wish his son to be brought up. We all know by name and reputation—I and your majors know him personally—the gallant James O'Car-

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roll, who died fighting bravely at the siege of Limerick. He was succeeded in his estate by his brother John, one of the few Irishmen of good family who turned traitor to his king, and who secured the succession to his brother's possessions by becoming an ardent supporter of the usurper and by changing his religion.

"Why Murroch Kennedy should have chosen such a man as the guardian of his son is a mystery. Whether they had been great friends in earlier times when John O'Carroll professed as warm an attachment to the Stuart cause as did his brother James, or whether Kennedy possessed such knowledge of O'Carroll's traitorous dealings with the Dutchman as would, if generally known, have rendered him so hateful to all loyal men that he could no longer have remained in the country, and so had a hold over him, Mr. Kennedy can tell us nothing. He was brought by his nurse to Castle Kilkargan and was left with John O'Carroll. It is clear that the latter accepted the charge unwillingly, for he sent the child to a farm, where he remained until he was eight years old, and then placed him with the parish priest, who educated him. The lad visited at the houses of the neighboring gentry, shot and rowed and fished with their sons. O'Carroll, however, beyond paying for his maintenance, all but ignored his existence, showing no interest whatever in him up to the time when he furnished him with a letter of introduction to de Noailles, except that he made him a present of a gun as soon as he became of an age to use one. He never attempted to tamper with his loyalty to King James, and in fact, until he sent for him to ask what profession he would choose, he never exchanged ten words with him from the time that he was brought to the castle.

"We can each form our own theory as to the cause of such strange conduct. He may have given a pledge to Murroch

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that the boy should be brought up a loyalist and a true son of the church. It may have been that the loyalty of the boy's father formed so unpleasant a contrast to his own disloyalty and apostasy that he disliked the sight of him. However, these theories can make no difference in our reception of Desmond Kennedy as a gentleman of a good family and as the son of a loyal adherent of the king; and as such, I think that I can from what I have already seen of him, assert that he is one who will be a good comrade, a pleasant companion and a credit to the regiment."

The subject of these remarks was a tall and handsome young fellow, some sixteen years of age. He was already broad at the shoulders, and promised to become an exceedingly powerful man. He had stood somewhat behind the colonel, watching calmly the effect of his words on those whose comrade he was to be, for he knew how punctilious were his countrymen on the subject of family, placing as much or even more value than did the Scots on points of genealogy and of descent from the old families. His frank open face, his bearing and manner, did as much to smooth his way as did the speech of his colonel, who, when he had been introduced to him two days before, had questioned him very closely on the subject of his family. It had almost been a matter of satisfaction to Desmond when he heard from the colonel that the officer who had fallen at Breda was probably the father of whom he had no remembrance, for, from the time he attained the age of boyhood, it had been a grief and pain that he should never have heard from his father, who it now appeared had been prevented by death from ever communicating with him.

The officers received him cordially; they had little doubt that he was the son of the Murroch Kennedy of Dillon's regiment, although, after they separated, some wonder was expressed as to the reason why the latter had committed his

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son to the care of so notorious a traitor as John O'Carroll. Desmond had been specially introduced to two of the young lieutenants, Patrick O'Neil and Phelim O'Sullivan, and these took him off with them to their quarters.

"And what is the last news from Ireland? I suppose that the confiscations have ceased for the excellent reason that they have seized the estates of every loyal gentleman in the country?"

"That was done long ago in the neighbourhood of Kilkargan and, so far as I know, everywhere the feeling is as bitter as ever among those who have been dispossessed, and also among the tenants and peasantry, who have found themselves handed over to the mercies of Dutchmen or other followers of William. At Kilkargan there was not that grievance; but although they had still one of the old family as their master, they could not forgive him for deserting to the side of the usurper, nor for changing his religion in order to do pleasure to William. Certainly he can have derived but little satisfaction from the estates. He seldom showed himself out of doors, never without two or three armed servants, all of whom were strangers from the north, and he was often away for months together at Dublin."

"And what did you do with yourself?"

"I fished, shot, and rode; I had many friends among the gentry of the neighbourhood, who would doubtless have shown less kindness than they did had it not been for the neglect with which O'Carroll treated me. His unpopularity was all in my favour. However, I have one good reason for being obliged to him, since it was through him that I obtained my commission. He told me that in his young days he had been at a French college with the duke. They had been great friends there, and he thought that, in memory of this, de Noailles would procure me a commission."

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"I suppose the real fact was, Kennedy, that he was glad to get rid of you altogether?"

"I think that is likely enough; he certainly raised no objection whatever to my going abroad, and seemed to think it natural that I should choose the Irish Brigade here in preference to the British service. He said something unpleasant about its not being singular that I should be a rebel when I always associated with rebels, to which I replied that it seemed to me that I could hardly be blamed for that, seeing that my father had been what he called a rebel, and that I had little choice in the matter of my associates; and that if I had been educated at a school in England instead of by good Father O'Leary, I might have had other sentiments. He replied that my sentiments were nothing to him one way or the other. He was glad to wash his hands of me altogether; and, at any rate, if I went to France I could drink the health of King James every day without his being involved in my treason."

"It almost looked as if he wished you to grow up a rebel, Kennedy, or he would hardly have placed you in the charge of a priest. He may have reckoned that if there was another rising you might join it, and so be taken off his hands altogether."

"Whatever the reason was, I have certainly cause for satisfaction that he removed me from the care of the farmer's wife with whom he at first placed me, and arranged with the priest to take charge of me altogether. O'Leary himself had been educated at St. Omer, and was a splendid fellow. He was very popular on the country-side, and it was owing to my being with him that I was admitted to the houses of the gentry around, whereas had I remained in the farmhouse in which O'Carroll first placed me, I should only have associated with the sons of other tenants."

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"It loooked at any rate as if he wished to make a gentleman of you, Kennedy."

"Yes, I suppose my father had asked him to do so. At any rate I was infinitely better off than I should have been if he had taken me in at Kilkargan, for in that case I should have had no associates whatever. As it was, I scarcely ever exchanged a word with him until that last meeting. He sent down by one of his servants the letter to the Duc de Noailles, and a bag containing money for my outfit here, and for the purchase of a horse, together with a line saying that he had done his duty by me, and had no desire to hear from me in the future. I was inclined to send the money back to him, but Father O'Leary persuaded me not to do so, saying that I must be in a position to buy these things if I obtained a commission, and that no doubt the money had been given me, not for my own sake, but because he felt that he owed it to me for some service rendered to him by my father."

"It was an ungracious way of doing it," O'Sullivan said, "but in your circumstances I should have taken the money had it come from the old one himself. It is perhaps as well that it should have been done in such a manner that you may well feel you owe no great gratitude towards such a man."

"And how did you get over here?"

"There was no great difficulty about that. In spite of the activity of the English cruisers, constant communication is kept up between Ireland and France, and fortunately I had, a short time before, made the acquaintance of one of your officers, who was over there in disguise gathering recruits for the Brigade."

"Yes, there are a good many agents in Ireland engaged in that work. There is no difficulty in obtaining recruits, for there is scarcely a young Irishman who does not long to be

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with his countrymen who have won such credit out here, and many abstain from joining only because they do not know how to set about it. The work of the agents, then, is principally to arrange means for their crossing the channel. It is well that the supply is steadily kept up, for I can assure you every battle fought makes very heavy gaps in our ranks; but in spite of that, three fresh regiments have been raised in the last year, partly by fresh-comers from Ireland, and partly by Irish deserters from Marlborough's regiments. But I am interrupting your story."

"Well, after leaving Mr. O'Carroll and making my preparations, I paid a visit to the cottage where the officer was staying in disguise, and told him that I wanted to cross. He gave instructions as to how to proceed. I was to go to a certain street in Cork and knock at a certain door; when it was opened I was to say, 'The sea is calm and the sky is bright'. 'Then', he said, 'you will be taken in hand and put on board one of the craft engaged in the work of carrying our recruits across the water. You will be landed at St. Malo, where there is an agent of the Brigade who gives instructions to the recruits as to how they are to proceed, supplies them with money enough for the journey, and a man to accompany each party and act as interpreter on the way.'

"I carried out his instructions, crossed the channel in a lugger with thirty young peasants bound also for Paris, and on landing at St. Malo took my place in the diligence for Paris, having fortunately no need for an interpreter. On my presenting my letter to the Marquis de Noailles he received me with great kindness, and treated me as a guest until he had obtained me a commission in your regiment. Now, when are we likely to go on active service?"

"Soon, I expect," O'Neil said; "but whether we shall be sent to the Peninsula or to Flanders no one knows; in fact it

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is likely enough that we shall for the present remain here until it is seen how matters go, and where reinforcements will be most required. It is but ten months since we came into garrison in Paris, and we may therefore expect to be one of the last regiments ordered off. For my part, I am in no particular hurry to exchange comfortable quarters and good living and such adventures as may fall to the lot of a humble subaltern for roughing it in the field, where, as has been the case ever since the Brigade was formed, we get a good deal more than our fair share of hard work and fighting."

"I should have thought that you would all have liked that," Desmond said in some surprise.

"Enough is as good as a feast," the other said; "and when you have done a few weeks' work in trenches before a town you are besieging, stood knee-deep for hours in mud, soaked to the skin with rain, and with the enemy's shot coming through the parapet every half-minute or so, you will see that it is not all fun and glory. Then, too, you see we have no particular interest in the quarrels between France and Germany. When we fight, we fight rather for the honour of the Irish Brigade than for the glory of France. We have a grudge against the Dutch, and fight them as interested parties, seeing that it was by his Dutch troops that William conquered Ireland. As to the English troops, we have no particular enmity against them. Cromwell's business is an old story, and I don't suppose that the English soldier feels any particular love for Queen Anne, or any animosity against us; and after all, we are nearer in blood to them than we are to the Germans, Austrians, or Spaniards, for there are few even of our oldest families who have not many times since the days of Strongbow intermarried with the English settlers. At any rate, there are still plenty of adherents of King James in England and Scotland. We speak the same language and

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form part of the same nation, and I own that I would rather fight against any foreign foe than against them."

"So would I," Desmond said heartily. "Our only point of difference is that we don't agree as to who should be king. We want a Catholic king, and the majority of the English want a Protestant king. We have fought on the subject, and been beaten. Next time we hope that we may succeed. If the king were to land in England again I would fight heart and soul in his cause; but whether the French beat the English in the present war, or the English beat the French, will not, as far as I can see, make much difference to King James, who, Father O'Leary tells me, is, in his opinion, supported here by the French king from no great love for himself, but because so long as James has adherents in Ireland, Scotland, and England, he is able to play him off against the English Government."

The other young men laughed.

"For heaven's sake, Kennedy, keep such sentiments as these to yourself. It is a matter of faith in our brigade that we are fighting in the cause of King James as against the English usurper. Now that William is dead, and James's daughter on the throne, matters are complicated somewhat; and if the Parliament had settled the succession after Anne on her brother there might have been an end of the quarrel altogether. But now that they have settled it on Sophia of Hanover, granddaughter of James I., and her descendants, subject to the restriction that they shall be Protestants, the quarrel does not seem likely to be healed."

"This priest of yours must be a dangerous man," O'Sullivan said.

"Not at all. I can assure you he is devoted to the king; but as he told me, there is no use in Irishmen always closing their eyes to the true state of things. He says that we must

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rely upon ourselves and our loyal friends in Scotland and England, but that he is sure the king will never be placed on his throne by French bayonets. A small auxiliary force may be sent over, but in all these years Louis has made no real effort to assist him, and even if for his own purposes he sent a great army to England and placed him on the throne, he would not be able to maintain himself there for a month after the French had withdrawn, for even a rightful king would be hated by the people upon whom he had been forced by a foreign power, especially a power that had for centuries been regarded as their chief enemy. If he had been in earnest, Louis would have sent over a great army instead of a few thousand men to Ireland, when such a diversion would have turned the scale in our favour. As he did not do so then, he is not likely to do so in the future. The king is useful to him here by keeping up an agitation that must to some extent cripple the strength of England, but were a Stuart on the throne he would have to listen to the wishes of the majority of his people, and France would gain nothing by placing him there. Moreover, she would lose the services of twenty thousand of her best soldiers, for naturally the exiles would all return home, and what is now the most valuable force in the French service might then become an equally important one in the service of Britain."

"I am glad that this priest of yours remains quietly in Kilkargan, for if he were to come here and expound his views among our regiments he might cause quite a defection among them. At any rate, Kennedy, I should advise you not to take to propagating his views in the regiment. It would not add to your comfort or ours, and there are a good many hot-headed men who would take up the idea that you had been infected by O'Carroll's principles."

"It would not be well for anyone to say as much to my

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face," Desmond said. "Father O'Leary is loyal to the backbone, although he has his own ideas as to the hopelessness of our obtaining any efficient help from Louis. He thinks that it will be far better to trust to our friends at home, and that even did Louis carry out his promises it would in the long run harm rather than benefit King James."

"I am not saying that his view may not be correct, Kennedy. I am only saying that the view would be a very unpopular one among the Brigade. We are fighting for France because we believe that France in turn will aid in placing our rightful king on the throne, and if we once entertained the notion that Louis was deceiving us, that he had no intention of helping us, and that if he did place James on the throne he would alienate all his sympathizers at home, we should ask ourselves of what use was it spending our blood in fighting the battles of France."

"At any rate, I will take your advice, O'Sullivan, and will keep my lips sealed as to Father O'Leary's views. As you see by my presence here, he has not convinced me, and as long as there is a hope that by the aid of a French army we may yet see our king come to his own again, I shall do my best to prove myself a faithful soldier of France. I have chosen my career with my eyes open. A loyal Irishman cannot obtain employment, still less military employment, in his own country, and accordingly we are to be found fighting as soldiers of fortune in every country in Europe. At least there is some chance that we may be benefiting the royal cause by fighting for the country that gave King James shelter and rendered him armed assistance in his struggle with the usurper, and will probably give aid more or less efficient when the next attempt is made. In other countries we are but soldiers of fortune; in France we may regard ourselves as serving our own king by serving King Louis."

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"Do you speak French well, Kennedy?" O'Neil said, changing the conversation abruptly.

"Yes. Father O'Leary took care of that, for I always said that I should take service abroad as there was clearly nothing else to do for a living, and consequently he generally talked to me in that language, and I speak it as well as I do English or Irish."

"You have not had much practice with the sword, I suppose?"

"Not so much as I could wish, though I never lost an opportunity of practising. There were several of the tenants who served in the regiment James O'Carroll raised. I used to practise with them, but I shall lose no time in getting the best instruction I can here."

"You may want it, Kennedy. We are not particularly liked by the French officers, because we are generally chosen to lead an assault or for other desperate service. Duelling is of course forbidden, but that in no way prevents duels from being frequent. As for fighting in action, as far as I have seen or heard, swordsmanship does not go for a great deal. If you press on hard enough, and there are men following you, the enemy give way generally before it comes to hand-to-hand fighting. If, on the other hand, they are the more numerous, and hold their position in the breach, it is the musketry that settles it. It is only when two officers happen to meet in a fierce fight that swordsmanship becomes of importance.

"We have a good school in the regiment, and there are several famous masters of fence in the town, so I should advise you to give a couple of hours a day for a time to making yourself a first-rate swordsman. I have just left off. Our *maître d'armes* tells me I am too hot-headed ever to make a fine blade, but I should fancy, from the way you have been

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arguing, that you are likely to be cooler than most of us in a fencing bout. It is the fault with us all that we are apt to lose our tempers, and indeed Maître Maupert, who is the best teacher here, declines absolutely to take any of us as pupils, saying that while we may do excellently well in battle, he can never hope to make first-class fencers of men who cannot be relied upon to keep their heads cool, and to fight with pointed weapons as calmly as they might fence with a friend in a saloon."

"Well, I shall work hard to become a fair swordsman," Desmond said with a laugh. "I suppose there is plenty of time to spare."

"Plenty. We have a couple of hours' drill in the morning, and after that, except when you are officer of the day, you can spend your time as you like. The colonel and two of his officers attend at the king's levees when he is in Paris, but as he spends the greater portion of his time at Versailles we are seldom called upon for that duty."

A few days after Desmond's arrival the colonel took him with him to St. Germain, where James III, as his supporters called him, held a miniature court. The colonel presented Desmond as a loyal subject of His Majesty and a newly-joined cornet in his regiment. The young prince was a lad of eighteen. He was surrounded by a group of courtiers who had accompanied or followed his father into exile, and whose insistence upon treating him with the respect due to a monarch was in no slight degree galling to him, for as he often declared to the few friends he had about his own age, he had all the disadvantages of being a king without any of the advantages. He was at once taken with the appearance of Desmond Kennedy.

"Ah, Monsieur Kennedy," he said, after the ceremony of presentation had been completed, "I wish that I had all my

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faithful subjects of the Irish Brigade across the water with me, and that I could put on a uniform like yours and fight at their head for my rights."

"I would that you had, Sire; it would be a good day for us all; and believe me, that either in Ireland or Scotland you would soon find yourself at the head of an army many times more numerous than our brigade."

"They all tell me that I must wait," the young prince said with a sigh, "but I have been waiting a long time now, and it seems no nearer than when I was a child. However, the King of France has promised me that it cannot be much longer, and that, when Marlborough is defeated and his army driven back across the sea, he will send a fleet and an army to place me on my throne."

"We shall all rejoice indeed when that time comes, Sire, and I am sure there is not a man in the Irish Brigade who will not follow you to the death, and serve you as faithfully as many of them did your royal father."

"I hope you will come here often, Monsieur Kennedy. I am sure that I shall like you very much, and I think that you would always say what you thought and tell me the real truth about things."

"Sire!" one of the older men exclaimed reproachfully.

"I mean no reflection on any one, Dillon. You all say what I am sure you feel, but you have grown accustomed to waiting, and all think of what is politic, and complain that I speak too frankly. Monsieur Kennedy comes straight from Ireland, and he is not old enough yet to have learned to measure his words, and will not be always afraid that anything he may say will be carried to the king. How I wish that the king would send me with Marshal Tallard!"

"That would never do, Sire. The English are your subjects, and they would never forgive you if you were to ap-

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pear in the field with a French army, fighting against them."

"But the Irish Brigade fight, Dillon?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, but they are in the service of France, and by the terms of the treaty of Limerick were allowed to expatriate themselves and to enter the French service. We have, in fact, renounced our nationality with the consent of the English, and if taken prisoners could only be treated as captured foes and not as traitors. Of course when Your Majesty ascends the throne we shall again become British subjects."

"I trust that that may come soon, Dillon, and for your sake rather than my own. When the time comes you will not find me backward, but this weary waiting tries me sorely, and were it not for those who have remained faithful to our cause, I would gladly resign such chances as I have of succeeding to the throne of England and take a commission in the Irish Brigade."

Dillon and some of the elder men shook their heads.

"Can you wonder?" the young prince said passionately. "Here is Master Kennedy, who is younger than myself, though a free life and exercise have made him a man in comparison to me; he has his life before him, he will bear his part in many a pitched battle, and doubtless in many a private adventure. He is his own master, and as long as he does his duty there are none to say, you must not do that, you must not say that, you must preserve your dignity, you must speak softly and discreetly, you must wait patiently. I envy you, Master Kennedy, I envy you from the bottom of my heart! Come often to see me, you will always be welcome;" and, turning abruptly away, he left the chamber hurriedly to conceal the tears which filled his eyes. His counsellors shook their heads solemnly, but Colonel O'Brien said warmly:

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"What the king says is natural for a man of his age, and, for my part, it has increased my respect for him. I say it without offence, but what could be duller than the life this lad leads here? He has been brought up literally without a pleasure. His late Majesty, heaven rest his soul! was absorbed in his religious exercises, and nothing could have been more trying to a boy than a court in which the priests and confessors were practically supreme. Since his father's death things have been but little better, and now I see that at heart the young king has plenty of spirit and energy, I can feel that his life has been that of a caged hawk, and I am not surprised that he occasionally breaks out into revolt against it. It would, methinks, do him a world of good had he a few companions about his own age like Ensign Kennedy. I would even say that although I can quite understand that as King of England he could not well take a commission in one of our regiments, he might at least be placed with one of our most experienced and honoured colonels in order to learn miitary exercises and to mix with the officers as any other nobleman might do when attached to the regiment."

Murmurs of dissent arose among the counsellors.

"Well, gentlemen," the colonel went on, "I have no desire to interfere with your functions, but in my opinion it is good that a king should also be a general. Did anyone think any the worse of Dutch William that he was able to command his army personally? None of us can believe that King James will ever succeed to the inheritance of his fathers without fighting, and it would be well indeed that he should not appear as a puppet, but as one qualified to command. It was the fault, or rather the misfortune, of his father that he was unfit to lead his troops in the field. Had he been able to do so he would in all probability have died King of England instead of as a fugitive and a pensioner of

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King Louis. In one way it grieves me to see that the young king feels his position acutely, but, on the other hand, I am rejoiced to see that he is in no way lacking in spirit, and that he longs to be out of his cage and to try his wings for himself. Well, gentlemen, having had my say I will take my leave of you, as duty calls me back to my regiment. I trust that the frankness with which I have spoken will not be misunderstood."

So saying, with a bow to the courtiers he left the room, followed by Kennedy.

"They mean well," he said, after they had mounted and ridden off at a gallop, "but it is a pity that these gentlemen, all loyal and honourable men as they are, should surround the young king. They suited well enough to the mood of his father, who was always wanting in spirit, and was broken down not only by the loss of his kingdom, but by the conduct of his daughters, and what with that and his devotion to religion he was rather a monk than a monarch. He believed —but most mistakenly—that he had a genius for politics, and was constantly intriguing with his adherents at home, notably Marlborough and other lords, from whom he obtained fair words and promises of support, but nothing else. But though he could plan, he did not possess a spark of energy, and was one of the most undecided of men, though, like most undecided men, he could be extremely obstinate, and unfortunately, the more wrong he was the more obstinately he held to his course. However, all this can make no difference in our devotion to the Stuart cause; but I hail with satisfaction the prospect that in his son we may have one to whom we may feel personally loyal, for there can be no doubt that men will fight with more vigour for a person to whom they are attached than for an abstract idea."

"I have heard Father O'Leary say the same, sir. His

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opinion was that had the late king possessed the qualities that commanded the personal admiration and fidelity of his followers, and excited something like enthusiasm among the people at large, he would never have lost his throne, nor could he have led his armies as did Gustavus or Charles XII of Sweden, would William of Orange ever have ventured to cross to England."

"It was a bad business altogether, lad. His cause was practically lost from the day that William set foot upon English soil; he had in reality no personal friends, and those who would have remained faithful to the cause were paralyzed by his indecision and feebleness. Charles the Martyr made many mistakes, but he had the passionate adherence of his followers; his personality and his noble appearance did as much for him as the goodness of his cause, while his son James repelled rather than attracted personal devotion. I trust that his grandson will inherit some of his qualities. His outburst today gave me hope that he will do so, but one must not build too much on that. It may have been only the pettishness of a young man sick of the constant tutelage to which he is subjected and the ennui of the life he leads, rather than the earnestness of a noble spirit. Of course, Kennedy, I need not tell you that it would be well to make no mention to anyone of the scene that you have witnessed."

"I shall certainly make no mention of it to anyone, sir. I am sorry indeed for the young king. His life must be a dreadful one, conscious of the impossibility of breaking the bonds in which he is held, and knowing that his every word and action will be reported by spies to the King of France."

For three months Desmond Kennedy worked hard at drill and sword exercise. He became a general favourite in the regiment owing to his good temper, high spirits, and readiness to join in everything that was going on. He went over

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several times to St. Germain. At first the king's counsellors looked but coldly upon him, and he would have ceased to come there had it not been for the unaffected pleasure shown by the king at his visits. In time, however, two of the principal men at the little court requested him to have a conversation with them before going into the king's chamber.

"You will understand, Mr. Kennedy," one of them said, when they had seated themselves in a quiet spot in the garden, "that we, standing in the position of His Majesty's counsellors, are in a position of great responsibility. His Majesty, as we admit is but natural, chafes over the inaction to which he is condemned by circumstances, and is apt at times to express his desire for action in terms which, if they came to the ears of King Louis, as we have every reason to believe is sometimes the case, would do him and the cause serious injury. Naturally we should be glad for him to have companions of his own age, but it behoves us to be most careful that such companionship should not add to our difficulties in this direction, and we should view with satisfaction a friendship between the young king and one who, like yoursef, is nearly of his own age and, as we can see, full of spirit and energy. In these matters the king is deficient, but it would be better that he should for the present remain as he is, rather than that he should, in acquiring more manly habits, grow still more impatient and discontented with his position.

"We have naturally taken some little trouble in finding out how you stand in your regiment, and we hear nothing but good of you You are much liked by your comrades, pay the greatest attention to your military exercises, and are regarded as one who will some day do much credit to the regiment, and we feel that in most respects your influence could not but be advantageous to the young king; but the good that this might do him would be more than balanced were you to render him

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still more impatient than he is for action. You may well suppose that we, exiles as we have been for so many years from our country, are not less impatient than he for the day of action, but we know that such action must depend upon the King of France, and not upon ourselves. We would gladly risk all in an effort to place him on the throne of England, to repair past injustices and crüel wrongs; but, were we to move without the assistance of Louis, instead of achieving that object we might only bring fresh ruin, confiscations, and death upon the royalists of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Are you of our opinion?"

"Completely so, sir. Of course I know but little of what is passing save in the neighbourhood where I have been brought up; but I know that there, even among the king's most devoted adherents, there is a feeling that nothing can possibly be done until France lends her aid in earnest. The English army is far stronger than it was when we were last in arms and when William had to rely almost entirely upon his Dutch troops and Dutch generals, while the friends of the Stuarts are almost without arms, without leaders, and without organization."

"That is good, Mr. Kennedy; and if we were to sanction King James's forming an intimacy with you, can I understand that we could rely upon your not using your influence to add to his impatience for action and discontent with his present position?"

"Certainly, sir; being so recently from Ireland I could assure him that even his most devoted adherents there are of opinion that no rising could be attended with success unless backed by French arms, and especially by the aid of the Irish Brigade, which has already won such renown for itself, and whose appearance would excite the greatest enthusiasm among all Irishmen."

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"In that case, Mr. Kennedy, so far from throwing any difficulties in the way of His Majesty seeking your companionship, we shall encourage him, and shall be glad to see you here as often as your military duties will permit."

CHAPTER II

A VALIANT BAND

THE permission was not attended with the result that the young prince's counsellors had hoped. For a time James showed a lively pleasure when Desmond rode over to St. Germain, walked with him in the gardens, and talked to him alone in his private apartments, and professed a warm friendship for him; but Desmond was not long in discovering that his first estimate of the prince's character had been wholly erroneous, and that his outburst at their first meeting had been the result of pique and irritation rather than any real desire to lead a more active life. Upon the contrary he was constitutionally indolent and lethargic. There were horses at his command, but it was seldom indeed that he would take the trouble to cross the saddle although walking was distasteful to him. Even when speaking of his hopes of ascending the throne of England he spoke without enthusiasm, and said one day, "It is a pity that it cannot be managed without fuss and trouble. I hate trouble."

"Nothing can be done worth doing, without trouble, Your Majesty," Desmond said sturdily. "It almost seems to me that if everything could be had without trouble it would not be worth having."

"How do you mean, Mr. Kennedy?"

"I may illustrate it by saying, Sire, that no true fisherman would care about angling in a pond close to his house and so

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full of fish that he had but to drop a baited hook into the water to bring up one immediately. The pleasure of fishing consists largely in the hard work that it demands; it is perhaps miles to a stream across the hills, and a long day's work may produce but a half-dozen fish, but these the angler prizes in proportion to the trouble he has had to get them. I think that were I born heir to a throne I would rather that it should cost me hardship, toil, and danger to obtain it, than walk into a cathedral a few days after my father's death and there be crowned."

"I do not agree with you at all," James said, shortly; "if anything could not be had without toil, hardship, and danger, as you say, I would willingly go without it."

"Then, Sire, I can only hope that the toil and danger may be borne by your devoted followers, and that you may be spared them personally."

James looked sharply up at his companion to gather whether the words were spoken sarcastically, but Desmond's face, though flushed, was calm and serious. Nevertheless, indolent as he was, James felt that the words were a reproof, that although he had at first liked him, there was in reality little in common between him and this energetic young fellow, and the next time he came he received him with much less cordiality than before; while Desmond, who was beginning to tire of the companionship of one who lacked alike the fun and humour and the restless activity of his comrades Patrick and Phelim, and who saw that the professions of James's friendship were but short-lived, came over to St. Germain less frequently, until at last he only rode over with his colonel, or when some duty called him there.

"So you have been a failure, Master Kennedy," the counsellor who had first spoken to him said one day, when the change in the king's manner became evident to them all.

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"I am afraid so, sir," Desmond replied with a smile. "I have no doubt that it was my fault. Perhaps I was not patient enough with him; but indeed my efforts to rouse him to take exercise, to practise in arms, and so on, were so ill received that I felt I was doing more harm than good."

"I was afraid that it would be so," the other said regretfully. "You see, during his later years his father gave up his time almost entirely to religious observances, and consequently the lad's life was very dull and monotonous. Constitutionally he undoubtedly takes after his father, who, with all his virtues, was at once indolent and undecided. We have observed with regret his disinclination to bestir himself in any way. Seeing that we, who were his father's companions, are too old or too much disheartened to be lively companions for him, we had hoped that the talk of one of spirit and of his own age might have roused him to make some exertions to overcome his disinclination for anything like active exercise. I think now, however, that we were wrong, that the tonic was too strong, that he could not but feel that your abundance of spirits and life were too much for him, and that the companion he needs is one who could to some extent sympathize with him, and who could perhaps make more allowance for the manner in which he has been brought up. We do not blame you at all. I am sure that you have done your best. But it is evident that the contrast between you and himself has been too strong a one; and that, feeling he cannot hope to emulate your soldierly activity, he has come to resent it as a sort of reflection upon himself."

Desmond was by no means sorry at being relieved of the necessity of paying frequent visits to St. Germain. In the first place, he begrudged the time that was taken from his fencing lessons, at which he had worked enthusiastically; and in the next, he had felt, after two or three visits, that between

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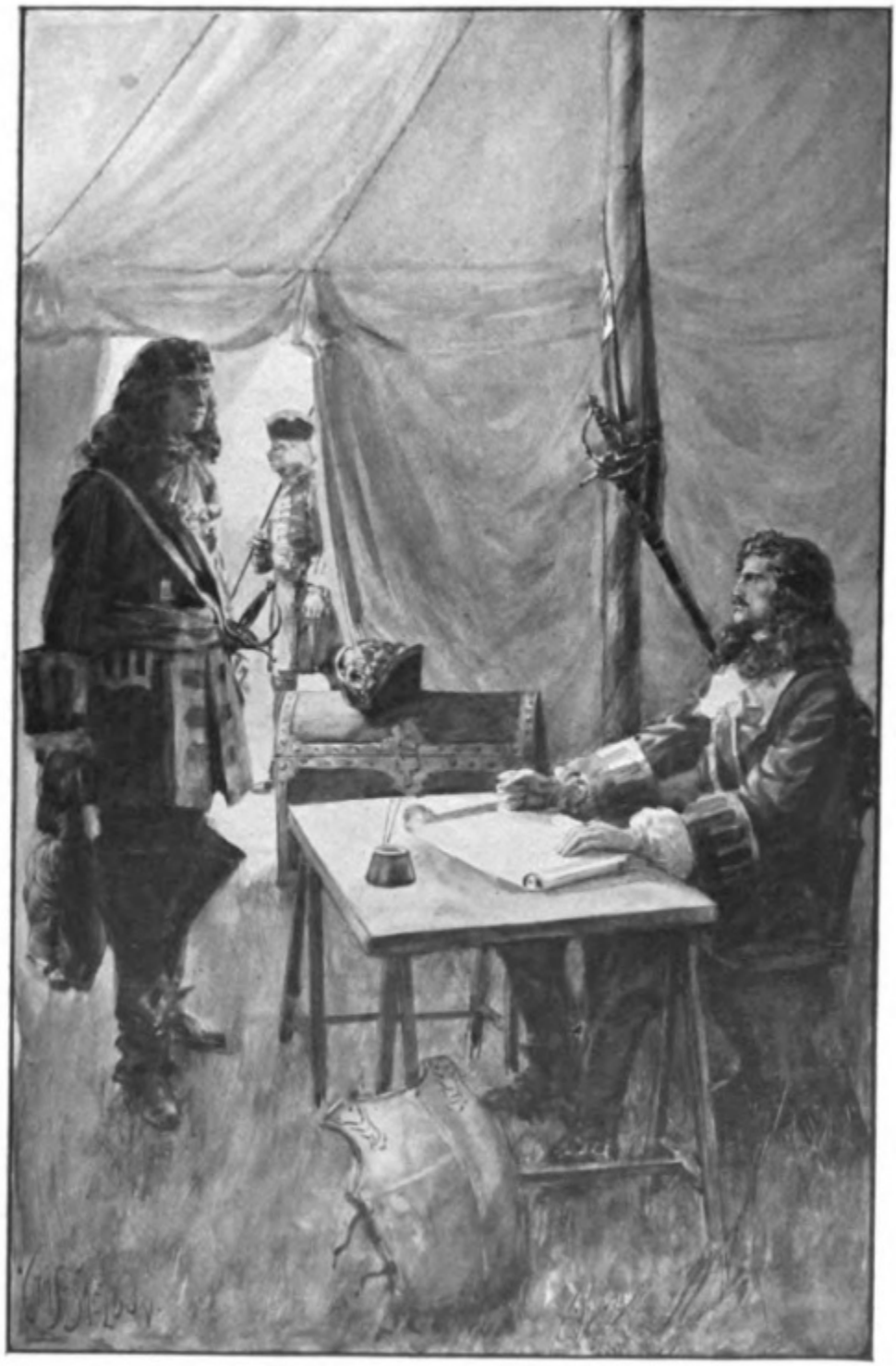

JAMES FELT THAT THE WORDS WERE A REPROOF.

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himself and the young king there was really nothing in common. Full of life and spirits himself, it seemed to him nothing short of disgraceful that one who aspired to rule should take no pains whatever to fit himself for a throne, or to cultivate qualities that would render himself popular among a high-spirited people. And as he came to understand James more thoroughly, he had found his visits increasingly irksome, all the more so as he felt their inutility.

"Thank goodness," he said to his two friends when he went home that day, "I have done with St. Germain. I am as warm an adherent as ever of the cause of the Stuarts, and should be perfectly ready, when the time comes, to fight my hardest for them; but I would vastly rather fight for the king than converse with him."

"I suppose, by what I have seen of him, that he must be somewhat wearisome," Phelim O'Sullivan said with a laugh. "Fortunately wit and gaiety are not essential qualities on the part of a monarch; but I must own that treasonable as it may sound, I fear His Majesty is lacking in other qualities far more essential in a monarch. I should say that he is kindly and well disposed, he wishes to be fair and just, and may turn out a wise ruler; but he is altogether deficient in energy. I suppose there is no occasion for a king safely seated upon a throne to be energetic, but a prince in exile should possess the qualities that excite enthusiasm and bind men to him. Possibly the qualities King James possesses would be highly valued by the Scotch, but they would certainly fail to inspire our people."

"Yes," Patrick O'Neil agreed, "his father did more to ruin his cause in Ireland that all William's Dutch generals and troops together. It was disheartening to be risking life and possessions for a man who would do nothing for himself, whose indecision paralysed our leaders, and who, the moment

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a reverse came, sought safety in flight instead of taking his place among the men who were devoted to his cause. I can understand that in England, where the majority of those who professed to be devoted to him were betraying him, and were in secret communication with William, he should be by turns obstinate and vacillating; but in Ireland, where every man who surrounded him was risking his life in his cause, he should have shown absolute confidence in them, listened to their advice, set an example of personal gallantry and courage, and at least remained among them until all was definitely lost. It was the desertion of James rather than the loss of the battle of the Boyne that ruined his cause.

"Well, I am glad you are out of it, for it was a pity that you should be going without your work at the *salle d'armes* when you were making such progress that, the master reported, in a few months you would become one of the best swordsmen in the regiment."

There were in Paris many Irish officers besides those belonging to Colonel O'Brien's regiment. These were for the most part men who had been severely wounded in the preceding campaign, and who now remained in the capital with the depots of their regiments. These were constantly recruited by fresh arrivals from Ireland, by which means the Irish Brigade was not only kept up to their original strength, in spite of the heavy losses they suffered in the engagements in which they had taken part, but largely increased its force, new regiments being constantly formed. Naturally O'Brien's corps, being the only complete regiment in Paris at the time, was regarded as the head-quarters and general meeting-place of all the Irish officers there, and as some of these had campaigned in Flanders, in Italy, and in Spain, Desmond learned from their talk and anecdotes far more of the doings of the Brigade than he had hitherto known. From the first

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they had, by their reckless bravery in almost every engagement that had taken place, so distinguished themselves that they received the highest commendation from the French generals, and were almost invariably selected for specially dangerous service.

"I think the hottest affair I was ever engaged in," a major who had served in Burke's regiment said one evening, when some ten or twelve of his companions had gathered at the room which was the general meeting-place of the officers of the corps, "was at the attack on Cremona by Eugene. You have all heard how our regiment and that of Dillon distinguished themselves there, but you may not have heard particulars. The place was a strong one, and it was garrisoned by some 4000 men—all French with the exception of our two regiments. Marshal Villeroy was himself in command, an excellent officer, but, as is often the case in the French army, very badly served by his subordinates.

"Here, as you know, almost everything goes by influence; and the generals are surrounded by men who have been forced upon them by powerful persons whom they cannot afford to disoblige. The consequence was that, relying upon the strength of the place, no proper watch was set. There were guards, indeed, at the gates, but with no communication with each other; no soldiers on the ramparts; no patrols were sent out beyond the town, or maintained in the streets. No harm might have come of this had it not been that treachery was at work. There was a scoundrel who was brother of the priest of one of the parishes near the wall, and both were in favour of the enemy. The priest's residence was near a sewer which communicated with the moat outside the walls. The entrance was closed by an iron grating. Were this removed, troops could enter by the sewer into the priest's wine-cellar. The priest, being promised a large sum of

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money, set to work. First he laid a complaint before the governor that the sewer was choked with filth, which might be a source of disease to the town unless removed, and to do this it was necessary that the grating should be taken down. Being altogether unsuspicious of evil the governor granted his request.

"As soon as the grating was removed Eugene despatched eight miners, who crossed the moat at night, made their way up the sewer, and opened a communication between it and the priest's house. When all was ready four or five hundred picked grenadiers entered, and were concealed in the house of the priest and other adherents of the emperor. Eugene set two strong bodies of picked troops in motion; the one was to enter by the St. Margaret gate, which would be seized by the force already in the city; this column consisted of five thousand men. The second force of two thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry under the Prince de Vaudemont was to cross the river by a bridge of boats. We slept like stupid dogs; such watchmen as there were on the walls gave no alarm. The gate of All Saints was seized, its guard being instantly overpowered, and a party of engineers broke down the gate of St. Margaret, which had been walled up; and at daylight Eugene rode into the town, followed by his troops and one thousand cavalry, while another mounted force watched the gate and the country round to prevent the escape of fugitives.

"Before any alarm was given Eugene had established himself at the Hotel de Ville, was master of the great street that separated half the garrison from the other half, had taken possession of the cathedral, and in fact the place was captured without a shot being fired. Then the uproar began. Parties of troops, led by natives of the town, seized a large number of officers at their lodgings; and as the alarm spread, the troops

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seized their muskets and rushed out, only to be sabred and trodden down by the enemy's cavalry. I was asleep and dreaming when my servant rushed into my room and said:

"'The Germans are in possession of the town, Captain.'

"'You are a blathering idiot,' I said.

"'It's true, your honour. Get up and listen.'

"Very unwillingly I got out of bed and opened the window, and by the holy poker I found that Pat was right. There was a sound of firing, shouting, and screaming, and I heard the gallop of a heavy body of horsemen, and directly afterwards a squadron of German cuirassiers came galloping down the street.

"'It is time for us to be out of this, Pat,' I said, and jumped into my clothes quicker than I had ever done before.

"We went downstairs, and I borrowed two overcoats that we found hanging there, and put them on over our uniforms. Then we went out by the back-door, and ran as hard as we could, keeping through narrow lanes, to the barracks. On my way I had to pass a barrier near a toll-gate. Here there were thirty-six of our men under a sergeant. Not knowing where the enemy were, or whether they were between me and the barracks, I thought it best to stay there, and of course took the command. Just as I had done so I heard the tramping of cavalry, and had the gate shut. We were just in time, for two hundred and fifty cuirassiers came galloping along.

"Their leader, Baron de Mercy, as soon as the troops began to enter St. Margaret's gate, was ordered to dash round and capture the Po gate, through which Vaudemont's corps would, after crossing the bridge, enter the town. He shouted to me to surrender, promising us our lives. I told him that if he wanted the place he would have to come and take it. He used language which I need not repeat, but he did not attack

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us, waiting for the arrival of four hundred infantry who had been ordered to follow him. They were some time in coming up, having lost their way owing to the rascally native who was their guide being killed by a shot from a window. I was not sorry for the delay, for it gave us time to look at matters quietly, and prepare for defence. Another six hundred cavalry now came up, and Mercy placed them so as to cut off altogether the French cavalry, who were quartered away to the right; then he ordered the infantry to attack us.

"Our position was a good one; the barricade was formed of square piles driven into the ground with small narrow openings between them. I ordered the men to keep behind the timbers until the enemy came up. The Germans opened a murdering fire as they approached, but though the bullets pattered like rain against the palisades, and whistled in between them, not a man was touched. I waited till they were within two paces, and then gave the word, and you may well guess that there was not a bullet thrown away, and the Germans, mightily astonished, drew back, leaving nigh forty of their men behind them. Then, falling back a bit, they opened fire upon us, but it was a game that two could play at. We could see them, but they could not see us; and while we loaded our muskets in shelter, they were exposed, and we picked them off by dozens.

"The firing had of course given the alarm to our two regiments, who turned out just as they were, in their night-shirts. Major O'Mahony, who was in command of Dillon's regiment, as Lally was away on leave, luckily made his way in safety from his lodgings to the barracks, got his own men in order, while Colonel Wauchop, who commanded our regiment, took the command of the two battalions. Fortunately a portion of the regiment had been ordered to fall in early for inspection, and this gave time for the rest to get into their uniforms; and

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as soon as they were ready Wauchop led them out and fell suddenly upon a portion of Mercy's force, poured in a volley, and then charged them. Horse and foot fell back before the attack. Then they turned the cannon on the ramparts, and thus secured possession of the Po gate, and, pushing on, the guns helping them, drove the Austrians from the houses they occupied, and so opened communications with the French cavalry.

"A brigadier now came up and ordered the battalions to barricade all the streets they had won with barrels and carts. A French regiment arrived and occupied the church of St. Salvador and the battery which commanded the bridge, across which Vaudemont's corps could now be seen approaching. The redoubt on the other side of the bridge was only held by fifty men, and they were now strengthened by a hundred of the French soldiers. The Austrians approached, making sure that the town had already been taken, and looking out for a signal that was to be hoisted. Their astonishment was great when a heavy musketry fire was opened upon them by the garrison of the outpost, while the guns of the battery on the wall plunged their shot in among them.

"The column was at once halted. Eugene had regarded the struggle as over, when news was brought to him of the defeat of Mercy's corps by the Irish. Everywhere else things had gone most favourably. Marshal Villeroy had been wounded and made prisoner; his *maréchal de camp* shared the same fate. The Chevalier D'Entregues, who advanced to meet the enemy, was defeated and killed, as was Lieutenant-General de Trenan, and the Spanish Governor of the town mortally wounded. On receiving the news, Eugene at once sent an officer to inspect the Irish position; but his report was that they were too well placed to be driven from it. He then sent Captain MacDonnell, an officer in his service, to offer, if

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the Irish would leave their position, to enrol them in the Austrian service, with higher pay than they now received.

"You may guess the sort of answer he received, and he was at once arrested for bringing such a message to them. Eugene then endeavoured to engage Marshal Villeroy to order the Irish to lay down their arms, as further resistance would only end in their slaughter. Villeroy simply replied that as a prisoner he could no longer give orders. During this pause the Count de Revel and the Marquis de Queslin succeeded in gathering together a considerable number of the scattered French infantry, and with these they marched to endeavour to recover the gates that had been lost, and having occupied the church of Santa Maria and a bastion near the gate of All Saints, ordered the Irish to leave a hundred men at the barricades, and with the rest to push forward to the gate of Mantua. So I found myself in command of a full company.

"O'Mahony was now in command of the two regiments, as Wauchop had been wounded. It was pretty hard work they had of it, and they suffered heavily in carrying the guard-house, held by two hundred Austrians. Eugene now launched a great force against our people, and attacked them on all sides, but O'Mahony faced them each way, and received the charge of the cuirassiers with so heavy a fire that they fled in disorder. Another corps of cuirassiers came up, and these charged with such fury that their leader, Monsieur de Freiberg, pushed his way into the middle of Dillon's regiment, where he was surrounded, and, refusing quarter, was killed, and his men, disheartened by the fall of their leader, fled, carrying with them the infantry who were ranged in their rear.

"But our men were now exhausted by their exertions, and suffered heavily; and O'Mahony, seeing that he was likely to be attacked by fresh troops, and that my post guarding

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the approach of the Po gate would then be left altogether unsupported, returned to it. I was glad enough when I saw them coming, for it was mighty trying work being left there and hearing the storm of battle going on all round, and knowing that at any moment we might be attacked. They did not stop long, for orders came from Revel, who had captured the gate of All Saints and was preparing to attack St. Margaret's, to march again to the gate of Mantua. It seemed a hopeless enterprise. Captain Dillon of Dillon's regiment marched out and, after hard fighting, drove the Austrians from house to house; but on reaching a spot where the ground was open he was attacked on all sides, and for a time the enemy and our men were mixed up together in a *mêlée*."

"I could hear by the sound of the firing that our men were returning, and posted my fellows so as to cover their retreat; and as they came back hotly pressed by the enemy, we opened so warm a fire that they passed in through the gate of the barrier in safety, but only half as strong as they had gone out. As soon as they were in, they aided us in strengthening the position. Seeing that Vaudemont's corps was on the point of attacking the redoubt, the Marquis de Queslin sent orders to the little garrison there to withdraw across the bridge and destroy the boats. This they effected in spite of the heavy fire kept up by the enemy. In the meantime fighting had been going on all over the town; the gate of Mantua had been held by Captain Lynch of Dillon's battalion and thirty-five men. As soon as he heard the din of battle in the town, he collected a few fugitives, entrenched his position at the guard-house, and maintained it for the whole day; not only that, but, finding that his position was commanded by a party of Austrians who had taken post in the church of St. Marie close by, he sallied out, drove them from the church, and maintained possession of that as well until, late in the afternoon, he was reinforced

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by two companies of our regiment, who made their way this time without opposition.

"The enemy fell back but not unmolested, as, sallying out, we pressed hotly upon them. There now remained only the gate of St, Margaret in the hands of the Austrians. Here a large body of troops had been stationed, and succeeded in repulsing the repeated attacks made upon them by Revel's force. The fight had now lasted for eleven hours, and the position of the Austrians had become critical. The desperate resistance of our men had entirely changed the position. They had repulsed every attack upon them, had given time for the scattered French to gather, and the one gate remaining in Eugene's possession was seriously threatened. Vaudemont's corps was helpless on the other side of the river, and could render no assistance, and Eugene gave the order for his troops to retire, which they did in good order. It had been a hot day indeed for us, and we were only too glad to see them go. We had lost three hundred and fifty men out of the six hundred with which we began the fight; altogether the garrison had lost in killed, wounded, and in prisoners, fourteen hundred men and officers, while Eugene's loss was between fifteen and sixteen hundred.

"Personally I have had hotter fighting, but taking the day altogether it was the most terrible through which I have ever passed. Throughout the day we were in total ignorance of what was going on elsewhere, though we knew by the firing in other parts of the town that the French there had not been overpowered, and each time the regiments left us I was expecting every moment to be attacked by an overwhelming force; faith it was enough to make one's hair white! However, I have no reason to grumble. I obtained great praise for the defence of the barrier, and was given my majority; and if it had not been for the wound I received two years ago,

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which incapacitated me from active service, I might now be in command of the regiment."

"Yes, indeed," another officer said, "it was truly a gallant affair; and although our men had fought equally as well in many another engagement, it was their conduct at Cremona that attracted the greatest attention, and showed the French the value of the Brigade. I would we had always been employed in actions on which we could look back with the same pride and pleasure as we can upon Cremona and a long list of battles where we bore the brunt of the fighting, and never failed to be specially mentioned with praise by the general. The most unpleasant work that I ever did was when under Marshal de Catinat. Eight Irish battalions were sent up in 1694 from Pignerolle into the valley of La Perouse to oppose the Vaudois, who had always offered a vigorous resistance to the passage of our troops through their passes. They were wild mountaineers, and Huguenots to a man, who had, I believe, generations ago been forced to fly from France and take refuge in the mountains, and maintained themselves sturdily against various expeditions sent against them.

"I own the business was not at all to my taste, and many others of our officers shared my opinions. It was too much like what we remembered so bitterly at home, when William's troopers pursued our fugitives to the hills, burning, destroying, and killing, and, above all, hunting down the priests. This was the other way, but was as cruel and barbarous. The poor people had given no offence save that they held to their own religion. An Irishman should be the last to blame another for that, and, seeing they had successfully opposed the efforts of the French to root them out, it was much against my will that I marched with my regiment. I hope that when it comes to fighting against regular troops, of whatever nationality, I am ready to do my work, but to carry fire and sword among

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a quiet people in little mountain villages went against the grain. It seemed to us that it was to be a massacre rather than fighting, but there we were mistaken; it was the hardest work that I ever went through. It was impossible in such a country to move in large bodies, and we were broken up into small parties, which advanced into the hills, each under its own commander, without any fixed plans save to destroy every habitation, to capture or kill the flocks of goats, which afforded the inhabitants their chief means of subsistence, and to give no quarter wherever they resisted.

"Even now I shudder at the thought of the work we had to do; climbing over pathless hills, wading waist-deep through mountain torrents, clambering along on the face of precipices where a false step meant death, and always exposed to a dropping fire from invisible foes, who, when we arrived at the spot from which they had fired, had vanished and taken up a fresh position, so that the whole work had to be done over again. Sometimes we were two or even more days without food, for, as you may imagine, it was impossible to transport provisions, and we had nothing save what we carried in our haversacks at starting. We had to sleep on the soaked ground in pitiless storms; many men were carried away and drowned in crossing the swollen torrents; our clothes were never dry, and the worst of it was, after six weeks of such work we felt that we were no nearer to the object for which we had been sent up than we were when we started.

"It was true that we had destroyed many of their little villages, but as these generally consisted of but a few houses, only rough buildings that could be rebuilt in a few days, the gain was not a substantial one. We had, of course, killed some of the Vaudois, but our loss had been much heavier than theirs, for, active as our men were, they were no match in speed for these mountaineers, who were as nimble as their

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own goats, knew everything of the country, and could appear or disappear, as it seemed to us, almost by magic. It was a wretched business, and once or twice when our parties were caught in the narrow ravines they were overwhelmed by rocks thrown down from above, so that on the whole we lost almost as many men as we should have done in a pitched battle, gaining no credit, nor having the satisfaction that we were doing good service to France.

"I hope I may never be employed in a business like that again. It was not only the Vaudois that we had to fight, for, seeing that at first we were pushing forward steadily, the Duke of Savoy, under whose protection they lived, sent six hundred regular troops to assist them, and these, who were well commanded, adopted the same tactics as the peasants, avoiding all our attempts to bring on an engagement, and never fighting except when they had us to great advantage. As a rule our men were always dissatisfied when they received orders to fall back, but I think that there was not a man among us but was heartily glad when we were recalled to rejoin Catinat at Pignerolle."

The expedition, however, although altogether unsuccessful in rooting out the Vaudois, created such terrible devastation in the mountains and valleys that the Irish name and nation will long remain odious to the Vaudois. Six generations have since passed away, but neither time nor subsequent calamities have obliterated the impression made by the waste and desolation of this military incursion.

"You were at Blenheim, were you not, Captain O'Donovan?"

"Yes. A tough fight it was, and a mismanaged one. I was in the Earl of Clare's regiment, which, with Lee and Dorrington's battalions, was stationed with the force in Oberglau in the centre of our position. It seemed to us and to our generals that our position was almost impregnable. It

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lay along a ridge, at the foot of which was a rivulet and deep swampy ground. On the right of the position was the village of Blenheim, held by twenty-seven battalions of good French infantry, twelve squadrons, and twenty-four pieces of cannon. Strong entrenchments had been thrown up round our position, but these were not altogether completed. Blenheim, moreover, had been surrounded by very heavy and strong palisades altogether impassable by infantry, and as the allies could not hope to get cannon across the stream and swamps, it seemed to defy any attack. From Oberglau the army of Marshal de Marcin and the elector stretched to the village of Lutzingen. We had some five-and-twenty cannon at Oberglau. The weak point, as it afterwards turned out to be, was the crest between us and Blenheim. Considering that both the artillery and musketry fire from both villages swept the slope, and as in numbers we equalled the enemy, it was thought well-nigh impossible for him to cross the swamps and advance to the attack; and almost the whole of the French cavalry were massed on the crest in order to charge them should they succeed in crossing and try to ascend the slope.

"At first the battle went altogether favourably. We had opposite to us the English, Dutch, Hanoverians, and Danish troops under Marlborough, while facing our left were Prussians, Imperialists, and other German troops under Eugene. Marlborough's Danish and Hanoverian cavalry first crossed, but were at once charged and driven back; then they tried again, supported by English infantry. Then Marlborough led up a still stronger force, drove back our light cavalry, and began to ascend the hill. We were attacked by ten battalions—Hanoverians, Danes, and Prussians, while the English bore against Blenheim. The fighting at both places was desperate, and I must do the Germans the justice to say that nothing could have exceeded the gallantry they showed, and that in

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spite of the heavy fire we maintained they pressed up the slope. We remained in our intrenchments till it could be seen that the English were falling back from Blenheim, whose palisade, manned by twenty-seven battalions of infantry, offered an obstacle that would have defied the best troops in the world to penetrate.

"Immediately this was seen, nine battalions, headed by our three regiments, leapt from the trenches and poured down on the Germans. The enemy could not withstand our onslaught. Two of their regiments were utterly destroyed, the rest suffered terribly, and were driven back. On the left Marcin held his ground against all the attacks of Eugene, and it seemed to us that the battle was won. However, it was not over yet. While the fierce fighting had been going on in front of Oberglau and Blenheim, Marlborough had passed the whole of his cavalry and the rest of his infantry across the rivulet, and in spite of artillery and musketry fire these moved up in grand order, the infantry inclining towards the two villages as before, the cavalry bearing straight up the slope, and when they reached the crest charging furiously upon our horse stationed there. They were superior in numbers, but on this head accounts differ. At any rate they overthrew our cavalry, who fled in the greatest disorder, pursued by the allied horse.

"The infantry poured into the gap thus made, Blenheim was entirely isolated, and we were exposed to assault both in front and rear. Nevertheless we repulsed all attacks until Marcin sent orders for us to retire; then we sallied out, after setting fire to the village, flung ourselves upon the enemy, and succeeded in cutting our way through, our regiment forming the rear-guard. The whole of Marcin's army were now in full retreat harassed by the allied cavalry, but whenever their squadrons approached us we faced about and gave

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them so warm a reception that they attacked less formidable foes. As for the garrison in Blenheim, you know they were at last surrounded by Marlborough's whole force with artillery, and with the Danube in their rear and no prospect of succour they were forced to surrender. It was a disastrous day, and I have not yet recovered from the wound I received there. Had five thousand infantry been posted in a redoubt half-way between Blenheim and Oberglau, so as to give support to our cavalry, the result of the battle would have been very different. Still, I suppose that most battles are lost by some unlooked-for accident,—some mistake in posting the troops. We can only say that had the allied forces been all composed of such troops as those Eugene commanded, they would have been beaten decisively, and that had, on the contrary, Eugene commanded such troops as those under Marlborough, Marcin would never have held his ground."

"How many British troops were there in the battle, Captain O'Donovan?"

"Somewhere about twelve thousand, while the Continental troops were forty-seven or forty-eight thousand. There is no doubt that they were the backbone of the force, just as we flatter ourselves that our three regiments were the backbone of the defence of Oberglau."

CHAPTER III

A STRANGE ADVENTURE

WHEN the party broke up, O'Neil and O'Sullivan, as usual, came in for a quiet chat to Desmond's room.

"As we may be possibly ordered to Spain," Kennedy said, "I should like to know a little about what we are going to

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fight about; for although I know a good deal about the war in Flanders, no news about that in Spain ever reached Kilkargan."

"Well, you know, of course," O'Neil said, "that Philip V. is a grandson of Louis, and is naturally supported by France against the Archduke Charles of Austria, who is competitor for the throne, and who is, of course, supported by England. Six thousand English and Dutch troops were sent to aid the Archduke Charles in his attempt to invade Spain and dethrone Philip. The King of Portugal who is a member of the allied confederacy promised to have everything ready to co-operate with them. They found, however, on their arrival, that no preparations had been made, and they were accordingly distributed for a time among the garrisons on the frontier. Philip on his part had not been so inactive, and two armies—the one commanded by the Duke of Berwick and the other by General Villadarias—invaded Portugal. Berwick surprised and captured two Dutch battalions, and then captured Portalagre, and compelled the garrison, including an English regiment of infantry, to surrender.

"The allies, to make a diversion, sent General Das Minas into Spain with fifteen thousand men, who captured one or two towns and defeated a body of French and Spanish troops. The hot weather now set in and put a stop to hostilities, and the troops on both sides went into quarters. The general—I forget his name—who commanded the English and Dutch contingent was so disgusted with the proceedings of the Portuguese that he resigned his command, and the Earl of Galway was appointed in his place. The next year he crossed the frontier, captured several towns without much fighting, and invested Badajos. Here, however, a stern resistance was met with. Galway's hand was carried off by a shot, and the French general (Tessè) coming up in force to the relief of the town,

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and the Portuguese not arriving at all, the allies were obliged to fall back upon Portugal. But Philip was threatened from a fresh quarter.

"In June the Earl of Peterborough sailed from Portsmouth with five thousand men, and at Lisbon took on board the Archduke Charles. At Gibraltar some more troops were embarked, and Peterborough set sail for the coast of Valencia. Peterborough himself, one of the most daring of men, and possessed of extraordinary military talent, was in favour of a march upon Madrid; but, fortunately for us, he was overruled, and commenced the siege of Barcelona—a strong town garrisoned by five thousand good troops, while he himself had but a thousand more under his command. Nevertheless, by a sudden and daring attack he captured the strong castle of Montjuich which commanded the town, which was in consequence obliged to surrender four days later, and the whole of Catalonia was then captured. St. Matteo, ninety miles from Barcelona, which had declared for Charles and was besieged by a large force, was relieved; and so brilliant were the exploits accomplished by Peterborough with most inadequate means, that the Spaniards came to the conclusion that he was possessed by an evil spirit.

"Large reinforcements were sent from France, and King Philip advanced upon Barcelona and invested it by land, while a French fleet bombarded it by sea. Peterborough hurried with a small force from Valencia to aid the besieged, the matter being all the more important since Charles himself was in the city. Before his arrival, however, an English fleet appeared, and our fleet retired. Philip at once raised the siege and retired to Madrid. His position was indeed serious. Lord Galway was advancing from the frontier, and Peterborough had gathered a force to co-operate with him. Upon the approach of Galway, Philip and the Duke of Berwick retreated

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to the frontier. There they received great reinforcements and advanced against Madrid, which was evacuated by Galway, who marched away to form a junction with Lord Peterborough.

"Owing to the dilatory habits and hesitation of the Austrian prince the junction was not effected for some time, and then in spite of the entreaties of the two English generals, he could not be persuaded to make a movement towards Madrid. Peterborough, whose temper was extremely fiery, at last lost all patience, abused Charles openly, and then, mounting his horse, rode down to the coast, embarked upon an English ship of war, and sailed away to assist the Duke of Savoy. After his departure the ill feeling between the English force, the Portuguese, and the leaders of the Spanish adherents of Charles, increased, and they spent their time in quarrelling among themselves. They were without money, magazines, and almost without provisions. Berwick was near them with a superior force, and they took the only step open, of retreating towards Valencia, which they reached, after suffering great hardships, before Berwick could overtake them.

"French troops were poured into Spain, while no reinforcements were sent from England. Galway and the Portuguese advanced to meet the Duke of Berwick, who was marching with a large army to occupy Catalonia. The two forces met on the plain of Almanza on the 24th of April. We and the Spaniards were superior in number to the English, Dutch, and Portuguese. The battle was maintained for six hours. The Portuguese infantry did little, but the English and Dutch repulsed charge after charge even after the Portuguese and Spanish allies on both wings were defeated. But in the end victory remained with us. Galway and Das Minas, the Portuguese general, were both wounded, and five thousand of their men killed, and yet the Dutch and English infantry held together. But on the following day, being absolutely with-

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out supplies, some effected their escape and succeeded in reaching Portugal, while the main body surrendered. Valencia, Saragossa, and other towns opened their gates to us, and for a time the cause of the Archduke Charles seemed lost.

"Our success was, however, balanced by the loss in the same year of the whole of the Spanish possessions in Italy. As yet, in spite of the disasters that had befallen him, the cause of Charles was not altogether lost, for he received fresh promises of support from England, whose interest it was to continue the war in Spain, and thus compel France to keep a considerable body of troops there instead of employing them against Marlborough in Flanders. Galway and Das Minas were taken back to Portugal in an English fleet after their disaster, and General Stanhope, who, they say, is an officer of great military experience and talent, has been sent out to take the command; and as a portion of Catalonia is still held for Charles, there may yet be a good deal of hard fighting before the matter can be considered finally settled."

"Thank you, O'Neil; I feel that I know something about it now. Are there any of our regiments there?"

"Yes, three of them; there is also an Irish regiment in the Spanish service under Colonel Crofton;" and with this the talk ended for the night.

After three months' work Desmond was dismissed from drill and had obtained such a proficiency with the rapier that he felt that he could now relax his work and see something of the city, which he had been hitherto too busy to explore. He had seen the principal streets in the company of his comrades, had admired the mansions of the nobles, the richness of the goods exposed to view in the windows, and the gaiety and magnificence of the dresses of the upper class. His friends had warned him that if he intended to go farther he should never do so alone, but should take with him his soldier servant, a

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trooper named Mike Callaghan. Mike was some twenty-eight years old, strong and bony; his hair was red, and the natural colour of his face was obscured by a host of freckles; his eyes were blue, and his nose had an upward turn; his expression was merry and good-humoured, but there was a twinkle about his eyes that seemed to show that he was by no means wanting in shrewdness.

"Even in the daytime," O'Neil said, "it is not safe for a man, if well dressed and likely to carry money in his pocket, to go into some quarters of the town. Paris has always been a turbulent city, and, while it is the abode of the richest and noblest of Frenchmen, it is also the resort of the rascaldom of all France. Some streets are such that even the city guard would not venture to search for an ill-doer unless in considerable force and prepared for battle. There are, of course, many streets both on this and the other side of the river where life and property are as safe as in the Rue Royal, which, by the way, is not saying much, for it was only three days ago that a man was assassinated there in broad daylight. He was a captain in the Picardy regiment, and it was supposed that his murderer was a man who had been dismissed from the regiment with ignominy. But, whoever it was, he has got clear away, for your Parisian citizen takes good care not to interfere in such matters, and no one thought of laying hands on the villain, although it is said he walked quietly off.

"It is in the streets that I am speaking of that adventures may most easily be met with. Here there are too many hotels of the nobles, with their numerous retainers, for it to be safe to commit crime, and the city guard are generally on the alert, for were harm to come to one of the gentlemen attached to the great houses, the matter would be represented to the king, and the city authorities would come in for a sharp reproof for their failure to keep order in the city; whereas anything

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that happens among the *bourgeois* would pass wholly without notice. However, if you keep out of the wine-shops you are not likely to become involved in trouble. Nine-tenths of the quarrels and tumults originate there. There is a dispute, perhaps, between a soldier and a citizen, or between soldiers of different regiments, and in a minute or two twenty swords are drawn, and the disturbance grows sometimes until it is necessary to call out troops from the nearest barracks to suppress it. However, I know that you are not likely to get into trouble that way, for you are a very model of moderation to the corps."

"I have seen enough of the consequences of drink in Ireland," Desmond said, "to cure me of any desire for liquor even if I had a love for it. Faction fights involving the people of the whole barony, arising from some drunken brawl, are common enough, while among the better class, duels are common and, for the most part, are the result of some foolish quarrel between two men heated by wine. Besides, even putting that aside, I should have given up the habit. When I joined the regiment I was anxious to become a good swordsman, but if one's head is overheated at night one's hand would be unsteady and one's nerves shaken in the morning. Possibly," he added with a smile, "it is this, quite as much as the hotness of their temper,that prevents the best teachers from caring to undertake the tuition of the officers of the Brigade."

"Possibly," Phelim laughed, "though I never thought of it before. There is no doubt that the French, who, whatever their faults be, are far less given to exceeding a fair allowance of wine than are our countrymen, would come to their morning lessons in the saloon in a better condition to profit by the advice of the master than many of our men."

"I don't think," Patrick O'Neil said, "that we Irishmen drink from any particular love of liquor, but from good

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fellowship and joviality. One can hardly imagine a party of French nobles inflaming themselves with wine and singing, as our fellows do. Frenchmen are gay in what I may call a feeble way—there is no go in it; there is no spirit in their songs, there is no real heartiness in their joviality, and the idea of one man playing a practical joke upon another, the latter taking it in good part, could never enter their heads, for they are ready to take offence at the merest trifle. As you know, there are certain cabarets told off for the use of the soldiers of the Brigade. They are allowed to use no others, and no French troops are allowed to enter these wine-shops. Similarly there are certain establishments which are almost exclusively patronized by officers of the Brigade. There is, of course, no absolute rule here, and we can enter any cabaret we choose; but it is understood that it is at our own risk, and that if we get into trouble there, we are sure to be hauled over the coals pretty sharply, as it is considered that we must have gone there deliberately with the intention of picking a quarrel. The cabarets used by the men are all close to the barracks, so that in case of a fracas a guard is sent down to bring all concerned in it back to the barracks. Fortunately, there is no need for the places we frequent being so close to the barracks, for it is understood that anyone who takes too much liquor outside his own quarters brings discredit on the regiment; and it is after we adjourn to the rooms of one or other of us that liquor begins to flow freely, and we make a night of it."

"Don't you ever have quarrels among yourselves?"

"Angry words pass sometimes, but all present interfere at once; the honour of the regiment is the first point with us all. If men want to quarrel there are plenty of French officers who would be quite ready to oblige them, but a quarrel among ourselves would be regarded as discreditable to the

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corps. Consequently a dispute is always stopped before it reaches a dangerous point, and if it goes further than usual, the parties are sent for by the colonel in the morning, both get heavily wigged, and the colonel insists upon the matter being dropped altogether. As the blood has had time to cool, both are always ready to obey his orders, especially as they know that he would report them at once to the general if the matter were carried further."

"Well, I shall certainly not be likely to get into a quarrel over wine," Desmond said, "nor indeed in any other way, unless I am absolutely forced into it. As to adventures such as you speak of, I am still less likely to be concerned in them. I hope that when we are ordered on service I shall have a full share of adventure such as may become a soldier."

O'Neil smiled. "Time will show," he said. "Adventures come without being sought, and you may find yourself in the thick of one before you have an idea of what you are doing; but mind, if you do get into any adventure and need assistance, you are bound to let us help you. This is the compact we made two months ago. We agreed to stand by each other, to be good comrades, to share our last sous, and naturally to give mutual aid under all and every circumstance."

Desmond nodded. "At any rate, O'Neil, adventures cannot be so common as you represent, since neither of you so far has called upon me for aid or assistance."

"Have you heard the last piece of court scandal, Kennedy?" O'Sullivan asked, as the three friends sat down to breakfast together a few days later.

"No; what is it?"

"Well, it is said that a certain damsel—her name is at present a secret—has disappeared."

"There is nothing very strange about that," O'Neil laughed; "damsels do occasionally disappear; sometimes they have

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taken their fate into their own hands and gone off with someone they like better than the man their father has chosen for them; sometimes, again, they are popped into a convent for contumacy. Well, go on, O'Sullivan, that cannot be all."

"Well, it is all that seems to be certain. You know that I went with the colonel last night to a ball at the Hotel de Rohan, and nothing else was talked about. Several there returned from Versailles in the afternoon, and came back full of it. All sorts of versions are current. That she is a rich heiress goes without saying. If she had not been, her disappearance would have excited no attention whatever. So we may take it that she is an heiress of noble family. Some say that her father had chosen as her husband a man she disliked exceedingly, and that she has probably taken refuge in a convent. Some think that she has been carried off bodily by someone smitten both by her charms and her fortune. It is certain that the king has interested himself much in the matter, and expresses the greatest indignation. Though, as it would not seem that she is a royal ward, it is not clear why he should concern himself over it. Some whisper that the king's anger is but feigned, and that the girl has been carried off by one of his favourites."

"Why should such a thing as that be supposed?" Desmond asked indignantly.

"Well, there is something in support of the idea. If anyone else were to steal away, with or without her consent, a young lady of the court with influential friends, he would be likely to pass the first two years of his married life in one of the royal prisons; and therefore none but a desperate man, or one so secure of the king's favour as to feel certain that no evil consequences would befall him, would venture upon such a step. You must remember that there are not a few nobles of the court who have ruined themselves to keep up the lavish

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expenditure incumbent upon those who bask in the royal favour at Versailles. It would be possible that His Majesty may have endeavoured to obtain the hand of this young lady for one of his favourites, and that her father may be a noble of sufficient consequence to hold his own and to express to His Majesty his regret that he was unable to adopt his recommendation, as he had other views for the disposal of her hand. The real singularity of the matter is, that no one can tell with certainty who the missing lady is. Early in the day half a dozen were named, but as I believe all of these put in an appearance at the reception in the afternoon, it is evident that so far as they were concerned there were no foundations for the rumour. It may be taken for certain, however, that her friends are powerful people to have been able to impose silence upon those acquainted with the facts."

"Well, it is impossible to take very much interest in the story," Desmond said carelessly, "when we are in ignorance of the very name of the lady, and of the important point whether she has voluntarily gone away either with a lover or to a convent, or whether she has been carried off against her will. If the latter, you were talking of adventures, O'Neil, and this would be just the sort of adventure that I should like, for us three to discover the maiden and rescue her from her abductor."

The others both laughed loudly. "And this is the young officer who the other day declared that he wished for no adventures save those that came in the course of a campaign, and now he is declaring that he would like to become a very knight-errant and go about rescuing damsels in distress!"

"I have no idea of carrying it into execution," Desmond said; "it was merely an expression of a wish. Of course if the lady in question went willingly and to avoid persecution, I would rather help than hinder her; but if she has been carried

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off by some ruined courtier, nothing would please me better than to rescue her from him."

Several days had passed, and at last it was confidently believed that the missing lady was the daughter of Baron Pointdexter, a magnate of Languedoc, who had but recently come up to court on an intimation from the king that it was a long time since he had been seen there, and that His Majesty hoped that he would be accompanied by his daughter, of whose beauty reports had reached him. It was certain that neither she nor her father had attended any of the receptions or fêtes at Versailles since the rumour first spread, although the baron had had a private interview with the king a few hours afterwards, and had left his chamber with a frowning brow that showed that the interview had not been a pleasant one. He had not again appeared at court, whether in consequence of the royal command or not no one knew. The baron was one of the richest proprietors in the south of France. He was a specimen of the best type of the French nobles, preferring to spend his time among his own wide estates to coming up to the capital, where his visits had at all times been rare.

During the daytime Desmond went out but little. When the hours of drill and exercise were over, he spent some time in visiting the quarters of the men of his company, making their personal acquaintance, and chatting freely with them. They were glad to hear from him about their native country; and as some of them came from his own neighbourhood, they took a lively interest in the news—the first that had reached them for years—of families with whom they were acquainted. He spent two or three hours in the afternoons in the *salle d'armes* of the regiment, or of the schools of one or other of the *maîtres d'armes* most in vogue, and then paid visits with one or other of the officers of the regiment to great houses of which they had the entrée. Of an evening he went out, accompanied by

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Mike Callaghan, and wandered about the less fashionable part of the town, which pleased him better than the more crowded and busy quarters.

One evening he had gone farther than usual, had passed through the gates, and had followed the road by the banks of the river. As an officer in uniform he was able to re-enter the town after the gates were closed, the rules being by no means strict, as, during the reign of Louis XIV, France, though engaged in frequent wars abroad, was free from domestic troubles. Presently he passed a lonely house of some size standing back from the road and surrounded by a high wall. As he did so, he heard a scream in a female voice, followed by angry exclamations from two male voices, while loudly rose a woman's cries for help.

"There is bad work of some sort going on in there," he said to Mike; "we had better see what it is all about. Do you go round the wall by the right and I will go round by the left, and see if there is any way by which we can climb over."

They met at the back of the house; the wall was unbroken save by the gates in front.

"The wall is too high for us to climb, Mike," Desmond said. "Even if I stood on your head I could not reach the top; let us go round to the front again."

They returned and closely scrutinized the gate. It was not so high as the wall itself, but was fully twelve feet.

"I have got a pistol with me, your honour," Mike said. "I have seen doors blown in by firing a gun through the key-hole."

"That would do if we were sure that there were no bars, Mike; but the chances are that it is barred as well as locked. Besides, I am sure that we should not be justified in blowing in the door of a private house. It may be that they were the

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cries of a mad woman. I would rather get over as quietly as possible."

"Well, sir, I will stand against it, and if you will get on to my shoulders and put your foot on my head, you will reach the top. Then if you lower one end of your sash to me I can pull myself up beside you."

"Yes, I think we can manage it that way, Mike. I am convinced that there is something wrong going on here and I don't mind taking the risk of getting into a scrape by interfering. Now do you stoop a bit so that I can get on to your shoulder; then you can raise yourself to your full height. Take off your hat first; I shall certainly have to put my foot on your head."

"All right, your honour; don't you be afraid of hurting me; my skull is thick enough to stand the weight of two of you."

In a minute Desmond had his fingers on the top of the gates, drew himself up, and, moving to the corner where he could get his back against the end of the wall, lowered his sash to Mike.

"You are sure I shall not pull you down?"

"I am not sure, but we will try, anyhow."

This was said in a whisper, for there might, for anything he knew, be two or three men in the garden. Mike took off his boots so as to avoid making a noise. Desmond was sitting astride of the gate and had his end of the sash over the top of it and under his leg, thereby greatly reducing the strain that would be thrown on it, and then leaning with all his weight on it where it crossed the gate. Mike was an active as well as a strong man, and speedily was by his side.

"Now we will drop down," Desmond said, and, setting the example, lowered himself till he hung by his hands, and then dropped. Mike was soon beside him.

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"What shall we do next?"

"We will go and knock boldly at the door; but before we do that, we will unbar the gate and shoot the bolt of the lock; we have no idea how many men there may be in the house. Maybe we shall have to beat a retreat."

The lock was shot without difficulty, but the bolts were still fast, and were not drawn without noise. They pushed back the last of these, and then opened the gates, which creaked noisily as they did so.

"They can hardly help hearing that," Desmond muttered; and indeed, as he spoke, the door of the house opened suddenly, and five men came out, two of them holding torches. A man who seemed to be the leader of the party uttered an exclamation of fury as the light fell upon the figures of the two men at the open gate.

"Cut the villains down!" he shouted.

"Stop!" Desmond cried in a loud voice. "I am an officer of O'Brien's regiment of foot. I heard a scream and a woman's cry for help, and, fearing that foul play was going on, I made my entry here."

The man who had drawn his sword paused.

"You have done wrong, sir. The cries you heard were those of a mad woman. You had better withdraw at once. I shall report you to-morrow for having forcibly made an entrance into private premises."

"That you are perfectly at liberty to do," Desmond replied quietly; "but certainly I shall not withdraw until I see this lady, and ascertain from herself whether your story is a true one."

"Then your blood be on your own head!" the man said. "At them, men! you know your orders,—to kill anyone who attempted to interfere with us, no matter what his rank."

The five men rushed together upon the intruders.

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"Hold the gate, Mike," Desmond said, "and they cannot get behind us."

They stepped back a pace or two and drew their swords. The position was a favourable one, for the two halves of the gate opened inwards and so protected them from any but an attack in front. The leader rushed at Desmond, but the latter guarded the sweeping blow he dealt at him, and at the first pass ran him through the body; but the other four men, enraged rather than daunted by the fall of their leader, now rushed forward together, and one of them, drawing a pistol, fired at Desmond when within three paces. The latter threw his head on one side as he saw the pistol levelled. The action saved his life, for it was well aimed and the bullet would have struck him full between the eyes. As it was, he felt a sharp sudden pain as it grazed his cheek deeply. He sprang forward, and before the man could drop the pistol and change his sword from the left hand to the right, Desmond's weapon pierced his throat. At the same moment Mike cut down one of his assailants with his sabre, receiving, however, a severe cut on the left shoulder from the other. Paralyzed at the loss of three of their number, the remaining two of the assailants paused for a moment. It was fatal to one of them, for Mike snatched his pistol from his pocket and shot the man who had wounded him, dead. The other threw down his sword and fell upon his knees crying for mercy.

"Shall I kill him, your honour?"

"No; fasten his hands behind him with his own belt, and bind his ankles tightly together with that of one of his comrades."

He paused, while Mike adroitly carried out his instructions.

"Now we will see what this is all about," Desmond said. "I don't suppose that there are any more of them in the house; still, we may as well keep our swords in readiness."

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Picking up one of the torches that had fallen from their assailants' hands, and holding it above his head with his left hand while his right held his sword ready for action, Desmond entered the house. The sitting-rooms on both sides of the hall were empty, but upon entering the kitchen he found an old woman crouching in a corner in the extremity of fear.

"Stand up; I am not going to hurt you," Desmond said. "Lead us at once to the chamber of the lady we heard call out."

The old woman rose slowly, took down a key hanging from a peg, and, leading the way upstairs, opened a door.

"Keep a watch upon the crone," Desmond said as he entered. As he did so his eye fell upon a girl of some seventeen years old. She was standing at the window with her hands clasped. She turned round as he entered, and as her eye fell upon his uniform she gave a cry of delight.

"Ah, monsieur, you have rescued me! I heard the fight in the garden, and knew that the good God had sent someone to my aid. But you are wounded, sir; your face is streaming with blood."

"'Tis but the graze of a pistol ball," he said, "and needs but a bowl of water and a strip of plaster to put it right. I had well-nigh forgotten it. I am glad indeed to have been able to render you this service, mademoiselle. It was most providential that I happened to come along the road and heard your screams and cries for aid; and I determined to see if any foul business was being carried on here. What made you call out?"

"I had let myself down from the window by knotting the bed-clothes together. I was blindfolded when they carried me in here, and did not know that the walls were so high all round, but had hoped to find some gate by which I might escape. There were only the great gates, and these were

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DESMOND'S WEAPON PIERCED HIS THROAT.

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locked, and I was trying to draw the bolts when two of the men suddenly rushed out. I suppose the old woman came up here and found the room empty. It was then that I screamed for help, but they dragged me in in spite of my struggles, and one said I might scream as much as I liked, for there was not a house within hearing, and no one would be passing anywhere near. When he said that, I quite gave up hope. I had believed that I was in some lonely house in the suburbs of the city, and I little thought that my cries could not be heard. But where are the men who guarded me?"

"Four of them are dead, mademoiselle, and the other securely bound. Now, if you will tell me who you are and where your friends live, I and my soldier servant will escort you to them."

"My name is Anne de Pointdexter."

Desmond was scarcely surprised, for the care which had been taken in choosing so lonely a spot for her concealment, and the fact that an officer and four men should be placed there to guard her, showed that she must have been regarded as a prisoner of importance.

"Then I am glad indeed to have been the means of rescuing you. All Paris has been talking of your disappearance for the past ten days. The question is, what would you wish done? It is too far to take you to Versailles to-night, and too late to obtain means of conveyance."

"There is a carriage in the stables behind the house, and there are some horses. I cannot say how many, but at night I have heard them stamping. I suppose the carriage was left here so that they could remove me to some other place in case suspicion should fall upon this house. How many are there of you, monsieur?"

"Only myself and the trooper you see at the door."

"And did you two fight with five men and kill four of

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them?" she exclaimed in surprise. "How brave of you, monsieur, and how good to run such risk for a person of whom you knew nothing!"

"I knew that it was a woman in distress," Desmond said, "and that was quite enough to induce two Irishmen to step in and answer to her cry for aid. However, mademoiselle, if the carriage and horses are there, this will get us out of our difficulty. The only question is, will you start at once or wait until daylight? We may be stopped by the patrols as we approach Versailles, but I have no doubt that my uniform will suffice to pass us into the town, where probably your father is still lodging."

"I would much rather go at once," the girl said; "there are others who come sometimes at all hours of the night."

"Very well then, we will see about getting the carriage ready at once. If you will come downstairs we will lock this old woman up in your room."

This was done at once, and the girl, who was so shaken by her captivity that she feared to remain for a moment by herself, accompanied her rescuers to the back of the house. Here, as she had said, they found a carriage and four horses, two of which stood ready saddled, while the others were evidently carriage horses. These were speedily harnessed and put into the carriage.

"Now, Mike, you had better drive. I will mount one of these saddle-horses and ride alongside. I think, mademoiselle, as the drive will be a long one, it would be as well that we should put the old woman in the carriage with you. She will be a companion, though one that you would not take from choice. Still, your father may wish to question her, and indeed it would be better in many respects that you should have a female with you."

"Thank you, Monsieur Kennedy,"—for she had already

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learned his name—she said gratefully, "it would certainly be much better."

The old woman was therefore brought down and made to enter the carriage and seat herself facing Mademoiselle Pointdexter. Mike took his seat on the box and Desmond mounted one of the saddle-horses and led the other. They had already removed the bodies that lay in front of the gates. They had to make a considerable detour round Paris before they came down upon the Versailles road. The roads were bad and the carriage was heavy, and daylight was already breaking when they entered the town. They had twice been stopped by patrols, but Desmond's uniform had sufficed to pass them. Baron Pointdexter had taken up his abode in a large house standing in a walled garden in the lower part of the town. When they reached it Desmond dismounted and rung the bell. After he had done this several times a step was heard in the garden, and a voice asked roughly, "Who is it that rings at this hour of the morning?"

Mademoiselle Pointdexter, who had alighted as soon as the carriage stopped, called out, "It is I, Eustace."

There was an exclamation of surprise and joy, bolts were at once drawn and the gate thrown open, and an old servitor threw himself on his knees as the girl entered, and, taking the hand she held out to him, put it to his lips.

"Ah, mademoiselle," he said, while the tears streamed down his cheeks, "what a joyful morning it is! We have all suffered, and monsieur le baron most of all. He has spoken but a few words since you left, but walks up and down the garden as one distraught, muttering to himself, and sometimes even drawing his sword and thrusting it at an invisible enemy. He is up, mademoiselle; he has never gone to his bed since you were missing."

As he spoke, the door of the house opened and the baron

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hurried out, with the question, "What is it, Eustace?" Then, as his eye fell on his daughter, he gave a hoarse cry, and for a moment swayed as if he would have fallen. His daughter ran up to him and threw her arms round his neck.

"Do you return to me safe and well?" he asked, as, after a long embrace, he stepped back and gazed into her face.

"Quite safe and well, father."

"The Lord be praised!" the baron exclaimed, and, dropping into a garden-seat by his side, he burst into a passion of sobbing. As soon as he appeared Desmond had handed over the old woman to Eustace.

"She is a prisoner—keep a watch over her," he said; "she can tell much. We will take the carriage round to a stable, and must then return at once to Paris, where I must be on duty at seven. Please inform the baron that I shall do myself the honour of calling to-morrow to enquire whether Mademoiselle Pointdexter has suffered from the effects of the fatigue and excitement. Express my regret that I am obliged to leave at once, but I am sure he will have so much to hear from his daughter that it is best they should be alone together for a time."

He at once remounted his horse, Mike climbed up on to his seat, and they drove off, and, knocking up the people at some large stables, left the carriage and horses there, telling the proprietors to send to the Baron Pointdexter to know his wishes regarding it. Then Mike mounted the spare horse, and they started at full speed for Paris, and arrived at the barracks in time for Desmond to take his place at the early parade.

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CHAPTER IV

AT VERSAILLES

THE regiment was on the point of falling in on the parade ground when Desmond Kennedy rode up. Leaping from his horse he threw the reins to his servant.

"Take them both round to the stables and put them in spare stalls, Mike. I will get leave off parade for both of us, and ask the surgeon to dress your wounds properly."

Then he went up to the colonel, who was just entering the barrack-yard.

"Colonel O'Brien," he said, "I must ask your leave off parade, for, as you see, I am scarcely in a condition to take my place with my company."

"So it would seem, Mr. Kennedy. You have been in trouble, I see. Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Nothing at all, sir, as far as I am concerned. It is merely a graze from a pistol ball."

"Well, I must hear about it afterwards."

"I must also ask leave off parade for Callaghan, my servant, sir. He is hurt a good deal more than I am, though not, I hope, seriously."

The colonel nodded. "I will send the surgeon to your quarters and he will see to you both."

As Desmond left the colonel his two chums came up. "Why, Kennedy, what on earth have you been doing to yourself? This is what comes of gallivanting about after dark. When we came round yesterday evening to go out with you as usual, you were not in. There was nothing very unusual in that, for these evening walks of yours are often prolonged; but we called again on our return at eleven o'clock and found you were still absent. This looked serious.

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We came round again at six this morning, for we were anxious about you, and learned you had not been in all night, and, on enquiring, heard that Callaghan was also absent. That was cheering. That you might get into some scrape or other, we could reasonably believe; but, as you had your man with you, we could hardly suppose that misfortune had fallen upon both of you."

"The wound is a mere graze. I will tell you after parade what I have been doing," Desmond said, "but you must nurse your curiosity till you are dismissed."

A few minutes after Desmond reached his quarters the surgeon came in. "I do not think that I have any need of your services, doctor. I got a piece of plaster and stuck it on two hours ago, and I have no doubt that the wound will heal in a few days."

"However, I will, with your permission, take it off, Mr. Kennedy. It is much better that the wound should be properly washed and some dressing applied to it. It will heal all the quicker, and you are less likely to have an ugly scar.

"It is a pretty deep graze," he said, after he had carefully removed the plaster. "An eighth of an inch farther and it would have made your teeth rattle. You had better keep quiet to-day. To-morrow morning, if there is no sign of inflammation, I will take off the dressing and bandage and put on a plaster—one a third of the size that I took off will be sufficient; and as I will use a pink plaster, it will not be very noticeable if you go outside the barracks. Where is your man? The colonel told me there were two patients.

"A nasty cut," he said, after examining Mike's wound. "It is lucky that it was not a little higher. If it had been, you would have bled to death in five minutes. As it is, it is not serious. You will have to keep your arm in a sling for a

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fortnight. You are not to attend parade or mount a horse until I give you leave."

On the ride from Versailles Desmond had warned Mike to say no word as to the events of the night. "I do not know what course the young lady's father may take," he said, "and until I do, the matter had better be kept a secret altogether."

"I will keep a quiet tongue in my head, and no one shall hear anything from me as to how I got this slice on my shoulder. I will just say that it was a bit of a scrimmage I got into with two or three of the street rascals; and the thing is so common that no one is likely to ask any further questions about it."

After the parade was over, O'Neil and O'Sullivan came up to Desmond's quarters. "Now, Master Kennedy, we have come to receive your confession. We gave you credit for being a quiet, decent boy, and now it seems that you and that man of yours have been engaged in some disreputable riot, out all night, and coming in on two strange horses, which, for aught we know, have been carried off by force of arms."

Desmond laughed. "As to the horses, you are not so far wrong as one might expect, O'Neil. We rode them this morning from Versailles."

"From Versailles!" O'Neil repeated. "And what in the name of all the saints took you to Versailles? I am afraid, Desmond, that you are falling into very evil courses. Well, tell us all about it. I shall be glad to be able to believe that there is some redeeming feature in this strange business."

Desmond laughed, and then said more seriously, "Well, I have had an adventure. Other people were concerned in it as well as myself. I have made up my mind to tell you both, because I know that I can depend upon your promises to keep it an absolute secret."

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"This sounds mysterious indeed," O'Sullivan said. "However, you have our promises; O'Neil and I will be as silent as the grave."

"Well, then, you know how you were chaffing me the other day about finding Mademoiselle Pointdexter—"

"You don't mean to say that you have found her, Kennedy?" O'Neil exclaimed incredulously.

"That is what I mean to say, though found is hardly the word, since I was not looking for her, or even thinking of her at the time. Still, in point of fact I accidentally came across the place where she was hidden away, and after a sharp skirmish, in which Callaghan and I each had to kill two men, we carried her off and delivered her safely to her father this morning."

The two young officers looked hard at Desmond to discover if he was speaking seriously, for his tone was so quiet and matter-of-fact that they could scarce credit that he had passed through such an exciting adventure, and the three were so accustomed to hoax each other that it struck them both as simply an invention on the part of their comrade, so absolutely improbable did it seem to them.

"Sure you are trying to hoax us, Kennedy," O'Sullivan said.

"You could not blame me if I were," Desmond said with a smile, "considering the cock-and-bull stories that you are constantly trying to palm off on me. However, you are wrong now. I will tell you the affair just as it happened." And he related in detail the story of the rescue of Mademoiselle Pointdexter, and the manner in which he had conveyed her to Versailles.

"By St. Bridget, Kennedy, we were not far wrong when we called you a knight-errant. Well, this is something like an adventure, though whether it will end well or ill for you I

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cannot say. Did you learn the name of the person who had the girl carried off?"

"No; I asked no questions, and indeed had but little conversation with her; for, as I have told you, I put her in a carriage with the old hag who was in charge of her, and rode myself by the side of it in case the old woman should try to escape."

"A truly discreet proceeding, Kennedy," O'Neil laughed. "I think, if I myself had been in your place, I should have taken a seat inside also, where you, of course, could at once have watched the old woman and talked with the young one."

"I don't think that you would have done anything of the sort, O'Neil," Desmond said gravely, "but would have seen, as I did, that it was better that she should travel alone with the old woman till she reached her father's house. Scandal will be busy enough with her name in any case, and it is as well that it should not be said that she arrived home in a carriage with a young officer of O'Brien's Irish regiment."

"By my faith, Kennedy, it seems to me that you are a St. Anthony and a Bayard rolled into one; but, seriously, you are undoubtedly right. Well, it all depends on who was the man who carried her off, as to whether you were fortunate or unfortunate in thus having thwarted his designs. If he is some adventurer your action will gain you heaps of credit. If, on the other hand, it was one of the king's favourites seeking to mend his fortunes by marrying, it is probable that you will have made a dangerous enemy,—nay, more, have drawn upon yourself the king's displeasure. I should think it likely that before attempting so desperate an action as the carrying off of the Baron Pointdexter's daughter, such a man would have assured himself that the king would not view the enterprise with displeasure. We may assume that he would not inform His Ma-

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jesty of any particulars, but would put it hypothetically, that as he was getting into sore straits he thought of mending his fortunes by carrying off an heiress—not, of course, one of those of whose hands the king had the disposal; and that he trusted that if he succeeded, His Majesty would not view the matter as a grave offence. From what I know of Louis he would reply gravely: 'I should be obliged (duke or viscount, as the case might be) to express very grave displeasure, and to order you to leave the court for a time; but as the harm would be done, and the young lady married to you, it might be that in time I should pardon the offence.' If this is how things have gone, you may be sure that the king will not view with satisfaction the man who has interfered with his favourite's plan for mending his fortunes."

Desmond shrugged his shoulders. "The king's dissatisfaction would matter very little to me," he said, "especially as he could not openly manifest it without making it apparent that he had approved of the scheme."

"It is not such a trifle as you think, Kennedy. *Lettres de cachet* are not difficult to obtain by powerful members of the court, especially when the person named is a young regimental officer whose disappearance would excite no comment or curiosity save among the officers of his own regiment. The man who carried off Mademoiselle Pointdexter must be a bold fellow, and is likely to be a vindictive one. No doubt his object was to keep the young lady a prisoner until she agreed to marry him, and the loss of a pretty bride with a splendid fortune is no trifling one, and likely to be bitterly resented. Whether that resentment will take the form of obtaining an order for your confinement in the Bastille or other royal prison, or of getting you put out of the way by a stab in the back, I am unable to say, but in any case I should advise you strongly to give up your fancy for wandering about after

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dark; and when you do go out, keep in the frequented portions of the town. Jack Farquharson, who was at Versailles with the colonel last week, was speaking of Mademoiselle Pointdexter, and said that she was charming. Did you find her so?"

"I thought nothing about it one way or the other," Desmond said carelessly; "I only saw her face by torch-light, and she was, of course, agitated by what had happened; and indeed, as I was busy helping Mike to yoke the horses to the carriage, I had scarcely time to look at her. When we reached Versailles it was barely daylight. I handed her out of the carriage, and left her to enter by herself, as I thought it was better that she should meet her father alone. I do not think that I should recognize her were I to meet her in the street."

"Most insensible youth!" O'Sullivan said with a laugh; "insensible and discreet to a point that, were it not assured, none would believe that you had Irish blood in your veins. And so you say you are going over to Versailles to-morrow?"

"Yes; I left a message with the servant who opened the door to that effect. Of course I shall be glad to know if the baron intends to take any steps against his daughter's abductor, or whether he thinks it best not to add to the scandal by stirring up matters, but to take her away at once to his estates."

He is in a difficult position," O'Neil said gravely. "The young lady has been missing for a fortnight; no one knows whether she went of her own free-will or against it. Were her father to carry her off quietly it would excite the worst suspicions. Better by far lodge his complaint before the king, proclaim his grievances loudly everywhere, and tell the story in all its details. Whichever course he takes, evil-minded people will think the worse; but of the two evils, the latter seems to me to be the lesser."

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"I suppose it would be," Desmond agreed, "though for my part I should be heartily glad if I never heard another word about it."

"You are too modest altogether, Kennedy. Whatever rumours may be current concerning the young lady, there can be no doubt that you come out splendidly, in that you hear a cry of a woman in distress; you scale walls to get in to her assistance; you and your servant encounter five of her guards, kill four of them and bind the other; rescue the maiden, and carry her off with flying colours in the carriage of her abductor. My dear Kennedy, you will become an object of admiration to all the ladies of the court."

"That will be absolutely disgusting," Desmond said angrily; "it is almost enough to make one wish that one had never interfered in the affair."

"Pooh, pooh, Kennedy! I am sure that either O'Sullivan or myself would give, I was going to say a year's pay, though how one would exist without it I don't know, to have been in your place. Why, man, if you had captured a standard in battle after feats of superhuman bravery, you would not attract half the attention that will fall to you as a consequence of this adventure. Life in the court of His Most Christian Majesty is one of the most artificial possible. The women hide their faces with powder and patches, lace themselves until they are ready to faint, walk with a mincing air, and live chiefly upon scandal; but they are women after all, and every woman has a spice of romance in her nature, and such an adventure as yours is the very thing to excite their admiration."

"I know nothing about women," Desmond growled, "and don't want to know any of them, especially the ladies at the court of Louis."

"Well, of course, Kennedy, if the baron proclaims his wrongs, and publishes the circumstances of his daughter's ab-

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duction and rescue, the seal of silence will be taken from our lips, especially as you will almost to a certainty be summoned to Versailles to confirm the lady's story."

"I am afraid that that will be so," Desmond said despondingly. "However, it can't be helped, and I suppose one must make the best of it." To most of the officers who dropped in in the course of the day to see Desmond and to enquire how he got his wound, he abstained from giving any particulars. It was merely said that he and Callaghan were suddenly attacked by five ruffians, whom they managed to beat off. Much surprise was expressed that such attack should be made upon an officer and a soldier, on whom little plunder could be expected, and who would be sure to defend themselves stoutly. Several, indeed, expressed some incredulity.

"We do not doubt for a moment, Kennedy, that you were attacked by five men, as you say, and that you routed them, but there must have been some motive for the attack. These evening strolls of yours are suspicious, and I will warrant that there must have been a great deal at the bottom of it. Now, can you deny that?"

"I neither admit nor deny anything," Desmond said with a smile; "enough that at present I have told you all that I feel justified in telling. I acknowledge that there is more behind it, but at present my mouth is sealed on the subject."

The colonel was among those who came in to see him. To him Desmond said frankly that the affair was altogether out of the common, that it was likely that the whole facts would be known shortly, but that, as other persons were concerned, he could not speak of it until he had obtained their permission.

"Then I will ask no further," Colonel O'Brien said. I have seen enough of you to know that you would not be concerned in any affair that could bring discredit upon the corps.

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I am curious to know the whole story, but am quite content to wait until you feel at liberty to tell me."

The next morning Desmond took part in the usual work of the regiment, and then, mounting his horse, rode to Versailles. On his ringing the bell at the house occupied by the Baron de Pointdexter, the old servitor whom he had before seen opened the gate.

"The baron is expecting you, monsieur," he said, bowing deeply; and at his call another servant ran out and took Desmond's horse and led it away to the stable, while Desmond followed the old man to the house. The door opened as they approached, and the baron, a tall man, some fifty years of age, advanced hastily, holding out both hands.

"Monsieur Kennedy," he said, "you have rendered to me the greatest service that I have received during my life. No words can express the gratitude that I feel for one who has restored to me my only child just when I had come to believe that she was lost to me for ever. It was surely her guardian saint who sent you to the spot at that moment."

"It might have happened to anyone, sir," Desmond said; "surely any gentleman on hearing an appeal for help from a woman in distress would have done just what I did."

"Let us go in," the baron said; "my daughter has been eagerly waiting your coming, especially as she tells me that she does not think she said even a word of thanks to you, being overpowered by what she had gone through, and by her joy, at her sudden and unexpected deliverance. Indeed, she says that she scarcely exchanged two words with you."

"There was no opportunity, Baron, for, indeed, as soon as she told me that there was a carriage and horses in the stable, I was too much occupied in getting it ready for her to depart without delay, to think of talking."

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They had now entered the house, and as the baron led the way into the sitting-room the girl rose from a fauteuil.

"This, Monsieur Kennedy, is my daughter, Mademoiselle Anne de Pointdexter. It is high time that you were formally presented to each other. This, Anne, is the officer who rendered you such invaluable service."

"We meet almost as strangers, mademoiselle," Desmond said, bowing deeply, "for I own that I saw so little of your face the other night that I should hardly have recognized you had I met you elsewhere."

"I should certainly not have recognized you, Monsieur Kennedy. What with my own fright, and I may say the condition of your face, I had but a faint idea of what you were really like, but I certainly did not think that you were so young. You had such a masterful way with you, and seemed to know so perfectly what ought to be done, that I took you to be much older than you now look."

"I joined the regiment but little more than three months ago," Desmond said, "and am its youngest ensign."

"Monsieur, I owe to you more than my life, for had it not been for you I should have been forced into marriage with one whom I despise."

"I cannot think that, mademoiselle. From what I saw of you I should say that you would have resisted all threats and even undergone hopeless imprisonment rather than yield."

"There is no saying, Monsieur Kennedy," the baron said; "Anne is of good blood, and I know that it would have been hard to break down her will, but confinement and hopelessness will tell on the bravest spirit. However that may be, she and I are your debtors for life."

"Indeed, Monsieur Kennedy," the girl said, "I pray you to believe that I am more grateful to you than words can express."

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"I pray you to say no more about it, mademoiselle. I deem it a most fortunate circumstance that I was able to come to your assistance, and especially so when I found that the lady I had rescued was one whose disappearance had made so great a stir; but I should have been glad to render such service to one in the poorest condition."

"My daughter said that you asked her no questions, Monsieur Kennedy, and you therefore are, I suppose, in ignorance of the name of her abductor?"

"Altogether."

"It was the Vicomte de Tulle, one who stands very high in the regard of the king, and who is one of the most extravagant and dissipated even of the courtiers here. For some time it has been reported that he had nigh ruined himself by his lavish expenditure, and doubtless he thought to re-establish his finances by this bold stroke. His plans were well laid: he waited until I had gone to Paris on business that would keep me there for a day or two. A messenger arrived with a letter purporting to be from me, saying that I wished my daughter to join me at once, and had sent a carriage to take her to me. Anne is young, and, suspecting no harm, at once threw on a montle and hood and entered the carriage. It was broad daylight, and there was nothing to disquiet her until, on approaching the town, the carriage turned off the main road. This struck her as strange, and she was just about to ask the question where she was being taken, when the carriage stopped in a lonely spot, the door was opened, and a man stepped in.

"Before she had even time to recognize him he threw a thick cloak over her head. She struggled in vain to free herself, but he held her fast. Again and again she tried to cry out, but her mouth was muffled by the wrapping. She had heard the blinds of the carriage drawn, and finding that her

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struggles to free herself were vain, and receiving no answer to her supplications to be released, she remained quiet until the carriage stopped. Then she was lifted out and carried into the house where you found her. The wrapping was removed, and the man who had taken it off, and who by his attire was a gentleman in the service of some noble, said, 'Do not be alarmed, mademoiselle; no harm is intended to you. My master is grieved to be obliged to adopt such means, but his passion for you is so great that he was driven to this step, and it will entirely depend upon yourself when your captivity will end.'

"'Your master, whoever he may be,' Anne said, 'is a contemptible villain.'

"'Naturally you have a poor opinion of him at present,' the fellow said; 'but I am convinced that in time you will come to excuse his fault. It is wholly due to the depth of the feeling that he entertains towards you. There is a woman here who will wait upon you; I and my men will not intrude. Our duty is solely to see that you do not escape, which indeed would be an impossibility for you, seeing that the wall that surrounds the garden is well-nigh fifteen feet high, and the gate barred and locked, and the key thereof in my pocket.' He called, and the old woman whom you brought here with Anne entered, and bid her ascend to the room that had been prepared for her.

"In that respect she had nothing to complain of. Of course you did not notice it, as you had other things to think of, but it was handsomely furnished. There was a bed in an alcove, some flowers on the table, some books, and even a harpsichord —evidently it was intended that her imprisonment should be made as light as might be.

"Looking from the window, Anne saw that the room was at the back of the house, and had probably been chosen because

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some trees shut the window off from view of anyone beyond the wall. The next day the old woman announced the Vicomte de Tulle. He bowed profoundly, and began by excusing the step that he had taken, and crediting it solely to the passion that he had conceived for her. You may imagine the scorn and reproaches with which she answered him. He was quite unmoved by her words. 'Mademoiselle,' he said calmly when she paused, 'you may be sure that I should not have undertaken this scheme unless I had fully weighed the consequences. My plans have been so laid that whatever search may be made for you will be in vain. Here you are, and here you will remain until you listen to my suit. Every want shall be satisfied, and every wish complied with; but whether it is one year or five, you will not leave this house until you leave it as my bride.'

"'Then, sir,' she said passionately, 'I shall be a prisoner for life.'

"'So you may think at present, mademoiselle,' he said. 'And I expected nothing else; but with time and reflection you may come to think otherwise. Union with me is not so terrible a matter. My rank you know, and standing high as I do in the favour of His Most Gracious Majesty, your position at court will be such as might gratify the daughter of the noblest family in France. The study of my life will be to make you happy. I shall now leave you to think over the matter. I shall not pester you with my attentions, and for another month you will not see me again. At the end of that time I trust that you will have seen the futility of condemning yourself to further captivity, and will be disposed to make more allowance than at present for the step to which my passion for yourself has driven me.'

"It was just a month since she had been carried off, and the very day when you rescued her the old woman had in-

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formed her that the vicomte would do himself the pleasure of calling upon her the next day. For the first fortnight she had held up bravely, in the hope that I should discover the place where she had been hidden. Then she began to feel the imprisonment and silence telling upon her, for the old woman only entered to bring in her meals, and never opened her lips except on the first occasion, when she told her that she was strictly forbidden to converse with her. After that she began to despair, and the news that her abductor would visit her the next day decided her to make an attempt to escape. She had no difficulty in letting herself down from the window by the aid of her bed-clothes, but she found that what had been said respecting the wall and gate was true, and that she was no nearer escape than she had been before she had left her room. She was trying in vain to unbar the gate, which, indeed, would have been useless could she have accomplished it, as it was also locked. But she was striving with the energy of desperation when the door of the house opened and the men rushed out and seized her. As they dragged her back to the house she uttered the cries that brought you to her assistance. The rest you know.

"As soon as I heard her story I went to the palace and asked for a private interview with the king. The king received me graciously enough, and asked, with an appearance of great interest, if I had obtained any news of my daughter.

"'I have more than obtained news, Your Majesty. I have my daughter back again, and I have come to demand justice at your hands.'

"'I congratulate you indeed, Baron,' the king said, with an appearance of warmth, but I saw his colour change, and was convinced that he knew something at least of the matter.

"'And where has the damsel been hiding herself?' he went on.

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"'She has not been hiding herself at all, Sire,' I said. 'She has been abducted by one of Your Majesty's courtiers with the intention of forcing her into a marriage. His name, Sire, is the Vicomte de Tulle, and I demand that justice shall be done me, and that he shall receive the punishment due to so gross an outrage.'

"The king was silent for a minute, and then said:

"'He has indeed, if you have been rightly informed, acted most grossly. Still, it is evident that he repented the step that he took, and so suffered her to return to you.'

"'Not so, Your Majesty,' I said. 'I owe her return to no repentance on his part, but to the gallantry of a young officer who, passing the house where she was confined, heard her cries for aid, and with his soldier servant climbed the gate of the enclosure, and was there attacked by the man who had charge of her, with four others. The young gentleman and his servant killed four of them and bound the other, and then, entering the house, compelled the woman who had been appointed to act as her servant to lead the way to her chamber. Fortunately, the carriage in which she had been taken there was still in the stables, with its horses. The gallant young gentleman at once got the carriage in readiness, placed my daughter in it, with the woman who had been attending on her. The servant drove, and he rode by the side of the carriage, and in that way brought her home this morning.'

"In spite of his efforts to appear indifferent, it was evident that the king was greatly annoyed. However, he only said:

"'You did quite right to come to me, Baron. It is outrageous indeed that a young lady of my court should be thus carried off, and I will see that justice is done. And who is this officer who has rendered your daughter such a service?'

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"'His name is Kennedy, Sire. He is an ensign in O'Brien's Irish regiment.'

"'I will myself send for him,' he said, 'and thank him for having defeated this disgraceful plot of the Vicomte de Tulle. I suppose you are quite sure of all the circumstances as you have told them to me?'

"'It is impossible that there can be any mistake, Sire,' I said. 'In the first place, I have my daughter's account. This is entirely corroborated by the old woman she had brought with her, and whose only hope of escaping from punishment lay in telling the truth. In every respect she fully confirmed my daughter's account.'

"'But the vicomte has not been absent from Versailles for the past month. He has been at my morning levée, and on all other occasions at my breakfasts and dinners; he has walked with me in the gardens, and been always present at the evening receptions.'

"'That is so, Sire,' I said. 'My daughter happily saw him but once, namely, on the morning after she was captured. He then told her frankly that she would remain a prisoner until she consented to marry him, however long the time might be. He said he would return in a month, and hoped by that time to find that, seeing the hopelessness of her position, she would be more inclined to accept his suit. It was on the eve of his coming again that my daughter, in her desperation, made the attempt to escape. She was foiled in her effort, but this, nevertheless, brought about her rescue, for her cries, as her guards dragged her into the house, attracted the attention of Monsieur Kennedy, who forthwith, as I have told you, stormed the house, killed her guards, and brought her home to me.'

"The king then sent for de Tulle, and spoke to him with great sternness. The latter did not attempt to deny my

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accusation, but endeavoured to excuse himself on the ground of the passion that he had conceived for my daughter. Certainly from the king's tone I thought that he would at least have sent him to the Bastille, but to my great disappointment he wound up his reproof by saying, 'I can, of course, make some allowances for your passion for so charming a young lady as Mademoiselle Pointdexter, but the outrage you committed is far too serious to be pardoned. You will at once repair to your estates, and will remain there during my pleasure.' The vicomte bowed and withdrew, and an hour later left Versailles. The king turned to me as he left the room, and said, 'I trust, Monsieur le Baron, that you are content that justice has been done.'

"I was too angry to choose my words, and I said firmly, 'I cannot say that I am content, Your Majesty. Such an outrage as that which has been perpetrated upon my daughter deserves a far heavier punishment than banishment from court; and methinks that an imprisonment as long as that which he intended to inflict upon her unless she consented to be his wife, would have much more nearly met the justice of the case.'

"The king rose to his feet suddenly, and I thought that my boldness would meet with the punishment that I desired for de Tulle, but he bit his lips, and then said coldly: 'You are not often at court, Baron Pointdexter, and are doubtless ignorant that I am not accustomed to be spoken to in the tone that you have used. However, I can make due allowance for the great anxiety that you have suffered at your daughter's disappearance. I trust that I shall see you and your daughter at my levée this evening.'

"As this was a command, of course we went, and I am bound to say that the king did all in his power to show to his court that he considered her to be wholly blameless. Of course the story had already got about, and it was known that

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the vicomte had been ordered to his estates. The king was markedly civil to Anne, talked to her for some time, expressed his deep regret that she should have been subject to such an outrage while staying at his court, and said, in a tone loud enough to be heard by all standing round: 'The only redeeming point in the matter is, that the Vicomte de Tulle in no way troubled or molested you, and that you only saw him for a few minutes on the first day of your confinement.' I need not say that this royal utterance was most valuable to my daughter, and that it at once silenced any malicious scandal that might otherwise have got about.

"The king stopped to speak to me immediately afterwards, and I said: 'I trust that you will pardon the words I spoke this morning. Your Majesty has rendered me and my daughter an inestimable service by the speech that you have just made.' Thus, although dissatisfied with the punishment inflicted on the Vicomte de Tulle, and believing that the king had a shrewd idea who her abductor was, I am grateful to him for shielding my daughter from ill tongues by his marked kindness to her, and by declaring openly that de Tulle had not seen her since the day of her abduction. I intended to return home to-morrow, but the king himself, when I went this morning to pay my respects and state my intention of taking Anne home, bade those standing round to fall back, and was good enough to say in a low voice to me: 'I think, Baron, that you would do well to reconsider your decision to leave to-morrow. Your sudden departure would give rise to ill-natured talk. It would be wiser to stay here for a short time till the gossip and wonder have passed away.'

"I saw that His Majesty was right and shall stay here for a short time longer. It would certainly have a bad effect were we to seem to run away and hide ourselves in the provinces."

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Mademoiselle de Pointdexter had retired when her father began to relate to Desmond what had happened.

"I know little of life in Paris, Monsieur le Baron," Desmond said, "but it certainly seems to me monstrous that the man who committed this foul outrage should escape with what is doubtless but a short banishment from court."

"I do not know that the matter is ended yet, Monsieur Kennedy. In spite of the edicts against duelling, I myself should have demanded satisfaction from him for this attack upon the honour of my family, but I am at present Anne's only protector. It is many years since I have drawn a sword, while de Tulle is noted as a fencer, and has had many affairs of which he has escaped the consequences owing to royal favour. Therefore, were I to challenge him, the chances are that I should be killed, in which case my daughter would become a ward of the crown, and her hand and estate be bestowed on one of the king's creatures. But, as I said, the matter is not likely to rest as it is. Anne has, with my full consent and approval, given her love to a young gentleman of our province. He is a large landed proprietor, and a connection of our family. They are not as yet formally betrothed, for I have no wish to lose her so soon; and in spite of the present fashion of early marriages, I by no means approve of them, and told Monsieur de la Vallée that they must wait for another couple of years.

"I need scarcely say that after what has happened I shall reconsider my decision, for the sooner she is married and beyond the reach of a repetition of this outrage the better. I imagine, however, that the young gentleman will be no better satisfied than I am that the matter should have been passed over so lightly, and will take it into his own hands and send a challenge immediately to the vicomte. He is high-spirited, and has the reputation among us of being a good

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fencer, but I doubt whether he can possess such skill as that which de Tulle has acquired. It is not always the injured person that comes off victorious in a duel; and should fortune go against Monsieur de la Vallée it would be a terrible blow to my daughter, and indeed to myself, for I am much attached to him. She is worrying about it already. Of course it is impossible that the affair can be hidden from him; it is public property now, and therefore I sent off one of my grooms an hour since with a letter to him.

"Hitherto I had not written to him about my daughter's disappearance. Knowing he would, on hearing of it, at once hasten here, where he could do no good and would only add to my trouble, I thought it best to let matters go on as they were. I had been doing everything that was possible, and to have his troubles as well as my own on my hands would have driven me to distraction. The groom is to change horses at every post-house, and to use the greatest possible speed. You may be sure that Monsieur de la Vallée will do the same, and that in six days he will be here. I have given him the merest outline of the affair, and have not mentioned the name of Anne's abductor. Had I done so, it is probable that Philip would have gone straight to de Tulle and forced on an encounter at once. As it is, I trust that Anne and I between us may persuade him to take no step in the matter. It is the honour of my family, not of his, that has been attacked. Had he been betrothed to my daughter he would have been in a position to take up her quarrel; as it is, he has no status, except distant relationship. And now, Monsieur Kennedy, I have the king's order to take you to the palace. He asked me several questions about you this morning. I said that I had not yet seen you, but that you were riding over here to-day, and he said: 'Bring him to me when he comes, Baron. I should like to see this young fire-eater who thrust himself so boldly into a mat-

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ter in which he had no concern, solely because he heard a woman's voice calling for help.'"

"I am sorry to hear it," Desmond said bluntly. "From what you say I imagine that, in spite of what he has done, the king is far from gratified at the failure of his favourite's plan. However, I cannot disobey his commands in the matter."

CHAPTER V

A NEW FRIEND

THE baron sent a servant to request his daughter to come down.

"I am going now with Monsieur Kennedy to the palace, Anne," he said as she entered. "I do not suppose that we shall be absent very long. I have been talking matters over with him, and I think that he agrees with my view of them."

"But I have hardly spoken to him yet, father!"

"You will have an opportunity of doing so when we return. Monsieur Kennedy will, of course, dine with us. After the service that he has rendered to us we have a right to consider him as belonging to us."

"Had I had an idea of this," Desmond said, as they walked up the hill towards the palace gate, "I should have put on my full uniform. This undress is scarcely the attire in which one would appear before the King of France, who is, as I have heard, most particular in matters of etiquette."

"He is so," the Baron said. "He will know that you could not be prepared for an audience, and doubtless he will receive you in his private closet."

On ascending the grand staircase the baron gave his name to one of the court chamberlains.

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"I have orders," the latter said, "to take you at once, on your presenting yourself, to His Majesty's closet, instead of entering the audience-chamber." They were conducted along a private passage of considerable length. On arriving at a door the chamberlain asked them to wait while he went inside to ascertain whether His Majesty was disengaged.

"His Majesty will see you in a few minutes, Baron," he said when he came out; "the Duc d'Orleans is with him, but, hearing your name announced for a private audience, he is taking his leave."

In two or three minutes a hand-bell sounded in the room, and the chamberlain, who at once entered, returned in a moment and conducted the baron and Desmond into the king's private apartment.

"Allow me to present to Your Majesty," the former said, "Monsieur Desmond Kennedy, an officer in O'Brien's regiment, and an Irish gentleman of good family."

The king who was now far advanced in life, looked at the young man with some surprise. "I had expected to see an older man," he said. "Though you told me, Baron, he was but an ensign, I looked to see a man of the same type as so many of my gallant Irish officers, ready for any desperate service. So, young sir, you have begun early indeed to play havoc among my liege subjects, for I hear that you and a soldier with you slew four of them."

"Hardly your liege subjects, Your Majesty, if I may venture to say so; for assuredly they were not engaged in lawful proceedings when I came upon them."

A slight smile crossed the king's face. He was accustomed to adulation, and the simple frankness with which this young soldier ventured to discuss the propriety of the word he used surprised and amused him.

"You are right, sir; these fellows who are ready to under-

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take any service, however criminal, for which they are paid, certainly do not deserve to be called liege subjects. Now I would hear from your own lips how it was that you thrust yourself into a matter with which you had no concern, being wholly ignorant, I understand, that the lady whose voice you heard was Mademoiselle Pointdexter."

"The matter was very simple, Sire. Having joined the regiment but a few months, and being naturally anxious to perfect myself in exercises in arms, I have but little time to stir out during the day, and of an evening I frequently go for long rambles, taking with me my soldier servant. I had that evening gone farther than usual, the night being fair and the weather balmy, and naturally, when I heard the cry of a woman in distress, I determined to see what had happened, as it might well be that murder was being done."

He then related all the circumstances of his obtaining an entrance into the gardens, of the attack upon him by the guard, and how he finally brought Mademoiselle Pointdexter to Versailles. The king listened attentively.

"It was an exploit I should have loved to perform when I was your age, Monsieur Kennedy. You behaved in the matter with singular discretion and gallantry; but if you intend always to interfere when you hear a woman cry out, it is likely that your time will be pretty well occupied, and that before long there will be a vacancy in the ranks of your regiment. Truly Monsieur le Baron and his daughter have reason for gratitude that you happened to be passing at the time, and I as King of France am glad that this outrage on a lady of the court has failed. I am perhaps not altogether without blame in the matter. A short time ago the Vicomte de Tulle told me that he hoped to better his fortune by a rich marriage. He named no names, nor said aught of the measures he

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intended to adopt. But I said it would be well that he should do so, for rumours had reached me that his finances were in disorder. Whether he took this as a permission to use any means that he thought fit I cannot tell; and I certainly did not suspect, when I heard of the disappearance of Mademoiselle de Pointdexter, that he had any hand in it, and was shocked when the baron came here and denounced him to me. I am glad indeed that his enterprise was thwarted, for it was a most unworthy one. You are too young yet for me to grant you military promotion, but this will be a proof of my approbation of your conduct, and that the King of France is determined to suppress all irregularities at his court." And taking a diamond ring from his finger, he handed it to Desmond, who went on one knee to receive it. "You will please inform your colonel that when he comes to Versailles I request he will always bring you with him."

The audience was evidently finished, and the baron and Desmond, bowing deeply, left the king's cabinet. The baron did not speak till they left the palace.

"Louis has his faults," the baron then said, "but no one could play the part of a great monarch more nobly than he does. I have no doubt whatever that de Tulle relied implicitly upon obtaining his forgiveness had he succeeded in forcing Anne into marrying him, though doubtless he would have feigned displeasure for a time. He has extricated himself most gracefully. I can quite believe that he did not imagine his favourite intended to adopt so criminal a course to accomplish the matter of which he spoke to him, but he could not fail to have his suspicions when he heard of Anne's disappearance. However, we can consider the affair as happily ended, except for the matter of Monsieur de la Vallée, of whom I spoke to you. And now, sir, that the king has expressed his gratitude to you for saving his court from a grave

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scandal, how can I fitly express my own at the inestimable service that you have rendered us?"

"I should say, Baron, that it will be most welcomely expressed if you will abstain from saying more of the matter. It is a simple one. I went to the assistance of a woman in distress, and succeeded at the expense of this trifling wound in accomplishing her rescue. The lady happened to be your daughter, but had she been the daughter of some little *bourgeois* of Paris carried off by a reckless noble, it would have been the same. Much more has been made of the matter than there was any occasion for. It has gained for me the approbation and thanks of the king, to say nothing of this ring, which, although I am no judge of such matters, must be a very valuable one, or he would not have worn it; and I have had the pleasure of rendering a service to you and Mademoiselle de Pointdexter, therefore I feel far more than duly rewarded for a service somewhat recklessly undertaken on the spur of the moment."

"That may be very well as far as it interests yourself, Monsieur Kennedy, but not so far as I am concerned, and I fear I shall have to remain your debtor till the end of my life. All I can say at present is, that I hope that as soon as you can obtain leave you will come as a most honoured guest to my château. There you will see me under happier circumstances. The life of a country seigneur is but a poor preparation for existence in this court, where, although there is no longer the open licentiousness that prevailed in the king's younger days, there is yet, I believe, an equal amount of profligacy, though it has been sternly discountenanced since Madame Maintenon obtained an absolute, and I may say a well-used, influence over His Majesty."

"I shall be happy indeed to pay you a visit, Baron, if my military duties will permit my absenting myself for a time

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TAKING A DIAMOND RING FROM HIS FINGER HE HANDED IT TO DESMOND.

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from Paris. All I know of France is its capital, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have the opportunity of seeing its country life in so pleasant a manner."

"Our pleasure would be no less than your own, Monsieur Kennedy. There is one thing I must warn you about, and that is you must be careful for a time not to go out after dark. De Tulle has an evil reputation, and is vindictive as well as unscrupulous. Doubtless he has agents here who will, by this time, have discovered who it was that brought his daring scheme to naught; and it is to my mind more than probable that he will endeavour to be revenged."

"I shall be on my guard," Desmond said quietly.

"You must be careful indeed," the baron said. "Against open violence you can well defend yourself, but against a blow from behind with a dagger, skill and courage are of little avail. When you go out after dark, I pray you let your army servant follow closely behind you, and see that his sword is loose in its scabbard."

Desmond nodded. "Believe me, I will take every precaution. It is not likely that there will long be need for it, for none can doubt that military operations will soon begin on a large scale, and we are not likely, if that is the case, to be kept in garrison in Paris."

When Desmond arrived that evening at the barracks he found that the story of the rescue of Madamoiselle de Point-dexter was already known, and also that the Vicomte de Tulle had been the abductor, and had in consequence been banished from court. The baron had indeed related the circumstances to some of his intimate friends, but the story had varied greatly as it spread, and it had come to be reported that an officer had brought a strong body of soldiers, who had assaulted the house where she was confined, and, after a desperate conflict, had annihilated the guard that had been placed over her.

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Desmond laughed as this story was told to him when he entered the room where the officers were gathered. The narrator concluded, "As you have been to Versailles, Kennedy, doubtless you will have heard all the latest particulars. Have you learnt who was the officer, what regiment he belonged to, and how he came to have a body of soldiers with him outside the town, for they say that the house where she was confined was a mile and a half beyond the walls?"

There was no longer any reason for concealment. The matter had become public; the baron would certainly mention his name, and indeed his visit to the palace, and the private audience given to him and the baron would assuredly have been noted.

"Your story is quite new to me," he said "and is swollen in the telling to undue proportions. The real facts of the case are by no means so romantic. The truth of the story by this time is generally known, as Mademoiselle Pointdexter and her father have many friends at court. The affair happened to myself."

"To you, Kennedy?" was exclaimed in astonishment by all those present.

"Exactly so," he said. "Nothing could have been more simple. The evening before last I was, as usual, taking a walk, and the night being fine, I passed beyond the gate. Presently I heard a scream and a woman's cry for help. None of you, gentlemen, could have been insensible to such an appeal. Callaghan and I climbed over a pretty high gate. Not knowing what force there might be in the place, we occupied ourselves at first by unbarring and shooting the lock of the gate. The bolts were stiff, and we made some noise over it, which brought out five men. These we disposed of after a short fight, in which I got this graze on the cheek and Callaghan his sword wound in the shoulder."

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"How did you dispose of them, Kennedy?" the colonel asked.

"I ran two of them through, Callaghan cut down one and shot another; the fifth man cried for mercy, and we simply tied him up. We then found Mademoiselle Pointdexter, and learning from her that the carriage in which she had been brought there was, with its horses, still in the stable, we got it out, harnessed the horses, and put an old woman who was mademoiselle's attendant in the carriage with her. Mike took the reins, I mounted a saddle-horse, and we drove her to her father's house at Versailles, saw her fairly inside, and then, as you know, got back here just as the regiment was forming up on parade."

"A very pretty adventure, indeed," the colonel said warmly, and loud expressions of approbation rose from the other listeners.

"And why did you not tell us when you came in?" the colonel went on.

"I had not seen Baron Pointdexter, and did not know what course he would take—whether he would think it best to hush the matter up altogether or to lay a complaint before the king; and until I knew what he was going to do, it seemed to me best that I should hold my tongue altogether. When I went to Versailles to-day I found that he had laid his complaint before the king, and that the Vicomte de Tulle, who was the author of the outrage, had been ordered to his estates. I may say that I had the honour of a private interview with His Majesty, who graciously approved of my conduct and gave me this ring," and he held out his hand, "as a token of his approval."

"Well, gentlemen, you will agree with me," the colonel said, "that our young ensign has made an admirable début, and I am sure that we are all proud of the manner in which he has

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behaved; and our anticipations that he would prove a credit to the regiment have been verified sooner than it seemed possible."

"They have, indeed, Colonel," the major said. "It was in every way a risky thing for him to have attempted. I do not mean because of the odds that he might have to face, but because of the trouble that he might have got into by forcing his way into a private house. The scream might have come from a mad woman, or from a serving-wench receiving a whipping for misconduct."

"I never thought anything about it, Major. A woman screamed for help, and it seemed to me that help should be given. I did not think of the risk either from armed men inside—for I had no reason to believe that there were such—or of civil indictment for breaking in. We heard the cry, made straight for the house, and, as it turned out, all went well."

"Well, indeed," the colonel said. "You have rescued a wealthy heiress from a pitiable fate, you have fleshed your maiden sword in the bodies of two villains, you have earned the gratitude of the young lady and her father, and have received the approval of His Majesty—a very good night's work altogether. Now tell us a little more about it."

Desmond was compelled to tell the story in much further detail than before. The colonel ordered in a dozen of champagne, and it was late before the party broke up.

"You see we were pretty nearly right in our guess," O'Neil said, as he and O'Sullivan walked across with Desmond to their quarters. "We said that we thought it likely she might have been carried off by one of the court gallants, who felt tolerably confident that, if successful, the king would overlook the offence. This fellow, thanks to your interference, did not succeed, and the king has let him off lightly enough by only banishing him from court. If it had been any one but one of

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his favourites he would by this time have been a tenant of the Bastille. I do not think myself that this punishment was adequate; but then I am not a courtier, and should be rather glad than not to be sent away to any estates I might have."

"But," Desmond remarked, "I suppose the punishment is a severe one to these men accustomed to a round of pleasure and dissipation, and who consider it the highest of earthly honours to be in favour with the king. However, no one could be kinder than His Majesty has been on the subject. At the reception last night, at which he ordered the baron and his daughter to appear, he showed her the most marked favour, and particularly put a stop to all scandals by saying loudly that de Tulle had never seen her after the first morning of her capture."

Six days later, when Desmond was engaged in the fencing-room, Callaghan came in and told him that a gentleman was at his quarters wishing particularly to see him.

"What is his name?"

"Sure and I don't know, your honour. He did not mention it, and it was not for the likes of me to ask him."

"Ridiculous, Mike! In future, when anyone comes and wishes to see me, you will say, 'What name shall I tell Mr. Kennedy?'" He put on his uniform coat reluctantly, for he was engaged in an interesting bout with a professor, who was an old friend of the *maîtres d'armes*. As he entered his room, a young man who had been staring out of the window and drumming impatiently with his fingers, turned. He was a stranger to Desmond.

"I am Desmond Kennedy, sir," the young officer said. "To what do I owe the honour of this visit?"

The other did not reply, but stood looking at him in so strange and earnest a way that Desmond felt almost uneasy. "Sir," his visitor said at last, advancing to him and holding

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out both hands, "when I tell you that my name is Philip de la Vallée you will understand what must strike you as my singular behaviour. I arrived last night at Versailles and heard all that had happened. You can imagine, therefore, that my heart is almost too full for words with gratitude and thankfulness." Desmond was moved by the emotion of his visitor, and their hands met in a hearty clasp. Monsieur de la Vallée was a young man of four-or five-and-twenty, well-proportioned, and active and sinewy from his devotion to field sports. He was about the same height as Desmond himself, but the latter, who had not yet finished growing, was larger boned, and would broaden into a much bigger and more powerful man.

"Henceforth, Monsieur Kennedy," de la Vallée went on, "I hope that we shall be as brothers, and more. Had it not been for you my life would have been a ruined one. What agony have I been saved! It makes me mad to think that I was idling at home, ignorant that my beloved had been carried away. I do not blame the baron for not informing me, and I acknowledge that the reasons he gave me were good ones. I could have done nothing, and should but have added to his troubles by my anxiety and anger. Still, he told me that in another day or two he would have felt that I ought no longer to be kept in the dark, and would have summoned me to Paris. I am thankful now that he did not do so, for I believe that my impotence to do anything would have driven me almost to distraction."

"I agree with you that the baron acted wisely," Kennedy said. "Had not chance or Providence taken me past the house where she was imprisoned at the very moment when Mademoiselle Pointdexter cried for help, she might, for aught I can say, have remained a captive there for months or even years."

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"It was Providence indeed, Monsieur Kennedy. Providence not only that she should have cried at that moment, but that her cries should have reached the ears of one so ready and able to save her. And now, I pray you, call me Philip and allow me to call you Desmond, as a pledge of our close friendship."

"With pleasure," Kennedy replied; and the compact was sealed with another close grasp of the hand.

"It is strange, Desmond, that while the king, who had but little interest in the matter, could present you, as I am told he did, with a diamond ring, the baron and I, who owe you so much can do nothing to show our gratitude."

Desmond smiled. "I can assure you that I need no such tokens," he said; "the thanks that I have received from you both are infinitely more grateful to me than any amount of rings and jewels."

"And now, my friend," Philip de la Vallée went on, "my own burning desire is to go to de Tulle as soon as I have accompanied the baron and Anne to their home, first to publicly chastise this villain noble, and, then, of course, to fight him. Naturally I have said nothing of this to the baron, but I feel, after what has happened, that in you I shall find an adviser and a sympathizer."

"I sympathize with you most heartily, Philip, and in your place should feel the same impulse; and yet it would not be wise to give way to it. I say this on the ground that he is a notoriously good swordsman, and that instead of your taking vengeance upon him he might kill you.

"I feel that that argument would not have any influence with you personally, but, taking your position with regard to Mademoiselle de Pointdexter, it should have great weight. You can judge from what you would have felt yourself had you been aware of her disappearance, what she would feel did

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she hear of your death in this quarrel. Were you her brother I should say that you would be right,—nay, that it would be your duty to endeavour to punish the outrage against the honour of your family. Were you openly betrothed to her you would again have the right to punish her abductor; but, not being either her brother or her betrothed, neither reason nor public opinion would justify your doing so. Moreover, did you fight with him and kill him, you would incur the gravest resentment of the king, for in fact you would be impugning his justice, which has considered banishment from court to be a sufficient punishment for his offence. Not only was he a favourite of the king's, but he belongs, I understand, to a powerful family who would, you may be sure, use their influence with the king to bring about your punishment for the breach of the decree against duelling, and you would be fortunate if you escaped a long imprisonment."

The other was silent. "I feel that you are right," he said at last, "but indeed it is hard that I should not be able to avenge this outrage upon the lady who is to be my wife. I may tell you that as soon as we return home our formal betrothal is to take place, and ere long our marriage will be celebrated, but I shall feel lowered in my own esteem if I sit down quietly under this injury."

"I do not see that," Desmond said. "If you abstain from challenging de Tulle, it is from no fear of the consequences, but it is, as I have shown you, because, whatever the issue of the contest, it would be bad both for you and her. If you were killed, her life would be spoilt; if you killed him, you might languish for years in one of the royal prisons. The king prides himself on his justice, and by all accounts rightly so, and I am sure that he would feel the deepest resentment were you or anyone to show by your actions that you considered he has favoured the transgressor."

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"You are right, Desmond; and at any rate for the present I will put my intention aside; but should he ever cross my path, assuredly I will have a reckoning with him. But how is it that you, who are at least eight years younger than I am, should argue as an old counsellor rather than a young ensign?"

"I suppose, in the first place, it is from my bringing up. I lived with and was educated by a good priest, one not wanting in manliness and energy, but who often deplored the system of duelling, which is as strong with us as it is here, and denounced it as a relic of barbarism, and at any rate never to be put in use on account of a heated quarrel over wine, but only if some deadly injury had been inflicted, and even then better left alone. Of course as an officer in one of His Majesty's regiments I should be obliged to conform to the general usage, for did I decline I should be regarded as having brought dishonour on the corps, but my case differs altogether from yours. In the next place, knowing you were coming to Versailles, I thought over what course you would be likely to pursue, and considered it was probable you would lose no time in challenging de Tulle. I have thought the matter over in every light, and made up my mind to endeavour to dissuade you from doing so, if the opportunity offered. So you see," he added with a smile, "I had prepared my array of arguments against it, and I cannot but think that the opinion of one interested, but not vitally so, on a point, is rather to be taken than that of a person smarting under an injury."

"And now to turn to other matters. In three days we start for the south. The baron accompanied me here, and went to see your colonel, while I came to your quarters. His object was to ask him to grant you a month's leave of absence, with the provision, of course, that you should return at once if the regiment was ordered on service."

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"It is kind, indeed, of him," Desmond said, "but I doubt whether the colonel will assent. It is not a month since I was dismissed from drill and took my place with my company, and I doubt whether he will consider that I am sufficiently versed in my duties, or that, after being so short a time in the regiment I have any right to leave."

"What you say is right enough under ordinary circumstances, but these are altogether extraordinary. Then, after what you have done, he will feel it but natural that we should wish to have you with us for a time. Moreover, I do not consider that our journey will be altogether unattended by danger. From what I have heard of de Tulle, he is a man who never forgives, and will pursue his object with the pertinacity of a blood-hound. He has failed in his first attempt, but there is no reason why he should not renew it, confident, perhaps, that if successful the king, though he may feel it necessary to feign much anger for a time, will finally forgive him and take him into favour again, especially as his family would bring all their influence to bear to bring this about. Doubtless he will be kept perfectly informed of what is going on here. There are several forests to be traversed on the way, and these are for the most part the haunts of robber bands; and should the carriage be found overturned, and the baron and his daughter missing, it would be put down as their work. Having the baron as well as his daughter in his power, de Tulle would find it easier than before to compel Anne to purchase her father's freedom as well as her own by consenting to his terms. Therefore, you see, the aid of a sword like yours would be valuable, and no doubt your servant, who is also a sturdy fighter, will accompany us.

"I can hardly think that de Tulle would venture upon so bold a stroke as that, and yet he might do so. Men of that kind are not accustomed to be thwarted, and it would be a satis-

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faction to his resentment at his former failure as well as the attainment of the wide estates of which Anne is heiress."

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and the baron entered.

"My dear Monsieur Kennedy," he said, I have succeeded. Colonel O'Brien has been pleased to say that you have been so assiduous in learning your duties that he considers you as capable of performing them as any of his subalterns, and that you have just brought so much credit on the regiment that he is pleased to be able to grant the favour I asked. Here is your furlough duly signed. Now it only rests with yourself to accept or refuse my invitation."

"I accept it most gladly, Baron. It will give me the greatest pleasure to accompany you and mademoiselle and Monsieur de la Vallée, whom I now regard as a dear friend, to your home."

"That is settled, then," the baron said. "We start early on Thursday morning. It would be well, therefore, if you were to ride over on Wednesday evening and occupy one of the many spare chambers there are in the house."

"I will do so willingly; and I shall ask the colonel to allow my servant to accompany me."

"That is already settled. I told Colonel O'Brien that I owed much to him also, and he at once acceded to my request, saying that although the wound is healing, the surgeon said that it would be a fortnight before he will be fit for service; and, moreover, that it was a custom when an officer went on leave that he should, if he wished it, take his soldier servant with him."

"Thank you again, Baron. Mike is a faithful fellow, and a shrewd one. I am so accustomed now to his services that I should miss them and his talk very much."

"Have you heard, Mike," Desmond asked, when his serv-

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ant came up to his room after the baron and Philip de la Vallée had left, "that you are to go with me to stay for a month at Pointdexter?"

"I have, your honour. Sure I was sent for to the colonel's quarters, and there I found a tall gentleman whom I had never seen before as far as I knew. 'This is Mike Callaghan, Mr. Kennedy's servant,' the colonel said, and the baron stepped forward and shook hands with me, for all the world as if I had been a noble like himself; and he said, 'My brave fellow, I have to thank you for the aid you gave your master in rescuing my daughter, in which service you received the wound which still keeps your arm in a sling. Here is a token that we are not ungrateful for the service. If you will take my advice you will hand it to an agent of mine here in Paris, who will keep it for you, and you may find it useful when the time comes for you to take your discharge.'

"So saying, he put a heavy purse into my hand and said: 'You will find my agent's name and address on a card inside the purse. I shall go round to him now and tell him that you are coming, and that he is to use the money to your advantage, and to hand it over to you whenever you choose to ask for it. Your master is coming down to stay for a month with me, and Colonel O'Brien has granted leave for you to accompany him.' I thanked him heartily, as you may believe, sir; though, as I said, I wanted no reward for obeying your orders and for the share I took in that little skirmish. After I came out I looked into the purse, which was mighty heavy, expecting to find a handful of crowns; and it fairly staggered me when I found that it was full of gold pieces, and on counting them found that there were a hundred louis. Never did I dream that I should be so rich. Why, your honour, when I lave the regiment, which will not be for many a long year, I hope, I

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shall be able to settle down comfortably for the rest of my life in a snug little shebeen, or on a bit of land with a cottage and some pigs, and maybe a cow or two; and it is all to your honour I owe it, for if you hadn't given the word it would never have entered my head to attack a gentleman's house merely because I heard a woman scream."

"Well, I am heartily glad, Mike; and I hope that you will take it straight to the agent's, and not break in upon it by treating half the regiment to drink."

"I will, your honour. It was given to me to stow away for the time that I might want it, and though I don't say that my own inclinations would not lead me to trate a few of the boys, I feel that I ought to do what the gentleman told me."

"Certainly you should Mike. If you once began to spend it in that way, it is not one louis, but five or more, that would disappear in a few hours. I am heartily glad that the baron has so handsomely rewarded you for the service, and if you like I will go round with you this afternoon to his agent and see the money safely deposited."

"Thank you, your honour. I shan't feel easy as long as I have got it in my pouch. I should suspict everyone who came near me, and should never dare take my hand off it lest someone else might put his in."

"You are a lucky fellow, Kennedy," O'Neil said, when Desmond told his two comrades of the arrangements that had been made. "And if you go on like this the regiment will believe that any good fortune that may fall to its lot is the result of your luck."

"I really do not like having leave given to me when I have been such a short time in the regiment. It does not seem fair upon others."

"No one will grudge you that," O'Sullivan said. "It is not as if we were at home; then, of course, everyone would

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like his turn. But here, although we are soldiers of France, we are as strangers in the land. Here in Paris we have many acquaintances, and a welcome at most of the receptions; but that is the end of it. It is seldom indeed that we are invited into the country houses of those we know; that sort of hospitality is not the fashion in France. Here nobles may throw open their houses to all gentlemen by birth who happen to be presented to them, but at home they are rigidly exclusive; and, moreover, I am inclined to think they regard us Irishmen as detrimental and dangerous. Many Irishmen make exceedingly good matches, and we are regarded as having a way with us with the girls that is likely to interfere with the arrangements their parents have made for their marriages. Now it seems to me that your baron must be a very confiding old gentleman, or he would never take you to stay in the society of the young lady who owes so much to you. Faith it seems to me that you have the ball at your feet, and that you have only to go in and win. From what I hear, Mademoiselle Pointdexter is no older than you are yourself, and it is a glorious chance for you."

Desmond broke into a laugh. "My dear O'Sullivan," he said, "it seems to me that it is the favourite dream of Irish soldiers of fortune that they may improve their circumstances by marriage."

"Well, there is no easier or more pleasant way," his friend said stoutly.

"Possibly I may come to think so in another ten years," Desmond went on, "but at present I have no more thought of marrying than I have of becoming king of France. The idea is altogether absurd, and it happens to be particularly so in the present case, since one of the objects of my going down to Pointdexter is that I may be present at the formal betrothal of this young lady to Monsieur de la Vallée, a neighbour of

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theirs whom I had the pleasure of meeting this afternoon, and to whom she is tenderly attached."

"By the powers but that is unlucky, Kennedy!" O'Neil said; "and I have been thinking that your fortune was made, and that the regiment would soon lose you, as you would of course settle down as a magnate in Languedoc; and now it seems that what we thought the proper sequence of your adventure is not to come off after all. Well, lad, I congratulate you on putting a good face on it and hiding your disappointment."

"What nonsense you talk!" Desmond said laughing; "it is you who have been building castles, not I, and it is your disappointment that they have fallen to pieces."

CHAPTER VI

AN AMBUSCADE

ON the morning arranged the cavalcade started from Versailles. The baron had instructed the stable-keeper where the carriage and horses had been placed, to notify the Vicomte de Tulle that he held them at his disposal. The woman, who had been brought to Versailles, had been dismissed after having made before a magistrate a deposition stating how Mademoiselle de Pointdexer had been held a close prisoner, and that, with the exception of herself, no one whatever had entered her apartment, except that the Vicomte de Tulle had paid her a visit of some five minutes' duration on the morning after she was brought there. A copy of this was left in the magistrate's hands for safe-keeping, while the original was kept by the baron, who regarded it as a most important document, concerning as it did the honour of his daugh-

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ter. Anne had travelled to Paris in the family coach, and she again, with her maid, took her place in it. The baron, M. de la Vallée, and Desmond rode on horseback behind it, two armed retainers rode in front, and two others, with Mike, took their places behind. The old servitor sat on the front seat by the side of the coachman.

"I do not think, Desmond," Philip de la Vallée said, as the baron fell back to talk for a while with his daughter, "that he has the slightest thought of our being attacked by any of the agents of the vicomte, but I have made a good many enquiries about the fellow in the past few days, and from what I have heard I am still more convinced that before long he is likely to renew his attempt to get possession of Anne. I hear that his circumstances are well-nigh desperate. He has mortgaged the income of his estates, which, of course, he is unable to sell, as they go with the title to the heir. He is pressed by many creditors, who, now that he has lost the favour of the king, will give him no further grace. Indeed, I understand that the king who is always liberal and not infrequently makes considerable gifts to the gentlemen of the court to enable them to support the necessary expenses, has already assisted him several times, and that it was only by such aid that he has been able to hold on as long as he has done.

"He is, in fact, a desperate man, and his only hope is in making a wealthy alliance. Therefore, putting aside his pique and anger at having failed, the temptation to again obtain possession of Anne is great indeed. Once married to her he could, even if the king kept him in banishment, well maintain his position as a country magnate."

"But Mademoiselle de Pointdexter cannot come into the estates until her father's death."

"Not his estates, but those of her mother, who was also a

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wealthy heiress, and of which she will enter into possession either on coming of age or on marrying. So you see he can afford to disregard the enmity of her father as well as the displeasure of the king, which probably would soon abate after the marriage took place. If I had known when I left home what had happened, and that if she was found we should be returning home, I would have brought with me a dozen stout fellows from my own estate. As it is, I sent off a messenger yesterday with an order to my major-domo to pick out that number of active fellows from among the tenantry, and to start with the least possible delay by the route that we shall follow, of which I have given him particulars. He is to ride forward until he meets us, so that when he joins us we shall be too strong a party for any force that the vicomte is likely to gather to intercept us."

"A very wise precaution, Philip; but we shall be far upon our way before this reinforcement can come up."

"We shall be some distance, I admit. My messenger will take fully five days in going. He will take another day to gather and arm the tenants, so that they will not start until two days afterwards. Then, however, they will travel at least twice as fast as we shall, hampered as we are by the carriage. I should have suggested that Anne should ride on a pillion behind me or her father, but I did not do so, because it would have been necessary to explain to him my reasons for suggesting the change; and moreover I felt sure that he would not agree to it had I done so. Baron Pointdexter is one of the largest land-owners in Languedoc, and although one of the kindest and best of men, he has his full share of family pride, and would consider that it was derogatory to his position for his daughter to be riding about on a pillion like the wife or daughter of some small landed proprietor or tenant farmer, instead of in a carriage, as becomes her station.

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Therefore, I must accept the situation, carriage and all, and I can only hope that this villain will not attempt to interfere with us before my men join us.

"Fortunately, even if a courier take the vicomte word that the baron and his daughter have made their adieus to His Majesty, the fellow cannot hear of it for two days, however fast the messenger may travel. Of course Tulle is nigh a hundred miles nearer Paris than Pointdexter, which lies between Florac and Ste. Afrique, both of which towns lie within the circle of the estate. I admit that, foreseeing the baron is likely to return to his estates without delay, the vicomte may have made his preparations and be ready to start as soon as he gets the news. Nevertheless he will have a ride of some eighty miles to strike the road on which we shall be travelling. He may then move north until he finds some suitable place for a surprise; but even allowing for his exercising the greatest speed we should be half-way from Paris before we can possibly meet him, and my men should join us by that time."

"You have forgotten one contingency, which would entirely alter the state of things."

"What is that?" M. de la Vallée asked sharply.

"We give this villain noble credit for resource and enterprise. What more likely than that he has left a couple of his retainers at Versailles with orders that should any messenger be sent off by a southern road from the baron his journey is to be cut short, and any paper or letter found upon him carried with all speed to Tulle? In that case the chances of our being met by a reinforcement are very small."

"*Peste!* you are right, Desmond. I never gave the matter a thought. Now that you mention it, nothing is more probable. It was the servant who accompanied me whom I sent off, but as de Tulle would have been notified of my arri-

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val and the man started from the baron's house, it would be deemed certain that he was either going to Pointdexter or my own estate, and that the message he carried was a somewhat urgent one. Well, all we can do is to hope that the fellow has not thought of our taking such a precaution, and that my messenger will arrive unmolested. Still, I acknowledge that the idea makes me anxious, and I fear that we shall not get through without serious trouble. There are so many disbanded soldiers and other knaves in the forests that de Tulle would have no difficulty in hiring any number of them and carrying his scheme out without the assistance or knowledge of his own tenants. The heavy taxation necessary to keep up the expenses of the court has driven numbers of people to despair, and many hitherto law-abiding folk are being forced to leave their holdings and to take to unlawful courses. However, it is of no use our telling the baron our fears. He is obstinate when he has once made up his mind to a thing, and nothing short of a royal command would induce him either to change his route or to stop at one of the towns that we shall pass through, and wait until my band arrives. He would indeed consider his honour greatly attainted by allowing himself to make a change of plans on the mere chance that our suspicions were justified."

Six days passed without anything occurring. Impatient as Philip de la Vallée and Desmond were to get forward, they could not hurry the slow pace at which they travelled. Mademoiselle Pointdexter was now suffering from the reaction after her month of captivity and anxiety. The baron therefore travelled with provoking slowness. Obtaining as he did relays of horses at each post, they could without difficulty have travelled at almost double the rate at which they actually proceeded, but stoppages were made at all towns at which comfortable accommodation could be obtained. In-

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deed in some places the roads were so bad that the carriage could not proceed at a pace beyond a walk without inflicting a terrible jolting upon those within it.

"There is one comfort," Philip said, when he had been bewailing the slowness of their pace, "my men should reach us at Nevers at the latest, and you may take it as tolerably certain that any attempt to interfere with us will take place considerably south of that town. I should guess that it would be somewhere between Moulins and Thiers. If our escort does not come before we reach Moulins I shall begin to think that your suggestion was correct, and that my messenger has indeed been intercepted and slain."

Desmond could not gainsay the truth of his friend's calculation, but he said:

"Possibly, Philip, instead of being attacked by the way, de Tulle's agents might rob him of his letter at one of the inns at which he put up. Did he know its contents?"

"Yes; I told him that it contained an order for the major-domo to ride with a troop of twelve men to meet us, and that he was to give what aid he could in getting them together as quickly as possible, so that even if robbed of the letter he might still be able to fulfil his mission; not, I own, that I thought of that at the time, for the idea that he might be stopped never once entered my mind."

At Nevers, Desmond went round to all the inns in the town to enquire if any body of men had put up at that place, but without success. When he related his failure to obtain any news to Philip, the latter said:

"Well, we must hope that we shall meet them before we arrive at Moulins. If not, I shall no longer have any hope that my messenger got through safely, and then we shall have to consider whether it will not be necessary to inform the baron of our fears, and to get him to change his route and

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make a détour, cross the Loire at Bourbon, make for Macon, and then journey down the other bank of the Saone as far as Pont St. Esprit, and thence over the mountains to Florac."

"That would certainly be the safest plan, always providing that we have not been watched ever since we left Paris. The vicomte might well take this precaution in case we should deviate from the regular route."

"*Sapriste!* Desmond, you are always full of evil prognostications Still, as usual, I cannot but allow that there is reason in them."

"You see, Philip, we have plenty of time, as we travel at a snail's pace, and in the evening when we stop, to think over the affair in every light. I always put myself in the position of the Vicomte de Tulle, and consider what steps I should take to ensure success in my next attempt to carry off Mademoiselle de Pointdexter."

"Then I am very glad that you are not in the position of de Tulle, for, if you were, I should consider that all was lost, and that there was not a chink or crevice by which we could escape. It is monstrous that a nobleman cannot travel from Paris to his estate without being obliged to take as many precautions as the general of an army would have to do against the attack of an active and formidable enemy."

"And will you tell the baron, Philip?"

"I hardly know what to do in that respect, for after all we have no solid foundation whatever for our uneasiness beyond the fact that the men I sent for have not met us. All our apprehensions are due solely to the fact that this fellow is utterly unscrupulous, and that his whole future depends on his carrying out his insolent designs successfully. If we had any solid facts to work on I would urge the baron to change his route, but I fear that he would not only scoff at

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our views that there may be danger, but might be angry at my taking the step of sending for a party of my retainers without his being in any way consulted in the matter. At any rate I feel sure that he would refuse to change his route without some very much stronger reason than we can give him."

"Then we must let matters go on as they are, Philip; it may be that really we have been alarming ourselves without sufficient cause. If the worst comes to the worst we can make a good fight for it."

"It is certainly hard on you. You have performed one brave action for us at the risk of your life, and now you are thrust into another danger perhaps even greater than the first, and this in a quarrel in which you have no concern whatever."

Desmond laughed. "Do you not see, Philip, that the adventure is good training for a soldier, and that if I am on duty in command of a company I shall be all the more useful an officer for having served a sort of apprenticeship in surprises, ambuscades, and alarms. The journey has been vastly more interesting than it would have been under other circumstances. We should have found it dull without such matter of interest as this affair has given us, and, even should nothing whatever come of it, it will have served its purpose by beguiling our journey, which, in truth, riding at so slow a pace, would otherwise scarce have been amusing."

"Well, then, it seems that the only thing that we can do is to see that the servants all keep their pistols charged and are prepared to do their duty in case of sudden attack. Of course, at present they have no idea that any special danger threatens us, but I shall tell them before I start in the morning that we fear that the road is dangerous owing to a band of robbers reported to be in the forest, and that they must hold themselves in readiness for action in case we fall in with any of them. Old Eustace and the coachman have both got arque-

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buses. I shall tell them that, should they be attacked, they are to fire at once, and then the coachman is to whip up his horses and drive at full speed while we endeavour to keep off the assailants."

"That would be of use if the assailants should be for the most part on foot, but I think it more likely that they will be mounted, and however fast this lumbering carriage might go, they could easily keep up with it. Fight as hard as we may, the carriage must be overtaken if they are in sufficient force to overpower us. I should think that it would be well that you should warn Mademoiselle Pointdexter that we hear the road is not very safe, and that if there is trouble she is on no account to attempt to leave the carriage. As long as she remains there she will run but little risk, for you may be sure that de Tulle will have issued the strictest orders that no pistol is to be fired in its direction. I have also little doubt that he has ordered the baron's life to be respected, because his death would greatly add to the anger that would be excited by the attack, and would also put a barrier between him and mademoiselle, who would naturally regard him with even more hostility than before as the author of her father's death. Therefore, I trust that in any case his life and hers will not be endangered, however numerous our assailants might be."

"Yes, I have no doubt that that is so, Desmond, though I am sure that were I wounded and on the point of death I would rather know that Anne had fallen by a chance shot than that she was in the power of this villain."

The next morning they started very early for Moulins, for the journey would be a longer one than usual, and the road through the forest would probably be so rough that the pace must necessarily be very slow. At two o'clock the men riding ahead noticed that a tree had fallen across the road, and one of them galloped back and informed the baron of it.

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"That is strange," the latter said; "there have been no storms for the past two days. It must have fallen quite recently, for otherwise the news would have been taken to the nearest commune, whose duty it would be to see at once to its removal."

Philip de la Vallée had, as the servant was speaking, glanced at Desmond. To both it seemed that this obstacle could scarcely be the result of an accident. "I will see how large the tree is," the baron said; "whatever be its size it is hard if eight men and four horses cannot drag it off the road." So saying, he cantered forward, followed by the retainer, whose comrade also fell in as they passed him.

"Look to your arquebuses," Philip said to the two men on the box, and at the same time called up Mike and the two men from behind. "A tree has fallen across the road," he said to them, "and it is possible that this may be an ambush and that we may be attacked, so hold yourselves in readiness, look to your pistols, and see that the priming is all right in the pans." Then they went to the door of the carriage.

"It is just possible that we are going to have trouble, Anne," Philip said; "remember what I told you last night, and on no account move from your seat, whatever may take place."

As he spoke there was a discharge of firearms in front, and at the same moment a score of horsemen broke from the trees and rode down upon the carriage. Their leader was masked. As they came up, the coachman and Eustace discharged their arquebuses, emptying two saddles; then, drawing their swords, both leapt to the ground. In the meantime Philip, Desmond, and the three men dashed at their assailants. Philip made for their leader, who, he doubted not, was the Vicomte de Tulle, but the latter drew a pistol and fired when he was within a horse's length of him. The young man swayed in

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his saddle and fell heavily to the ground, while a piercing cry from the carriage rose in the air. Desmond, after cutting down the first man he encountered, turned his horse and attacked the masked figure, who met him with a fury that showed he was animated by personal animosity.

His skill in fencing, however, gave him but slight advantage in such an encounter, while Desmond's exercise with the sabre in the regimental *salle d'armes* was now most useful to him. Enraged at the fall of his friend, and seeing that there was but a moment to spare, for already some of the other assailants were coming to the assistance of their chief, he showered his blows with such vehemence and fury that his opponent had enough to do to guard his head without striking a blow in return. Seeing in a moment that he would be surrounded, Desmond made a last effort. The vicomte's weapon shivered at the stroke, but it somewhat diverted the direction of the blow, and instead of striking him full on the head, the sword shore down his cheek, inflicting a ghastly wound, carrying away an ear as well as the cheek from the eye to the chin. Then, wheeling his horse, he dashed at two men who were riding at him.

The attack was so sudden that one of their horses swerved, and Desmond, touching his charger's flank with a spur, rode at him and hurled horse and rider to the ground. A backhanded blow struck his other opponent full in the throat, and then he dashed into the wood, shouting to Mike to follow him. The two servitors had both fallen, and the greater part of the assailants were gathered round the carriage. Mike was engaged in a single combat with one of the horsemen, and had just run his opponent through when Desmond shouted to him; so, turning, he galloped after his master. They were not pursued. The fall of their leader had for the moment paralysed the band, and while three or four of them remained by

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the carriage—whose last defender had fallen—the others, dismounting, ran to where the vicomte was lying.

"That has been a tough business, your honour," Mike said, as he joined his master. "It is right you were, sir, when you told me that you were afraid that rascal would try and hinder us on our way; sure it has been a bad business altogether. Monsieur Philip is killed, and the baron too, I suppose, and all the others, and Miss Anne has fallen into the hands of that villain again."

"I do not think that the baron has been hurt, Mike. I expect the orders were only to take him prisoner."

"Where are we going, your honour?" Mike asked, for they were still galloping at full speed.

"I am going to get into the road again, and try to find help at Moulins to recover the young lady. There is one thing, she is not likely to be molested by that fellow for some little time."

"Then you did not kill him, your honour?"

"No. I cut through his guard, but it turned my sword. But I laid his face open, and it will be some time before he will be fit to show himself to a lady. If, as I expect, I can get no help at Moulins, I shall ride on to Monsieur de la Vallée's place, gather some men there, and try to cut the party off before they get to Tulle. If I am too late I shall see what I can do to rescue them. From la Vallée I shall go to Pointdexter. I have no doubt that we can get together a force there large enough to besiege de Tulle's castle."

After an hour's ride they arrived at Moulins, and Desmond rode at once to the mairie. Being in uniform he was received with every respect by the mayor, who, however, on hearing his story, said that he did not see how he could interfere in the matter. It seemed to be a private quarrel between two nobles, and even if he were ready to interpose, he had no force

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available; "but at the same time he would send out four men with a cart to bring in any they might find with life in them."

"Very well, sir," Desmond said indignantly; "you know your duty, I suppose, and I know mine, and I shall certainly report to the king your refusal to give any assistance to punish these ill-doers."

So saying, he left the room, and at once rode to some stables. Leaving his horse and Mike's there, he hired others, and then continued his journey south at full speed, and before evening rode into Roanne. He knew that it was useless endeavouring to stir up the authorities here, as they would naturally say that it was the business of the mayors at Nevers and Moulins, since the attack had taken place between those towns. Ordering fresh horses to be got ready, he said to Mike:

"Do you go to all the inns on the left of the main street—I will go to all those on the right—and inquire if a troop of mounted men have come in. I am afraid there is no chance of it, but it is at least worth the trial."

At the first four or five places he visited, the answer was that no such party had arrived; then, seeing one of the civic guards, he asked him if he had seen or heard of a troop of men passing through the town.

"Such a troop arrived an hour ago, Monsieur l'officier. They stopped as they passed me and asked if Monsieur le Baron Pointdexter, accompanied by a carriage and some servants, had passed through the town. They put up at the 'Soleil', and I should think that they are there now, for they had evidently made a long journey, and their horses were too worn out to go farther."

Delighted at the unexpected news, Desmond hurried to the inn. It was a second-class establishment, and evidently fre-

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quented by market people, as there were large stables attached to it. The landlord was standing at the door. He bowed profoundly, for it was seldom that guests of quality visited the inn.

"What can I do for monsieur?" he enquired.

"You have a party of travellers who arrived an hour ago. I have business with them."

"You will find them in this room, monsieur," the landlord said, opening a door.

There were some twelve men inside; the remains of a repast were on the table; some of the men were still sitting there, others were already asleep on benches. One, who was evidently their leader, was walking up and down the room impatiently. He looked up in surprise when Desmond entered.

"You are the intendant of Monsieur de la Vallée, are you not?"

"I am, sir," the man said, still more surprised.

"I am a friend of your master. We have been expecting to meet you for the past four or five days. He was travelling south with the Baron de Pointdexter and his daughter. We were attacked this afternoon on the other side of Moulins. The baron and his daughter were, I believe, carried off; the servants all killed. I saw your master fall, but whether mortally wounded or not I cannot say. I and my servant cut our way through the assailants, who were led by the Vicomte de Tulle, who had before carried off Mademoiselle de Pointdexter. I was on my way south to la Vallée, with but faint hope of meeting you on the road."

"This is bad news indeed, sir," the intendant said. "I trust that my master is not killed for we all loved him. As to Mademoiselle Pointdexter, it was an understood thing that she one day would be our mistress. It is not our fault that we were so late. Our master's messenger was attacked near

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Nevers, and was left for dead on the road. The letter he bore and his purse were taken from him. The night air caused his wounds to stop bleeding, and he managed to crawl to Moulins. Having no money he was unable to hire a horse, and indeed could not have sat one. He went to an inn frequented by market people, and there succeeded in convincing an honest peasant who had come in with a cart of faggots that his story was a true one, and promised him large pay on his arrival at la Vallée. The pace was, as you may imagine, a slow one, but two days ago he arrived home, and told me the story. I had the alarm-bell at the castle rung at once, and in half an hour the tenants came in, and I chose these twelve, and started an hour later. Fortunately the master had told the messenger what was the purport of his letter, and we have ridden night and day since. I am at your service, monsieur."

"In the first place let your men have a sleep. It is eight o'clock now. I will give them seven hours. At three in the morning we will mount. There are not beds enough here, but if you get some clean straw scattered down in one of the sheds the men can lie there. In the meantime I will go round and hire fresh horses, leaving your own in pledge for their safe return. You had better pick out two of your men to ride on to Moulins. The mayor there promised to send out a cart to fetch in any wounded who might be found at the scene of the conflict. If on their arrival they find that Monsieur de la Vallée is not among these, they must ride on till they get there —it is some three leagues from the town—and bring in his body together with those of his servants. They must arrange to give them Christian burial there, but your master's body they will, of course, take on to la Vallée. His last wish, of course, would be that Mademoiselle de Pointdexter should be rescued from the power of the villain noble who has carried

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her off. Starting in the morning so early we shall have no difficulty in cutting him off long before he arrives at Tulle. He will probably cross the Alier at the ferry at St. Pierre le Moutier. I must look at a map and see the road that he is likely to follow, but it is probable that he will make by country tracks till he strikes the main road from Moulins."

"Well, I should think, sir, that he would cross it near Aubusson, and then pass over the mountains by the road through Felletin and come down upon Meimac, when he will be only two leagues from his castle near Correze. There is a good road from here to Aubusson, and we might take post on the road between that town and Felletin. At least, sir, we can avenge the murder of our dear master, though we have arrived too late to save him and can rescue Mademoiselle de Point-dexter and her father."

The men who had roused themselves and listened to the conversation with many ejaculations of fury and regret, now exclaimed that they were ready to ride on at once.

"There is no occasion for that, my friends," Desmond said; "the coach with mademoiselle can travel but slowly, especially along country roads."

"Perhaps the vicomte may take her on the saddle behind him," the intendant suggested.

"That he will not do," Desmond said. "In the fight I wounded him so sorely that he will, I think, have to be caried in a litter, and he will be in no condition for fast or long travelling, so that they certainly are not at the present time many leagues from the spot where they attacked us, and cannot reach Aubusson until the day after to-morrow. We might cut them off before they arrive there, but we do not know what road they may follow, and might miss them; whereas, from what you say, there can be no doubt that they would pass through Felletin."

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"I think that he would be sure to come that way, sir, for if he followed the road on to Limoges questions might be asked. At any rate, sir, we might post a man at Aubusson, and another at Pont Gibaut, as he might make from that town to Felletin through the village of Croc. How many men has he with him?"

"That I cannot tell you. Some twenty mounted men under his own leading attacked the carriage. Two were shot by Eustace and the coachman. I disposed of two more, and my soldier servant of another. The two mounted men and the two servants probably killed two or three more at least before they themselves fell, so that the vicomte would only have some twelve mounted men with him. But there was another party in ambush, and I cannot say how strong they were; but probably altogether there would be twenty. There are ten of your men after sending two off to Moulins. Now there is yourself, my servant, and I, so we shall be thirteen. With the advantage of surprise I think that we may calculate upon an easy victory, especially as I imagine that the men employed in the affair are not de Tulle's own retainers, but some robber band that he hired for the purpose; and these, having no special interest in the matter beyond earning the pay, are not likely to make any very determined resistance."

Desmond now went back to the hotel where he had put up his horse. He found Mike awaiting him there, and the latter was delighted when he heard the news of the arrival of the party from la Vallée. Desmond's purse was but lightly furnished, and as he saw that the expenses might be heavy he went to a jeweller's

"I want to borrow fifty louis," he said, "on this ring. It is, I imagine, worth a good deal more, since it was a present to me from the king."

The jeweller examined the ring carefully.

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"It is a valuable one indeed, sir," he said, "and I would willingly lend you double as much upon it."

"Well, we will say seventy-five then," Desmond said. "I think that will be ample for my purpose."

Having received the money, he returned to the inn, accompanied by Mike, and went around to the various stables in the town, where he hired fifteen horses. These were to be taken to the "Soleil" at three in the morning, and the men who brought them were to take back the tired horses as security. At that hour the party started, and after a ride of some thirty-five miles reached Clermont, where they stabled the horses for six hours. Late that evening they arrived at Aubusson, having accomplished a journey of some seventy miles. One of the men had been left at Pont Gibaut with orders to take a fresh horse and ride on to Aubusson, if the party they were in search of passed through the town. At Aubusson Desmond took a fresh horse and rode back to Pont Gibaut, enquiring at all the villages along the road whether a party of twenty men had been seen to cross the road at any point. Then he took four hours' sleep, and at daybreak started back again, making fresh enquiries till he arrived at Aubusson. He was convinced that the band had not at that time crossed the road on its way south.

At ten o'clock he started out with his party, followed the road by the side of the Crorrere river—here a mere streamlet—and halted in a wood about five miles from Felletin. At six o'clock in the afternoon a horseman was seen coming along and was recognized as the man who had been left at Pont Gibaut. Desmond went out to meet him. He reported that at twelve o'clock a party of horsemen had come down on to the road a mile to the west of the town. He had followed at a distance, and they had turned off by the track leading to Croc. They had with them a carriage and a horse-litter and

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were travelling slowly. Desmond and his men at once shifted their position, and took up a post on the track between Croc and Felletin. An hour later the party of horsemen were seen approaching the wood in which they were hidden. Desmond drew up the men, all of whom were armed with pistols as well as swords, in line among the trees. He waited until the carriage was abreast of them and then gave a shout, and the men at once dashed upon the escort.

Taken completely by surprise, these made but a poor fight of it. Several were shot down at once. The vicomte, whose head was enveloped in bandages, leapt into the saddle of a horse whose rider had been shot, and, drawing his sword, rode at Desmond, who was making for the door of the carriage. Expecting no such attack, he would have been taken by surprise had not Mike, who saw his danger, shouted a warning, and at the same moment discharged his pistol. The ball struck de Tulle in the forehead, and he fell back dead. His fall at once put an end to the conflict. The robbers, who had lost some eight of their number, at once turned their horses' heads and rode off at full gallop. As Desmond drew bridle by the carriage, the door opened and the baron leapt out.

"By what miracle have you effected our rescue, my dear Monsieur Kennedy?" he exclaimed. "My daughter told me that she saw you and your servant break your way through these brigands and ride off. She has been suffering an agony of grief for Philip, whom she saw shot. Have you any news of him?"

"None, sir. I, too, saw him fall, but whether he was killed or only wounded I am unable to say. I have sent two men to bring him into Moulins, and I trust they will find that he is only wounded."

"My daughter saw you cut down that villain with a terri-

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ble blow. We have not seen him since, but we know that he was carried on a horse-litter behind the carriage."

"At any rate, he will trouble you no more, Baron. My man shot him through the head just as he was riding to attack me from behind."

"Thank God we are saved from further persecutions! And now tell me how you came to be here."

"It was simple enough, Baron. I found twelve men with Monsieur de la Vallée's intendant at Roanne. Philip, who feared that the vicomte would endeavour to make a further effort to repair his fortune by carrying your daughter off on the road sent a messenger to his intendant to ride at once with twelve men to meet us, and had all gone well they would have joined us fully two days' journey north of Nevers. The messenger was attacked on the way, robbed of his letter and purse, and left for dead. He managed to crawl to Nevers, and there, being too weak and ill to sit a horse, he hired a peasant's cart and made the journey slowly and painfully to la Vallée. As he knew the purport of the letter, two hours after his arrival there the intendant started and rode without drawing bridle to Roanne. There by great good fortune I found them, though men and horses were alike done up. Knowing, however, that the vicomte in his wounded state, and embarrassed with the coach, could proceed but slowly, I let them have seven hours' sleep, and in the meantime hired fresh horses for them; and we rode that day to Aubusson, and this morning moved down to within five miles of Felletin. I left a man on the road to Pont Gibaut, and he brought us word that you had left the main road and were travelling through Croc, so we moved at once to intercept you; and you know the rest."

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CHAPTER VII

IN PARIS AGAIN

"YOU have indeed done well, Monsieur Kennedy," the baron said, when Desmond finished his story. "Now let us see to my daughter. Her maid is attending on her. She fainted when the fight began. She is not of a fainting sort, but the trials of the last few weeks, and her belief that de la Vallée was killed, have very much upset her."

"No wonder," Desmond said. "It must have been terrible indeed to lose her lover, and to know that she was again in the power of that villain. And you, Baron; how did you escape the fate that befell the rest of your convoy?"

"We had ridden close up to the tree, when suddenly there was a discharge of firearms. The two men with me fell at once; I was unhurt, but as I turned my horse he fell dead, three bullets having pierced his chest. Before I could recover my feet the rascals were upon me; they evidently intended to take me alive for they were provided with ropes, and, binding my arms, hurried me back to the carriage. By the time we got there all was over; my faithful Eustace and the coachman lay dead by the side of the carriage. They had fought stoutly, for three of the brigands lay beside them. Six others were scattered near, and the brigands were gathered round a fallen man who I guessed was their leader. I found Anne in a state of the wildest grief. She told me that she had seen Philip shot by the vicomte just as he was attacking him, and that you in turn had cut down the villain.

"For half an hour nothing was done, and then one who was evidently in authority over the others left the troop and came up to the carriage.

"'Monsieur le Baron,' he said, 'the orders of my chief are

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that you are to be placed in the carriage with your daughter and her maid. If you will give your word of honour that you will not attempt to escape, or to give the alarm as you go along, or to address a word to anyone whom we may encounter, your arms will be freed, and you will be treated with all respect. If, on the contrary, you decline to give this promise, my instructions are that your feet as well as your hands are to be tied, and that you are to be gagged and placed in the bottom of the carriage. You are also to answer for your daughter and her maid, that they too, neither by word nor gesture, shall attempt to attract the attention of anyone in the villages that we may pass through."

"It was a hard condition, but I had no choice. The idea that I should suffer the indignity of being bound and gagged like a common malefactor made my blood boil. I should in that case no more be able to give the alarm than if I had been free; therefore I gave the promise, for at least it would be a comfort to Anne that I should be with her and able to talk to her. We stopped two nights on the road, being lodged at solitary houses on the way. A guard was placed at my chamber door and another at my window, and even had I not given my word I could not have escaped. And now, Monsieur Kennedy, what do you propose?"

"I think, sir, that it would be best that you should start at once in the carriage for Pointdexter. Monsieur Philip's intendant and his men will ride as your escort, but I do not think that there is the slightest probability of your being interfered with, for now that the vicomte is dead, these men —who were not, I think, his retainers, but a band of robbers whom he had hired for the occasion—will have no further motive for attacking you. I myself shall return to Aubusson, send back the horse on which I rode there, hire another, and make straight for Moulins, where I still hope that I may find

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Monsieur de la Vallée alive. Did you see the vicomte after you were attacked?"

"No; I heard one of the men tell the fellows who were guarding us that your stroke had cut off one of his ears and laid his cheek bare from the eye to the chin. I fancy that he was too badly hurt to come to us, but in any case he would not have cared to show himself in so terrible a plight."

"We must admit that with all his faults he was brave," Desmond said; "for in spite of his pain and weakness, and of the fact that his head was enveloped in bandages, he sprang from his litter, leapt into one of the saddles we had emptied, and, single-handed, made for me, until my man cut his career short with a bullet. As you go through Croc it might be well that you should send one of the villagers off to his castle to tell them that their master is lying dead here, when doubtless they will send out a party to fetch in his body."

By this time Mademoiselle de Pointdexter had recovered from her faint. She held out her hand to Desmond as he stood bare-headed beside the door.

"You have rescued me again, Monsieur Kennedy," she said, "for though life seems worthless to me now, you have saved me from far worse than death. That you have so saved me, for my father's sake as well as my own I thank you with all my heart."

"I would have you still hope, mademoiselle. We know that Monsieur de la Vallée fell, but many men fall from their horses when wounded, even when the wound is not vital. I am riding at once to Moulins, and trust to find him still alive; therefore I pray you do not give up all hope."

"I dare not let myself hope," she said; "it would be but to suffer another blow. Still, I feel that I have so much to be thankful for that, grievous as my sorrow is, I shall try to bear it, with the help of the Holy Virgin."

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The party now separated. The baron mounted one of the horses left behind by the brigands, and with the men from la Vallée started for Pointdexter, while Desmond, with Mike Callaghan, rode back to Aubusson. There they slept for a few hours, and then obtained fresh horses and started for Moulins, where they arrived late in the evening. They alighted at the "Soleil", where Desmond had ordered the two men who had gone on from Roanne to bring the body of Monsieur de la Vallée.

"The gentleman is not here, sir," the landlord said as he came to the door. "He was brought into the town by the men sent out by the mayor. As by his dress he was evidently a gentleman of quality, they took him straight to the 'Couronne'."

"Was he alive?"

"Yes, sir; but, as I hear, the surgeons are unable to decide yet whether he will live. The men you sent here arrived the day after he was brought in. They told me that you would return, and put their horses here, but they are now in attendance on the wounded gentleman, who it seems is their lord."

"Thank God he is alive!" Desmond exclaimed. "I have news for him that will do more than the surgeons can to restore him to himself." Leaving Mike to see the horses stabled, he hurried away to the other hotel. He sent up his name, and one of the surgeons came down.

"Monsieur de la Vallée is very ill," he said, "although his wound is not necessarily mortal. This morning we succeeded in extracting the ball, but he is in a terribly weak state. He is unable to speak above a whisper, and does not seem to care to make any effort. It would appear that he even does not wish to live."

"I have news that will put fresh life into him."

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"Then by all means go in and see him, sir. We have thought that he is fast sinking; but if the news you bring can rouse him into making an effort to live, he may yet recover. I will go in and give him a strong restorative, and tell him that you are here."

In three or four minutes he came to the door of the chamber and beckoned to Desmond to enter.

"The sound of your name has roused him from the lethargy into which he seemed sinking," he whispered. "When I told him that I could not allow you to enter until he had taken the draught that I gave him, he swallowed it eagerly."

Desmond went up to the bedside and took the hand which lay on the coverlet. The pressure was slightly returned, and Philip's lips moved, but he spoke so faintly that Desmond had to lean over him to hear the words. "I am glad, indeed, that you are safe and sound. I have been reproaching myself bitterly that I should have brought you into this fatal business. As to the rest of it, I dare not even think of it; but I shall die all the easier for knowing that you have escaped."

"I escaped for a good purpose, Philip. I have good news for you. Monsieur le Baron and mademoiselle are on their way to Pointdexter, under the guard of your men."

"Is it possible, Desmond, or are you only saying it to rouse me?"

"Not at all, Philip. You do not suppose that even for that purpose I would hold out false hopes to you or tell an untruth on a matter so vital to your happiness."

Philip's eyes closed, but his lips moved, and Desmond knew that he was returning thanks to God for this unlooked-for news.

"How did it happen?" Philip said, after a silence of some minutes. His voice was much stronger than before, and there was a faint touch of color in his cheeks. The surgeon nodded

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approvingly to Desmond, and murmured, "I think that he will live."

"It is too long a story to tell you in full now," Desmond said. "Seeing that all was lost, that you were down, and that further resistance was absolutely fruitless, Mike and I cut our way out, the more easily since I had struck down their leader de Tulle and most of his band had crowded round him. At Roanne I found your men, who had just arrived there. It matters not now why they had been detained. I got fresh horses for them and rode for Correze, placed an ambush, and turned the tables upon them. Mike shot the vicomte, and we easily defeated his followers and rescued the baron and his daughter. I sent them to Pointdexter under charge of your intendant and followers, and rode hither, hoping against hope that I might find you still alive. Your two men who came on here could have told you that I had escaped."

"I did not allow them to speak to monsieur," the surgeon said ,"or even to see him. They are below, greatly grieved at being refused entry; but I told them that any agitation might be fatal to their master, and that they could do nothing for him if they came up; for indeed, up to the time when we extracted the ball, he was unconscious. And now, monsieur, I think that it were best you should retire. I shall give Monsieur de la Vallée a soothing draught; a night's rest will be of vital importance to him. And now that you have relieved his mind of the load that has evidently weighed upon him, I think there is little doubt that he will soon fall asleep."

"I will go and have supper," Desmond said, "for I have ridden fifty miles since I last ate, and then it was but a piece of bread with a draught of wine. After that I will, with your permission, return here, and if you tell me that he sleeps, will take my place by his bedside till morning."

"To that I have no objection," the surgeon said. "I and

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a colleague have one or other been with him since he was brought in; and I shall be glad of a rest myself."

Desmond returned to the "Soleil", where he had left Mike. The latter, who had just finished his supper, was delighted to hear that de la Vallée was likely to recover. After satisfying his own hunger Desmond returned to the "Couronne". He went upstairs, and, taking off his riding-boots, stopped at the door of his friend's chamber. It stood a little ajar, and, pushing it open noiselessly, he entered. The surgeon who was sitting at the bedside rose at once.

"He is asleep already," he whispered, "and is breathing quietly. I think it likely that he will not stir until to-morrow morning. I shall be here at six. If he wakes and there is any change, send for me at once."

After he had left the room Desmond took his place on the fauteuil by the bedside. For a time he thought over the singular chain of adventures that he had gone through. Gradually, in spite of his efforts, his eyelids drooped. De la Vallée had not moved, and, being dead tired by the exertions of the past four days, he fell into a deep sleep, from which he did not awake until daylight streamed into the room. Shocked at having thus given way, he looked anxiously at de la Vallée, and was relieved to find that he was lying exactly in the same position and had evidently slept without once waking. Half an hour later Philip opened his eyes, looked wonderingly at him, and then said:

"So it was not all a good dream, Desmond? You are really here and your news is true?"

"Certainly it is true, Philip. By this time Mademoiselle de Pointdexter and her father are far on the way home. They were to have travelled on to Argentan and then through Aurillac, striking the Lozere at Entraigues and proceeding along its banks to Mende, and thence by a road over the hills

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to Villefort, where they would be twenty miles from Pointdexter. The carriage was to be left behind at their first halting-place. Mademoiselle was then to ride, and her maid to be carried behind one of your men, by which means they would travel more than twice as fast as they would do if encumbered by the carriage. The baron said that he would spare no pains to get home as quickly as possible, and would send a man on some hours ahead of him to see that fresh horses were in readiness for the whole party at each town they came to."

"Now tell me all about it, Desmond. I feel another man. Your good news and a long night's sleep have done wonders for me. Now please tell me all about the affair."

Seeing that Philip was so much stronger that he could hear, without being over-excited, the story of the rescue, Desmond related all the details to him.

"You have indeed done wonders," Philip said; "you do not seem to know what fatigue is. How strange that you, whose name I had never heard until ten days back, should have rendered to Baron Pointdexter and myself two such inestimable services. And so, after all your exertions and fatigue, you have been keeping watch at my bedside all night?"

"I am ashamed to say that I have not been keeping watch, Philip," Desmond replied with a smile. "I had intended to, but you were sleeping so quietly, and everything was so still, that I went off and slept as soundly as you have done until within half an hour of the time when you opened your eyes; but I am sure that I should have awoke at once had you moved."

"Then I am glad that I did not move, Desmond, for you must sorely need a long sleep after having passed three days and almost three nights in the saddle."

The surgeons now arrived, and were delighted at the change that had taken place in their patient.

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"And when shall I be fit to travel, doctor?"

"Ah, well, we will talk of that in another fortnight's time. You need absolute quiet, for were you to move before your wound is fairly healed inflammation might set in, and that would throw you back for a long time. You have had a very narrow escape, and you are fortunate indeed to have got off with only a trifling detention."

"But I might be carried in a horse-litter?"

"Certainly not at present," the surgeon said decidedly. "Possibly in ten days you might without danger be so carried, providing they take you in short stages and with easy-paced horses, but I should say that it would be still better were you to be carried on men's shoulders. There is never any difficulty in hiring men, and you could get relays every eight or ten miles, while it would be difficult to get horses accustomed to such work."

"You don't think that I should be able to ride, doctor?"

"Certainly not in less than a month, probably not in six weeks."

"Then I must be carried," Philip said. "I should work myself into the fever you talk of if I were to be kept here. What are your plans, Desmond?"

"I have not thought of them yet. At any rate I shall stay with you till you are well enough to start."

"I could not think of that, Desmond."

"You have no say in the matter, Philip. In the first place, you will get on all the faster for my being with you; in the next place, ten days of my leave are already expired, and were we to go on straight to Pointdexter I should only have a few days there before starting back for Paris, and I must therefore postpone my visit to some future time. I can stay here ten days, accompany you some four days on your journey, and then turn back again."

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"A nice way of spending a month's holiday!" Philip grumbled.

"It will be a holiday that I shall long look back to," Desmond said quietly, "and with pleasure. I do not say that I should not have enjoyed myself at the baron's château, for that I should have done; but the adventures that I have gone through will remain in my mind all my life as having gained the friendship of yourself, the baron, and his daughter."

"Friendship seems to me too mild a word for it, Desmond. You have earned a gratitude so deep that it will be a pain to us if we cannot show it in deeds."

"And now, Philip," Desmond said, changing the subject abruptly, "I suppose that you will be at once sending off one of your men with the news that you are in a fair way towards recovery. Mademoiselle de Pointdexter is suffering at the thought that you were probably killed. I did my best to give her hope, but without much success. Your two retainers have been fretting greatly that they were not allowed to see you, but I think that now they can be brought up, and you can choose one of them to act as your messenger. He will, of course, ride post, and can arrive at Pointdexter very soon after the baron, if indeed he does not get there first. If he starts at once and changes horses at each place, he may be there by to-morrow at noon, if not earlier, for it is not more, I believe, than a hundred and twenty miles to Pointdexter. If you will dictate a letter for him to take I will write it for you."

"It must be a short one," the surgeon said, "just a few words. Monsieur de la Vallée has talked more than is good for him."

Half an hour later the messenger started, carrying a note with a few words from Philip to Anne, and a longer letter from Desmond to the baron. Four days later answers were

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received. The messenger had arrived at Pointdexter two hours before the travellers reached home, and Anne's joy at the news that not only was Philip alive, but might in a short time be with her, was deep indeed. The baron wrote to Desmond as well as to Philip, again expressing the deep gratitude of himself and his daughter, greatly regretting that he should not have the opportunity at present of thanking him personally. With the letter the messenger brought a bag of money, concerning which he wrote:

You have, I know, dear Monsieur Kennedy, expended a considerable sum of money in hiring relays of horses for yourself and M. de la Vallée's men, and this, of course, is a debt you cannot object to my repaying. Without knowing the exact sum, I have roughly calculated the probable amount, and forward it to you by the messenger who will bring you this letter.

Desmond had no hesitation in accepting the money. The baron had evidently taken considerable pains to calculate the sums that he must have laid out, in order not to hurt his feelings by sending a larger sum than he had spent, for the amount contained in the bag was but a few louis over his disbursements. He at once rode over to Roanne and redeemed his ring, which had proved of more value to him than he had ever anticipated.

At the end of the ten days Philip was strong enough to walk across the room, and the surgeon gave permission for him to start, if, instead of being carried all the way, he would be taken to Lyons, which was but twenty miles distant, and there take boat down the Rhone to Viviers. Desmond went with him to Lyons, and saw him comfortably bestowed on board a craft going down the river, and there left him in charge of his own retainers. Then, accompanied by Mike, whose wound was now

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well healed, he rode back to Paris by comparatively easy stages, arriving there on the day before his leave was up. He reported himself to the colonel.

"So you have not been to Pointdexter after all! I received a long letter a week ago from the baron, sent by special messenger, giving me a full account of your doings, which reads like a chapter of romance. He mentioned that he had also written to the king denouncing the conduct of the Vicomte de Tulle, and stating that in the fight between his own rescuers and the vicomte's band the latter was killed, and doing full justice to the part you played in the affair. I had a message from His Majesty yesterday, ordering that you should as soon as you returned, go at once to Versailles, in order that he might question you further on the affair. I have another piece of news for you. We have received orders to march in three days' time, which is a fortunate circumstance for you, for there can be no doubt that, however gallantly and well you have behaved in this affair, and in whatever light His Majesty may view it, you have incurred the enmity of de Tulle's family and connections, and the air of Paris would not be healthy for you for a time. I need not say that I have read the baron's letter to your comrades, and that they fully shared with me the admiration I feel at your conduct."

"Had I better start at once for Versailles, sir?"

"I think so. The king is not pleased at being kept waiting. He is sure to ask you when you arrived. You had better take one of my horses; I will order it to be brought round, and shall be at your quarters by the time you have put on your full uniform."

The king had just returned from hunting when Desmond arrived at the palace and gave his name to one of the ushers. Five minutes later he was conducted to the king's dressing-room.

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"This is a serious business, young sir, in which you have been engaged," the king said shortly to Desmond as he entered.

"I am aware of that, Sire; and yet I am well assured that every officer in Your Majesty's service would have acted as I did under similar circumstances."

"The Baron de Pointdexter has written to us fully on the matter," the king said, "but we wish to hear the account from your own lips. When did you return to Paris?"

"But two hours since, Sire."

"Then you have lost no time in presenting yourself here. Now tell us the whole matter, omitting no detail."

Desmond told the story fully. He was interrupted once by the king. "How was it that Monsieur de la Vallée's people were at Roanne?"

Desmond then related the fears that he and Philip had entertained lest the vicomte should make another attempt to carry of Mademoiselle Pointdexter, and how, without the baron's knowledge, Philip had sent off a messenger to his intendant for a body of his men to meet them on the way; how the messenger had been intercepted and desperately wounded, and how in consequence, instead of their being met by the party at Nevers, or north of that town, they had only reached Roanne after the attack had been made on the travellers near Moulins.

The king asked no more questions until Desmond finished his story. "You did well, sir," he then said; "and the conduct of the Vicomte de Tulle was outrageous, and we should have visited him with our heaviest displeasure had he not already received his deserts. It is intolerable that a noble gentleman with his daughter cannot travel along the high-roads of our kingdom without being thus assaulted; it was the more scandalous when the vicomte was banished from our court for a similar attempt. The fact that he had enjoyed our favour

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would in no degree have mitigated—indeed it would have increased—our anger at his conduct, since it would have seemed as if he had relied upon it for immunity for his action. Surely such a belief would have been an erroneous one; the law must be observed, and the higher placed a man is, the more is he bound to set an example of obedience to it. We thank you, sir, for having thwarted so daring and villainous a scheme. We have not yet sent an answer to the Baron de Pointdexter, because we wished your report of the matter before doing so. We shall now cause him to be informed of our indignation at the plot against his person and that of his daughter, and our satisfaction that they have escaped from it. You have begun your career well indeed, young sir. Your regiment is about to start for the frontier; we shall direct your colonel to report to us from time to time as to your conduct, and shall see that your promotion is in accordance with your actions, and shall request him to offer you any opportunity that may occur for distinguishing yourself."

Desmond rode back to Paris well satisfied with the result of the interview. He had not been slow in noticing that although the king's approval of his actions had been warmly expressed in words, there was a certain coldness in the tone in which they were spoken, which showed that although the king's sense of justice constrained him to praise, he was at heart sore at the death of one who had been a favoured companion in his sports and amusements. On his return he found his two friends waiting for him at his quarters. They gave him a hearty greeting.

"You are a perfect paladin, Kennedy," O'Neil said; "and though we are all proud of you we cannot help feeling a little envious that such adventures have all fallen to the lot of our junior ensign. It is evident that if you were not born with a silver spoon in your mouth, fortune determined to make up

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in other ways by giving you such chances as do not fall to the lot of anyone else."

"Yes, I think I have every right to consider myself exceptionally fortunate."

"You may have been fortunate, Kennedy," O'Sullivan remarked; "the thing is, that you took advantage of the opportunities. You threw yourself into the first adventure that came your way, rescued a lovely damsel in distress, and her gratitude and that of her father attracted the king's notice and gained that ring on your finger. In the next place, after escaping from the ruffians who attacked the coach—principally, as it seems, by cutting down their leader and so occupying the attention of his followers—you instantly took the resolution to attempt to rescue him and his daughter, and succeeded in doing so. Another man might have stopped at Moulins, congratulating himself that he had escaped from the trap, and lamenting that he could do nothing towards again rescuing this damsel from her abductors. Of course it was a piece of good fortune meeting de la Vallée's men at Roanne, but I have no doubt that if you had not done so you would still have got to Pointdexter, gathered a force, and intercepted the vicomte's party."

"It would have been a very near thing, O'Sullivan. Changing horse at every post I might have got to Pointdexter from Roanne in twenty-four hours; but I doubt whether, even allowing that no time was lost in getting the men together, I could have got to Tulle before them. They had but one hundred and fifty miles to travel, I should have had still farther; and as they would have had three days' start, they should have been there before me, for I heard from the baron that in addition to the four horses in the coach, they had four others, ridden by troopers, fastened to it where the road was bad."

"What would you have done if they had got to the vi-

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comte's château—it is, I believe, a strong place—before you could intercept them?"

"I cannot say what I should have done; I thought the matter over and over again as we rode. It seemed absurd to think of attacking a château with only twelve men; and besides it would have been a very serious business to assault a noble in his own castle. There would almost certainly be twenty or thirty men there at the least, and the ringing of the alarm-bell would have brought all his vassals within five miles round to his aid at once. I have no doubt that I should have attempted something, but in what way I could form no idea until I saw the place."

The two young men laughed. "I believe that you would have succeeded somehow, Kennedy," O'Neil said. "After what you have done I have an almost unlimited faith in you, and if you told me you could see no other plan than carrying off His Gracious Majesty, and taking him down to Tulle and forcing him to order this rascal vicomte to deliver up his captives, you would accomplish it."

Desmond laughed. "The plan might be as good as another, though I own that it had not occurred to me; but it would certainly necessitate my having him held prisoner until I had got safely out of France, otherwise my fate would assuredly be to be broken on the wheel."

"Yes; I don't think His Gracious Majesty would have forgiven such an indignity even if put upon him for a good purpose. It is almost treason even to dream of such a thing."

Desmond laughed. "It was a purely imaginary case; but you see, not having been accustomed, as you are, to a country where the king is regarded almost as a god, I am afraid I have not that awe of him that is generally entertained here. I have naturally a great respect for the king whom I serve, and whose pay is a matter of the greatest importance to me;

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but, after all, although in his service, he is not my lawful king."

"Then you would not even imagine such a thing as to take your lawful king, James, prisoner, however much the fate of someone in whom you were interested was concerned?"

Desmond did not answer at once. "I don't know," he said at last, "what I should do in such a case. For King James as lawful king of my country I have the deepest respect, and would freely venture my life in his service; but for him as a man, irrespective of his crown, I own that my admiration is not extreme, and that I should not hesitate to join in any plan for putting pressure upon him on behalf of anyone in whom I was extremely interested, as I certainly am now in Mademoiselle de Pointdexter and Monsieur de la Vallée."

"You are a curious fellow, Kennedy," O'Neil said with a smile, "and I should be very much puzzled if I were called upon to predict what your fate is likely to be. It seems to me that you have an equal chance of becoming a French marshal or being broken on the wheel. Here you are, not yet seventeen; you have, as I doubt not, somewhat interfered with the king's plans, and caused him the loss of one of his personal friends; you have twice rescued a noble lady from the hands of her abductors; you have brought disgrace and death upon a member of one of the most powerful families in France; you have earned the gratitude and friendship of one of the leading nobles of Southern France, that of the fiancé of his daughter, and of the daughter herself. As soon as this affair spreads abroad you will be the object of general remark and attention. You have rendered the regiment to which you belong proud of you, its junior ensign, and made Paris emphatically too hot to hold you. If all this is done before you are seventeen, what may we expect when another ten years have passed over your head?"

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"You had better wait for the ten years to pass, O'Neil," Desmond laughed; "by which time perhaps you and O'Sullivan will both have learned wisdom, and will see that because a man happens to have gone through a very exciting adventure without discredit, it by no means proves him to be anything in the smallest degree out of the way."

CHAPTER VIII

TO SCOTLAND

TWO days later the regiment was paraded, but no order had been received for their start, and their destination was still uncertain. The officers stood in a group awaiting the arrival of the colonel, who entered, accompanied by Colonel Wauchop and several other Irish officers. As there had been no notice of an official inspection there was a general feeling of surprise at the appearance of the visitors. The colonel rode up to the group of officers. "Gentlemen," he said, "I must ask you all to accompany me to the common room. I have news of importance to give you." He and those with him dismounted, and, followed by the wondering officers of the regiment, went into the large room where they gathered in the evening. "The news that I am about to give you is of an important and happy nature. His Most Gracious Majesty has decided to send an expedition to Scotland, where the whole country is ready to rise in favour of our lawful king."

A cheer broke from his hearers.

"Many Scottish and Irish gentlemen," the colonel went on, have been selected to accompany it. Among them is my friend Colonel Wauchop and the officers with him. The expedition will consist of six thousand French troops. I re-

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gret to say that no Irish regiments will accompany it." A groan of disappointment followed this announcement. "We must hope," the colonel said, "that Irish troops are not employed only because it is intended that another expedition will sail to Ireland, in which case we may be sure that some of us will have an opportunity of fighting again on our own side of the water. Moreover, between France and Scotland there has long been a close connection and friendship, and the employment of French troops would therefore better suit the Scots than would be the case with Irishmen. Another reason perhaps is, the King of France does not like to spare his best troops when he has sore need of them in Flanders and Spain. However, a number of Irish officers will accompany the expedition for the purpose of drilling and commanding the new levies, for which work they will be far better suited by their knowledge of English than French officers would be. Therefore the various Irish regiments are all to furnish a certain number of lieutenants. Generals Hamilton, Sheldon, Dorrington, and Lords Galmoy and Fitzgerald and our friend Colonel Wauchop will be in command of the newly-raised force, having with them many Scotch officers now in the service of France.

"The secret of the expedition has been well kept, but I have known it for a fortnight, and have prepared a list of the fifteen officers who are to go. I may say that, in order to avoid partiality, I have, with one exception, selected them by lot. Those who are to go will doubtless consider themselves fortunate; those who are to stay are still more lucky, if, as I hope, the regiment will form part of a similar expedition sent to Ireland."

He then read out a list of the officers chosen. O'Sullivan and O'Neil were both among them, and the name of Desmond Kennedy was the last read out.

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"You will, gentlemen, start in an hour's time, taking the northern road through Montvidier and Arras. In each of these towns you will be joined by officers from other regiments. Colonel Wauchop will accompany you. I do not name the port from which you are to sail, and no word must be said by you as to the route you are to travel, but you can no doubt judge for yourselves by the road that you are taking what port is your destination. The French troops will be already there, and the fleet is all in readiness. You all have horses. You can each take your soldier servant with you, but those who do so must either hire or purchase a horse for him. All further details you will learn from Colonel Wauchop, and the paymaster will have orders to issue two months' pay to each of you in advance. The distance will be about a hundred and fifty miles, and you will perform it in five days."

Colonel Wauchop then addressed a few words to the officers, all of whom were under the rank of captain.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you have an honorable task before you. For years we have been waiting for the day when our swords might aid to place our king upon the throne. At last it has come. I need not say that the struggle will be a severe one, and that your courage will be taxed to the utmost, but you have proved that in a score of desperate fights. The task before you will need tact to no ordinary degree. The Scotch are as peppery a race as the Irish are, and it will be necessary in no way to hurt their feelings or to excite among them the smallest degree of discontent at being drilled and led by men who are not of their own race. And now, as we have much to do before starting, I will leave you to make your arrangements. The rendezvous for us all is in your barrack-yard, and at nine o'clock we shall be here."

The colonel now left the room, and the officers eagerly and

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excitedly talked over the startling news that they had just heard. The greater part of those who had been selected for the service were delighted to go, while the others were equally pleased at the thought that they might shortly be fighting for King James on the soil of Ireland.

"Sure, your honour, I wish it had been in the ould country instead of Scotland," Mike said when he heard the news.

"I cannot say that I agree with you, Mike. In Ireland we should find tens of thousands of brave hearts ready to join us, but they are unarmed, undrilled, and undisciplined, and would be of comparatively slight assistance to us against the English troops. Defeat would bring down fresh persecutions, fresh confiscations, and greater misery upon the land."

"Sure we would beat them, your honour."

"We might, Mike; but you must remember that we failed to do so even when the people were armed. No doubt we shall take a certain amount of muskets and ammunition with us, but the power of England is more assuredly fixed in Ireland now than it was then—the influence of the old Irish families is broken, and even if we armed all who joined us, it would be but an armed rabble and not an army. In Scotland it is altogether different. The Scottish clans would join us under their chiefs, to whom they give absolute obedience, and they would turn out armed and ready for action. Thus, then, I think that, allowing that Ireland is as loyal as Scotland, the choice has been a wise one."

"Sure, you know best, your honour; but I will warrant that as soon as Scotland rises, Ireland will be in a blaze from one end to the other."

"That may well be, Mike; but there will then be a chance of success, since the English forces will be fully occupied by our descent in the north, which will threaten London, while Ireland can be left to itself until the main question is settled."

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"It is mighty lucky, your honour, that I should have stuck to the horse we got when we rescued Miss Pointdexter."

"I am very glad too, Mike, for otherwise I should have had to buy one, and it is likely enough that I may want all the money I have before this campaign that we are starting upon is over."

O'Neil and O'Sullivan at this moment burst into the room.

"It is glorious that we three should all be going, Kennedy!" the latter exclaimed. "It is just your luck, for you are the only ensign named, while the regiment will be left with only four lieutenants. Of course I should be still better pleased if we were going to Ireland. Still for anything we know that expedition may not come off, and so that we are fighting for the king it's all one whether it is in Scotland or at home."

Having seen that all was ready for departure, Desmond went to the colonel's quarters to say good-bye. Several of the officers who were going were already there, and the colonel motioned to him to stay until they had left. When they had done so he said, "Perhaps you guessed, Kennedy, that you were the one exception I mentioned to the rule I adopted of fixing by lot upon those who were to go."

"No, indeed, sir," Desmond said in surprise; "I thought it an extraordinary piece of good fortune that I should be the only ensign to go when there were so many others all senior to me. Indeed I thought for a moment of saying that I would resign in favour of one who was older and more experienced than myself; but then it struck me that if I did, some of the junior lieutenants might feel themselves obliged to do the same in favour of their seniors."

"I should not in any case have permitted a change to be made. I had decided that, in order to avoid jealousy, chance should decide the matter. Indeed, you are the only ensign going with the expedition. I informed Colonel Wauchop and

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General Hamilton of the reason for which I specially included you.

"So long as it was supposed that the regiment was on the point of marching to Spain I considered that if you took my advice and did not leave the barracks after nightfall no harm would befall you. But the case is altered now that it may remain here for some time, for no doubt it will take part in any expedition sent to Ireland. I have heard within the past forty-eight hours that the friends of de Tulle have made very strong representations to the king. They have urged that your proceedings, involving what they call the murder of their kinsman, were of the nature of civil war, and that if his conduct had been reprehensible it was for the Baron de Pointdexter to lay the matter before His Majesty and ask for redress. I hear, however, that the king received their remonstrances coldly, told them that de Tulle had brought his fate upon himself, that it was the duty of every gentleman to endeavour to rescue a lady so feloniously carried off, and that he approved of the readiness and energy with which you had taken steps to do so. On finding, then, that they have failed in their hope of having you sent to one of the royal prisons, from which you would probably never have come out alive, I have no doubt whatever that these people will endeavour to take the matter into their own hands, and that, with the means at their disposal, they will find no difficulty in procuring persons who would undertake to assassinate you. As I have said, if you had at once started for the army we might have looked after your safety until you crossed the frontier, but here in Paris you would not be safe for an hour, and could scarce venture between the barracks and your lodging unless under a strong guard. Under such circumstances I consider that I was justified in placing you on the list of the officers who would accompany the expedition. I explained to General Hamilton

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and Colonel Wauchop, who both happened to be with me, my reasons for wishing to include so young an officer in the ranks of those selected for the service. The officers heartily agreed with me, having, of course, heard the story, or, at any rate, the main facts of your rescues of Mademoiselle de Pointdexter."

"I am indeed greatly obliged to you, Colonel. I know that it is a dangerous thing to incur the enmity of one of those powerful families, and though I should certainly have taken every precaution in my power, I felt that I should be in constant danger until we fairly embarked upon a campaign."

At nine o'clock the party started; it numbered some fifty officers, Scotch and Irish. The baggage had started half an hour before; it was to join the carts with the baggage of the other officers outside the northern gates, and was under an escort of dragoons whose officer had powers given him to requisition fresh horses at each town through which he passed, and so to push on to the port with but two halts. Once off there was no longer any necessity for keeping their destination a secret, and the officers were informed that, as they had already guessed, Dunkirk was the harbour from which they were to sail.

The journey was a pleasant one; all were in the highest spirits. A short distance behind them marched a body of infantry composed entirely of non-commissioned officers, of whom O'Brien's regiment furnished thirty. All were picked men, and, marching each day as far as the party of officers rode, arrived at Dunkirk on the fifth day after starting, and were at once embarked on the ships of war. Colonel Wauchop and the officers of O'Brien's regiment were told off to the *Salisbury*, which was a ship that had been taken from the English and was now loaded with military stores, arms, and

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munitions for the use of those who were expected to join them on landing. After seeing that the officers were all properly accommodated the colonel went ashore, and when he returned it was at once seen by the expression of his face that something was wrong.

"I have very bad news," he said. "King James, who arrived here two days ago, has been taken suddenly ill, and until he is partially recovered we cannot sail, for it is absolutely necessary that he should be with us. This may mean the delay of a week or ten days and may defeat all our arrangements. The English government have spies here as well as elsewhere, and their fleet has for the last week been hovering off the coast. They may not have known the purpose of the assembly of troops here, for this has been kept strictly secret, and few even of the French officers of the expedition knew, until they arrived here, for what reason the regiments had been ordered to Dunkirk. But the arrival of King James of course showed what was the intention, and as soon as the news reaches London you may be sure that the English fleet will be sent to intercept us."

It was indeed ten days before James was sufficiently recovered to be embarked—a delay which probably cost him his kingdom, for there can be no doubt that on landing he would have been joined at once by all the great clans and by no small proportion of the able-bodied men of the country. The consequences were so evident to all engaged in the expedition that despondency took the place of the enthusiasm with which they had embarked. The fact that the expedition, after being so carefully and secretly prepared, should at its outset meet with so serious a misfortune was considered an omen of evil. At last, however, James embarked under a salute by the guns of the ships of war, and as the sails were hoisted and the anchors weighed, the spirits of all again rose. They

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had sailed but a few miles when it became evident that the *Salisury* was the slowest ship in the fleet, for, although she had every stitch of canvas set, she lagged behind the rest, and the other vessels were obliged to lower some of their sails in order to allow her to keep up with them."

"I begin to think, Kennedy," O'Neil said, "that the good fortune that has hitherto attended you has spent itself. O'Sullivan and I both regarded it as a good omen that you should be the one ensign selected to go with us, but this miserable delay at Dunkirk, and the fact that we are on board the slowest tub in the fleet, seems to show that Dame Fortune is no longer going to exercise herself in your favour."

"It looks like it, indeed," Desmond agreed. "Still, I can't hold myself responsible for either the king's illness or for our being allotted to this heavy-sailing craft, and, perhaps, even if fortune should not favour me any longer, she will do something for some of the others. She has always been favourable to Colonel Wauchop. He has been through innumerable engagements. Though many times wounded he has never been seriously so, though scores of other officers have fallen in enterprises in which he has taken part. In his case fortune has not been fickle, and as he is the chief officer on board, we must hope that she has not deserted him on this occasion. I think there is a certain amount of luck in the fact that we carry a large amount of guns and ammunition. If that had not been the case, it is likely that, rather than delay, the squadron would sail on at full speed, and have left us to follow as best we might."

A constant watch was maintained at the mast-head of the ship, but no signs were seen of the English fleet, until, on the 23rd of March, six days after sailing, they reached the mouth of the Firth of Forth, and were congratulating themselves that they had brought the voyage to a successful termination,

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At daybreak next morning, however, just as they were about to enter the estuary, they beheld the masts of a great fleet coming out to meet them. This was the squadron of Sir George Byng, which had for some days been on the coast, having been despatched as soon as the news reached London of the gathering of ships and troops at Dunkirk, and of the arrival of the Pretender there. The French admiral at once signalled to all the ships to put about, and he lay off until the English fleet were near enough to discern its composition, which was far superior in force to his own. Seeing the impossibility of landing the troops and stores, and the slight chances of success in giving battle, he hoisted the signal for all to make their way back to Dunkirk, keeping as much as possible together, in order to defend themselves if overtaken or if intercepted by another hostile fleet.

In vain James begged that a few boats might be given him with which to land with his chief followers. The French admiral replied that his instructions would not justify him in doing so, and that he had been ordered to specially protect the person of the young king, whose safety was of the highest concern to his sovereign. It was with the deepest feeling of disappointment and depression that the Scotch and Irish officers heard that it was determined to sail for Dunkirk again. Had the troops on board the ships been of their own nationality, they would have ordered them to disobey the admiral's commands, and to insist upon the fleet, if it succeeded in evading the pursuit of the enemy, making another effort to effect a landing. As, however, all the soldiers were French with the exception of two or three hundred non-commissioned Irish officers, they were powerless, and were half-mad with rage and grief.

"This looks bad for us," O'Sullivan said gravely to his two friends. "I think that the French ships will outsail the

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English, but there is little chance that this unwieldy craft will do so; in which case, my friends, it is likely that we shall all see the inside of an English prison, and that probably not a few of us will be executed. The colonel should be safe, for he came over with the Brigade after Limerick, and therefore by that treaty was allowed to enter the service of France; but it is different with the rest of us. We have all joined since those days, and are therefore not covered by the treaty, and so are liable to be tried as traitors."

O'Neil shrugged his shoulders. "Well, we knew that when we joined," he said. "However, I hardly think they are likely to proceed to such an extremity. Very many of our Brigade have been taken prisoners at Blenheim and other places, and they have always had the same treatment as other prisoners of war."

"That may be," O'Sullivan replied; "but this is a different matter. It is not a question of war on foreign soil. We were going to attack the throne of Anne, to promote civil war, and to overthrow the government. The attempt once made can be made again, and you may be sure that the news of our sailing has created a tremendous scare throughout the country. However, we are in for it, and there is no use grumbling against fate. Already, you see, the rest of the fleet are leaving us—faster, I think, than the English fleet are gaining on us—and I trust they will get safely away into Dunkirk. The fact that we so nearly succeeded will perhaps act as an inducement to Louis to renew the expedition, and the loss of a colonel, fifteen lieutenants, and thirty non-commissioned officers will not seriously affect anyone except ourselves."

"However," Desmond put in, "I think that, after all, things may not be as bad as you think. In the first place, our execution would have an extremely bad effect in Scotland and Ireland, and would add to the general hostility to the present govern-

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ment. In the next place, Louis has many English prisoners in his hands, and might threaten reprisals. Lastly, there is always a chance of escape."

"Your first two arguments are good, Kennedy," O'Neil said, "but I cannot say as much for the last. The chances of escape from an English prison must be small indeed."

"Nevertheless there must always be chances," Desmond said. "If you will take my advice you will at once go below and conceal your money."

"Where are we going to conceal it?" O'Sullivan said. "You may be sure that we shall be searched."

"Well, you took my advice in changing the silver in which you were paid into gold, though you lost pretty heavily by the transaction. We did it to prevent lugging about a heavy bag of silver. Now it has its advantages. You could not hope to conceal silver, but we may at least hide a few pieces of gold. Mike is a handy fellow, and I have no doubt will be able to help us. At any rate let us go below and see what can be done."

Mike was summoned to the cabin. "Now, Mike," Desmond said, "I suppose in a campaign a good many of you carry what money you may have about you, and I dare say some of you hide it so that if you are taken prisoners you may have means of adding to your prison fare."

"We do, your honour, and by the same token I have a score of crowns in between the soles of my boots. It does not always succeed, for if your boots happen to be good, the chances are that someone takes a fancy to them. Still, on the whole, that is the best place there is, for they are sure to feel all the lining of your clothes."

"Well, we want to hide some gold, Mike. In another hour we shall have the English within shot of us, and of course fighting is out of the question. Do you think that

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you will have time to hide a dozen gold pieces in each of our boots?"

Mike looked doubtful.

"To do the thing properly, your honour, one should take off the lower sole, take some leather out of the upper one, put some money in, and then sew it up again; but it would take more than an hour to do one pair."

He thought for a moment.

The quickest way would be to get out the inside lining of the sole, then to cut out enough leather for the money to lie in, then to put in the lining again. It would not be soft walking on a twenty-mile march, but I think, if I get the lining in tight, with a few little nails to keep it from dropping out if anyone takes the trouble to turn the boots upside down, I might manage it."

"Well, let us commence at once then, Mike. We have all got riding-boots, and can put them on before we are taken prisoners. Do you take the linings out as you say, and then we will help to cut out some of the leather of the upper sole."

They were quickly at work. Mike cut out enough of the thin lining to admit of a hole being made large enough to hold ten louis in each boot, and he and the two officers then set to work to cut out a sufficient depth of leather for the coins to lie side by side. Half an hour sufficed for this. The coins were put in. Mike had in the meantime obtained a handful of pitch and melted it at the galley fire. This he ran in over the gold, and then replaced the pieces of lining with hot pitch.

"There, your honours," he said, when he had finished; "I call that a neat job, and it would be hard indeed if the spalpeens find that there is anything amiss. And with these heavy boots the extra weight won't betray that there is anything hidden. Don't put them on till the last moment; give

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THE ENGLISH OFFICER RECEIVED THE SWORDS OF THE FRENCH OFFICERS.

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them time to cool, for if any of it oozes out you will stick your stockings so tight to it that you won't get your foot out without laving them behind."

Leaving their high boots in the cabin, the three young men went on deck. The leading vessel of the British fleet was not more than a mile astern, while the French fleet was three miles ahead, having gained more than a mile since the chase began. Mike had been given four louis, which he said he could hide in his mouth. Five minutes later there was a puff of smoke from their pursuer's bow. The ball struck the water close to them.

"Shall I hold on, Colonel?" the captain of the ship asked Colonel Wauchop.

"There is no use in your doing so; that ship will be alongside in an hour, and it might only cause a useless loss of life were we to keep on. If she were alone I should say let her come alongside, and with your crew and our officers and men we might, if we had luck, take her by boarding; but with the whole fleet close behind us it would be madness to think of such a thing, as we have but twelve guns, and those of small weight."

Accordingly the topsails were run down, and the courses brailed up, and the ship lay motionless till the English frigate came up. Signals had been exchanged between the English vessels, and as they came along six of them dropped boats, each with some twenty men in it. While these rowed towards the prize, the fleet pressed on under all canvas in pursuit of the French squadron. The English officer in command of the boats received the swords of the French officers, and the non-commissioned officers were all sent below into the hold. All sail was at once got on to the vessel again, and she followed in the wake of the fleet. The English lieutenant then took the names of the prisoners.

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"You are all Irish," he said seriously. "I am sorry, gentlemen, that this should be so, for I fear that it will go harder with you than if you were French, when, of course, you would be merely prisoners of war."

"We should be prisoners of war now," Colonel Wauchop said; "we are in the service of the King of France, and were but obeying his orders, along with our French comrades."

"I hope they may see it in that light in London," the officer said courteously; "but I doubt whether at the present moment they will take a calm view of the subject. However, I hope they will do so, especially as no shot has been fired by you, and they cannot charge you with resisting capture. At any rate, gentlemen, I will do my best to make you comfortable while you are under my charge. I must ask a few of you to shift your quarters so as to make room for me and the three officers with me; beyond that, you will continue as before, to use the ship as passengers."

When darkness set in the pursuit was discontinued. The French fleet was fully ten miles ahead, and it was evident that there was no chance whatever of overtaking it, while there was a risk of its doubling back during the night and again making its way north. The greater part of the sails of the men-of-war were therefore furled, while the frigates and corvettes made off on either hand to establish themselves as sentries during the night, and to give warning should the French fleet be seen returning. An hour and a half after the pursuit had ceased the *Salisbury* joined the fleet, and the officer in command went on board the admiral's ship to report the number of prisoners taken and the nature of her cargo. The officers had, at his invitation, dined with him and his officers in the cabin. All political topics had been avoided, and no one who had looked in would have supposed that

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the majority of those present were the prisoners of the others."

The Irish temperament quickly shakes off a feeling of depression, and the meal was as lively as it had been during the voyage north. The lieutenant, however, omitted no precaution. A dozen men kept guard over the prisoners below, and as many more with loaded muskets were always stationed on deck. The Irish officers saw that among many of the sailors there was a strong feeling of sympathy with them. The fleet had been largely recruited by impressment, and by the handing over to the naval authorities of numbers of men imprisoned for comparatively slight offences, and, as was natural, these had but small feeling of kindness towards the government who had so seized them; while many shared in the feeling of loyalty towards the house of Stuart, which was still so prevalent among the population.

At daybreak the cruisers all returned. None had seen any signs of the French squadron, and Sir George Byng, leaving the majority of the fleet to maintain watch, sailed with his prize for Harwich.

Here the prisoners were handed over to the military authorities, while the admiral started for London in a post-chaise to carry the news of the failure of the French to effect a landing, and of their return to Dunkirk,—news that was received with exuberant delight by the supporters of Government and the commercial portion of the population, who had been threatened by ruin. The run upon the banks had been unprecedented, and although the House of Commons had relaxed the regulations of the Bank of England, the panic was so great that it could not have kept its doors open another twelve hours. The treatment of the prisoners was now very different from what it had been on board ship. Not only were they confined to prison, but, to their indignation, irons were placed on their

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legs as if they had been common malefactors. The only mitigation allowed to them was that their servants were permitted to attend upon them.

Their clothes had been rigorously searched and their boots taken off, but no suspicions had been entertained that coin had been hidden in those of Desmond and his friends. Two days later an order was received from Government, and the officers were marched up to town ironed as they were, under a strong guard, and were imprisoned at Newgate. Callaghan and the other servants remained in prison at Harwich.

"Things are looking bad, Kennedy," O'Neil said dolefully, for the three officers had, at their own request, been allotted a cell together.

"They don't look very bright, but we must make allowance for the awful fright that, as we hear, has been caused by the expedition. Possibly when they have got over the shock, things may be better."

"I will never forgive them for putting irons on us," O'Sullivan said passionately. "If they had shot us at once it was, I suppose, what we had a right to expect, but to be treated like murderers or ruffians of the worst kind is too bad."

"Well, we were rid of the irons as soon as we got here. No doubt these were only put on to prevent the possibility of any of us escaping. I am sure by their looks that some of our escort would willingly have aided us, only that it was impossible to do so; and, knowing how large a number of persons would sympathize with us, I cannot blame them so very much for taking steps to prevent our escape."

"I never saw such a fellow as you for finding excuses for people," O'Sullivan said almost angrily. "You look at things as calmly as if they concerned other people, and not ourselves."

Kennedy smiled. "If an opinion is to be worth anything,

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O'Sullivan, it must be an impartial one; and it is best to look at the matter calmly, and to form our plans, whatever they may be, as if they were intended to be carried out by other people."

O'Sullivan laughed. "My dear fellow, if you had not gone through those adventures I should have said that you had mistaken your vocation, and were cut out for a philosopher rather than a soldier. However, although your luck did not suffice to save the *Salisbury* from capture, we must still hope that it has not altogether deserted you; and anyhow, I am convinced that if it be possible for anyone to effect an escape from this dismal place, you are the man."

Newgate in those days stood across the street, and constituted one of the entrances to the city. Its predecessor had been burnt in the great fire of 1666, and the new one was at this time less than forty years old, and though close and badly ventilated, had not yet arrived at the stage of dirt and foulness which afterwards brought about the death of numbers of prisoners confined there, and in 1750 occasioned an outbreak of jail-fever which not only swept away a large proportion of the prisoners, but infected the court of the Old Bailey close to it, causing the death of the lord mayor, several aldermen, a judge, many of the counsel and jurymen, and of the public present at the trials. The outward appearance of the building was handsome, but the cells were for the most part small and ill-ventilated.

"This place is disgraceful," O'Neil said; "there is barely room for our three pallets. The air is close and unwholesome now, but in the heat of summer it must be awful. If their food is as vile as their lodging, the look-out is bad indeed."

"I fancy the cells in the French jails are no better," O'Sullivan said. "No doubt in the state prisons high-born prisoners are made fairly comfortable, but the ordinary prisoners

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and malefactors, I have been told, suffer horribly. Thank goodness I have never entered one; but even the barrack cells can scarcely be called inviting."

"You are learning philosophy from Kennedy," O'Neil said with a laugh.

"I don't know as I shall feel philosophic if we are served with nothing but bread and water. However, the turnkey told us that until we have been tried and condemned we are at liberty to get our food from outside—certainly a mockery in most cases, considering that we all were relieved of any money found upon us when we arrived in Harwich. It is a comfort that we are, as he said, to take our meals together, and the money we have in our boots will alleviate our lot for some time. Probably it will last a good deal longer than we are likely to be here."

When they joined their companions in the room in which they were to dine, all were astonished at seeing an excellent dinner on the table with eight bottles of wine.

"Is this the way they treat prisoners here?" Colonel Wauchop asked one of the jailers, of whom six remained present.

The man smiled. "No, indeed; it has been sent in from a tavern outside, and with a message that a like meal will be provided as long as you are here. One of us was sent across to inquire as to the person who had given the order. The landlord said that he was a stranger to him, but that he had paid him a fortnight in advance, and would call in and renew the order at the end of that time."

"Well, gentlemen," the colonel said, "before we begin to eat we will drink the health of our unknown benefactor. Not only is the gift a generous and expensive one, but it cannot be without danger to the donor, for none but a strong adherent of King James would have thought of thus relieving our necessities."

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It was plain that the authorities suspected that some message might have been sent in to the prisoners concealed in the viands. The bread had been cut up into small squares, the crust had been lifted from two pasties, the meat had evidently been carefully searched; and the turnkeys placed themselves round the table so that they could narrowly watch every one of the prisoners as they ate, and notice any movement that would seem to indicate that they had come across some pellet of paper or other substance.

Every day the servants at the tavern brought in similar fare, and this continued as long as the prisoners were in the jail; and it was a matter of deep regret to all that they were never able to discover the name of the person to whom they were so much indebted.

CHAPTER IX

AN ESCAPE FROM NEWGATE

AFTER being allowed to remain an hour at the table, the prisoners were again marched off to their cells.

"I wish we had Mike with us," Desmond said, as he and his comrades discussed the possibility of escape. "He is a shrewd fellow, and would probably be allowed greater freedom in moving about the prison than we are; but I was sure that we should see no more of him after we left Harwich. Of course the first question is, are we to try bribery, or to work our way out of this cell?"

"I think that it would be dangerous to try bribery," O'Sullivan remarked. "Our turnkey is a sour-faced rascal. I am convinced that if we were to try to bribe him he would denounce us at once. Not from any principle, you know, but be-

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cause he would think that it would pay him better to do so, and so obtain promotion and reward, rather than to accept our money and run the risk of being detected and hanged."

"I don't blame him," O'Neil said. "He is, as you say, a sour-looking rascal, but I don't think that he is a fool, and none but a fool would run that risk for the sake of the money that we could give him, for in any case we should have to retain a portion of our store in order to obtain disguises and maintain ourselves till we could find means of crossing the channel."

"Then let us put that idea altogether aside, O'Neil, and give our whole attention to the manner in which we are to ecape."

"The manner in which we are to try to make our escape!" O'Neil repeated with a laugh.

"Well, put it that way if you like. Now in the first place there is the window, in the second the door, and lastly the walls and floor."

"The door would withstand a battering-ram," O'Sullivan said. "I noticed as I went out that it was solid oak some four inches thick, with two bolts as well as the lock, and, moreover, if we could get through it we should be no nearer escaping than we are at present. What with the corridors and passages, and the turnkeys and the outer gate, that course seems to me impossible. Let us come to the second point, the window."

They looked up at it. The sill was fully six feet from the ground. The window was a little over a foot wide, with a heavy bar running down the centre, and cross bars.

"The first point is to see where it looks out on," Desmond said. "I will stand against the wall, and as you are the lighter of the two, O'Neil, you can stand on my shoulder and have a good look out and tell us what you see. Give him your hand, O'Sullivan. Put your foot on that, O'Neil, and then step on my shoulder."

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O'Neil was soon in his place. "You need not hold me," he said; "the wall is very thick, the bars are placed in the middle, and there is just room for me to take a seat on the edge, then I can see things at my ease."

He sat looking out for a minute or two before he spoke.

"Well, what can you see?" O'Sullivan asked impatiently.

"This room is on the outer side of the prison," he said. "I noticed as we came in that it was built along on both sides of the gate, and no doubt this side stands on the city wall."

"Then what do you see?"

"I see the ground sloping steeply down to a stream that runs along the bottom of it. There are a good many small houses scattered about on the slope and along by the stream. Over to the left there is a stone bridge across it; near this is a large building that looks like another prison, and a market-place with stalls in it; houses stand thickly on either side of the road, and beyond the bridge the opposite side of the slope is covered with them. Among these are some large buildings. If we were once out there would not be much chance of our being detected if we had something to put over our uniforms; but of course they would betray us to the first man we met."

"Yes, of course," O'Sullivan said; "but we might possibly obtain plain clothes at one of those small houses you speak of, though that would be risky."

"We might leave our coatees behind us and go only in our shirts and breeches, and give out that we had been attacked and robbed of our money and coats by footpads," Desmond said.

"That is a good idea," O'Neil agreed. "Yes, that might do, especially as after dark they would not be likely to notice that our breeches were of a French cut."

"But it seems to me that we are beginning at the wrong

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end of the business. It is of no use discussing what we are to do when we escape till we have settled upon the manner in which we are to get out. Let us talk over that first. Are the bars firmly in, O'Neil?"

O'Neil tried with all his strength to shake them.

"They are as firm as the walls," he said; "there is no getting them out unless we have tools to cut away all the stonework round them."

"I suppose there is no chance of cutting through them?" O'Sullivan asked.

"There is not," O'Neil said. "We have not got such a thing as a knife about us. If we had, we could never saw through those thick bars; it would take a year of Sundays."

"You are rather a Job's comforter. Now, do you get down and let Kennedy and myself have a chance of a breath of fresh air, to say nothing of the view."

A few minutes satisfied O'Sullivan, but Desmond, when he took his place, sat there considerably longer, while the other two, throwing themselves on their pallets, chatted gaily about Paris and their friends there.

"Well, what conclusions do you arrive at?" they asked when he leapt down from his seat.

"They are not very cheering," he replied, "and I recognize fully that we cannot possibly make our escape without aid from without."

"That is the same as to say that we cannot make our escape at all."

"Not exactly. We have found one unknown friend who supplied us with our dinners; there is no absolute reason why we should not find one who would supply us with means of escape. There must be a great number of people who sympathize with us, and whose hearts are with King James. I have seen several men come from the market, stand and look

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up at this prison, and then walk off slowly as if they were filled with pity for us. Now I propose that one of us shall always be at the window."

"Oh, that is too much," O'Sullivan said. "That ledge is so narrow that I could hardly sit there even holding on by the bars; and as to stopping there half an hour, I would almost as soon be on the rack."

"There will be no occasion for that," Desmond said. "We can easily move one of the pallets under it, pile the other straw beds upon it, and, standing on these, we could look out comfortably, for our shoulders would be well above the ledge."

"I don't see that we should be nearer to it then, Kennedy."

"We should have gained this much, that directly we saw any person looking up with a sympathizing air, especially if of a class who could afford to do what is necessary for us, we could wave our hands and attract his attention. If disposed to help us he might give some sign; if not, no harm would be done. We might, too, tie a handkerchief to the bars, which in itself might be taken for an indication that there are followers of the Stuarts here."

"But supposing all this turned out as you suggest it might, how could even the best-disposed friend do anything to help us?"

"That is for after-consideration; let us first find a friend, and we shall find a way to open communication with him. we have no paper, but we could write the message on a piece of linen and drop it down. As far as we can see from here, there is nothing to prevent anyone coming up to the foot of the wall below us."

For the next four days nothing whatever happened. They could see that the white handkerchief at the bars attracted some attention, for people stopped and looked up at it, but

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continued their way without making any gesture that would seem to show that they interested themselves in any way in the matter.

On the fourth day Desmond, who was at the window, said in a tone of excitement, "There is a man down there who, after looking fixedly in this direction, is making his way towards us. He does not come straight, but moves about among the houses; but he continues to approach. I can't make out his face yet, but there is something about him that reminds me of Mike, though how he could be here when we left him in the prison at Harwich is more than I can say."

O'Neil and O'Sullivan in turn looked through the window. Not being so much accustomed as he was to Mike's figure and walk, they could not recognize in the man, in the dress of a country peasant, the well-set-up soldier who attended on Desmond. Both admitted, however, that in point of figure it might well be the man.

"If it is," Desmond said, "all our difficulties are at an end, and I will wager that we shall be free in three or four days. Now, how are we to communicate with him?"

"I have a piece of paper in my pocket. It is only an old bill, and they threw it down contemptuously when they searched me," O'Neil said. "I picked it up again. I hardly know why, except perhaps that the idea occurred to me that some day I might get a chance of paying it. But as we have no ink, nor pen, nor charcoal, I don't see how it can benefit us."

He drew the bill from the pocket of his coatee. Desmond took it, and stood looking at it in silence for a minute. Then an idea occurred to him.

"I have it!" he exclaimed presently. "O'Neil, see if you can get a piece of this gold wire off my facings. I want it

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five or six inches long, so that when it is doubled up and twisted together so as to be an inch long, it will be stiff enough for our purpose."

Somewhat puzzled, O'Neil did as he was requested. Desmond straightened out the fine wire wrapped round the centre thread, doubled, and again doubled it, and finally twisting it together, reduced it to the length of about an inch and the thickness of a pin. The others looked on, wondering what was his intention. He held the paper out before him, and began pricking small holes through it close together. He continued to work for some time, and then held it up to the light. The others understood the nature of his work, and they could now read:

Come ten to-night under window. Bring long thin string. Whistle. We will lower thread. Tie end of string to it. Will give further instruction.

KENNEDY.

He tore off the portion of the bill on which the message was written, twisted off two of the buttons of his coatee, folded them in the paper, and took his place at the window again. The man who had been watching was standing some sixty feet from the foot of the wall. His back was towards them. Presently he turned, carelessly looked up at the window, and then, as if undecided what to do, took off his cap and scratched his head.

"It is Mike sure enough," Desmond exclaimed. And thrusting his hand through the bars, waved it for a moment. Then taking the little packet, he dropped it. Mike put on his hat again, turned round, then looked cautiously to see that no one was noticing him, and strolled in an aimless and leisurely way towards the wall. Desmond could no longer see him, but felt sure that he would find the missive. Presently

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he came in sight again, walking quietly away. He did not look round; but when nearly at the bottom of the hill turned, lifted one hand, and disappeared behind some houses.

"He can't read," Desmond said, "but I have no doubt he will get someone to do it for him."

A vigilant watch was kept up, but nothing was seen of Mike till late in the afternoon, when he emerged into one of the open spaces. They had now taken the handkerchief down from the window, and directly they saw him Desmond waved it, showing that they were watching him. He threw up his arm, turned, and disappeared again.

"He has made out my message," Desmond said. "We may expect him here at ten o'clock."

While he had been watching, his two comrades had, under his instructions, been unraveling a portion of one of their blankets. When enough thread had been obtained the strands were tied together and doubled, and Desmond had little doubt that it was sufficiently strong to draw up the string Mike would bring with him. He now took another portion of the bill, and pricked upon it the words:

At nine to-morrow night. Bring, if possible, fine steel saw, two files, and a small bottle of oil. Fasten these to string we will lower with further instructions.

He then opened his coatee, took out some of the white wool with which it was padded, formed this into a loose ball in the centre of which the note was fastened, and all being in readiness, waited patiently until, just as the city clock struck ten, they heard a low whistle. The ball had already been attached to the end of the thread, and Desmond at once lowered it down. Presently they heard another whistle, and hauling at it again they found that the ball had gone, and attached to the end of the thread was a very light silken cord.

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which they drew in. There was another low whistle, and all was silent.

"So far, so good," Desmond said. "We are fairly on our way to liberty. How long do you suppose it will take us to cut through these bars?"

"It would take us a long while to file through them all," O'Neil said, "but with a fine steel saw I should think that a couple of nights' work should do it. But of course that is mere guesswork, for I have not the least idea how fast even the best saw could cut through iron."

"Well, there is no particular hurry, for we know that no day has been fixed yet for our trial. So whether it is one night or six, it does not matter much."

On the following evening at nine o'clock the whistle was heard, and another ball lowered down at the end of the string. The instructions this time were:

When we are all ready we will show a handkerchief at window. Bring with you at nine that evening rope strong enough to bear us, and have disguises for the three ready for us at foot of wall. Herewith are ten louis to purchase three disguises.

The cord brought up a small packet which contained two very fine small steel saws, two files, and the oil. They did not lose a moment in setting to work, and, oiling the saws, one began to cut through the central bar just above the point where the lowest cross bars went through it, as they determined to leave these to fasten the rope to. There was not room for two of them to work together, and they agreed to take it by turns, changing every quarter of an hour. To their great satisfaction they found that the saw did its work much more quickly than they had expected, and by the time

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each had a turn the bar was cut through; and by morning the side bars had also all been cut. They did not attempt to cut the main bar higher up, as, had they done so, it would have been difficult to keep the portion cut out in its place. When it was light they filled up all the cuts with bread, which they had managed to secrete in the palms of their hands at dinner. This they kneaded into a sort of putty, rolled it in the dust of the floor until black, and then squeezed it into the interstices.

"There is no fear of their noticing it," O'Neil said when they had finished. "I cannot see the cuts myself from the floor, though I know where they are, and unless they were to climb up there and examine the place very closely they would not see anything wrong."

"Shall we hang out the flag to-day, Kennedy?"

"I think we had better wait till to-morrow. He will be hardly expecting to see it to-day, and may not be ready with the rope and disguises."

The next morning the signal was hung out. They saw nothing of Mike, but as he would be able to make out the handkerchief from a considerable distance they had no doubt whatever that he had observed it but thought it prudent not to show himself near the prison again. As soon as it was dark they recommenced work, and had cut through the main bar and cautiously lowered the grating to the ground before the clock struck nine. Then on hearing Mike's signal, they lowered the cord, and soon brought up a rope which, although small, was more than strong enough to support them.

"We had better tie some knots in it," Desmond said. "They will help us to avoid sliding down too rapidly. If it was a thick rope I think we could manage without them, but not being sailors I do not think that we could grasp this tightly enough."

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"How close shall we put them, Kennedy."

"About two feet apart, then we can come down hand over hand, helping our arms by twisting our legs round it. Now," he went on, when they had finished the knots, "who will go down first?"

"You had better do so," O'Sullivan said. "You are the lightest of us, and, I fancy, the strongest too."

"Very well. I don't think that it will make any difference, for the rope is strong enough to hold the three of us together. However, here goes. We may as well leave our coatees behind us; they might get us into difficulties if we took them."

So saying, he took off his coat, fastened the end of the rope securely to the bars that had been left for the purpose, and, holding it firmly, made his way through the opening and swung himself over. With his muscles strengthened by military exercises and sword practice, he found it easier work than he had expected. The depth was some sixty feet, and in a couple of minutes his feet touched the ground. Mike had been hanging on by the rope to steady it, and as Desmond descended he seized him by the hand and shook it enthusiastically, murmuring brokenly, "My dear master, thank God that you are free!"

"Thanks to you also, my dear fellow. Now, hold on again. My friends O'Neil and O'Sullivan shared my cell with me, and are following me."

He added his weight to that of Mike, and it was not long before O'Neil came down; but not so quietly as Desmond had done, for his strength had failed him, and the rope had slipped rapidly through his fingers, and Mike and Desmond narrowly escaped being knocked down by the suddenness with which the descent was made. He stood for a minute wringing his hand, and swearing in an undertone in English, Irish, and French.

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"By the powers," he said, "it has taken the skin off the inside of my hands entirely! A red-hot poker could not have done it more nately! Mike, you rascal, what are you laughing at? I have a mind to break your bones before thanking you."

O'Sullivan succeeded better, but was completely exhausted when he joined his friends.

"Now, Mike, where are the disguises?"

"Here they are, your honour. They are just like my own. Loose coats, rough breeches, white stockings, and buckled shoes, and soft hats with wide brims. I thought that you would pass better like that than in any other way, for if you were dressed up as citizens your tongues might betray you, for somehow they don't speak English as we do, and whenever I open my mouth they discover that I am an Irishman."

Desmond laughed. "There would be no difficulty about that. Now, let us put on our disguises at once and be off. Sometimes the turnkeys take it into their heads to look in during the night, and we had to keep one on watch while we were at work, and take to our beds when we heard a footstep approaching. I see you have brought shoes; I forgot to mention them. Our jack-boots would have attracted attention, so we have left them behind us, after getting our stores of money from their hiding-places."

They were soon dressed.

"What are we supposed to be, Mike?"

"You are sedan-chair men, sir. Most of the chairs are carried by Irishmen, who seem to be stronger in the leg than these London folk. You will have to cut your hair short, and then you will pass without observation."

"Where are you taking us to?" Desmond asked, as they descended the hill.

"I have got a lodging in a house out in the fields. I said

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that I was an Irishman who had come to London in search of employment, and that I expected three friends to join me, and that we intended to hire chairs and carry the gentry about, for here they seem too lazy to walk, and every one is carried, though it is small blame to them, for dirtier streets I never saw. They are just full of holes where you go in up to the knee in mud and filth of all kinds. Faith there are parts of Paris which we can't say much for, but the worst of them are better than any here, except just the street they call Cheapside, which goes on past St. Paul's, and along the Strand to Westminster."

"What have you brought these sticks for, Mike?" for he had handed to each a heavy bludgeon.

"Sure your honour, 'tis not safe to be in the streets after nightfall. It is like that part of Paris where no dacent man could walk without being assaulted by thieves and cut-throats. Dressed as we are, it is not likely anyone would interfere with us in the hope of finding money on us, but they are not particular at all, at all, and a party of these rascals might try to roll us in the mire just for fun. So it is as well to be prepared."

However, they met with no interruption, passed out through Holborn Bars, and soon arrived at the house where Mike had taken a lodging. They were not sorry, however, that they were armed, for several times they heard outbursts of drunken shouting and the sound of frays. Mike had hired two rooms. In one of these were three straw beds for the officers; he himself slept on a blanket on the floor of the other room, which served as kitchen and sitting-room. Now for the first time they were able to talk freely.

"Mike, we have not said much to you yet," Desmond began, "but I and these gentlemen are fully conscious that you have saved us from death, for we hear that Government is deter-

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mined to push matters to the extremity, and to have all the officers captured condemned to be hanged."

"Bad cess to them!" Mike exclaimed indignantly. "If I had two or three of them it's mighty little they would talk of execution after I and me stick had had a few minutes' converse with them. As to the getting you out, I assure you, your honour, there is little I have done except to carry out your orders. When I first saw the prison and the little white flag flying from the window, I said to myself that, barring wings, there was no way of getting to you; and it was only when I got your first letter that I saw it might be managed. Faith, that letter bothered me entirely. I took it to the woman down-stairs and asked her to read it for me, saying that I had picked it up in the street and wondered what it was about. She was no great scholar, but she made out that it was writ in a foreign language, and seemed to her to be a bit of an old bill. When I took it up to my room I looked at it every way. I knew, of course, that it was a message somehow, but devil a bit could I see where it came in.

"I fingered it for an hour, looking at it in every way, and then I saw that there were some small holes pricked. Well, I could not ask the woman what they meant, as I had told her I picked it up; so I went across to an Irishman, whose acquaintance I had made the day before, and who had recommended me, if I wanted work, to hire one of these chairs and get a comrade to help me carry it. I could see that he was a man who had seen better days. I expect he had come over in the time of the troubles, and had been forced to earn his living as he could; so I went to him.

"'I have got a message,' I said, 'pricked on a piece of paper. I picked it up, and am curious-like to know what it is about.'

"So he held it up to the light and read out your message.

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"'I think,' says he, 'it is some colleen who has made an appointment with her lover. Maybe she has been shut up by her father, and thought it the best way to send him a message.'

"'That is it, no doubt,' says I; 'and it is plain that it never came to his hand.'

"The next day I went to him with the second letter.

"'It's lying you have been to me,' he said. 'It is some plot you are concerned in.'

"'Well,' says I, 'you are not far wrong. I have some friends who have suffered for the Stuarts, and who have been laid by the leg, and it's myself who is trying to get them out of the hands of their persecutors.'

"'In that case I am with you,' he said, 'for I have suffered for the cause myself; and if you want assistance you can depend upon me.'

"'Thank you kindly,' says I. 'Just at present it is a one-man job, but maybe, if I get them out, you will be able to give us some advice as to how we had best manage.' So that is how it stands, your honour."

"And now tell us how you got away, Mike; you may guess how surprised we were when we first made you out, believing that you were safe under lock and key at Harwich."

'The matter was easy enough," Mike said. "It took me two or three days to get to understand the position of the place, with water all round it except on one side; and it was plain that if I were to start running it is little chance I should have if I did not hit upon the right road. Luckily they were mounting some cannon the day after you were taken away. We were ordered to go out and lend a hand, so it was not long before I learnt enough to know which road I ought to take. I was always a good runner, your honour, and many a prize have I carried off at fairs in the old country before

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troubles began. So it seemed to me that if I could have anything of a start I ought to be able to get off. There was nearly half a mile betwixt the town and the place where the narrow ground at whose end it stood widened out into the country. If I could only hold my own as far as that, I could take to the woods and lanes and save myself.

"A guard of soldiers with muskets and bayonets went out with us, and at the end of the second day I managed to slip off and hide behind a pile of cannon-balls. The rest assembled at a spot about fifty yards away, to be counted before they marched to prison again. As soon as the others had got there, and the guards had gathered round, I went off as hard as I could tear. And a good start I should have got if it hadn't been that a sentry on a fort close by, fired his piece at me; still I had a good hundred yards' start. The guards set to to run after me, and when they got in sight of me fired their guns; but they were flurried, and the bullets flew past without one of them touching me. Then I felt pretty safe; if they stopped to load their muskets I should get clean away; if, as I expected, they would not stop for that, they would not have a chance with me, carrying their muskets and cartridge-boxes and belts. I had taken off my coatee and boots while I was waiting for the start, and went up the hill like a deer. I did not look round till I got to the top; then I found that I had gained a hundred yards of them. I doubled down a lane at once, and then struck through some orchards, and ran without stopping maybe a couple of miles.

"I never heard any more of the soldiers, and knew that for the present I was safe, though maybe they would send some dragoons to scour the country when the news came in. I went on at a jog-trot till it was quite dark; then I sat down to think what I should do next. I had got my four louis with me for they hadn't found them when they searched me. The

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first thing was to get some duds, and I walked along till I saw a light in a cottage, which I entered. There were two women there. I told them at once that I wanted clothes, and was ready to pay for them; but that if they would not give them to me for money, I should take them without paying. Though I could see that they doubted the payment, and regarded me as a robber, they brought out the clothes, which belonged, one of the women said, to her husband. I took what I wanted.

"'Now,' I said, 'how much shall I pay you for these?"

"They were still terribly frightened, and said that I was welcome. However, I put one of my louis down on the table. This was certainly more than the clothes ever cost, so I said:

"'Here is a gold piece, but I want a shilling in change to buy food with.'

"At first they evidently hardly thought that I was in earnest; then at last, when they found that I really intended to give the money, they brightened up, and not only gave me a shilling in change, but offered me some bread and cheese, which I was glad enough to take. Then I put the clothes on over my own, not wishing to lave anything behind that would show searchers that it was I who had been there. I told the woman that the coin was a French one, but that it was worth about the same as an English guinea. I advised them to put it away for the present, and not to try and change it for a few weeks, as enquiries might be made as to how they obtained it.

"I had no difficulty on my way up to London. I avoided the main road till I got to Colchester, and after that walked boldly on, having money to pay for victuals. When I got to town I changed another of my louis at a money-changer's. He asked me where I had got it, and when I said that it was no business of his, but that it had been paid me by a French

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Huguenot gentleman who had lately arrived, and for whom I had been doing some work, and as there are many of these Huguenots in London, he was satisfied, and changed it for me. I then fell across the Irish porter I told you of. He told me whereabouts I could get lodgings, and advised me to apply to one of the men who let out a number of sedan-chairs, to hire one out to me by the week. Well, your honour, once I had taken the lodging, I thought no more of the chair, but went about the business for which I had come to London. I had not been an hour in the town before I made the acquaintance of half a dozen at least of my countrymen, and found out which was the prison in which you were kept. At first I thought of going there and giving myself up on condition that I might be employed as your servant. Then I thought, perhaps they would not keep their word to me, but would send me back to Harwich; and then the thought struck me that I might some way or other get your honours out of prison.

"When I first saw the place it seemed to me that it was impossible. The place was mighty strong, the windows all barred, and I had no means of finding out where you were lodged. I spent a whole day in prowling round and round the jail, but sorra an idea came into my thick head though I bate it wid my fists till it was sore, for, says I to myself, there is no lock so strong but it can be picked if you do but know the right way. It was the second day when I espied a little bit of white stuff at one of the windows. It might be a signal or it might not, and even if it was there was no reason why it should be yours, except that, I said to myself, Mr. Kennedy is not the boy to sit quietly in prison if he can see any possible way of slipping out of it. His head is crammed full of ideas; so I will walk near and investigate the matter. As I came close I could make out that there was someone behind the

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bars, but I could not see who it was. Of course I did not come straight to the spot, but went about promiscuously.

"For anythoing I could tell there might be someone in the towers watching me. Then I saw a hand drop a little white parcel, and I found it without much trouble and went off with it. It was as much as I could do to keep myself from running like a madman, for I felt somehow sure that it was you who had dropped it, but of course it was not until I got it read for me that I was certain. After that, your honour, it was all easy enough. You told me what to do and I did it. There was a little difficulty about the saw, but I got it through one of the chair-men, who told me, when I asked him, that he had the acquaintance of some cracksmen—more shame to him—and that he could get such a thing as I wanted through them. I was not surprised, for I had already heard that many of the chair-men worked in connection with the bad characters, letting them know which way they were coming with people from an entertainment, and carrying them down lanes where there was little chance of the watch interfering. It went against the grain to have dealings with such a man, for I was born of honest people, but if the ould gentleman himself had offered me a couple of saws, and I knew that I would have to give him a thousand years extra of purgatory, I would have closed with the bargain. Those two saws cost me another louis, and cheap enough too. After that it was all plain sailing, and the money you lowered to me was much more than sufficient for all the other things. And now, what is your honour going to do next?"

"That is more than I can tell you, Mike. We must talk it over."

This was a matter that they had already discussed in their cell after they had once made their preparations for flight. Closely watched as they were when with the other officers, it

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would have been impossible to have communicated their plans to them; but even if they could have done so they could see no possible way in which the others could share in their escape. Doubtless the doors of their cells were also strong and heavy, and could all these difficulties have been overcome there would have been passages, corridors, and staircases to traverse, with the certainty of meeting with some of the night watchmen who patrolled them, and they would finally have had to force the door into their cell. They were therefore reluctantly obliged to abandon the hope of liberating their friends, and decided that, once away, they must endeavour to cross to France without delay. The king would doubtless have been before now informed by his agents in London of the determination of the English Government to bring all the prisoners to execution, but nevertheless it would be their duty to obtain an audience and implore him to take steps to save them. They would, therefore, on their arrival in Paris, at once see General Hamilton and other officers of rank, and beg them to accompany them to Versailles to act as spokesmen, and to influence the king in their favour.

CHAPTER X

KIDNAPPING A MINISTER

IN spite of the war between the countries communications were frequent. Smuggling boats brought over, with their cargoes of wine and brandy, Huguenot fugitives, and by the same means secret agents carried back news of events in Paris, to the Government. Having decided upon making for the coast without delay, Desmond and his friends next discussed the port to which they had best travel and which seemed to offer the fairest opportunities. They agreed that Wey-

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mouth seemed to be most advantageous, as it was from there that the communications with Brittany were chiefly maintained. At the same time it was evident that considerable difficulty would be experienced in discovering the men engaged in such traffic and in making an arrangement with them, and it was all-important that no time should be lost, for there was no saying when the trial might come on.

"If we could but get hold of Godolphin," Desmond said next morning, "we might get an order from him to embark in one of the boats that carry his agents."

The others laughed. "Yes; and if you could get hold of Anne you might persuade her to sign an order for the release of our comrades."

Desmond did not answer, but sat thinking for a few minutes. "It is not so impossible as you seem to imagine," he said at last. "Doubtless, like everyone else, he goes in a sedan-chair to the meeting of the council, and returns in the same manner. There are two ways in which we could manage the matter. Of course he has his own chair, with his chair-men in livery. We might either make these men drunk and assume their dress, or attack them suddenly on the way; then we should of course gag and bind them, and carry him here or to some other place that we might decide upon, and force him to give us an order for the boatmen to take us across the channel at once. Of course we should have horses in readiness, and ride for the coast. We should have a twelve hours' start, for it would be that time before our landlady came in as usual with our breakfast, when Godolphin would, of course, be released."

The two officers looked at each other astounded at the audacity of the scheme that Desmond had quietly propounded. O'Sullivan was the first to speak. "Are you really in earnest, Kennedy?"

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"Quite in earnest. I do not see why it should not be done."

"Well, you are certainly the coolest hand I ever came across," O'Neil said; "you are proposing to seize the first minister in England as if it were merely an affair of carrying off a pretty girl quite willing to be captured. The idea seems monstrous, and yet, as you put it, I do not see why it might not succeed."

"I hardly think that it could fail," Desmond said quietly. "De Tulle managed to carry off the Baron de Pointdexter's daughter from the court of Versailles, and did so without any hitch or difficulty; surely three Irishmen could arrange an affair of this sort as well as a French vicomte."

"If it is to be done," O'Sullivan said, "I think the second plan is best. You might fail in making the chair-men drunk, or at any rate sufficiently drunk to allow them to be despoiled of their clothes, whereas you could have no difficulty in silencing a couple of chair-men by a sudden attack—a sharp rap on the head with these bludgeons ought to settle that affair."

"Quite so," Desmond agreed; "and while Mike and one of us were so employed, the other two might throw open the doors of the chair and gag Godolphin before he was conscious of what was happening."

"It all seems simple enough, Kennedy, and if it were a citizen one would think nothing of the undertaking; but it is nothing short of high treason for us thus to make free with the person of the chief minister of England."

"That is a matter that does not concern me at all, O'Neil; if we were captured now, we should be executed for high treason with the others, and if we carried off Anne herself they could not do much more to us. Now, it seems to me that if you are both agreed that we should carry out the plan, the

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first thing to be done is to arrange for horses, or, better still, for a light cart to carry the four of us. I should think that Mike would, among his acquaintances, be able to hear of a man with a couple of fast horses and such a cart as we require, who would agree to drive us to the coast, arranging a change of horses on the way. He could offer ten louis, which would be a sum that a man of that kind would be well satisfied with."

"I will see to that, your honour; I have no doubt that I can find such a man without difficulty. When would you want him?"

"To-night, certainly, with the arrangement that if we do not come to the appointed spot we shall be there to-morrow night. Recollect ten louis is all we can afford, but if he wants any more he must have it.

"Well, we will leave that to you." Then he went on to the others: "We had better go down to St. James's. Mike can go out and buy us three shock-wigs, with which we can cover our hair and look our parts better. We had better separate when we get there, and watch the entrances to the palace, gazing about like rustics; then we can get into a conversation with any servant that we see, and try and find out from which door members of the council usually issue, and about what hour. We could succeed without that, because we should notice the chairs waiting for them. Still, it is as well that we should get all the information we can. There will be, doubtless, personages leaving who have been with the Princess Anne; they might go out by another entrance, and therefore we should miss our man."

"You will have more than the two chair-men to deal with, your honour, for there are sure to be two link-men with the chair."

"Well, it will be as easy to dispose of four men as of two, Mike."

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"Every bit, your honour, and the more of them the more divarsion."

An hour later they set out, now so well disguised that no one would have dreamt that the three Irishmen were officers in a French regiment, and before noon Desmond succeeded in obtaining from a scullion employed in the palace the particulars that he required. On saying that he had but just come to London and wanted to get a sight of the great people, the present of a shilling sufficed to extract the information from the boy; and Desmond then rejoined his companions, and they at once returned to their lodgings, where they found Mike awaiting them.

"I have managed it, your honour, but it will cost twelve louis. I went to the man from whom I got the saws, and he said at once that the affair could be managed easily, and sure enough he took me to the shop of a man who, he said, sometimes acted with cracksmen. The fellow was sharp enough to see at once that it was something special that we wanted the horses for, but after some bargaining he agreed to do it for twelve gold pieces, and, if necessary, to get a change of horses twice on the road. He will be ready with his cart at twelve o'clock a hundred yards or so outside the last houses on the south side of the Old Kent Road. I could not tell him which port you would go to, but he said from there he could go to Dover, or turn off so as to make for Southampton or Weymouth. It is to be twelve pounds if it is to Dover or Southampton; fifteen pounds if it is to Weymouth."

"That is satisfactory," Desmond said. "Now we have nothing else to do till ten o'clock to-night, when, as the boy said the council generally ends, though we will be there an hour earlier in case they should leave before. Now I think we had better find out where Godolphin's house is, and fix upon the best spot for the attack, and how we shall each station ourselves."

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