CORNET OF HORSE

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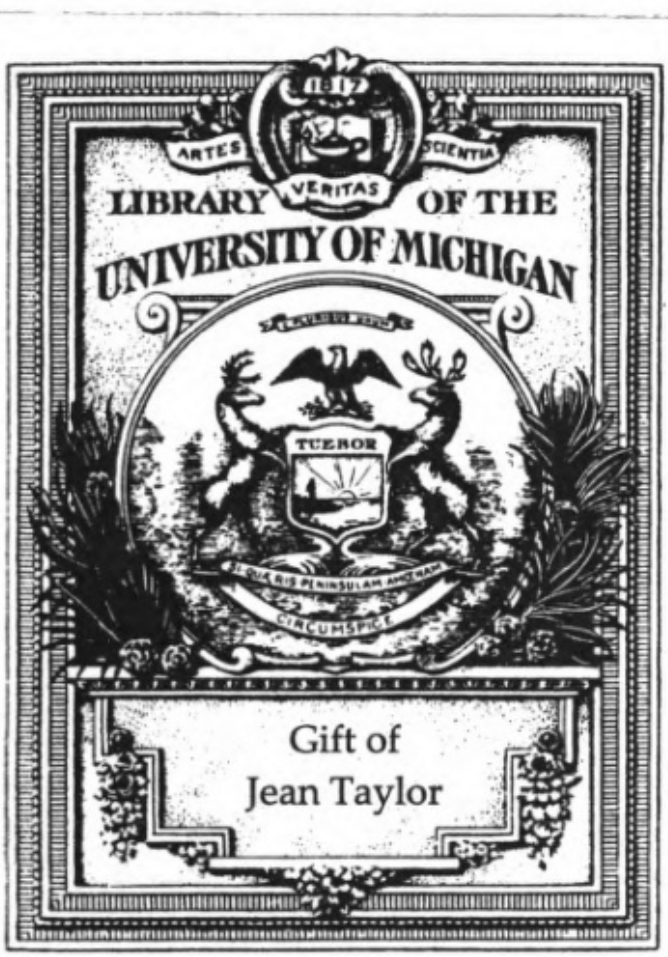

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HE DASHED THE TORCH IN SIR RICHARD'S FACE. *Cornet of Horse,*

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THE CORNET OF HORSE

A TALE OF MARLBOROUGH'S WARS

BY

G. A. HENTY

AUTHOR OF "THE YOUNG BUGLERS," "THE YOUNG FRANC-TIREURS," "LION OF THE NORTH," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK

THE MERSHON COMPANY

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THE CORNET OF HORSE.

CHAPTER I.

WINDTHORPE CHACE.

"ONE, two, three, four, one, two, three, four—turn to your lady; one, two, three, four—now a deep reverence. Now you take her hand; no, not her whole hand—the tips of her fingers; now you lead her to her seat; now a deep bow, so. That will do. You are improving, but you must be more light, more graceful, more courtly in your air; still, you will do. Now run away, Mignon, to the garden; you have madam's permission to gather fruit. Now, M. Rupert, we will take our lesson in fencing."

The above speech was in the French language, and the speaker was a tall, slightly-built man, of about fifty years of age. The scene was a long low room, in a mansion situated some two miles from Derby. The month was January, 1702, and King William the Third sat upon the throne. In the room, in addition to the dancing-master, were the lad he was teaching, an active, healthy-looking boy between fifteen and sixteen, his partner, a bright-faced French girl of some twelve years of age, and an old man, nearer eighty than seventy, but still erect and active, who sat in a large arm-chair, looking on. By the alacrity with which the lad went to

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an *armoire* and took out the foils, and steel caps with visors which served as fencing masks, it was clear that he preferred the fencing-lesson to dancing. He threw off his coat, buttoned a padded guard across his chest, and handing a foil to his instructor, took his place before him.

"Now let us practise that thrust in tierce after the feint and disengage. You were not quite so close as you might have been, yesterday. Ha! ha! that is better. I think that monsieur your grandfather has been giving you a lesson, and poaching on my manor. Is it not so?"

"Yes," said the old man, "I gave him ten minutes yesterday evening; but I must give it up, my sword begins to fail me, and your pupil gets more skilful, and stronger in the wrist, every day. In the days when I was at St. Germains with the king, when the cropheads lorded it here, I could hold my own with the best of your young blades. But even allowing fully for the stiffness of age, I think I can still gauge the strength of an opponent, and I think the boy promises to be of *première* force."

"It is as you say, monsieur le colonel. My pupil is born to be a fencer; he learns it with all his heart; he has had two good teachers for three years; he has worked with all his energy at it; and he has one of those supple strong wrists that seem made for the sword. He presses me hard. Now, Monsieur Rupert, open play, and do your best."

Then began a struggle which would have done credit to any fencing-school in Europe. Rupert Holliday was as active as a cat, and was ever on the move, constantly shifting his ground, advancing and retreating with astonishing lightness and activity. At first he was too

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eager, and his instructor touched him twice over his guard. Then, rendered cautious, he fought more carefully, although with no less quickness than before; and for some minutes there was no advantage on either side, the master's long reach and calm steady play baffling every effort of his assailant. At last, with a quick turn of the wrist, he sent Rupert's foil flying across the room. Rupert gave an exclamation of disgust, followed by a merry laugh.

"You always have me so, M. Dessin. Do what I will, sooner or later comes that twist, which I cannot stop."

"You must learn how, sir. Your sword is so; as you lunge I guard, and run my foil along yours, so as to get power near my hilt. Now if I press, your sword must go; but you must not let me press; you must disengage quickly. Thus, you see? Now let us try again. We will practise nothing else to-day—or to-morrow—or till you are perfect. It is your one weak point. Then you must practise to disarm your opponent, till you are perfect in that also. Then, as far as I can teach you, you will be a master of fencing. You know all my *coups*, and all those of monsieur le colonel. These face guards too have worked wonders, in enabling you to play with quickness and freedom. We are both fine blades. I tell you, young sir, you need not put up with an insult in any public place in Europe. I tell you so, who ought to know:"

In the year 1702 fencing was far from having attained that perfection which it reached later. Masks had not yet been invented, and in consequence play was necessarily stiff and slow, as the danger of the loss of sight, or even of death, from a chance thrust was very great. When Rupert first began his lessons, he was so rash

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and hasty that his grandfather greatly feared an accident, and it struck him that by having visors affixed to a couple of light steel caps, not only would all possibility of an accident be obviated upon the part of either himself or his pupil, but the latter would attain a freedom and confidence of style which could otherwise be only gained from a long practice in actual war. The result had more than equalled his expectations; and M. Dessin had, when he assumed the post of instructor, been delighted with the invention, and astonished at the freedom and boldness of the lad's play. It was, then, thanks to these masks, as well as to his teacher's skill, and his own aptitude, that Rupert had obtained a certainty, a rapidity, and a freedom of style absolutely impossible in the case of a person, whatever his age, who had been accustomed to fence with the face unguarded, and with the caution and stiffness necessary to prevent the occurrence of a terrible accident.

For another half-hour the lesson went on. Then, just as the final salute was given, the door opened at the end of the room, and a lady entered, in the stiff dress with large hoops then in fashion. Colonel Holliday advanced with a courtly air, and offered her his hand; the French gentleman, with an air to the full as courtly as that of the colonel, brought forward a chair for her; and when she had seated herself, Rupert advanced to kiss her hand.

"No, Rupert, you are too hot. There, leave us; I wish to speak to Colonel Holliday and monsieur."

With a deep bow, and a manner far more respectful and distant than that which nowadays would be shown to a stranger who was worthy of all honor, Rupert Holliday left his mother's presence.

"I know what she wants," Rupert muttered to him-

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self—"to stop my fencing lessons; just as if a gentleman could fence too well. She wants me to be a stiff, cold, finnikin fop, like that conceited young Brownlow, of the Haugh. Not if I know it, madame ma mère. You will never make a courtier of me, any more than you will a whig. The colonel fought at Naseby, and was with the king in France. Papa was a tory, and so am I." And the lad whistled a Jacobite air as he made his way with a rapid step to the stables.

The terms Whig and Tory in the reign of King William had very little in common with the meaning which now attaches to these words. The principal difference between the two was, in their views as to the succession to the throne. The Princess Anne would succeed King William, and the whigs desired to see George, Elector of Hanover, ascend the throne when it again became vacant; the tories looked to the return of the Stuarts. The princess's sympathies were with the tories, for she, as a daughter of James the Second, would naturally have preferred that the throne should revert to her brother, than that it should pass to a German prince, a stranger to her, a foreigner, and ignorant even of the language of the people. Roughly it may be said that the tories were the descendants of the cavaliers, while the whigs inherited the principles of the parliamentarians. Party feeling ran very high throughout the country; and as in the civil war, the towns were for the most part whig in their predilection, the country was tory.

Rupert Holliday had grown up in a divided house. The fortunes of Colonel Holliday were greatly impaired in the civil war; his estates were forfeited; and at the restoration he received his ancestral home, Windthorpe Chace, and a small portion of the surrounding domain,

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but had never been able to recover the outlying properties from the men who had acquired them in his absence. He had married in France, the daughter of an exile like himself; but before the "king came to his own" his wife had died, and he returned with one son, Herbert. Herbert had, when he arrived at manhood, restored the fortunes of the Chace by marrying Mistress Dorothy Maynard, the daughter and heiress of a wealthy brewer of Derby, who had taken the side of parliament, and had thriven greatly at the expense of the royalist gentry of the neighborhood. After the restoration he, like many other roundheads who had grown rich by the acquisition of forfeited estates, felt very doubtful whether he should be allowed to retain possession, and was glad enough to secure his daughter's fortune by marrying her to the heir of a prominent royalist. Colonel Holliday had at first objected strongly to the match, but the probable advantage to the fortune of his house at last prevailed over his political bias. The fortune which Mistress Dorothy brought into the family was eventually much smaller than had been expected, for several of the owners of estates of which the roundhead brewer had become possessed made good their claims to them.

Still Herbert Holliday was a rich man at his father-in-law's death, which happened three years after the marriage. With a portion of his wife's dowry most of the outlying properties which had belonged to the Chace were purchased back from their holders; but Herbert Holliday, who was a weak man, cared nothing for a country life, but resided in London with his wife. There he lived for another six years, and was then killed in a duel over a dispute at cards, having in that time managed to run through every penny that his wife had

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brought him, save that invested in the lands of the Chace. Dorothy Holliday then, at the colonel's earnest invitation, returned to the Chace with her son Rupert, then five years old. There she ruled as mistress, for her disposition was a masterful one, and she was a notable housekeeper. The colonel gladly resigned the reins of government into her hands. The house and surrounding land were his; the estate whose rental enabled the household to be maintained as befitted that of a county family was hers; and both would in time, unless indeed Dorothy Holliday should marry again, go to Rupert. Should she marry again—and at the time of her husband's death she wanted two or three years of thirty—she might divide the estate between Rupert and any other children she might have, she having purchased the estate with her dowry, and having right of appointment between her children as she chose. Colonel Holliday was quite content to leave to his daughter-in-law the management of the Chace, while he assumed that of his grandson, on whom he doted. The boy, young as he then was, gave every promise of a fine and courageous disposition, and the old cavalier promised himself that he would train him to be a soldier and a gentleman.

When the lad was eight years old, the old vicar of the little church at the village at the gates of the Chace died, and the living being in the colonel's gift as master of the Chace, he appointed a young man, freshly ordained from Oxford, who was forthwith installed as tutor to Rupert.

Three years later, Colonel Holliday heard that a French emigré had settled in Derby, and gave lessons in his own language and in fencing. Rupert had already made some advance in these studies, for Colonel

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Holliday, from his long residence in France, spoke the language like a native; and now, after Mistress Dorothy's objection having been overcome by the assurance that French and fencing were necessary parts of a gentleman's education if he were ever to make his way at court, M. Dessin was installed as tutor in these branches, coming out three times a week for the afternoon to the Chace.

A few months before our story begins, dancing had been added to the subjects taught. This was a branch of education which M. Dessin did not impart to the inhabitants of Derby, where indeed he had but few pupils, the principal portion of his scanty income being derived from his payments from the Chace. He had however, acceded willingly enough to Mistress Dorothy's request, his consent perhaps being partly due to the proposition that, as it would be necessary that the boy should have a partner, a pony with his groom should be sent over twice a week to Derby to fetch his little daughter Adèle out to the Chace, where, when the lesson was over, she could amuse herself in the grounds until her father was free to accompany her home.

In those days dancing was an art to be acquired only with long study. It was a necessity that a gentleman should dance, and dance well, and the stately minuet required accuracy, grace, and dignity. Dancing in those days was an art; it has fallen grievously from that high estate.

Between M. Dessin and the old cavalier a cordial friendship reigned. The former had never spoken of his past history, but the colonel never doubted that, like so many refugees who sought our shore from France from the date of the revocation of the edict of Nantes to the close of the great revolution, he was of noble blood,

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an exile from his country on account of his religion or political opinions; and the colonel tried in every way to repay to him the hospitality and kindness which he himself had received during his long exile in France. Very often, when lessons were over, the two would stroll in the garden, talking over Paris and its court; and it was only the thought of his little daughter, alone in his dull lodgings in Derby, that prevented M. Dessin from accepting the warm invitation to the evening meal which the colonel often pressed upon him. During the daytime he could leave her, for Adèle went to the first ladies' school in the town, where she received an education in return for her talking French to the younger pupils.

It was on her half-holidays that she came over to dance with Rupert Holliday.

Mistress Dorothy did not approve of her son's devotion to fencing, although she had no objection to his acquiring the courtly accomplishments of dancing and the French language; but her opposition was useless. Colonel Holliday reminded her of the terms of their agreement, that she was to be mistress of the Chace, and that he was to superintend Rupert's education. Upon the present occasion, when the lad had left the room, she again protested against what she termed a waste of time.

"It is no waste of time, madam," the old cavalier said, more firmly than he was accustomed to speak to his daughter-in-law. "Rupert will never grow up a man thrusting himself into quarrels; and believe me, the reputation of being the best swordsman at the court will keep him out of them. In M. Dessin and myself I may say that he has had two great teachers. In my young days there was no finer blade at the Court of France

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than I was; and M. Dessin is, in the new style, what I was in the old. The lad may be a soldier—"

"He shall never be a soldier," Madam Dorothy broke out.

"That, madam," the colonel said courteously, "will be for the lad himself and for circumstances to decide. When I was his age there was nothing less likely than that I should be a soldier; but you see it came about."

"Believe me, madam," M. Dessin said deferentially, "it is good that your son should be a master of fence. Not only may he at court be forced into quarrels, in which it will be necessary for him to defend his honor, but in all ways it benefits him. Look at his figure; nature has given him health and strength, but fencing has given him that light, active carriage, the arm of steel, and a bearing which at his age is remarkable. Fencing, too, gives a quickness, a readiness, and promptness of action which in itself is an admirable training. Monsieur le colonel has been good enough to praise my fencing, and I may say that the praise is deserved. There are few men in France who would willingly have crossed swords with me," and now he spoke with a hauteur characteristic of a French noble rather than a fencing-master.

Madam Holliday was silent; but just as she was about to speak again, a sound of horses' hoofs were heard outside. The silence continued until a domestic entered, and said that Sir William Brownlow and his son awaited madam's pleasure in the drawing-room.

A dark cloud passed over the old colonel's face as Mistress Dorothy rose and, with a sweeping courtesy, left the room.

"Let us go into the garden, monsieur," he said abruptly, "and see how your daughter is getting on."

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Adèle was talking eagerly with Rupert, at a short distance from whom stood a lad some two years his senior, dressed in an attire that showed he was of inferior rank. Hugh Parsons was in fact the son of the tenant of the home farm of the Chace, and had since Rupert's childhood been his playmate, companion, and protector.

"Monsieur mon père," Adèle said, dancing up to her father, and pausing for a moment to courtesy deeply to him and Colonel Holliday, "Monsieur Rupert is going out with his hawks after a heron that Hugh has seen in the pool a mile from here; he has offered to take me on his pony, if you will give permission for me to go."

"Certainly, you may go, Adèle; Monsieur Rupert will be careful of you, I am sure."

"Yes, indeed," Rupert said, "I will be very careful. Hugh, see my pony saddled, and get the hawks. I will run in for a cloth to lay over the saddle."

In five minutes the pony was brought round, a cloth was laid over the saddle, and Rupert aided Adèle to mount, with as much deference as if he had been assisting a princess; then he took the reins and walked by the pony's head, while Hugh followed, with two hooded hawks upon his arm.

"They are a pretty pair," Colonel Holliday said, looking after them.

"Yes," M. Dessin replied, but so shortly that the colonel looked at him with surprise. He was looking after his daughter and Rupert with a grave, thoughtful face, and had evidently answered his own thought rather than the old cavalier's remark. "Yes," he repeated, rousing himself with an effort, "they are a pretty pair indeed."

At a walking pace, Rupert Holliday, very proud of his charge, led the pony in the direction of the pool in

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which the heron had an hour before been seen by Hugh, the boy and girl chattering in French as they went. When they neared the spot they stopped, and Adèle alighted. Then Rupert took the hawks, while Hugh went forward alone to the edge of the pool. Just as he reached it a heron soared up with a hoarse cry. Rupert slipped the hoods off the hawks, and threw them into the air. They circled for an instant, and then, as they saw their quarry rising, darting off with the velocity of arrows. The heron instantly perceived his danger, and soared straight upwards. The hawks pursued him, sailing round in circles higher and higher. So they mounted until they were mere specks in the sky. At last the hawks got above the heron, and instantly prepared to pounce upon him. Seeing his danger, the heron turned on his back, and, with feet and beak pointed upwards to protect himself, fell almost like a stone towards the earth; but more quickly still the hawks darted down upon him. One the heron with a quick movement literally impaled upon his sharp bill; but the other planted his talons in his breast, and, rending and tearing at his neck, the three birds fell together, with a crash, to the earth.

The flight had been so directly upwards that they fell but a short distance from the pool, and the lads and Adèle were quickly upon the spot. The heron was killed by the fall; and to Rupert's grief, one of his hawks was also dead, pierced through and through by the heron's beak. The other bird was with difficulty removed from the quarry, and the hood replaced. Rupert, after giving the heron's plumes to Adèle for her hat, led her back to the pony, Hugh following with the hawk on his wrist, and carrying the two dead birds.

"I am so sorry your hawk is killed," Adèle said.

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"Yes," Rupert answered, "it is a pity. It was a fine, bold bird, and gave us lots of trouble to train; but he was always rash, and I told him over and over again what would happen if he was not more careful."

"Have you any more?" Adèle asked.

"No more falcons like this. I have gerfalcons, for pigeons and partridges, but none for herons. But I dare say Hugh will be able to get me two more young birds before long, and it is a pleasure to train them."

Colonel Holliday and M. Dessin met them as they returned to the house.

"What, Rupert! had bad luck?" his grandfather said.

"Yes, sir. Cavalier was too rash, aud the quarry killed him."

"Hum!" said the old man; "just the old story. The falcon was well named, Rupert. It was just our rashness that lost us all our battles. What, M. Dessin, you must be off? Will you let me have a horse saddled for yourself, and the pony for mademoiselle? The groom can bring them back."

M. Dessin declined the offer; and a few minutes later started to walk back with his daughter to Derby.

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CHAPTER II.

RUPERT TO THE RESCUE.

ABOUT a month after the day on which Rupert had taken Mademoiselle Adèle Dessin out hawking, the colonel and Mistress Dorothy went to dine at the house of a county family some miles away. The family coach, which was only used on grand occasions, was had out, and in this Mistress Dorothy, hooped and powdered in accordance with the fashion of the day, took her seat with Colonel Holliday. Rupert had been invited, as the eldest son was a lad of his own age. It was a memorable occasion for him, as he was for the first time to dress in the full costume of the period—with powdered hair, ruffles, a blue satin coat, and knee-breeches of the same material, with silk stockings. His greatest pleasure, however, was that he was now to wear a sword, the emblem of a gentleman, for the first time. He was to ride on horseback, for madam completely filled the coach with her hoops and brocaded dress, and there was scarcely room for Colonel Holliday, who sat beside her almost lost in her ample skirts.

The weather was cold, and Rupert wore a riding cloak over his finery, and high boots, which were upon his arrival to be exchanged for silver-buckled shoes. They started at twelve, for the dinner hour was two, and there were eight miles to drive—a distance which, over the roads of those days, could not be accomplished

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much under two hours. The coachman and two lackeys took their places on the box of the lumbering carriage, the two latter being armed with pistols, as it would be dark before they returned, and travelling after dark in the days of King William was a danger not to be lightly undertaken. Nothing could be more stately, or to Rupert's mind more tedious, than that entertainment. Several other guests of distinction were present, and the dinner was elaborate.

The conversation turned chiefly on county business, with an occasional allusion to the war with France. Politics were entirely eschewed, for party feeling ran too high for so dangerous a subject to be broached at a gathering at which both whigs and tories were present.

Rupert sat near one end of the table, with the eldest son of the host; as a matter of course they kept absolute silence in an assembly of their elders, only answering shortly and respectfully when spoken to. When dinner was over, however, and the ladies rose, they slipped away to a quiet room, and made up for their long silence by chatting without cessation of their dogs, and hawks, and sports, until at six o'clock the coach came round to the door, and Rupert, again donning his cloak and riding-boots mounted his horse, and rode slowly off after the carriage.

Slow as the progress had been in the daytime, it was slower now. The heavy coach jolted over great lumps of rough stone, and bumped into deep ruts, with a violence which would shake a modern vehicle to pieces. Sometimes, where the road was particularly bad, the lackeys would get down, light torches at the lanterns that hung below the box, and show the way until the road improved.

They had ridden about six miles, when some distance

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ahead the sound of pistol shots, followed by loud shouts, came sharply on the ear. Rupert happened to be in front, and with the love of adventure natural to his age, he set spurs to his horse and dashed forward, not hearing, or at any rate not heeding, the shouts of his grandfather. Colonel Holliday, finding that Rupert was fairly off, bade the lackeys get down, and follow him at a run with their pistols, and urged the coachmen to drive on with all possible speed. Rupert was not long in reaching the scene of action; and hurried the more that he could hear the clinking of sword-blades, and knew that the resistance of those assailed had not ceased.

On arriving at the spot he saw, as he expected, a carriage standing by the road. One or two figures lay stretched on the ground; the driver lay back, a huddled mass, on his seat; a man held high a torch with one hand, while with the other he was striving to re-charge a pistol. Four other men with swords were attacking a gentleman who, with his back to the coach, was defending himself calmly and valiantly.

As he rode up Rupert unbuttoned his riding-cloak, and threw it off as he reined up his horse and dismounted. An execration broke from the assailants at seeing this new arrival, but perceiving that he was alone, one of the four men advanced to attack him.

Just as Rupert leapt from his horse, the man holding the torch completed the loading of his pistol, and levelling it at him, fired. The ball knocked off his hat just as he touched the ground, and the man shouted,—

"Kill him, Gervais! Spit him like a lark; he is only a boy."

Rupert drew his sword as the highwayman advanced upon him, and was in a moment hotly engaged. Never

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RUPERT RAN THE HIGHWAYMAN RIGHT THROUGH THE BODY.

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before had he fenced with pointed rapiers; but the swords had scarcely crossed when he felt, with the instinct of a good fencer, how different were the clumsy thrusts of his opponent to the delicate and skilful play of his grandfather and M. Dessin. There was no time to lose in feints and flourishes; the man with the torch had drawn his sword, and was coming up; and Rupert parried a thrust of his assailant's and with a rapid lunge in tierce ran him right through the body. Then with a bound he dashed through the men attacking the traveller, and took his stand beside him, while the torch-bearer, leaving his torch against a stump of a tree, also joined the combat.

Beyond a calm "I thank you, sir; your arrival is most opportune," from the traveller, not a word passed as the swords clashed and ground against each other.

"Dash in, and finish him," shouted the man who appeared the leader of the assailants, and three of them rushed together at the traveller. The leader fell back cursing, with a sword-thrust through his shoulder, just at the moment when Rupert sent the sword of the man who was attacking him flying through the air, and turning at once, engaged one of the two remaining assailants of the traveller. But these had had enough of it; and as the lackeys came running up, they turned, and rushed away into the darkness. The lackeys at Rupert's order discharged their pistols after them; but a moment later the sound of four horses making off at full gallop showed that they had escaped.

"By my faith," the traveller said, turning to Rupert, and holding out his hand, "no knight-errant ever arrived more opportunely. You are a gallant gentleman, sir; permit me to ask to whom I am so indebted?"

"My name is Rupert Holliday, sir," the lad said, as

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the stranger shook his hand warmly, and who, as the lackey approached with the torch, exclaimed,—

"Why, by the king's head, you are but a stripling, and you have run one of these fellows through the body, and disarmed the other, as neatly as I ever saw it done in the schools. Why, young sir, if you go on like this you will be a very Palladin."

"I have had good masters, sir," Rupert said, modestly; "and having been taught to use my sword, there is little merit in trouncing such rascals as these."

"By my faith, but there is though," the stranger said. "It is one thing to fence in a school with buttoned foils, another to bear oneself as calmly and as well as you did. But here are your friends, or I mistake not."

The coach came lumbering up, at a speed which for coaches in those days was wonderful, and as it stopped Colonel Holliday leapt out, sword in hand.

"Is it all over?" he exclaimed. "Is Rupert hurt?"

"It is all over, sir; and I have not so much as a scratch," Rupert said.

"Sir," the stranger said, uncovering, and making a courtly bow to the old cavalier, and to Mistress Dorothy, who was looking from the open door, "your son—"

"My grandson," the colonel, who had also uncovered, corrected.

"Your grandson arrived in time to save me from grievous peril. My coachman and lackey were shot at the first fire, and I fancy one of the horses. I disposed of one of the rascals, but four others pressed me hard, while a fifth held a light to them. Your grandson ran one through in fair fight, and disarmed another: I disabled a third, and they ran. I have to thank him for my life; and, if you will permit me to say so—and I have been in many frays—no man ever bore himself more

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coolly, or used his sword more skilfully, than did this young gentleman."

"I am very proud indeed to hear that the lad bore himself so well; although I own that he caused some anxiety to his mother and myself, by rushing forward alone to join in a fray of whose extent he knew nothing. However, all is well that ends well. And now, sir, as your servants are killed, and but one horse remains to your carriage, will you permit me to offer you for the night the hospitality of Windthorpe Chace? I am Colonel Holliday, sir, an old servant of King Charles the First."

"I accept your offer, sir, as frankly as it is made. I have often heard your name. I, sir, am John Churchill."

"The Earl of Marlborough!" exclaimed Colonel Holliday.

"The same," the earl said, with a smile. "I am not greatly loved, sir; but my name will, I am sure, do me no ill service with one of the men of Naseby."

"No, indeed!" Colonel Holliday said, warmly; "it is at once a pleasure and an honor to me to entertain so great a general at the Chace."

"And now," the earl said, "a truce to compliments. Pray resume your seat in the coach, sir. I will cut loose the horse from the coach, and will follow you in company with your grandson."

Colonel Holliday in vain tried to persuade the earl to take his place in the carriage.

The latter, however, firmly declined, and the colonel took his place in the coach, and drove off at once, to make preparation for the reception of his guest.

The earl had even declined the offer to leave one or both of the lackeys behind. And when the carriage

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had driven off, he said to Rupert, who had stood looking with respectful admiration at the greatest general of the age, "Now, young sir, let us have a look at this carrion; maybe their faces will throw some light upon this affair."

So saying, he took the torch which had been left burning, and turned over the body of the man he had slain before Rupert arrived on the scene.

"I do not know him," he said, looking steadily at the dead man's face.

"I know him," Rupert exclaimed in surprise. "He is a saddler of Derby—a fierce nonconformist and whig, and a preacher at conventicles. And to think of his being a highwayman!"

"An assassin is a better term," the earl said, contemptuously. "I guessed from their number it was my life, and not my money, that they sought. Now let us look at the fellow you sent to his account.

Rupert hung back as they approached the man he had killed. In those days of rebellions, executions, and duels, human life was regarded but lightly. Still, to a lad of little over fifteen the thought that he had killed a man, even if in fair fight, was very painful.

"Ah, I thought so," the earl said. "This is a creature of a political enemy. I have seen him in his ante-chamber. So the order came from London, and the tools were found here. That will do. Now let us get this horse out of the traces. It is some years since I have ridden bare-backed. No, I thank you," in answer to Rupert's offer of his own horse; "a saddle matters not one way or the other. There, now for the Chace; and I shall not be sorry to fall to on the supper which, I doubt not, the good gentleman your grandfather will have prepared."

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So saying, he vaulted on his horse, and with Rupert rode quietly along the road to the Chace. The great door opened as they approached, and four lackeys with torches came out. Colonel Holliday himself came down the steps and assisted the earl to alight, and led the way into the house.

They now entered the drawing-room, where Mistress Dorothy was seated. She arose and made a deep courtesy, in answer to the even deeper bow with which the earl greeted her.

"My lord," she said, "welcome to Windthorpe Chace."

"Madam," the earl said, bowing over the hand she extended, until his lips almost touched her fingers, "I am indeed indebted to the fellows who thought to do me harm, in that they have been the means of my making the acquaintance of a lady whose charms turned all heads in London, and who left the court in gloom when she retired to the country."

Nowadays, such a speech as this would be thought to savor of mockery, but gentlemen two hundred years since ordinarily addressed women in the language of high-flown compliment.

Mistress Holliday, despite her thirty-seven years, was still very comely, and she smiled as she replied,—

"My lord, ten years' absence from court has rendered me unused to compliments, and I will not venture to engage in a war, even of words, with so great a general."

Supper was now announced, and the earl offered his hand to lead Mistress Dorothy to the dining hall.

The meal passed off quietly, the conversation turning entirely upon country matters. The earl did full justice to the fare, which consisted of a stuffed carp,

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fresh from the well-stocked ponds of the Chase, a boar's head, and larded capon, the two latter dishes being cold. With these were served tankards of Burgundy and of sherries. Rupert, as was the custom of the younger members of families, waited upon the honored guest.

The meal over, Mistress Holliday rose. The earl offered her his hand and led her to the door, where, with an exchange of ceremonious salutes, she bade him good-night.

Then the earl accompanied Colonel Holliday to the latter's room, hung with rapiers, swords, and other arms. There ceremony was laid aside, and the old cavalier and the brilliant general entered into familiar talk, the former lighting a long pipe, of the kind known at present as a "churchwarden." The earl told Colonel Holliday of the discovery that had been made, that the attack was no mere affair with highwaymen, but an attempt at assassination by a political rival.

"I had been down," he said, "at Lord Hadleigh's, where there was a gathering of many gentlemen of our way of thinking. I left London quietly, and thought that none knew of my absence; but it is clear that through some spy in my household my enemies learned both my journey and destination. I came down on horseback, having sent forward relays. When I arrived last night at Hadleigh my horse was dead lame. I misdoubt now 'twas lamed in the stable by one of the men who dogged me. Lord Hadleigh offered me his coach, to take me back the first stage—to the inn where I had left my servants and had intended to sleep. I accepted—for in truth I sat up and talked all last night, and thought to doze the journey away. Your Derbyshire roads are, however, too rough, and I was wide awake when the first shot was fired!"

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"Do you think of taking steps to punish the authors of this outrage?" Colonel Holliday asked.

"By no means," the earl answered. "I would ask you to send over a man, with the horse I rode on and another, at daybreak. Let him put them into the coach and drive back to Hadleigh, taking with him the bodies of the lackey and coachman. With him I will send a note to my lord, asking that no stir be made in the matter. We need not set the world talking as to my visit to this house; but lest any magistrate stir in the matter, I will leave a letter for him saying that the coach in which I travelled was attacked by highwaymen, and that two of them, as well as the two servants, were killed, and that no further inquisition need be made into the matter. You may be sure that the other side will say naught, and they will likely enough go back and carry off their dead to-night, and bury them quietly."

"Very well, sir," Colonel Holliday said. "My grandson will ride over with you in the morning to Ashby-de-la-Zouche. Two well-armed lackeys shall accompany you."

"Oh, there is no fear of another attempt," the earl said, smiling. "Besides, your grandson and I could fight a whole troop of cut-throats by daylight. What a swordsman that boy is! and as cool as a veteran! He is your pupil with the sword, I presume?"

"Only partly; he owes most of his skill to a French emigré, who calls himself M. Dessin, but who had, I suspect, a far higher title across the water. He is a magnificent swordsman; and as I was able to teach the lad a few thrusts which in their time did me good service, and the boy has a clear eye, a cool head, and a firm wrist, he can, young as he is, hold his own, go where he will."

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"What do you mean to do with him? You ought to make a soldier of him. It is the career of a gentleman, and we shall have a stirring campaign on the Rhine next spring. He will have plenty of opportunities to distinguish himself, and I need not say he will have my best favor and protection!"

"I thank you heartily," the colonel said, "and doubt not that one day the lad may claim the fulfilment of your promise. At present his mother dreams of his being a Parliament-man, and shining at court. But you might as well expect to teach a falcon to dance. Besides, the lad is a soldier heart and soul, and has, saving your presence, little of the whig in him; and his mother will find ere long, that if he goes to Parliament it will not be to vote as she wishes. Besides," he said, moodily, "I foresee changes here which he, young as he is, will not brook. If then at present I decline your kind offer in his name, I think that the time is not far off when he may remind you of it."

"Let him do so," the earl said, "and a commission in horse, foot, or artillery is at his service. And now, with your permission, I will to bed, for my eyelids are consumedly heavy."

Colonel Holliday rang a hand-bell, and a lackey appeared with lighted candles. Preceded by him the old cavalier accompanied his guest to the door of his apartment, and seeing that a posset cup of spiced cordial was steaming on the table, and that everything else was properly prepared, left him to repose.

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CHAPTER III.

A KISS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

THREE months have passed since the Earl of Marlborough's visit to the Chace. Changes have taken place in England, for on the 8th of March King William died from the effects of a fall from his horse, and the Princess Anne ascended the throne. After her accession, one of her first steps had been to shower honor upon the Earl of Marlborough. A whig cabinet was formed, of which he and Lord Godolphin were the leading spirits, two tories, however—Harley and St. John—having seats in the ministry. The Earl of Marlborough was her most trusted adviser. He had during the reign of the late monarch been always a firm friend of the Princess Anne, and was at one time regarded almost as a tory. He had indeed plotted for the restoration of the Stuarts, and had entered into negotiation with the French king for that purpose. The plot having been discovered, he had with other noblemen been sent to the Tower, and had continued in disgrace until a year before the death of William.

Anne appointed him one of her ministers, and made the duchess her most intimate friend. In fact, in politics the Duke of Marlborough took no very strong part. He was attached to the Stuarts, for under them he had at first risen to rank and honor; but he was a strong Protestant, and therefore in favor of the maintenance

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of the Act of Succession, fixing the reversion of the throne on the Elector of Hanover, who, although not the nearest in the line of succession, had been selected because the nearest heirs to the throne were Catholics.

At the Chace things have gone on as before. Rupert has worked hard at his lessons and his fencing, and M. Dessin allows that, save for his extra length of reach, he should have no advantage now over his pupil. In the afternoon the lad spent his time with his hawks, or practised firing with pistol or carbine, or roamed over the country with Hugh. Nevertheless, things had somehow changed. Colonel Holliday had become gloomy and silent; and although he and his daughter-in-law were studiously ceremonious and polite to each other, it was clear that a cloud had risen between them. Rupert saw but little of this, however, and was surprised one day when, as he was going out for a ride, his grandfather said to him gravely,—

"Take a turn in the garden with me, Rupert; I want to have a talk with you. I think it well, Rupert," he said, after walking for some time in silence, "to prepare you for what, if you have not guessed already, you will be told ere long. Madam will no doubt herself inform you of it; and it is as well, my lad, that you should be prepared, for you might in your surprise say something hasty, and so cause a breach which it would take long to heal."

Rupert looked in astonishment at his grandfather. He had not the most remote idea of what was coming.

"You have doubtless noticed," Colonel Holliday went on, "the frequency of Sir William Brownlow's visits here?"

"Yes, sir, I have noticed that, but do not often see him. I keep out of his way, for in truth I like him not,

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nor that son of his, who, on the strength of his three years' seniority, looks down upon me, and gives himself as many airs as madam my mother's peacock."

"And you have never even thought why he comes here so frequently?"

"No, sir," Rupert said, surprised; "it was no business of mine, and I gave no single thought to it."

"He is a suitor for your lady mother's hand," Colonel Holliday said, gravely.

"What!" almost shouted Rupert; "what, sir! he, with his sneering face, dares to think—"

"My dear boy, he not only dares to think, but madam approves of the thought, and has promised him her hand."

Rupert stood motionless.

"It shall not be," he burst out. "We must stop it, sir. Why do not you?"

"I have no shadow of authority over Mistress Holliday," the old colonel said. "As far as I could go, for your sake I have gone—farther, perhaps, than was wise. It has been a great blow for me, Rupert. I had hoped that in the time to come you would be master of the Chace, and of all the broad acres I owned when young; now it will never be. This house and the home farm are mine, and will be yours, lad; but the outlying land will never come back to the Chace again, but will go to swell the Haugh estate on the other side. My lady can leave it as she likes. I have begged her to have it settled upon you, but she has declined. She may have another family, and, infatuated as she is with her suitor, she is more likely to leave it to them than to you, especially as I fear that you will not take kindly to the new arrangement."

"I will not submit to it, sir; I will not have it. I

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will insult him, and force him to fight me!" the lad gasped, his face white with passion.

"No, Rupert, it won't do, lad. Were you four or five years older you might interfere; now he would laugh at you for a headstrong boy. You would gain his hate, and forfeit your mother's favor utterly. It was because I feared an outbreak like this that I told you to-day what you will in a few hours learn from her."

"What is to be done?" Rupert said, despairingly.

"Nothing, my boy. At her marriage, your mother will of course live at the Haugh with Sir William. This house is mine, and if you cannot get on at the Haugh, it will be always open to you."

"I will never set my foot inside the Haugh," Rupert said, firmly. "My lady mother may leave her lands where she will; but if I am to have them only at the price of being the humble servant of this new father-in-law, I care not for them. He has an evil face, grandfather, and I hated him before I knew what he came for."

"My boy," Colonel Holliday said, "we have all many things to go through in life that we like not. This is your trial, and I trust that you will come out of it worthily. Your respect and duty are due to your mother. If you will not feign gladness that you do not feel, I do not blame you; but when she tells you the news, answer her with that respect which you owe her. She has a clear right to choose for herself. She is still a comely dame, and no one will blame her for taking another husband. To me and to you the thing may seem hard, even unnatural, but it is not so. I like Sir William no more than you do. Report says that he has deeply dipped into his estates over the dice-box; and your lady mother's estates, and the sum that many years of quiet

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living has enabled her to save, are doubtless items which he has not overlooked."

Rupert remained for some time silent.

"I will be perfectly respectful to my mother," he said, "but I will not disguise my feelings. If I did so at first, it would in the end be useless, for Sir William I could never treat with respect. Sooner or later a quarrel would come, and I may therefore as well have it understood first as last. The estates I care for only because they were part of the Chace, and I know that they will never be mine if this match is made. You feel that yourself, do you not, sir?"

"Yes," the colonel said, reluctantly, "I have felt that all along."

"Very well, sir," Rupert said; "in that case I have nothing to gain by affecting a satisfaction at this match. I shall respectfully but firmly warn my mother against it, and tell her that if she persists in it I will never put my foot under the roof of Sir William Brownlow."

The next morning the servant brought word to Rupert, that Mistress Holliday wished to speak to him in her room. Knowing what was coming, Rupert went with slow steps and a heavy heart to the little drawing-room which was known as madam's room.

"Rupert," she said, as he stood respectfully before her, "I have sent for you to tell you that I have accepted the offer of marriage of Sir William Brownlow. Sir William has much court influence, and will be able to do you much service, and he has promised me to look upon you as a son of his own."

"Madam," Rupert said, calmly and respectfully, "that you should marry Sir William Brownlow is a matter as to which, alas! I have no right to say aught. I trust that the marriage will bring you happiness, al-

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though my mind sorely misgives me as to whether it will be so. As to myself, I decline Sir William's offer of protection. It is enough for me that my fathers have for generations owned Windthorpe Chace. Come what may, madam, I neither acknowledge Sir William as my father, nor do I put a foot under his roof."

"Malapert boy!" Mistress Holliday said, angrily, "this is the teaching of Colonel Holliday."

"Pardon me," Rupert said, quietly, "Colonel Holliday begged me to submit to what could not be helped; but I declined. This man is not worthy of you, madam. Were you about to marry a good man, I would gladly receive him as my father. I should be glad to know when out in the world that you were cared for and happy; but this is not a good man."

"Hush, sir," Mistress Holliday said. "I will not suffer you to speak thus. And know, Rupert, if you do not know it already, that I have absolute power over the estates of the Chace, and that if you defy me I can leave them where I will."

"I know it, madam," Rupert said, sadly; "but this will in no way alter my determination. If when you marry you give me your permission to remain here with my grandfather, I will do so; if not, I will go forth into the world to seek my fortune."

"Insolent boy!" Mistress Holliday said, furiously, "I have a mind to call the lackeys in and bid them beat you."

"Madam," Rupert said, drawing himself up and touching his sword lightly, "if you value your lackeys you will give no such order; for the first man, lackey or lord, who lays his hand on me, I would kill like a dog. With your permission, madam, I will retire, since this morning I take my dancing lesson."

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So saying, with a ceremonious bow Rupert left his mother's presence. M. Dessin and his daughter were already with Colonel Holliday when Rupert joined them, and he went through his dancing lessons as usual. Then Adèle went as usual out into the garden, and the fencing lesson began. When it was half over, Rupert's brow clouded angrily for he heard horsemen ride up to the door, and felt sure who they were.

"Steady, my dear pupil, steady," M. Dessin cried, as with knitted brow Rupert pressed him hotly, fancying at the moment that Sir William Brownlow stood in front of him.

"*Peste!*" he exclaimed, as the lad lunged and touched him in the chest, "you are terrible. Monsieur le colonel," he went on, dropping his sword, "I resign my post. I have seen it coming for some time, and now it has arrived. Your grandson is more than a match for me. He has all my skill, some of yours, and has besides an activity and suppleness greater, I think, than I ever had. You young islanders are trained to use hand and eye; and although French lads may have as much activity, they have far less strength, far less aptitude for such exercises. Besides, there are other reasons. Go, Monsieur Rupert, and take care of my daughter; I would talk with monsieur your grandfather."

Slowly, and brooding over the change which the late twenty-four hours had made in his fortune, Rupert sought the garden. As he sauntered along the walks he heard a cry, and looking up saw Adèle struggling in the arms of James Brownlow, who was trying to kiss her, while a young fellow his own age stood by laughing. Rupert's pent-up fury found a vent at last, and rushing forward, he struck the aggressor so violent a

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blow between the eyes that, loosing his hold of Adèle, he fell to the ground.

"Thunder and lightning," the other young man exclaimed, drawing his sword, "what means this, young cockerel?"

Rupert's sword flew from its sheath, but before he could cross it, James Brownlow sprang to his feet and crying to his friend,—

"Stand back! I will spit the saucy knave!" rushed upon Rupert.

The swords clashed, and almost simultaneously Brownlow's weapon flew far through the air.

With a cry of fury he ran to fetch it, while his companion burst into a coarse laugh.

Rupert did not move from his position, but stood passive, until his antagonist again rushed at him.

"Mind this time," Rupert said, between his teeth, "for I will kill you like a dog."

Warned by the lesson, James Brownlow fought more carefully; but he was too enraged to continue these tactics long, and after a short bout he lunged furiously. Rupert turned aside the point and straightened his arm, and his antagonist fell to the ground, run completely through the body.

"You are a witness that I killed him in fair fight," Rupert said, turning to the young man, who gazed stupefied at the body of his comrade, and then sheathing his sword bounded away to the stables. Hugh was there.

"Quick, Hugh; saddle Ronald. I have just killed young Brownlow, and must ride for it."

Hugh stood for a moment astonished, and then calling a helper ran into the stables. In a minute he came out with two horses saddled. Without a word Rupert

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leapt on one, while he vaulted on the other, and the two dashed off at full speed.

"Where are you going, Master Rupert?"

"To London," Rupert said. "This is no place for me now. I killed him in fair fight, and after warning; still, what with Sir William and my lady mother, there will be no stopping here. You had better ride back, Hugh, and tell my grandfather, privately, that I am going to the Earl of Marlborough, to ask him to give me the cornetcy he promised me."

"With your leave, Master Rupert, I shall do nothing of the sort. Where you go, I go. My grandfather rode out with yours to Naseby, and died there. My people have been the tenants of the Chace as long as the Hollidays have been its lords, and have always followed their master to the field. My old father would beat me out of the house with a broom-handle, if I went back and said I had let you go to the wars alone. No, Master Rupert, wherever you go, Hugh Parsons goes too."

Rupert held out his hand, which his companion grasped, and the two galloped rapidly along the roads towards London.

In the meantime all was consternation at the Chace.

Colonel Holliday and M. Dessin were deeply engaged in conversation when Adèle burst in upon them.

"Quick, quick!" she exclaimed, "M. Rupert is fighting with a wicked young man!"

"Then," said M. Dessin, grimly, "it will be very bad for the wicked young man, whoever he is."

"Where are they?" exclaimed Colonel Holliday.

"In the garden," the girl said bursting into tears. "The wicked young man was rude to me, and wanted

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to kiss me, and M. Rupert knocked him down, and then they began to fight, and I ran away."

M. Dessin swore a very deep oath in French, and was about to hurry out with Colonel Holliday. Then he stopped, and putting his hand on the colonel's shoulder, said, coldly, "Do not let us hurry, sir. M. Rupert has taken the matter in his hands. It is as well that he should kill this fellow as that I should have to do so."

Just at this moment they reached the door and a young man came running up to the house shouting,—

"Young Brownlow is killed. Help! help!"

"I think, M. Dessin," Colonel Holliday said, stopping, "it would be as well if you and mademoiselle were for the present to leave us. There will be trouble enough, and the fewer in it the better. Sir William is a hot man, and you are not a cool one. Enough mischief has been done."

"You are right," M. Dessin said. "Will you tell M. Rupert that so long as my arm can lift a sword it is at his service, and that I am his debtor for life. Come, Adèle, let us leave by the front of the house."

Colonel Holliday now hurried out into the garden, just as Sir William Brownlow, accompanied by his son's friend, rushed out of the house, followed by some lackeys with scared faces.

Not a word was spoken as they ran to the spot where young Brownlow was lying.

Sir William and Colonel Holliday both knelt beside him and the latter put his finger to his pulse.

"He is not dead," he said after a moment. "Ralph, saddle a horse, and ride with all speed to Derby for a doctor."

"Ay," Sir William said, "and tell the chief magistrate

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that he is wanted here, with one of his constables, for that murder has been done."

"You will do nothing of the sort," Colonel Holliday said. "Sir William Brownlow, I make every excuse for you in your grief, but even from you I will permit no such word to be used. Your son has been wounded in fair fight, and whether he dies or not, alters the circumstances no whit. My grandson found him engaged in offering a gross insult to a young lady in the garden of my house. He did what I should have done had I so found him—he knocked him down. They fought and your son was worsted. I think, sir, that for the credit of your house you had best be quiet over the matter. Hush, sir," he went on sternly, seeing that the baronet was about to answer furiously, "I am an old man, but I will put up with bluster from no man." Colonel Holliday's repute as a swordsman was well known, and Sir William Brownlow swallowed his passion in silence. A door was taken off its hinges, and the insensible young man was carried into the house. There he was received by Mistress Holliday, who was vehement in her reproaches against Rupert, and even against Colonel Holliday, who had, as she said, encouraged him in brawling. The colonel bent quietly before the storm; and leaving the wounded man in the care of his daughter-in-law and the attendants, made his way to the stables, to inquire what had become of Rupert. There he found that a few minutes before, Rupert, accompanied by Hugh Parsons, had ridden off at full speed, having placed valises and a brace of pistols in the holsters on their saddles. The colonel was glad to hear that Rupert had his humble friend with him, and doubted not that he had made for London. With a somewhat lightened heart he went back to the house.

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After galloping fast for the first two miles, Rupert drew rein, for he had now time to think, and was assured that even should Sir William at once send into Derby for a warrant for his apprehension, he would be across the borders of the county long before he could be overtaken.

"Have you any money with you, Hugh?" he asked, suddenly; "for I have not a penny with me."

"I have only two shillings, Master Rupert. I got that yesterday in Derby for a nest of young owlets I found in the copse."

Rupert reined up his horse in dismay.

"Two shillings between us, Hugh! and it is a hundred and twenty-six miles to London. What are we to do?"

Hugh thought a moment. "We can't go on with that, sir. Do you take these two shillings and ride on to the Red Dragon, you will be outside the county there. I will ride back to father's. It's under two miles, and I shall be back here in half-an-hour again. He will give me any money he may have in the house. I may as well fill my valise too, while I am about it; and he's got a pair of pistols too, that he will give me."

It was clearly the best course to take, and Rupert trotted forward on his way, while Hugh galloped back at full speed. In a quarter of an hour the latter drew rein at his father's door.

"Hullo, Hugh, lad," the farmer, a hearty man of some fifty years of age, said as he came to the door, "be'est thou? What art doing on the squire's horse? He looks as if thou had ridden him unmercifully, surely?"

In a few words Hugh related what had taken place, and told him of his own offer to go to the wars with Rupert.

"That's right lad; that's right and proper. It's ac-

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cording to the nature of things that when a Holliday rides to the war a Parsons should ride behind him. It's always been so, and will always be so, I hope. Mother will grieve, no doubt; but she won't want to fly in the face of nature. Here, mother, come out; Master Rupert's killed Sir William Brownlow's son, and is off to the wars, and so our Hugh's, natural-like, going with him."

Mrs. Parsons, after her first ejaculation of surprise, burst into tears, but, as her husband had predicted, offered no objection whatever to what seemed to her, as to him, a matter of plain duty on the part of her son. Hugh now explained the reason of his return.

"Ay, ay, lad; thou shalt have the money. I've got fifty pounds for next quarter's rent. Colonel Holliday will be glad enough for some of it to go to his grandson. I'll gin ye half o't, Hugh, and take my chance of the colonel agreeing to it. I'll give'e as much more out of my old stocking upstairs. Put it carefully by, lad. Money is as useful in war as at other times, and pay ain't always regular; may be the time may come when the young master may be short of money, and it may come in useful. Now put on thy riding coat; and mother will put thy best clothes in a valise. Bustle up, mother, there bain't no time to lose."

Thus addressed, Mrs. Parsons dried her tears and hurried away. Hugh, hitching the bridle over a hook, made his way to his room to change his clothes. When he came down, all was ready.

"Thy clothes are in the valise, Hugh. I have put on the holsters, and the pistols are in them. They are loaded, boy. In the bottom of one are the master's twenty-five pounds. Thy own money is in the valise. Here, boy, is my father's sword; it hasn't been used

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since Naseby, but it's a good blade. Thou are adeft hand at quarterstaff and single-stick though, and I doubt not that thy hands can guard thy head. I need not say, Hugh Parsons, you will, if need be, die for thy master, for I know thou will do it lad. Now kiss thy mother, boy; and God speed you."

A long embrace with his father and mother, and then Hugh, blinded by his tears, mounted his horse, and rode off in the track of Rupert.

After an hour's sharp riding he overtook him, at a wayside inn, just across the boundary between Derby and Leicestershire.

"Is it all right, Hugh?" he asked, as Hugh drew up at the door.

"All right, Master Rupert. Father has sent thee twenty-five pounds out of the rent that will be due at Lady day; and he doubts not that the colonel will approve of what he has done. How long have you been here?"

"Only some five minutes, Hugh. We had best let the horses feed, and then ride quietly into Leicester, it's only fifteen miles away. I see you've got a sword."

"A sword and pistols, Master Rupert and as you have the same, methinks any highwayman chaps we might meet would think twice ere they venture to cry 'Stand and deliver!'"

"You heard no word of whether James Brownlow was alive or dead, Hugh? I should be very glad to hear that he is not killed."

"No word of the matter had come to the farm when I came away," Hugh said; "but I should not worry about it one way or the other, Master Rupert. You'll kill lots more when you get to the wars; and the country won't grieve over James Brownlow. Young as he

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was, he was a bad one: I've heard more than one dark story whispered of him. Folks say he took after his father, who was as wild and as bad as any man in Derbyshire when he was young."

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CHAPTER IV.

THE SEDAN CHAIR.

"THIS is our last stage, Hugh, and to-night we shall be in London," Rupert said, as they rode out of Watford. "Methinks we shall find it very strange in that great city. I am glad I thought of asking our host the name of an inn at which to put up; the Bell in Bishopsgate Street, he said. It will seem less strange asking the way there than it would be to be wandering about gazing for a place at which to alight."

"Ay, truly, Master Rupert; and I've heard say those London folk are main fond of making game of strangers."

"So I have heard, Hugh; any reasonable jest we had best put up with with good temper; if they push it too far, we shall be able, I doubt not, to hold our own. The first thing to do will be to get clothes of the cut in vogue, for I have come away just as I stood; and I fear that even your clothes will have a marvellously country air about them in the eyes of the city folk. There is London," he said, as they passed over the crest of Hempstead Hill. "That great round dome that stands up so high must be St. Paul's; and look how many other church towers and spires there are. And there, away to the right, those must be the towers of Westminster."

"It is a big place, surely, Master Rupert. How many people do you think live there?"

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"I believe there are near three hundred thousand souls there, Hugh. It seems wonderful, does it not?"

"It's too big to think of, Master Rupert," Hugh said, and they continued their journey southward.

They entered the city at Aldersgate, but they had ridden some distance through houses before they arrived at the boundary, for the city was already spreading beyond its ancient limits.

Once inside the walls, the lads were astonished at the bustle and noise.

Hugh inquired the way to Bishopsgate Street of a respectable citizen, who directed them to follow the road until they came to a broad turning to their left, this would be Chepeside, and they were to follow this until they came to the Exchange, a large building straight in front of them. Passing this, they would find themselves in Bishopsgate Street.

If Aldersgate Street had surprised them, much more were they astonished at the din and turmoil of Chepeside, and Hugh, having twice narrowly escaped riding over a citizen, and being soundly rated for a country gawk, Rupert turned to him.

"Look at your horse's head, Hugh, and pay no attention to aught else. When we have reached our destination, we shall have plenty of time to look at all these wonders."

The advice was good, and without mischance they reached the Bell in Bishopsgate Street, and rode into the yard. The host at once came out, and after a momentary look of surprise at the youth of the new arrivals, he asked Rupert courteously if he needed a room.

"Two rooms if it please you," Rupert said, "and together."

The host called a hostler, who at once took charge of

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the horses, and led them to the stable, the lads first removing the valises and holsters, which a servant carried up to their rooms.

"We would have supper," Rupert said; "and while that is preparing we would, if it is not too late, order some clothes more in the mode than these. Can you direct us to a tailor?"

"You cannot do better," the landlord said, "than visit my neighbor, Master John Haliford. His shop is just opposite, and he makes for many of our best city folk, and for more than one of the gentry of the Court."

Rupert thanked him, and they crossed the street to the shop indicated.

The landlord looked after them with a puzzled air.

"It is not often that Joe Miles cannot guess the quality and errand of his guests, but this time he is floored. Has that young spark run away from home? I hardly think so, for he speaks gravely, and without haste; lads who have run away may generally be known by their speaking in a hurry, and as if anxious. They are both well mounted; the younger is clearly of the higher estate, although but meanly dressed; nor does the other seem like his lackey. What are they talking about outside neighbor Haliford's shop, I wonder? I would give a silver penny to know. I will walk over presently, and smoke a pipe with him, and hear what he thinks of them."

The conversation which the host of the Bell had wished he could overhear was as follows:—

Hugh began it.

"Look, Master Rupert, before we go into the shop, let us talk over what you are going to order."

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"I am going to order a walking suit, Hugh, and a court suit for myself, and a suit for you."

"Yes, but what sort of a suit, Master Rupert?"

"I should say a walking suit, Hugh, such as would become a modest citizen."

"That's just it, Master Rupert. So far you have treated me as a friend; but now, sir, it must be different, for to do so any longer would not be seemly. You are going to be an officer; I am going to follow you as a trooper; but till we go to the war I must be dressed as your retainer. Not a lackey, perhaps, but a sort of confidential retainer. That will be best, Master Rupert, in every way."

Rupert was silent for a moment.

"Well, Hugh, perhaps that would be best; but you must remember that whatever we are before others, we are always friends when we are alone."

"Very well," Hugh said, "that is understood; but you know that alone or before others, I shall always be your faithful servant."

"What can I make you, sir?" the tailor asked, as the lads entered his shop.

Master Haliford was a small man; neat in his dress; a little fussy in manner. He was very upright, and seemed to look under rather than through the pair of horn spectacles which he wore. His look changed from affability to doubt as he took a nearer look at his intending customers.

"I need a suit such as a gentleman might wear at court," Rupert said, quietly, "and a walking or ordinary suit for myself; and a suit such as would be worn by a trusted retainer for my friend here."

The tailor put his head on one side, and rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

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"Have I had the honor of being recommended to you by the honorable gentleman your father?" he asked.

"No, indeed," Rupert said, "it was mine host at the Bell, who advised me that I could not do better than come to your shop."

"Ah, you are known to him, beyond doubt," John Haliford said, brightening.

"No, indeed," Rupert answered, "he was a stranger to me to within five minutes back."

"You must excuse my caution, young sir," John Haliford said, after another minute's reflection, "but it is the custom of us London tradesmen with those gentlemen who may honor us with their custom, and whom we have not the honor of knowing, to require payment, or at least a portion of payment, at the time of giving the order, and the rest at the time of delivery of the goods. In your case, sir, I am sure, an unnecessary piece of caution, but a rule from which I never venture to go."

"That is only fair and right," Rupert said. "I will pay half now, and the other half when the garments are completed, or if it please you, will pay the whole in advance."

"By no means, by no means," the tailor said with alacrity; "one-third in advance is my rule, sir. And now, sir, what color and material do you affect?"

"As sober both in hue and in material as may be," Rupert said, "and yet sufficiently in the fashion for me to wear in calling upon a nobleman of the court."

"Pardon me," the tailor said, "but perhaps you would condescend to take me into your confidence. There are noblemen, and noblemen. A tory lord, for instance, is generally a little richer in his color than a

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whig nobleman, for these affect a certain sobriety of air. With some again, a certain military cut is permitted, while with others this would be altogether out of place."

"I am going to the Earl of Marlborough," Rupert said, briefly.

"Dear me, dear me! indeed now!" the little tailor said with an instant and great accession of deference, for the Earl of Marlborough was the greatest man in the realm. "Had your honor mentioned that at first, I should not have ventured to hint at need for previous payment."

"What!" Rupert said, with a smile, "you would have broken your fixed rule! Surely not, Master Haliford."

The tailor looked sharply at his young customer. Whoever he might be, he was clearly no fool; and without more ado he brought forward his patterns and bent himself to the work in hand.

Having chosen the colors and stuffs for the suits of clothes, the lads returned to the Bell, where a supper of cold chicken and the remains of a fine sirloin awaited them, with two tankards of home-brewed ale. The next morning, before sallying out to see the town, Rupert wrote to his grandfather, asking his pardon for running away, expressing his intention of applying to the Earl of Marlborough for a cornetcy of horse, and giving his address at the Bell; asking him also to make his humble excuse to his lady mother, and to assure her of his devotion and respect, although circumstances had caused his apparent disobedience to her wishes.

Although there was a much greater amount of filial respect and obedience expressed in those days than now, human nature has differed but slightly in different

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ages of the world; and it is probable that sons went their own way quite as much as they do now, when there is very little talk either of obedience or respect. Indeed, the implicit obedience, and almost servile respect, which our forefathers expected from their sons, could not but in a great number of cases drive the sons to be hypocrites as well as undutiful; and our modern system of making our boys companions and friends, of taking an interest in all they do, and in teaching them to regard us as their natural advisers, has produced a generation of boys less outwardly respectful, no doubt, but as dutiful, and far more frank and truthful than those of the bygone times.

Rupert, finding that few of the citizens wore swords, and feeling that in his present attire he would attract attention by so doing, left his sword at the inn, and bought for Hugh and himself a couple of stout sticks—Hugh's a cudgel which would be useful in a hand well accustomed to single-stick, his own a cane of a wood such as he had never before seen—light, strong, and stiff. He chose it because it was well balanced in the hand. Then they sallied out into Cornhill, past the Exchange, erected by the worshipful citizen Sir Thomas Gresham, and then into Chepeside, where they were astonished at the wealth and variety of the wares displayed in the shops. Gazing into the windows, they frequently got into the way, and were saluted many times with the query, "Where are you going, stupids?" a question which Hugh was largely inclined to resent, and would have done so had not Rupert told him that evidently they did get into the way of the hurrying citizens, and that it was more wise to put up with rudeness than to embark in a series of quarrels, in which, moreover, as strangers, they were likely to get the worst of

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the dispute. St. Paul's Cathedral, then but newly finished, astonished them vastly with its size and magnificence, and they returned to the mid-day dinner at the Bell delighted with all that they had seen.

Asking the landlord how he would recommend them to pass the afternoon, he said that they could do no better than take a boat at London Bridge, and be rowed up to the village of Chelsea, where many of the nobility did dwell, and then coming back to Westminster might get out there, see the Abbey and the great Hall, and then walk back along the Strand.

The lads followed the advice, and were soon delighted and surprised with the great river, then pure and limpid, and covered with boats proceeding rapidly in all directions, for it was at that time the great highway of London. Tide was flowing and the river nearly full, and having given their waterman the intimation that time did not press, he rowed them very gently along in the centre of the stream, pointing out to them, when they had passed above the limits of the city, the various noblemen's houses scattered along the banks of the river. Off Westminster the waterman ceased rowing, to allow them to view the grand old Abbey; and then as they went on again, they marvelled at the contrast of the low, deserted marshes of Lambeth and Bankside, which contrasted so strongly with the magnificence and the life they had left behind. At Chelsea they admired the grand palace for the reception of old soldiers, and then—for the tide was turning now—floated back to Westminster. So long were they in going round the Abbey, and examining the tombs of the kings, that it was getting dark when they started eastward again, up past the Palace of Whitehall, and then along the Strand. Already the distance between the city and Westminster

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was connected with houses, and the junction of the two cities had fairly taken place.

Dim oil lamps were lighted here and there as they went along, foot passengers bore lanterns to enable them to pick their way across rough places, and link-men carried torches in front of sedan-chairs, in which ladies were being taken to fashionable entertainments, which then commenced at six o'clock.

All this was new and amusing to the boys; and having gone into a tavern near the Abbey, and partaken of some refreshment, they were not pressed for time; and it was near eight before they seriously thought of proceeding towards the city.

When a few hundred yards from Temple Bar, they heard a shouting and a scream down one of the streets leading to the river.

The street was deserted, but down at the farther end they could see the flash of sword blades, in the light of an oil lamp.

"Come along, Hugh; that is a woman's scream."

"Better not interfere, Master Rupert," Hugh said.

But Rupert had already darted off, and Hugh without a moment's hesitation followed in his steps.

At the end of the street they came upon a sedan-chair. The two porters stood surlily against the wall, menaced by the drawn swords of two men, standing over them, while two other men—evidently of higher rank, but enveloped in cloaks—were forcibly dragging a lady from the chair. They had thrown a cloak over her head to drown her cries.

As the lads came up, one of the men uttered a furious oath.

"Rolf, Simon! leave those fellows and keep these springalls back. They are but boys. I will whistle

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when I am in the boat. Now, mistress!" and he began to carry the lady away.

As the lads arrived, the servitors—for such they were by their appearance—leaving the chairmen, turned upon them. One of the chairmen at once ran off as fast as his legs could carry him; but the other, a sturdy fellow, leaped on the back of the man who had been guarding him, as the latter turned upon Rupert. Hugh was attacked by the other.

"Be careful, Hugh! keep out of reach of his point," Rupert cried; and darting past, he struck the man who had hold of the lady a sharp blow across the ankle, which brought him instantly to the ground with his burden.

The other gentleman drew his sword, and rushed upon Rupert. It was fortunate for the latter that he had chosen his stick for lightness and balance, for it moved as quickly and easily as a foil. Without a thought of guarding, his assailant rushed at him to run him through; but Rupert parried the thrust, and in turn drove the end of his stick, with all his force, into his opponent's stomach. The man instantaneously doubled up with a low cry, and fell on the ground.

Then the other man, who had by this time risen to his feet, in turn rushed furiously at Rupert. A few times the sword and stick scraped and rasped against each other, and then Rupert lunged full at the other's face!

There was a loud cry, an oath, and then, as the sound of the watch running down the street, led by the chairman who had run away, was heard, the man took to his feet and fled. The lackey who had engaged Hugh, and who had in vain endeavored to get to close quarters with the lad, imitated his example; but the prostrate

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man on the ground, and the fellow held by the chairman, were seized by the watch.

Rupert turned to the young lady, who, having now disencumbered herself of the folds of the cloak over her head, was leaning, half fainting, against the chair.

Taking off his hat and bowing deeply, he expressed his hope that she had suffered no harm through the unmannerly assault upon her.

"I thank you greatly, sir," she said, speaking with a slightly foreign accent. "I am unhurt, although somewhat breathless. I owe you my deep gratitude for rescue from these evil-minded men."

"What may be your name, mistress?" one of the watch asked. "You will be needed to-morrow to testify against these men."

"My name is Maria Von Duyk, and I reside at present with the worthy alderman, Peter Hawkins, to whom I was returning in the chair, as the chairmen will tell you, after a visit to Mistress Vanloct, whose house we had just left when molested."

"And yours, young sir?" the watchman asked.

"My name is Rupert Holliday. I am staying at the Bell, in Bishopsgate Street."

"You will both have to be present to-morrow morning before the worshipful magistrate Master Forman, at Westminster."

The watch now secured the man on the ground, who was recovering from the effect of the violent thrust in the stomach, and putting handcuffs on him and the other, led them away.

"You will permit me, I trust, to escort you to your door," Rupert said, as he ceremoniously handed the young lady into her chair.

"Yes, indeed, sir; and I trust that you will enter,

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and allow Dame Hawkins to add her thanks to mine."

Rupert bowed, and the chair being closed the chairmen lifted it, and with Rupert and Hugh following, proceeded eastward.

When they arrived at the house of Alderman Hawkins, in Lawrence Pulteney, the young lady on alighting begged Rupert to enter; but the latter excused himself on account of the hour, but said that he would call next morning, and would, if allowed, accompany her and the alderman to give evidence as to the assault.

On arriving next morning, Rupert was overwhelmed with thanks by the alderman, his wife, and Mistress Maria Von Duyk, all of whom were much surprised at his youth, for in the dim light of the preceding evening the young lady had not perceived that her rescuer was a mere lad.

Rupert found that there was no occasion to go before the magistrate, for the alderman having sent down early to the watchhouse to inquire at what hour their presence would be required, found that the prisoners had been rescued on their way to the watchhouse, by a party of armed men.

"We are," the alderman said, "well aware who was the leader of the assailants, the man who escaped. Sir Richard Fulke is a ruined gamester, and is a distant relation of Dame Vanloct, whom my young friend was yesterday visiting. Knowing the wealth of Mistress Von Duyk's good father, he has sought to mend his ruined fortune by a match with her. At the urgent request of Mistress Von Duyk I wrote to him, saying that his attentions were unpleasing to her, and that they must be discontinued, or that she could no longer visit at Dame Vanloct's, where she usually had met him.

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This was a week since. He replied courteously, regretting that the deep devotion he felt was unrequited but withdrawing from the undertaking of trying to win her, and promising that henceforth she should be no longer troubled with his presence when she visited Dame Vanloct. This was of course done to lull our suspicion. When the chair was stopped yesterday, Maria at once recognized his voice. As they dragged her from the chair, he said,—

"'Quick! hurry her down to the boat.'

"There is no doubt upon my mind that he intended to carry her off, and compel her to marry him. I bethought me at first of applying to the secretary of state for a warrant for his arrest to answer for this outrage, but Mistress Maria leaves us to-morrow for Holland, and the process would delay her departure, and would cause a scandal and talk very unpleasant to herself, and which would greatly offend my good friend her father. Had the men in custody been brought up this morning, there would have been no choice but to have carried the matter through. It was then a relief to us to find that they had escaped. I have told you this, young sir, as your due after having rescued Mistress Von Duyk from so great a peril. Now, as to yourself, believe me if my friendship and assistance can in any way advantage you, they are at your service. Even of your name I am yet in ignorance."

Rupert thanked the worthy alderman, and then stated that he was the grandson of Colonel Holliday, of Windthorpe Chace, in Derbyshire, and had come up to London to wait upon the Earl of Marlborough, who had promised him his protection and a cornetcy in a regiment of horse for service in Holland.

"In that case, sir," Mistress Von Duyk said, "it is

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like you may come to Dort. If so, believe me that my father, whom I shall tell how much we are indebted to you, will not be backward in manifesting his gratitude for the great service that you have rendered to his daughter."

"How were you thinking of passing the day?" the alderman asked.

"I had no plan," Rupert said. "In truth, I am waiting to call upon the Earl of Marlborough until Master Haliford has fashioned me a suit of clothes fitted for such an occasion; he has promised them for this evening."

"Would it please you to go down the river? I have a boat, and if you would like to see the shipping of this great port, and the palace at Greenwich for our seamen, my boatmen will take you down; and you will, I trust, return and take your midday meal with us."

And so it was arranged; and as Rupert and Hugh were rowed down the river, lost in wonder at the numerous craft that lay there, Hugh admitted that Rupert's interference in a business which was no concern of his had turned out a fortunate occurrence.

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CHAPTER V.

THE FENCING-SCHOOL.

It was with no small trepidation that Rupert Holliday ascended the steps of the Earl of Marlborough's residence in Pall Mall. Hugh accompanied him thus far and stopped at the door, outside which, in the court-yard, and in the hall were standing many lackeys who had attended their masters. Rupert felt very young, and the somewhat surprised looks of the servants in the hall at his appearance, added to his feeling of youth. He was shown into an ante-chamber, where a number of officers of all ranks, of courtiers, and politicians, were assembled, talking in groups. Rupert felt alone and uncomfortable among this crowd of distinguished men, none of whom did he know, and no one paid the smallest attention to him. He had on entering written his name down in a book in the hall, whence it would be taken in with others to the great man.

Presently an officer in general's uniform came out from an inner room, and an instant afterwards the earl himself appeared. Not only was John Churchill one of the most handsome men in Europe, but he was the most courtly and winning in manner; and Rupert, shrinking back from observation, watched with admiration as he moved round the room, stopping to say a few words here, shaking hands there, listening to a short urgent person, giving an answer to a petition, before presented

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by another, giving pleasure and satisfaction wherever he moved. Rupert saw, however, that even while speaking his eye was wandering round the room, and directly he perceived him he walked straight towards him, those standing between falling back as he advanced.

"Ah, my young friend, he said, warmly, holding out his hand to Rupert, "I was expecting you. Sir John Loveday, Lord Fairholm," he said, turning to two young gentlemen near, "let me present to you Master Rupert Holliday, grandson of Colonel Holliday, one of the bravest of our cavaliers, and who I can guarantee has inherited the skill and courage of his grandfather. He will make the campaign in Holland with you, gentlemen, for his commission has been made out to-day in her Majesty's fifth regiment of dragoons. I will speak to you more, presently, Rupert."

So saying, the earl moved away among his visitors, leaving Rupert flushed with pleasure and confusion. The young gentlemen to whom the earl had introduced him, much surprised at the flattering manner in which the great general had spoken of the lad before them, at once entered into conversation with him, and hearing that he was but newly come to London, offered to show him the various places where men of fashion resorted, and begged him to consider them at his disposal. Rupert, who had been carefully instructed by his grandfather in courtly expression and manner, returned many thanks to the gentlemen for their obliging offers, of which, after he had again spoken to the earl, and knew what commands he would lay upon him, he would thankfully avail himself.

It was nearly an hour before the Earl of Marlborough had made the round of the ante-chamber, but the time passed quickly to Rupert. The room was full of men

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whose names were prominent in the history of the time, and these Sir John Loveday, and Lord Fairholm, who were lively young men, twenty-two or twenty-three years old, pointed out to him, often telling him a merry story or some droll jest regarding them. There was St. John, handsome, but delicate-looking, with a half sneer on his face, and dressed in the extremity of fashion, with a coat of peach-colored velvet with immense cuffs, crimson leather shoes with diamond buckles; his sword was also diamond-hilted, his hands were almost hidden in lace ruffles, and he wore his hair in ringlets of some twenty inches in length, tied behind with a red ribbon. The tall man, with a haughty but irritable face, in the scarlet uniform of a general officer, was the Earl of Peterborough. There too were Godolphin and Orford, both leading members of the cabinet, the Earl of Sutherland, the Dukes of Devonshire and Newcastle, Lord Nottingham, and many others.

At last the audience was over, and the minister, bowing to all, withdrew, and the visitors began to leave. A lackey came up to Rupert and requested him to follow him; and bidding adieu to his new friends, who both gave him their addresses and begged him to call upon them, he followed the servant into the hall and upstairs into a cosey room, such as would now be called a boudoir. There stood the Earl of Marlborough, by the chair in which a lady of great beauty and commanding air was sitting.

"Sarah," he said, "this is my young friend, Rupert Holliday, who as you know did me good service in the midlands."

The countess held out her hand kindly to Rupert, and he bent over it and touched it with his lips.

"You must remember you are my friend as well as

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my husband's," she said. "He tells me you saved his life; and although I can scarce credit the tale, seeing how young you are, yet courage and skill dwell not necessarily in great bodies. Truly, Master Holliday, I am deeply indebted to you; and Sarah Churchill is true in her friendships."

"As in her hates, eh?" laughed the earl.

Between the Earl of Marlborough and his wife there existed no common affection. They were passionately attached to each other; and the earl's letters show that at all times, even when in the field surrounded by difficulties, harassed by opposition, menaced with destruction by superior forces, his thoughts were turned affectionately towards her, and he was ever wishing that the war would end that he might return to her side. She on her part was equally attached to him, but much as she strove to add to his power and to forward his plans, her haughty and violent temper was the main cause of the unmerited disgrace into which he fell with his royal mistress, who owed so much to him personally, and whose reign he did so much to render a brilliant and successful one. At the present time, however, she stood upon the footing of the closest intimacy and affection with Queen Anne. The earl then introduced Rupert to those other ladies who were present; the eldest, his daughter Lady Harriet, recently married to Mr. Godolphin; the second, Anne, married to Lord Spencer; and the two daughters still unmarried, aged sixteen and seventeen respectively.

Rupert was so confused with the earl's kindness, that he had difficulty in finding words, but he made a great effort, and expressed in proper set terms his thankfulness to the countess for her great kindness to him, and of his own want of deserts.

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"There," the countess said, "that will do very nicely and prettily; and now put it aside until we are in public, and talk in your own natural way. So you have been fighting again, have you, and well-nigh killing young Master Brownlow?"

Rupert was completely astounded at this address; and the earl said, laughing,—

"I told you that I expected you. The worthy colonel your grandfather wrote me a letter, which I received this morning, telling me the incident which had taken place, and your sudden disappearance, stating that he doubted not you had made for London, and begging—which indeed was in no way necessary—my protection on your behalf?"

"Did my grandfather say, sir," Rupert asked, anxiously, "aught of the state of Master Brownlow?"

"Yes; he said that the leech had strong hopes that he would recover."

"I am indeed glad of that," Rupert said; "for I had no ill will to him."

"We must be careful of you, Master Holliday," the countess said; "for if you go on like this you will much diminish the number of the queen's subjects."

"I can assure your grace," Rupert said earnestly, "that I am no brawler, and am not quarrelsome by nature, and that the thought of shedding blood, except of the foes of my country in battle, pains me much."

"I'll warrant me you are the mildest-tempered boy alive," the earl said. "Now tell me frankly: you have been in London some forty-eight hours; have you passed that time without getting into a fray or quarrel of any kind?"

Rupert turned scarlet with confusion.

"His looks betray him," the earl laughed. "Look,

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girls, at the mild-tempered young gentleman. Now, out with it. How was it?"

Thus exhorted, Rupert stammeringly gave an account of the fray in which he had been engaged.

"Von Duyk!" the earl said. "She must be a daughter of the great merchant of Dort—a useful friend to have made maybe, Master Holliday; and it may be that your adventure may yet be of service to the state. Never speak now, Master Rupert, of your peaceful intentions. You take after your namesake, the Prince, and are a veritable knight-errant of adventure. The sooner I have you over in Holland fighting the queen's enemies, and not the queen's subjects, the better. Now tell me, where have you taken up your abode?"

"At the Bell, at Bishopsgate Street," Rupert answered.

"And your follower, for I know one accompanied you; where is he?"

"He waits without, sir."

The earl touched a hand bell.

"Fetch in Master Holliday's retainer; you will find him without. Make him at home in the servant's hall. Send a messenger down to the Bell at Bishopsgate, fetch hither the mails of Master Holliday; he will remain as my guest at present."

Rupert now entered upon a life very different to that which he had led hitherto. He received a letter from Colonel Holliday, enclosing an order on a London banker for fifty pounds, and he was soon provided with suits of clothes fit for balls and other occasions. Wherever the earl went, Rupert accompanied him as one of his personal followers; and the frank, straightforward manners of the lad pleased the ladies of the court, and

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thus "Little Holliday," as he was called, soon became a great favorite.

It was about a fortnight after his arrival in town that, for the first time, he accompanied his friends Sir John Loveday and Lord Fairholm to the fencing-school of Maître Dalboy, the great fencing-master of the day. Rupert had been looking forward much to this visit, as he was anxious to see what was the degree of proficiency of the young court gallants in the art which he so much loved.

Maître Dalboy's school was a fashionable lounge of the young men of the court and army. It was a large and lofty room, and some six assistants were in the act of giving instructions to beginners, or of fencing with more advanced students, when the trio entered. Maître Dalboy himself came up to greet them, for both Rupert's friends had been his pupils.

"You are strangers," he said, reproachfully. "How are your muscles to keep in good order, and your eye true, if you do not practice? It is heartrending! I take every pains to turn out accomplished swordsmen; and no sooner have my pupils learned something of the business, than they begin to forget it."

"We shall begin to put your teaching into effect before long, Maître Dalboy," Sir John Loveday said, with a smile, "for we are going over to join the army in Holland in a few weeks, and we shall then have an opportunity of trying the utility of the parries you have taught us."

"It is too bad," the Frenchman said, shrugging his shoulders, "that my pupils should use the science I have taught them, against my countrymen; but what would you have? It is the fortune of war. Is this young gentleman a new pupil that you have brought me?"

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"No, indeed," Lord Fairholm said; "this is Master Rupert Holliday, a cornet in the 5th regiment of dragoons, who is also about to start for Holland."

"I have had the advantage of learning from a countryman of yours, M. Dalboy," Rupert said, "a M. Dessin, who is good enough to teach the noble art in the town of Derby."

"Dessin! Dessin!" Maître Dalboy said, thoughtfully. "I do not remember the name among our maîtres d'escrime."

"The Earl of Marlborough himself vouches for the skill of Master Holliday with the sword. His grandfather, Colonel Holliday, was, I believe, noted as one of the finest blades at the court of St. Germains."

"I have heard of him," M. Dalboy said, with interest. "Let me think; he wounded the Marquis de Beauchamp, who was considered one of the best swordsmen in France. Yes, yes, his fame as a swordsman is still remembered. And he is alive yet?"

"Alive and active," Rupert said; "and although, as he says himself, he has lost some of his quickness of reposte there are, M. Dessin says, few fencers who could even now treat him lightly."

"And you have had the benefit of his instruction as well as that of my countryman?" M. Dalboy asked.

"Yes," Rupert said, "my grandfather, although he cares not at his age for prolonged exercise, has yet made a point of giving me for a few minutes each day the benefit of his skill."

"I should like to have a bout with you, Master Holliday," M. Dalboy said; "will you take a foil? I am curious to see what the united teaching of my countryman and that noted swordsman Colonel Holliday may have done. To me, as a master, it is interesting to dis-

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cover what is possible with good teachers, when the science is begun young. What may your age be, Master Holliday?"

"I am four months short of sixteen," Rupert said, "and I shall be very proud of the honor of crossing swords with so famed a master as yourself, if you think me worthy of so great a privilege."

There was quite a sensation in the fencing-school, round which were gathered some forty or fifty of the young men of the day, when Maître Dalboy called for his plastron and foil, for it was seldom indeed, and then only with swordsmen of altogether exceptional strength that M. Dalboy condescended to fence, contenting himself ordinarily with walking about the school and giving a hint now and then to those fencing with his assistants, not, perhaps, more than once a week taking a foil in his hand to illustrate some thrust or guard which he was inculcating. At this call, therefore, there was a general silence; and every one turned to see who was the fencer whom the great master thus signally designed to honor.

Great was the astonishment when, as M. Dalboy divested himself of his coat and vest, the lad who had entered with Lord Fairholm and Sir John Loveday was seen similarly to prepare for the contest.

"Who is he? What singular freak is this of the maître to take up a foil with a boy?" was the question which ran round the room.

Several of those present had met Rupert Holliday, and could give his name; but none could account for the freak on the part of the master.

Fortunately Rupert was unacquainted with the fact that what seemed to him a natural occurrence was an extraordinary event in the eyes of all assembled, and he

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therefore experienced no feeling of nervousness whatever. He knew that Colonel Holliday was a master of the sword, and his grandfather had told him that M. Dessin was an altogether exceptional swordsman; as he knew himself to be fully a match for the latter, he felt sure that, however perfect a master M. Dalboy might be, he need not fear discrediting his master, even if his present opponent should prove more than his match.

There was a dead silence of curiosity at the singularity of the affair, as Rupert Holliday took his post face to face with the master; but a murmur of surprise and admiration ran round the room at the grace and perfection of accuracy with which Rupert went through the various parades which were then customary before the combatants crossed swords.

Rupert felt as calm and as steady as when fencing at home, and determined to use all his caution as well as all his skill; for not only did he feel that his own strength was upon trial, but that the honor of the teachers who had taken such pains with him was concerned in the result. The swords had scarcely crossed when an expression of surprise passed across Maître Dalboy's face. The first few passes showed him that in this lad he had found an opponent of no ordinary character, and that all his skill would be needed to obtain a victory over him. For the first few minutes each fought cautiously, feeling each other's strength rather than attempting to attack seriously. Then the master dropped his point.

"Ma foi! young sir, you have done monsieur le colonel and my compatriot justice. I offer you my congratulations."

"They are premature, sir," Rupert said, smiling; "you have not as yet begun."

The silence in the school was even more profound

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when the swords again crossed than it had been when the bout began, for wonder had now taken the place of amused curiosity. The struggle now commenced in earnest. Several times at first Rupert narrowly escaped being touched, for the master's play was new to him. The thrusts and feints, the various attacks, were all familiar; but whereas Colonel Holliday had fought simply with his head, standing immovably in one place, and M. Dessin had, although quick to advance and fall back, fought comparatively on the defensive, while he himself had been the assailant from his superior activity, M. Dalboy was as quick and as active as himself, and the rapidity of the attacks, the quick bounds, the swift rushes, at first almost bewildered him; but gradually, as he grew accustomed to the play, he steadied himself and eluded the master's attacks with an activity as great as his own.

In vain M. Dalboy employed every feint, every combination in his repertoire. Rupert was always prepared, for from one or other of his teachers he had learnt the defence to be employed against each; and at last, as the master, exhausted with his exertions, flagged a little, Rupert in turn took the offensive. Now M. Dalboy's skill stood him in equal stead to defend himself against Rupert's rapid attacks and lightning-like passes and thrusts; and although the combat had lasted without a second's interruption for nearly a quarter of an hour, neither combatant had touched the other.

At last Rupert saw by his opponent's eye that a new and special combination was about to be put into action against him, and he instantly steadied himself to resist it. It came with the rapidity of thought, but Rupert recognized it by the first pass as the very last combination which M. Dessin had taught him, assuring him at

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the time that he would find it irresistible, for that there were not three men in Europe acquainted with it. He met the attack then with the defence which M. Dessin had showed him to be the sure escape, ending with a wrench which nearly tore the sword from the hand of his opponent. M. Dalboy sprang back on guard, with a look of profound astonishment; and then throwing down his foil, he threw himself, in the impetuous manner of his countrymen, on Rupert's neck, and embraced him.

"Mon dieu! mon dieu!" he exclaimed, "you are incroyable, you are a miracle. Gentlemen," he said, turning to those present, when the burst of enthusiastic applause which greeted the conclusion of this extraordinary contest subsided, "you see in this young gentleman one of the finest swordsmen in Europe. I do not say the finest, for he has not touched me, and having no idea of his force I extended myself rashly at first; but I may say he is my equal. Never but once have I crossed swords with such a fencer, and I doubt if even he was as strong. His parry to my last attack was miraculous. It was a *coup* invented by myself, and brought to perfection with that one I speak of. I believed no one else knew it, and have ever reserved it for a last extremity; but his defence even to the last wrench, which would have disarmed any other man but myself, and even me had I not known that it should have come then, was perfect; it was astounding. This maître of yours—this M. Dessin," he went on, turning to Rupert, "must be a wonder. Ah!" he said suddenly, and as if to himself; "c'est bien possible! What was he like, this M. Dessin?"

"He is tall, and slight except as to his shoulders, where he is very broad."

"And he has a little scar here, has he not?" the fencing master said, pointing to his temple.

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"Yes," Rupert said, surprised; "I have often noticed it."

"Then it is he," M. Dalboy said, "the swordsman of whom I spoke. No wonder you parried my *coup*. I had wondered what had become of him. And you know him as M. Dessin? and he teaches fencing?"

"Yes," Rupert said; "but my grandfather always said that M. Dessin was only an assumed name, and that he was undoubtedly of noble blood."

"Your grandfather was right," the master said. "Yes, you have had wonderful masters; but unless I had seen it, I should not have believed that even the best masters in the world could have turned out such a swordsman as you at your age."

By this time the various couples had begun fencing again, and the room resounded with the talk of the numerous lookers-on, who were all discoursing on what appeared to them, as to M. Dalboy, the almost miraculous occurrence of a lad under sixteen holding his own against a man who had the reputation of being the finest maître in Europe. Lord Fairholm, Sir John Loveday, and other gentlemen, now came round.

"I was rather thinking," Sir John said, with a laugh, "of taking you under my protection, Master Holliday, and fighting your battles for you, as an old boy does for a young one at school; but it must even be the other way. And by my faith, if any German Ritter or French swordsman should challenge the British dragoons to a trial of the sword, we shall put you forth as our David."

"I trust that that may not be," Rupert said; "for though in battle I hope that I shall not be found wanting, yet I trust that I shall have nought to do in private quarrels, but be looked upon as one of a peaceful disposition."

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"Very peaceful, doubtless!" laughed Lord Fairholm. "Tell me, Master Rupert, honestly now, didst ever use in earnest that sword that you have just shown that you know so well how to wield?"

Rupert flushed up crimson. "Yes," he said, with a shamefaced look, "I have twice used my sword in self-defence."

"Ha, ha! our peaceful friend!" laughed Lord Fairholm. "And tell me, didst put an end to both unfortunates?"

Rupert colored still more deeply. "I had the misfortune to slay one, my lord; but there are good hopes that the other will recover."

A general shout of laughter greeted the announcement, which together with Rupert's evident shamefaced look, was altogether too much for their gravity.

Just at this moment a diversion was caused by a young man dressed in the extreme of fashion who entered the school. He had a dissipated and jaded air.

"Fulke, where hast been?" one of the group standing round Rupert asked. "We have missed you these two weeks. Some one said you had been roughly mauled, and had even lost some teeth. Is it so?'

"It is," the new-comer said, with an angry scowl. "Any beauty I once may have had is gone forever. I have lost three of my upper teeth, and two of my lower, and I am learning now to speak with my lips shut, so as to hide the gap."

"But how came it about?"

"I was walking down a side street off the Strand, when four men sprang out and held my hands to my side, another snatched my watch and purse, and as I gave a cry for the watch, he smote me with the pommel of his rapier in my mouth, then throwing

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me on the ground the villains took to their heels together."

The exclamations of commiseration and indignation which arose around were abruptly checked by a loud laugh from Rupert.

There was a dead silence and Sir Richard Fulke, turning his eyes with fury towards the lad who had dared to jeer at his misfortune, demanded why he laughed.

"I could not help but laugh," Rupert said, "although doubtless it was unmannerly; but your worship's story reminded me so marvellously of the tale of the stout knight, Sir John Falstaff's adventure with the men of buckram."

"What mean you?" thundered Sir Richard.

"I mean, sir" Rupert said, quietly, "that your story has not one word of truth in it. I came upon you in that side street off the Strand, as you were trying to carry off by force, aided by a rascal named Captain Copper, a lady, whose name shall not be mentioned here. I had not my sword with me, but with a walking-stick I trounced your friend the captain, and then, with my stick against your rapier, I knocked out those teeth you regret, with a fair thrust. If my word is doubted, gentlemen, Alderman Hawkins, who heard the details of the matter from the young lady and her chairmen, can vouch for it."

A cry of fury burst from Sir Richard Fulke; and drawing his sword he would have sprung upon the lad, who had not only disfigured him for life, but now made him the laughing-stock of society, for the tale would, he knew, spread far and wide. Several of the gentlemen threw themselves between him and Rupert.

"I will have his life's blood!" he exclaimed, strug-

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DRAWING HIS SWORD, HE WOULD HAVE SPRUNG UPON THE LAD.

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gling in the arms of those who would hold him back. "I will kill the dog as he stands."

"Sir Richard Fulke," Lord Fairholm said, "Master Holliday is a friend of mine, and will give you an honorable meeting when you will; but I should advise you to smother your choler. It seems he proved himself with a stick your superior, although armed with a sword, and Master Dalboy will tell you that it is better to leave him alone."

Master Dalboy was standing by, and going up to Sir Richard, said,—

"Sir, if you will take my poor advice you will go your way, and leave Master Holliday to himself. He has, as those here will tell you, proved himself fully my equal as a swordsman, and could kill you if only armed with a six-inch dagger against your sword. It would be safer for you to challenge the whole of those in this present company than to cross swords with him."

A few words from those standing round corroborated a statement which at first appeared fabulous; and then finding that an open encounter with Rupert would be the worst possible method of obtaining satisfaction for the injuries he had received, Sir Richard Fulke flung himself out of the school, muttering deep vows of future vengeance.

"You have made a dangerous enemy," Lord Fairholm said, as the three friends walked homeward. "He bears a bad character, and is a reckless and ruined man. After what he has heard of your skill as a swordsman he will, we may be sure, take no open steps against you; but it is certain that he will scheme night and day for vengeance. When the report gets abroad of his cock-and-bull story, and the true history of the loss of his teeth, he will not be able to show his face in pub-

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lic for some time; but he will be none the less dangerous. Through that notorious ruffian, Captain Copper, he can dispose of half the cut-throats about the town, and I should advise you not to go out after dark until you have put the seas between you and him, and even then you had better be cautious for a time."

Rupert agreed with his friend's advice, and the next day begged his patron to let him embark at once for Holland, in a ship that was to sail with troops from London Bridge. He urged as his reason for desiring to go at once, his wish to learn something at least of his duties before the campaign began.

As the earl had already heard a rumor of the scene in the fencing-school, he made no opposition to the plan, and the next day Rupert, accompanied by Hugh, sailed down the Thames, bound for Rotterdam.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE WAR OF SUCCESSION.

THE war which was about to commence, and which Rupert Holliday sailed for the Hague to take part in, was one of the grandest and most extensive struggles that ever devastated Europe, embracing as it did the whole of the central and western nations of the continent. In fact, with the exception of Russia, still in the depths of barbarism, and Italy, which was then a battle-field rather than a nation, all the states of Europe were ranged on one side or the other.

As Charles the Second of Spain approached his end, the liveliest interest was felt as to his succession. He had no children, and the hopes and fears of all the continental nations were excited by the question of the disposal of the then vast dominions of Spain. The principal powers of Europe, dreading the consequences of this great empire being added to the power of any one monarch, entered into a secret treaty, which was signed at the Hague in 1698, by which it was agreed that Spain itself should be ceded to the Electoral Prince of Bavaria, with Flanders and the Low Countries; Naples, Sicily, Tuscany, and Guipuscoa, were to fall to France; and the Duchy of Milan to the archduke, son of the Emperor of Germany. Holland was to gain a considerable accession of territory. England, one of the signatories to the treaty, was to gain nothing by the division.

The contents of this treaty leaked out, and the king

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of Spain, after a consultation with Austria, who was also indignant at the secret treaty, made a will bequeathing all his dominions to the Elector of Bavaria. Had that prince lived, all the complications which ensued would probably have been avoided, but he died, the 9th February, 1699, and the whole question was thereby again opened. Another secret treaty was made, between England, France, and Holland, and signed on the 13th March, 1700, at the Hague. By this treaty it was agreed that France was to receive Naples, Sicily, Guipuscoa, and Lorraine; the Archduke Charles—Spain, the Low Countries, and the Indies, and the Spanish colonies were to be divided between Holland and England, As both England and Holland were at the time in alliance with Spain, it must be admitted that their secret arrangement for the partition of her territories was of a very infamous character.

Louis of France, while apparently acting with the other powers, secretly communicated the contents of the treaty to Charles II. The Spanish king was naturally dismayed at the great conspiracy to divide his kingdom at his death, and he convened his council of state and submitted the matter to them. It was apparent that France, by far the most powerful of the other continental states, could alone avert the division, and the states-general therefore determined to unite the interests of France and Spain by appointing the Duc d'Anjou, grandson of the King of France, sole heir to the vast empire of Spain.

The news that Spain and France were henceforth to be united caused the greatest consternation to the rest of the States, and all Europe began to arm. Very shortly after signing the bequest, the old King of Spain died, and the Duc d'Anjou ascended the throne. The

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Spanish Netherlands, governed by the young Elector of Bavaria, as Lieutenant-General of Spain, at once gave in their adhesion to the new monarch. The distant colonies all accepted his rule, as did the great Spanish possessions in Italy; while the principal European nations acknowledged him as successor of Charles II.

The new empire seemed indeed of preponderating strength. Bavaria united herself in a firm alliance with France and Spain; and these three countries, with Italy and Flanders, appeared capable of giving the law to the world. England, less affected than the continental powers by the dominance of this powerful coalition, might have remained quiet, had not the French King thrown down the gauntlet of defiance. On the 16th September, 1701, James II., the exiled King of England, died, and Louis at once acknowledged his son as King of Great Britain and Ireland. This act was nothing short of a public declaration of war, not only against the reigning monarch of England, but against the established religion of our country. The exiled prince was a Roman Catholic, Louis was the author of the most terrible persecution of the Protestants that ever occurred in Europe. Thus the action of the French king rallied round William III. all the Protestant feeling of the nation, both houses of Parliament voted loyal addresses, and the nation prepared for the great struggle before it. The king labored to establish alliances and a plan for common action, and all was in readiness, when his sudden death left the guidance of affairs in other hands. These hands were, happily for England, those of the Earl of Marlborough, the finest diplomatist, as well as the greatest soldier, of his time.

The struggle which was approaching was a gigantic

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one. On one side were France and Spain, open to attack on one side only, and holding moreover Flanders, and almost the whole of Italy, with the rich treasures of the Indies upon which to draw for supplies. The alliance of Bavaria, with a valiant population, extended the offensive power of the coalition into the heart of Austria.

Upon the other hand were the troops of Austria, England, Holland, Hanover, Hesse Cassel, and the lesser states of Germany, with a contingent of troops, from Prussia and Denmark. In point of numbers the nations ranged on either side were about equal; but while France, Spain, and Bavaria formed a compact body under the guidance of Louis, the allies were divided by separate, and often opposing interests and necessities, while Austria was almost neutralized by a dangerous Hungarian insurrection that was going on, and by the danger of a Turkish invasion which the activity of French diplomacy kept continually hanging over it. The coalition was weakened in the field by the jealousies of the commanders of the various nationalities, and still more by the ignorance and timidity of the Dutch deputies, which Holland insisted on keeping at headquarters, with the right of veto on all proceedings.

On the side of the allies the following were the arrangements for the opening of the campaign. A German army under Louis, Margrave of Baden, was to be collected on the upper Rhine to threaten France on the side of Alsace; a second corps, 25,000 strong, composed of Prussian troops and Dutch, under the Prince of Saarbruck, were to undertake the siege of Kaiserwerth, a small but very important fortress, on the right bank of the Rhine, two leagues below Dusseldorf. The main army, 35,000 strong, under the Earl of Athlone, was

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destined to cover the frontier of Holland, from the Rhine to the Vecun, and also to cover the siege of Kaiserwerth; while a fourth body, of 10,000 men, under General Cohorn, were collected near the mouth of the Scheldt, and threatened the district of Bruges.

Upon the other side the French had been equally active. On the Lower Rhine a force was stationed to keep that of Cohorn in check. Marshal Tallard, with 15,000 men, came down from the Upper Rhine to interrupt the siege of Kaiserwerth, while the main army, 45,000 strong, under the Duke of Burgundy and Marshal Boufflers, was posted in the Bishopric of Liege, resting on the tremendous chain of fortresses of Flanders, all of which were in Freneh possession, and strongly garrisoned by French and Spanish soldiers.

At the time, however, when the vessel containing Rupert Holliday and Hugh Parsons sailed up the Scheldt, early in the month of May, these arrangements were not completed, but both armies were waiting for the conflict.

The lads had little time for the examination of the Hague, now the dullest and most quiet of European capitals, but then a bustling city, full of life and energy; for, with the troops who had arrived with them, they received orders to march at once to join the camp formed at Breda. Accustomed to a quiet English country life, the activity and bustle of camp life were at once astonishing and delightful. The journey from the Hague had been a pleasant one. Rupert rode one of the two horses with which the Earl of Marlborough had presented him, Hugh the other; and as a portion of the soldiers with them were infantry, the marches were short and easy; while the stoppages at quaint Dutch villages, the solemn ways of whose inhabitants, their

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huge breeches, and disgust at the disturbance of their usual habits when the troops were quartered upon them, were a source of great amusement to them.

Upon reaching the camp they soon found their way to their regiment. Here Rupert presented to Colonel Forbes the letter of recommendation with which the Earl of Marlborough had provided him, and was at once introduced by him to his brother officers, most of them young men, but all some years older than himself. His frank, pleasant, boyish manner at once won for him a cordial acceptance, and the little cornet, as he was called in the regiment, soon became a general favorite.

Hugh, who had formally enlisted in the regiment before leaving England, was on arrival handed over to a sergeant; and the two lads were, with other recruits, incessantly drilled from morning till night, to render them efficient soldiers before the day of trial arrived.

Rupert shared a tent with the other two officers of his troop, Captain Lauriston, a quiet Scotchman, and Lieutenant Dillon, a young Irishman, full of fun and life.

There were in camp three regiments of British cavalry and six of infantry, and as they were far from the seat of war, there was for the present nothing to do but to drill, and prepare for the coming campaign. Rupert was delighted with the life, for although the work for the recruits was hard, the weather was splendid, supplies abundant—for the Dutch farm-wives and their daughters brought ducks, and geese, and eggs into the camp—and all were in high spirits at the thought of the approaching campaign. Every night there were gatherings round the fire, when songs were sung and stories told. Most of the officers had before campaigned in Holland, under King William, and many had fought in Ireland, and had stirring tales of the Boyne, of the siege

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of Athlone, and of fierce encounters with the brave but undisciplined Irish. At the end of a month's hard work. Rupert began to understand his duties, for in those days the amount of drill deemed necessary for a trooper was small indeed in proportion to that which he has now to master. Rupert was already a good rider, and soon learned where was his proper place as cornet in each evolution, and the orders that it behooved him to give. The foot drill was longer and more difficult, for in those days dragoons fought far more on foot than is now the case, although at this epoch they had already ceased to be considered as mounted infantry, and had taken their true place as cavalry. Rupert's broadsword drill lasted but a very short time; upon the drill sergeant asking him if he knew anything of that weapon, he said that he could play at singlestick, but had never practised with the broadsword. His instructor, however, found that a very few lessons were sufficient to enable him to perform the required cuts and guards with sufficient proficiency, and very speedily claimed the crown which Rupert promised him on his dismissal from the class.

Week after week passed in inactivity, and the troops chafed mightily thereat, the more so that stirring events were proceeding elsewhere. The siege of Kaiserwerth, by a body of 15,000 German troops, had begun on the 18th of April, and the attack and defence were alike obstinate and bloody. The Earl of Athlone, with his covering forces lay at Cleves, and a sharp cavalry fight between 1000 of the allied cavalry and 700 French horse took place on the 27th of April. The French were defeated, with the loss of 400 men; but as the victors lost 300, it is clear that both sides fought with extreme determination and bravery, such a loss—700 men out of 1700 combatants—being extraordinarily large. The

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spirit shown by both sides in this, the first fight of the war, was a portent of the obstinate manner in which all the battles of this great war were contested. For two months Kaiserwerth nobly defended itself. Seventy-eight guns and mortars thundered against it night and day. On the 9th of June the besiegers made a desperate assault and gained possession of a covered way, but at a cost of 2000 killed and wounded. A week later the place capitulated after a siege which had cost the allies 5000 men.

General Boufflers with his army of 37,000 men finding himself unable to raise the siege, determined to make a dash against Nimeguen, an important frontier fortress of Holland, but which the supineness of the Dutch Government had allowed to fall into disrepair. Not only was there no garrison there, but not a gun was mounted on its walls. The expedition seemed certain of success, and on the evening of the 9th of June, Boufflers moved out from Xanten, and marched all night. Next day Athlone obtained news of the movement and started in the evening, his march being parallel with the French, the hostile armies moving abreast, and at no great distance from each other. The cavalry covered the British march, and these were in the morning attacked by the French horse under the Duke of Burgundy. The British were outnumbered, but fought with great obstinacy, and before they fell back, with a loss of 700 men and a convoy of 300 wagons, the infantry had pushed forward, and when the French army reached Nimeguen, its ramparts bristled with British bayonets. Boufflers disappointed in his aim, fell back upon the rich district of Cleves, now open to him, and plundered and ravaged that fertile country. Although Kaiserwerth had been taken and Nimeguen saved, the

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danger which they had run, and the backward movement of the allied army, filled the Dutch with consternation.

The time, however, had come when Marlborough himself was to assume the command, and by his genius, dash, and strategy to alter the whole complexion of things, and to roll back the tide of war from the borders of Holland. He had crossed from England early in May, a few days only after Rupert had sailed; but hitherto he had been engaged in smoothing obstacles, appeasing jealousies, healing differences, and getting the whole arrangement of the campaign into something like working order. At last, everything being fairly in trim, he set out on the 2d of July from the Hague, with full power as commander-in-chief of the allied armies, for Nimeguen. There he ordered the British troops from Breda, 8000 Germans from Kaiserwerth, and the contingents of Hesse and Luneburg, 6000 strong, under the Prince of Zell, to join him.

As these reinforcements brought his army up to a strength superior to that of the French, although Marshal Boufflers had hastily drawn to him some of the garrisons of the fortresses, the Earl of Marlborough prepared to strike a great blow. The Dutch deputies who accompanied the army—and whose timidity and obstinacy a score of times during the course of the war thwarted all Marlborough's best-laid plans, and saved the enemy from destruction—interfered to forbid an attack upon two occasions, when an engagement would, as admitted by French historians, have been fatal to their whole army. Marlborough therefore was obliged to content himself by outflanking the French, compelling them to abandon Cleves, to cross the Meuse, and to fall back into Flanders, with some loss, and great haste and disorder.

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In vain the French marshal endeavored to take post so as to save the Meuse fortresses, which stood at the gates of Flanders, and by their command of the river prevented the allies from using the chain of water communications to bring up supplies, Marlborough crossed the line by which his siege train was coming up, and then pounced upon Venloo, a very strong fortress standing across the Meuse—that is to say, the town was on one side, the fort of St. Michael on the other.

After this chapter, devoted to the necessary task of explaining the cause and commencement of the great War of Succession, we can return to the individual fortunes of our hero.

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CHAPTER VII.

VENLOO.

UPON the 5th dragoons being, with the others lying with it in camp at Breda, ordered up to join the main army at Nimeguen, Rupert was, to his great delight, declared to be sufficiently advanced in his knowledge of drill to take his place regularly in the ranks; and Hugh and the other recruits also fell into their places in the various troops among which they were divided, Hugh being, at Rupert's request, told off to Captain Lauriston's troop. With drums beating and colors flying, the column from Breda marched into the allied camp at Duckenberg in front of Nimeguen, where the troops crowded out to greet this valuable addition of eight infantry regiments and three of cavalry.

Scarcely were the tents pitched than Rupert heard himself heartily saluted, and looking round, saw his friends Lord Fairholm and Sir John Loveday, who being already in camp had at once sought him out.

"By my faith, Master Holliday, the three months have done wonders for you; you look every inch a soldier," Lord Fairholm said.

"His very moustache is beginning to show," Sir John Loveday said, laughing.

Rupert join in the laugh, for in truth he had that very morning looked anxiously in a glass, and had tried in vain to persuade himself that the down on his upper lip showed any signs of thickening or growing.

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"Well, and how many unfortunate English, Dutch, and Germans have you despatched since we saw you?"

"Oh, please hush," Rupert said, anxiously. "No one knows that I have any idea of fencing, or that I have ever drawn a sword before I went through my course of the broadsword here. I would not on any account that any one thought I was a quarrelsome swordster. You know I really am not, and it has been purely my misfortune that I have been thrust into these things."

"And you have never told any of your comrades that you have killed your man? or that Dalboy proclaimed you in his *salle* to be one of the finest blades in Europe?"

"No, indeed," Rupert said. "Why should I, Sir John?"

"Well, all I can say is, Rupert, I admire your modesty as much as your skill. There are few fellows of your age, or of mine either, but would hector a little on the strength of such a reputation. I think that I myself should cock my hat, and point my moustache a little more fiercely, if I knew that I was the cock of the whole walk."

Rupert smiled. "I don't think you would, Sir John, especially if you were as young as I am. I know I have heard my tutor say that the fellow who is really cock of a school is generally one of the quietest and best-tempered fellows going. Not that I mean," he added hastily, as his companions both laughed, "that I am cock, or that I am a quiet or very good-tempered fellow. I only meant that I was not quarrelsome, and have indeed put up more than once with practical jokings which I might have resented had I not known how skilful with the sword I am, and that in this campaign I shall have plenty of opportunities of showing that I am no coward."

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"Well spoken, Rupert," Sir John said. "Now we have kept you talking in the sun an unconscionable time; come over to our tent, and have something to wash the dust away. We have some fairly good Burgundy, of which we bought a barrel the other day from a vintner in Nimeguen, and it must be drunk before we march. Are these the officers of your troop? pray present me."

Rupert introduced his friends to Captain Lauriston and Lieutenant Dillon, and the invitation was extended to them. For the time, however, it was necessary to see to the wants of the men, but later on the three officers went across to the tents of the king's dragoons, to which regiment Lord Fairholm and Sir John Loveday both belonged, and spent a merry evening.

Upon the following day the Earl of Marlborough sent for Rupert, and inquired of him how he liked the life, and how he was getting on; and begged of him to come to him at any time should he have need of money, or be in any way so placed as to need his aid. Rupert thanked him warmly, but replied that he lacked nothing.

The following day the march began, and Rupert shared in the general indignation felt by the British officers and men at seeing the splendid opportunities of crushing the enemy—opportunities gained by the skill and science of their general, and by their own rapid and fatiguing marches—thrown away by the feebleness and timidity of the Dutch deputies. When the siege of Venloo began the main body of the army was again condemned to inactivity, and the cavalry had of course nothing to do with the siege. The place was exceedingly strong, but the garrison was weak, consisting only of six battalions of infantry and 300 horse. Cohorn, the celebrated engineer, directed the siege operations, for which thirty-two battalions of infantry and thirty-six

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squadrons of horse were told off, the Prince of Nassau Saarbruch being in command.

Two squadrons of the 5th dragoons, including the troop to which Rupert belonged, formed part of the force. The work was by no means popular with the cavalry, as they had little to do, and lost their chance of taking part in any great action that Boufflers might fight with Marlborough to relieve the town.

The investment began on the 5th of September, the efforts of the besiegers being directed against Fort St. Michael at the opposite side of the river, but connected by a bridge of boats to the town.

On the 17th the breaches were increasing rapidly in size, and it was whispered that the assault would be made on the evening of the 18th, soon after dusk.

"It will be a difficult and bloody business," Captain Lauriston said, as they sat in their tent that evening. "The garrison of Fort St. Michael is only 800, but reinforcements will of course pour in from the town directly the attack begins, and it may be more than our men can do to win the place. You remember how heavily the Germans suffered in their attack on the covered way of Kaiserwerth."

"I should think the best thing to do would be to break down the bridge of boats before beginning the attack," Lieutenant Dillon remarked.

"Yes, that would be an excellent plan if it could be carried out, but none of our guns command it."

"We might launch a boat with straw or combustibles from above," Rupert said, "and burn it."

"You may be very sure that they have got chains across the river above the bridge, to prevent any attempt of that kind," Captain Lauriston said.

Presently the captain, who was on duty, went out for

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his rounds, and Rupert, who had been sitting thoughtfully, said, "Look here, Dillon, I am a good swimmer, and it seems to me that it would be easy enough to put two or three petards on a plank—I noticed some wood on the bank above the town yesterday—and to float down to the bridge, to fasten them to two or three of the boats, and so to break the bridge; your cousin in the engineers could manage to get us the petards. What do you say?"

The young Irishman looked at the lad in astonishment.

"Are you talking seriously?" he asked.

"Certainly; why not?"

"They'd laugh in your face if you were to volunteer," Dillon said.

"But I shouldn't volunteer; I should just go and do it."

"Yes, but after it was done, instead of getting praise—that is, if you weren't killed—you'd be simply told you had no right to undertake such an affair.

"But I should never say anything about it," Rupert said. "I should just do it, because it would be a good thing to do, and would save the lives of some of our grenadiers, who will, likely enough, lead the assault; besides, it would be an adventure, like any other."

Dillon looked at him for some time.

"You are a curious fellow, Holliday; I would agree to join you in the matter, but I cannot swim a stroke. Pat Dillon cares as little for his life as any man; and after all, there's no more danger in it than in going out in a duel; and I could do that without thinking twice."

"Well, I shall try it," Rupert said, quietly. "Hugh can swim as well as I can, and I'll take him. But can you get me the petards?"

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"I dare say I could manage that," Dillon said, entering into the scheme with all an Irishman's love of excitement. "But don't you think I could go too, though I can't swim? I could stick tight to the planks, you know."

"No," Rupert said, seriously, "that would not do. We may be detected, and may have to dive, and all sorts of things. No, Dillon, it would not do. But if you can get the petards, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have done your share of the work; and then you might, if you could, ride round in the evening with my uniform and Hugh's in your valise. If you go on to the bank half a mile or so below the town, every one will be watching the assault, and we can get ashore, put on our clothes, and get back home without a soul being the wiser."

"And suppose you are killed?"

"Pooh, I shall not be killed!" Rupert said. "But I shall leave a letter, which you can find in the morning if I do not come back, saying I have undertaken this adventure in hope of benefiting her Majesty's arms; that I do it without asking permission; but that I hope that my going beyond my duty will be forgiven, in consideration that I have died in her Majesty's service."

The next day at two o'clock, Lieutenant Dillon, who had been away for an hour, beckoned to Rupert that he wanted to speak to him apart."

"I have seen my Cousin Gerald, but he will not let me have the petards unless he knows for what purpose they are to be used. I said as much as I could without betraying your intentions, but I think he guessed them; for he said, 'Look here, Pat, if there is any fun and adventure on hand, I will make free with her gracious Majesty's petards, on condition that I am in it.' He's

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up to fun of every kind, Gerald is; and can, I know, swim like a fish. What do you say, shall I tell him?"

"Do, by all means," Rupert said. "I have warned Hugh of what I am going to do, and he would never forgive me if I did not take him, but if your cousin will go, all the better, for he will know far better than I how to fix the petards. You can tell him I shall be glad to act under his orders; and if it succeeds, and he likes to let it be known the part which he has played in the matter—which indeed would seem to be within the scope of his proper duties, he being an engineer—I shall be glad for him to do so, it always being understood that he does not mention my name in any way."

Half an hour later Dillon entered, to say that his cousin agreed heartily to take a part in the adventure, and that he would shortly come up to arrange the details with Rupert. Rupert had met Gerald Dillon before, and knew him to be as wild, adventurous, and harum-scarum a young officer as his cousin Pat; and in half-an-hour's talk the whole matter was settled.

Gerald would take two petards, which weighed some twenty pounds each, to his tent, one by one. Hugh should fetch them in a basket, one by one, to the river bank, at the spot where a balk of wood had been washed ashore by some recent floods. At seven in the evening Gerald should call upon his cousin, and on leaving, accompany Rupert to the river bank, where Hugh would be already in waiting. When they had left, Pat Dillon should start on horseback with three uniforms in his valise, the party hiding the clothes in which they left the camp, under the bank at their place of starting.

The plan was carried out as arranged, and soon after seven o'clock Rupert Holliday and Gerald Dillon, leaving the camp, strolled down to the river, on whose bank

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Hugh was already sitting. The day had been extremely hot, and numbers of soldiers were bathing in the river. It was known that the assault was to take place that night, but as the cavalry would take no part in it, the soldiers, with their accustomed carelessness, paid little heed to the matter. As it grew dusk, the bathers one by one dressed and left, until only the three watchers remained. Then Rupert called Hugh, who had been sitting at a short distance, to his side; they then stripped, and carefully concealed their clothes. The petards were taken out from beneath a heap of stones, where Hugh had hid them, and were fixed on the piece of timber, one end of which was just afloat in the stream. By their side was placed some lengths of fuse, a brace of pistols, a long gimlet, some hooks, and cord. Then just as it was fairly dark the log was silently pushed into the water, and swimming beside it, with one hand upon it, the little party started upon their adventurous expedition.

The log was not very large, although of considerable length, and with the petards upon it, it showed but little above water. The point where they had embarked was fully two miles above the town, and it was more than an hour before the stream took them abreast of it. Although it was very dark, they now floated on their backs by the piece of timber, so as to show as little as possible to any who might be on the look-out, for of all objects the round outline of a human head is one of the most easily recognized.

Presently they came, as they had expected, to a floating boom, composed of logs of timber chained together. Here the piece of timber came to a standstill. No talk was necessary, as the course under these circumstances had been already agreed to. The petards and other ob-

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jects were placed on the boom, upon which Rupert, as the lightest of the party, crept, holding in his hand a cord fastened round the log. Hugh and Gerald Dillon now climbed upon one end of the log, which at once sank into the water below the level of the bottom of the boom, and the current taking it, swept it beneath the obstacle. Rupert's rope directed its downward course, and it was soon alongside the boom, but on the lower side.

The petards were replaced, and the party again proceeded; but now Hugh swam on his back, holding a short rope attached to one end, so as to keep the log straight, and prevent its getting across the mooring chains of the boats forming the bridge; while Rupert and Gerald, each with a rope, also attached to the log, floated down some ten or twelve yards on either side of the log, but a little behind it. The plan answered admirably; the stream carried the log end foremost between two of the boats, which were moored twelve feet apart, while Gerald and Rupert each floated on the other side of the mooring chains of the boats; round these chains they twisted the ropes, and by them the log lay anchored as it were under the bridge, and between two of the boats forming it. If there were any sentries on the bridge, these neither saw nor heard them, their attention being absorbed by the expectation of an attack upon the breaches of Fort St. Michael.

The party now set to work. With the gimlet holes were made a couple of feet above the water. In them the hooks were inserted, and from these the petards were suspended by ropes, so as to lie against the sides of the boats, an inch only above the water's level. The fuses were inserted; and all being now in readiness for blowing a hole in the side of the two boats, they regained the log, and awaited the signal.

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The time passed slowly; but as the church clocks of the town struck eleven, a sudden outburst of musketry broke out round St. Michael's. In an instant the cannon of the fort roared out, the bells clanged the alarm, blue fires were lighted, and the dead silence was succeeded by a perfect chaos of sounds. The party under the bridge waited quietly, until the noise as of a large body of men coming upon the bridge from the town end was heard. At the first outbreak Gerald Dillon had, with some difficulty, lit first some tinder, and then a slow-match, from a flint and steel—all of these articles having been most carefully kept dry during the trip, with the two pistols, which were intended to fire the fuses, should the flint and steel fail to produce a light.

As the sound of the reinforcements coming on to the bridge was heard, Gerald Dillon on one side, Rupert Holiday on the other, left the log, and swam with a slow match in hand to the boats. In another instant the fuses were lighted, and the three companions swam steadily down stream.

In twenty seconds a loud explosion was heard, followed almost instantaneously by another, and the swimmers knew that their object had been successful, that two of the boats forming the bridge would sink immediately, and that, the connection being thus broken, no reinforcements from the town could reach the garrison of the Fort St. Michael. Loud shouts were heard upon the bridge as the swimmers struck steadily down stream, while the roar of the musketry from Fort St. Michael was unremitting.

Half an hour later the three adventurers landed, at a point where a lantern had, according to arrangement, been placed at the water's edge by Pat Dillon, who was in waiting with their clothes, and who received them

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with an enthusiastic welcome. Five minutes later they were on their way back to their camp.

In the meantime the battle had raged fiercely round Fort St. Michael. The attack had been made upon two breaches. The British column, headed by the grenadiers, and under the command of Lord Cutts, attacked the principal breach. The French opposed a desperate defence. With Lord Cutts as volunteers were Lord Huntingdon, Lord Lorn, Sir Richard Temple, and Mr. Dalrymple, and these set a gallant example to their men.

On arriving at a high breastwork, Lord Huntingdon, who was weakened by recent attack of fever, was unable to climb over it.

"Five guineas," he shouted, "to the man who will help me over!"

Even among the storm of balls there was a shout of laughter as the nobleman held out his purse, and a dozen willing hands soon lifted him over the obstacle.

Then on the troops swept, stormed the covered way, carried the ravelin, and forced their way up the breach. The French fought staunchly; and well it was for the British that no reinforcements could reach them from Venloo, and that the original 800 garrisoning the fort were alone in their defence. As it was, the place was stormed, 200 of the French made prisoners, and the rest either killed or drowned in endeavoring to cross the river.

The French in Venloo, upon finding that the fort had fallen, broke up the rest of the bridge; and although there was some surprise in the British camp that no reinforcements had been sent over to aid the garrison, none knew that the bridge had been broken at the commencement of the attack, consequently there were

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neither talk nor inquiries, and those concerned congratulated themselves that their adventure had been successful, and that, as no one knew anything of it, they could, should occasion offer, again undertake an expedition on their own account.

The day after the capture of St. Michael's, strong fatigue parties were set to work, erecting batteries to play across the river on the town.

These were soon opened, and after a few days' further resistance, the place surrendered, on the condition of the garrison being free to march to Antwerp, then in French possession.

The towns of Ruremond and Stevenswort were now invested, and surrendered after a short resistance; and thus the Maas was opened as a waterway for the supplies for the army.

The Dutch Government, satisfied with the successes so far, would have now had the army go into winter quarters; but Marlborough, with great difficulty, persuaded them to consent to his undertaking the siege of Liege, a most important town and fortress, whose possession would give to the allies the command of the Meuse—or Maas—into the very heart of Flanders.

Marshal Boufflers, ever watching the movements of Marlborough, suspected that Liege would be his next object of attack, and accordingly reconnoitered the ground round that city, and fixed on a position which would, he thought, serve admirably for the establishment of a permanent camp.

The news was, however, brought to Marlborough, who broke up his camp the same night; and when the French army approached Liege, they found the allies established on the very ground which the Marshal had selected for their camp. All unsuspecting the presence

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of the English, the French came on in order of march until within cannon-shot of the allies, and another splendid opportunity was thus given to Marlborough to attack the main body of the enemy under most advantageous circumstances.

The Dutch deputies again interposed their veto, and the English had the mortification of seeing the enemy again escape from their hands.

However, there was now nothing to prevent their undertaking the siege of Liege, and on the 20th of October the regular investment of the place was formed.

The strength of Liege consisted in its citadel and the Fort of Chatreuse, both strongly fortified. The town itself, a wealthy city, and so abounding in churches that it was called "Little Rome," was defended only by a single wall. It could clearly offer no defence against the besiegers, and therefore surrendered at the first summons, the garrison, 5000 stroug, retiring to the citadel and Fort St. Chatreuse, which mounted fifty guns. Siege was at once laid to the citadel, and with such extraordinary vigor was the attack pushed forward, under the direction of General Cohorn, that upon the 23d of October, three days only after the investment commenced, the breaches in the counter-scarp were pronounced practicable, and an assault was immediately ordered. The allies attacked with extreme bravery, and the citadel was carried by storm—here as at Venloo, the British troops being the first who scaled the breach. Thus 1000 prisoners were taken; and the garrison of Fort Chatreuse were so disheartened at the speedy fall of the citadel, that they capitulated a few days later.

This brought the first campaign of the war to an end. It had been very short, but its effect had been great. Kaiserwerth had been taken, and the Lower Rhine

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opened; four fortified places on the Meuse had been captured; the enemy had been driven back from the borders of Holland; and the allied army had, in the possession of Liege, an advanced post in the heart of Flanders for the recommencement of the campaign in the spring. And all this had been done in the face of a large French army, which had never ventured to give battle even to save the beleaguered fortresses.

The army now went into winter quarters, and Marlborough returned at once to England.

Upon the voyage down the Meuse, in company with the Dutch commissioners, he had a very narrow escape. The boat was captured by a French partisan leader, who had made an incursion to the river. The earl had with him an old servant named Gill, who, with great presence of mind, slipped into his master's hand an old passport made out in the name of General Churchill. The French, intent only upon plunder, and not recognizing under the name of Churchill their great opponent Marlborough, seized all the plate and valuables in the boat, made prisoners of the small detachment of soldiers on board, but suffered the rest of the passengers, including the earl and the Dutch commissioners, to pass unmolested.

Thus, had it not been for the presence of mind of an old servant, the Earl of Marlborough would have been taken a prisoner to France; and since it was his genius and diplomatic power alone which kept the alliance together, and secured victory for their arms, the whole issue of the war, the whole future of Europe would have been changed.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD MILL.

A CONSIDERABLE portion of the allied army were quartered in the barracks and forts of Liege, in large convents requisitioned for the purpose, and in outlying villages. The 5th dragoons had assigned to them a convent some two miles from the town. The monks had moved out, and gone to an establishment of the same order in the town, and the soldiers were therefore left to make the best they could of their quarters. There was plenty of room for the men, but for the horses there was some difficulty. The cloisters were very large, and these were transformed into stables, and boards were fastened up on the open faces to keep out the cold; others were stalled in sheds and outbuildings; and the great refectory, or dining hall, was also strewn thick with straw, and filled with four rows of horses.

In the afternoon the officers generally rode or walked down into the town. One day, Rupert Holliday with Pat Dillon had met their friends Lord Fairholm and Sir John Loveday, whose regiment was quartered in the town, at the principal wine-shop, a large establishment, which was the great gathering place of the officers of the garrison. There an immense variety of bright uniforms were to be seen, English, German, and Dutch, horse, foot, and artillery, while the serving men hurried

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about through the throng with trays piled with beer mugs, or with wine and glasses.

"Who is that officer," Dillon asked, "in the Hessian cavalry uniform? Methinks he eyes you with no friendly look."

Rupert and his friends glanced at the officer pointed out.

"It is that fellow Fulke," Sir John said. "I heard he had managed to obtain a commission in the army of the Landgrave of Hesse. You must keep a smart look-out, Master Rupert, for his presence bodes you no good. He is in fitting company; that big German officer next to him is the Graff Muller, a turbulent swashbuckler, but a famous swordsman—a fellow who would as soon run you through as look at you, and who is a disgrace to the Margrave's army, in which I wonder much that he is allowed to stay."

"Who is the fellow you are speaking of?" Dillon asked.

"A gentleman with whom our friend Rupert had a difference of opinion," Sir John Loveday laughed. "There is a blood feud between them. Seriously, the fellow has a grudge against our friend, and as he is the sort of man to gratify himself without caring much as to the means he uses, I should advise Master Holliday not to trust himself out alone after dark. There are plenty of ruined men in these German regiments who would willingly cut a throat for a guinea, especially if offered them by one of their own officers."

"The scoundrel is trying to get Muller to take up his quarrel, or I am mistaken," Lord Fairholm, who had been watching the pair closely, said; "they are glancing this way, and Fulke has been talking earnestly. But ruffian as he is, Muller is of opinion that for a no-

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torious swordsman like him to pick a quarrel with a lad like our friend would be too rank, and would, if he killed him, look so much like murder that even he dare not face it; he has shaken his head very positively."

"But why should not this Fulke take the quarrel in his own hands?" Dillon asked, surprised. "Unless he is the rankest of cowards he might surely consider himself a match for our little cornet?"

"Our little cornet has a neat hand with the foils," Lord Fairholm said, dryly, "and Master Fulke is not unacquainted with the fact."

"Why, Rupert," Dillon said, turning to him, "you have never said that you ever had a foil in your hand!"

"You never asked me," Rupert said, smiling. "But I have practised somewhat with the colonel my grandfather. And now it is time to be off, Dillon; we have to walk back."

Four days later, as Rupert Holliday was standing in the barrack-yard, his troop having just been dismissed drill, a trooper of the 1st dragoons rode into the yard, and after asking a question of one of the men, rode up to him and handed him a note.

Somewhat surprised he opened it, and read as follows:—"My dear Master Holliday,—Sir John Loveday and myself are engaged in an adventure which promises some entertainment, albeit it is not without a spice of danger. We need a good comrade who can on occasion use his sword, and we know that we can rely on you. On receipt of this, please mount your horse and ride to the old mill which lies back from the road in the valley beyond Dettinheim. There you will find your sincere friend, FAIRHOLM. P. S.—It would be as well not to mention whither you are going to ride."

It was the first note that Rupert had received from

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Lord Fairholm, and delighted at the thought of an adventure, he called Hugh, and bade him saddle his horse.

"Shall I go with you, Master Rupert?" Hugh asked, for he generally rode behind Rupert as his orderly.

Rupert did not answer for a moment. Lord Fairholm had asked him to tell no one; but he meant, no doubt, that he should tell none of his brother officers. On Hugh's silence, whatever happened, he could rely, and he would be useful to hold the horses. At any rate, if not wanted, he could return.

"Ay, Hugh, you can come; and look you, slip a brace of pistols quietly into each of our holsters."

With a momentary look of surprise, Hugh withdrew to carry out his instructions: and ten minutes later, Rupert, followed by his orderly, rode out of the convent.

The mill in question lay some three miles distant, and about half a mile beyond the little hamlet of Dettinheim. It stood some distance from the road, up a quiet valley, and was half hidden in trees. It had been worked by a stream that ran down the valley. It was a dark, gloomy-looking structure; and the long green weeds that hung from the great wheel, where the water from the overshot trough splashed and tumbled over it, showed that it had been for some time abandoned. These things had been noticed by Rupert when riding past it some time before, for, struck with the appearance of the mill, he had ridden up the valley to inspect it. On his ride to Lord Fairholm's rendezvous, he wondered much what could be the nature of the adventure in which they were about to embark. He knew that both his friends were full of life and high spirits, and his thoughts wandered between some wild attempt to carry off a French officer of importance, or an expedition to rescue a lovely damsel in distress. Hugh, equally won-

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dering, but still more ignorant of the nature of the expedition, rode quietly on behind.

The road was an unfrequented one, and during the last two miles' ride they did not meet a single person upon it. The hamlet of Dettinheim contained four or five houses only, and no one seemed about. Another five minutes' ride took them to the entrance to the little valley in which the mill stood. They rode up to it, and then dismounted.

"It's a lonesome dismal-looking place, Master Rupert. It doesn't seem to bode good. Of course you know what you're come for, sir; but I don't like the look of the place, nohow."

"It does not look cheerful, Hugh; but I am to meet Lord Fairholm and Sir John Loveday here."

"I don't see any sign of them, Master Rupert. I'd be careful if I were you, for it's just the sort of place for a foul deed to be done in. It does not look safe."

"It looks old and haunted," Rupert said; "but as that is its natural look, I don't see it can help it. The door is open, so my friends are here."

"Look out, Master Rupert; you may be running into a snare."

Rupert paused a moment, and the thought flashed across his mind that it might, as Hugh said, be a snare; but with Lord Fairholm's letter in his pocket, he dismissed the idea.

"You make me nervous, Hugh, with your suggestions; nevertheless, I will be on my guard;" and he drew his sword as he entered the mill.

As he did so, Hugh, who was holding the horses, bridles over his arm, snatched a brace of pistols from the holsters, cocked them, and stood eagerly listening. He heard Rupert walk a few paces forward, and then pause,

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and shout "Where are you, Fairholm?" Then he heard a rush of heavy feet, a shout from Rupert, a clash of swords, and a scream of agony.

All this was the work of a second; and as Hugh dropped the reins and rushed forward to his master's assistance, he heard a noise behind him, and saw a dozen men issue from behind the trees, and run towards him.

Coming from the light, Hugh could with difficulty see what was taking place in the darkened chamber before him. In an instant, however, he saw Rupert standing with his back to a wall, with a dead man at his feet, and four others hacking and thrusting at him. Rushing up, Hugh fired his two pistols. One of the men dropped to the ground, the other with an oath reeled backwards.

"Quick, sir! there are a dozen men just upon us."

Rupert ran one of his opponents through the shoulder, and as the other drew back shouted to Hugh,—

"Up the stairs, Hugh! Quick!"

The two lads sprang up the wide steps leading to the floor above, just as the doorway was darkened by a mass of men. The door at the top of the steps yielded to their rush, the rotten woodwork giving, and the door falling to the ground. Two or three pistol bullets whizzed by their ears, just as they leaped through the opening.

"Up another floor, Hugh; and easy with the door."

The door at the top of the next ladder creaked heavily as they pushed it back on its hinges.

"Look about, Hugh, for something to pile against it."

The shutters of the window were closed, but enough light streamed through the chinks and crevices for them to see dimly. There was odd rubbish strewn all about, and in one corner a heap of decaying sacks. To these

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both rushed, and threw some on the floor by the door, placing their feet on them to keep them firm, just as with a rush the men came against it. This door was far stronger than the one below, but it gave before the weight.

"The hinges will give, Hugh exclaimed; but at the moment Rupert passed his thin rapier through one of the chinks of the rough boards which formed it, and a yell was heard on the outside. The pressure against the door ceased instantly; and Rupert bade Hugh run for some more sacks, while he threw himself prone on them on the ground. It was well he did so, for, as he expected a half dozen pistol-shots were heard, and the bullets crashed through the woodwork.

"Keep out of the line of fire, Hugh."

Hugh did so, and threw down the sacks close to the door. Several times he ran backwards and forwards across the room, the assailants still firing through the door. Then Rupert leaped up, and the pile of sacks were rapidly heaped against the door, just as the men outside, in hopes that they had killed the defenders, made another rush against it.

This time, however, the pile of sacks had given it strength and solidity, and it hardly shook under the assault. Then came volleys of curses and imprecations, in German, from outside; and then the lads could hear the steps descend the stairs, and a loud and angry consultation take place below.

"Open the shutters, Hugh, and let us see where we are."

It was a chamber of some forty feet square, and, like those below it, of considerable height. It was like the rest of the mill, built of rough pine, black with age. It had evidently been used as a granary.

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"This is a nice trap we have fallen into, Hugh, and I doubt me if Lord Fairholm ever saw the letter with his name upon it which lured me here. However, that is not the question now; the thing is how we are to get out of the trap. How many were there outside, do you think?"

"There seemed to me about a dozen, Master Rupert, but I got merely a blink at them."

"If it were not for their pistols we might do something Hugh; but as it is, it is hopeless."

Looking out from the window they saw that it was over the great water-wheel, whose top was some fifteen feet below them, with the water running to waste from the leet, which led from the reservoir higher up the valley.

Presently they heard a horse gallop up to the front of the mill, and shortly after the sound of a man's voice raised in anger. By this time it was getting dark.

"What'll be the end of this, Master Rupert? We could stand a siege for a week, but they'd hardly try that."

"What's that?" Rupert said. "There's some one at the door again."

They came back, but all was quiet. Listening attentively, however, they heard a creaking, as of some one silently descending the stairs. For some time all was quiet, except that they could hear movements in the lower story of the mill.

Presently Rupert grasped Hugh's arm.

"Do you smell anything, Hugh?"

"Yes, sir; I smell a smoke."

"The scoundrels have set the mill on fire, Hugh."

In another minute or two the smell became stronger,

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and then wreaths of smoke could be seen curling up through the crevices in the floor.

"Run through the other rooms, Hugh; let us see if there is any means of getting down."

There were three other rooms, but on opening the shutters they found in each case a sheer descent of full forty feet to the ground, there being no outhouses whose roofs would afford them a means of descent.

"We must rush down stairs, Hugh. It is better to be shot as we go out, than be roasted here."

Rapidly they tore away the barrier of sacks, and Rupert put his thumb on the latch. He withdrew it with a sharp exclamation,—

"They have jammed the latch, Hugh. That was what that fellow we heard was doing."

The smoke was now getting very dense, and they could with difficulty breathe. Rupert put his head out of the window.

"There is a little window just over the wheel," he said; "if we could get down to the next floor we might slip out of that and get in the wheel without being noticed. Look about, Hugh," he exclaimed, suddenly; "there must be a trap-door somewhere for lowering the sacks. There is a wheel hanging to the ceiling; the trap must be under that."

In a minute the trap was found, and raised. The smoke rushed up in a volume, and the boys looked with dismay at the dense mirk below.

"It's got to be done, Hugh. Tie that bit of sacking, quick, over your nose and mouth, while I do the same. Now lower yourself by your arms, and drop; it won't be above fifteen feet. Hold your breath, and rush straight to the window. I heard them open it. Now, both together; now."

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The lads fell on their feet, and were in another minute at the window. The broad top of the great wheel stretched out level with them, hiding the window from those who might have been standing below. The wheel itself was some thirty feet in diameter, and was sunk nearly half its depth in the ground, the water running off by a deep tail-race.

"We might lie flat on the top of the wheel," Hugh said.

"We should be roasted to death when the mill is fairly in flames. No, Hugh; we must squeeze through this space between the wall and the wheel, slip down by the framework, and keep inside the wheel. There is no fear of that burning, and we shall get plenty of fresh air down below the level of the mill. I will go first, Hugh. Mind how you go, for these beams are all slimy; get your arm well around, and slip down as far as the axle."

It was not an easy thing to do, and Rupert lost his hold and slipped down the last ten feet, hurting himself a good deal in his fall. He was soon on his feet again, and helped to break the fall of Hugh, who lost his hold and footing at the axle, and would have hurt himself greatly, had not Rupert caught him, both boys falling with a crash in the bottom of the wheel.

They were some little time before regaining their feet, for both were much hurt. Their movements were, however, accelerated by the water, which fell in a heavy shower from above, through the leaks in the buckets of the wheel.

"Are you hurt much, Master Rupert?"

"I don't think I am broken at all, Hugh, but I am hurt all over. How are you?"

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"I am all right, I think. It's lucky the inside of this wheel is pretty smooth, like a big drum."

The position was not a pleasant one. A heavy shower of water from above filled the air with spray, and with their heads bent down it was difficult to breathe; the inside planks of the wheel were so slimy that standing was almost impossible, and at the slightest attempt at movement they fell. Above, the flames were already darting out through the windows and sides of the mill.

"Do you not think we might crawl out between the wheel and the wall, and make our way down the tail-race, Master Rupert? This water is chilling me to the bones."

"I think it safer to stop where we are, Hugh. Those fellows are sure to be on the watch. They will expect to see us jump out of the upper window the last thing, and will wait to throw our bodies—for of course we should be killed—into the flames, to hide all trace of us. We have only to wait quietly here. It is not pleasant; but after all the trouble we have had to save our lives, it would be a pity to risk them again. And I have a very particular desire to be even with that fellow who is, I doubt not, at the bottom of all this."

Soon the flames were rushing out in great sheets from the mill, and even in the wheel the heat of the atmosphere was considerable. Presently a great crash was heard inside.

"There is a floor fallen," Rupert said. "I think we may move now; those fellows will have made off, secure that—Hullo! what's that?"

The exclamation was caused by a sudden creaking noise, and the great wheel began slowly to revolve. The fall of the floor had broken its connection with the

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machinery in the mill, and left free, it at once yielded to the weight of the water in its buckets. The supply of water coming down was small, and the wheel stiff from long disuse, therefore it moved but slowly. The motion, however, threw both lads from their feet, and once down, the rotary motion rendered it impossible for them to regain their feet. After the first cry of surprise, neither spoke; across both their minds rushed the certainty of death.

How long the terrible time that followed lasted, neither of them ever knew. The sensation was that of being pounded to death. At one moment they were together, then separated; now rolling over and over in a sort of a ball, then lifted up and cast down into the bottom of the wheel with a crash; now with their heads highest, now with their feet. It was like a terrible nightmare; but gradually the sharp pain of the blows and falls were less vivid—a dull sensation came over them—and both lost consciousness.

Rupert was the first to open his eyes, and for a time lay but in dreamy wonder as to where he was and what had happened. He seemed to be lying under a great penthouse, with a red glow pervading everything. Gradually his thoughts took shape, and he remembered what had passed, and struggling painfully into a sitting position, looked round. The wheel no longer revolved; there was no longer the constant splash of water. Indeed the wheel existed as a wheel no longer.

As he looked round the truth lighted upon him. The burning mill had fallen across the wheel, crushing, at the top, the sides together. The massive timber had given no further, and the wheel formed a sort of roof, sloping from the outer wall, built solidly up against it, to the opposite foot. Above, the timber of this wall

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glared and flickered, but the soddened timber of the wheel could have resisted a far greater amount of heat. The leet had of course been carried away with the fall, and the water would be flowing down the valley. The heat was very great, but the rush of air up the deep cut of the mill-race rendered it bearable. Having once grasped the facts—and as he doubted not the fall must have occurred soon after he lost consciousness, and so saved him from being bruised to death—Rupert turned to Hugh.

He was quite insensible, but his heart still beat. Rupert crawled out of the wheel, and found pools of water in the mill-race, from which he brought double handfuls, and sprinkled Hugh's face. Then as he himself grew stronger from fresh air and a copious dousing of his face and head with water, he dragged Hugh out, and laying him beside a pool dashed water on his face and chest. A deep sigh was the first symptom of returning consciousness. He soon, to Rupert's delight, opened his eyes.

After a time he sat up, but was too much hurt to rise. After some consultation, Rupert left him, and went alone down to the hamlet of Dettinheim, where, after much knocking, he roused some of the inhabitants, who had only a short time before returned from the burning mill. Sodden and discolored as it was, Rupert's uniform was still recognizable, and by the authority this conveyed, and a promise of ample reward, four men were induced to return with him to the mill, and carry Hugh down to the village. This they reached just as the distant clock of Liege cathedral struck two. A bed was given up to them, and in half an hour both lads were sound asleep.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE DUEL.

GREAT was the excitement in the 5th Dragoons when, upon the arrival of Rupert and Hugh—the former of whom was able to ride, but the latter was carried by on a stretcher—they learned the attack which had been made upon one of their officers. The "Little Cornet" was a general favorite, short as was the time since he had joined; while Hugh was greatly liked by the men of his own troop. Rupert's colonel at once sent for him, to learn the particulars of the outrage. Rupert was unable to give farther particulars as to his assailants than that they were German soldiers; that much the dim light had permitted him to see, but more than that he could not say. He stated his reasons for believing Sir Richard Fulke was the originator of the attack, since he had had a quarrel with him in England, but owned that, beyond suspicions, he had no proof. The colonel at once rode down to headquarters, and laid a complaint before the Earl of Athlone, who promised that he would cause every inquiry to be made. Then the General commanding the Hesse contingent was communicated with, and the colonel of the cavalry regiment to which Sir Richard Fulke belonged was sent for. He stated that Captain Fulke had been away on leave of absence for three days, and that he had gone to England. The regiment was, however, paraded, and it was found that five troopers were missing. No inquiry,

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however, could elicit from any of the others a confession that they had been engaged in any fray, and as all were reported as having been in by ten o'clock, except the five missing men, there was no clue as to the parties engaged. The five men might have deserted, but the grounds for suspicion were very strong. Still, as no proof could be obtained, the matter was suffered to drop.

The affair caused, however, much bad feeling between the two regiments, and the men engaged in affrays when they met, until the order was issued that they should only be allowed leave into the town on alternate days. This ill-feeling spread, however, beyond the regiments concerned. There had already been a good deal of jealousy upon the part of the Continental troops of the honor gained by the British in being first in at the breaches of Venloo and Liege, and this feeling was now much embittered. Duels between the officers became matters of frequent occurrence, in spite of the strict orders issued against that practice.

As Rupert had anticipated, the letter by which he had been entrapped turned out a forgery. Lord Fairholm was extremely indignant when he heard the use that had been made of his name, and at once made inquiries as to the trooper who had carried the note to Rupert. This man he found without difficulty; upon being questioned, he stated that he had just returned from carrying a message when he was accosted by a German officer who offered him a couple of marks to carry a letter up to an officer of the 5th Dragoons. Thinking that there was no harm in so doing, he had at once accepted the offer. Upon being asked if he could recognize the officer if he saw him, he replied that he had scarcely noticed his face, and did not think that he could pick him out from others.

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The first three or four duels which took place had not been attended with fatal result; but about three weeks after the occurrence of the attack on Rupert, Captain Muller, who had been away on leave, returned, and publicly announced his attention of avenging the insult to his regiment by insulting and killing one of the officers of the 5th Dragoons.

The report of the threat caused some uneasiness among the officers, for the fellow's reputation as a swordsman and notorious duellist was so well known, that it was felt that any one whom he might select as his antagonist would be as good as a dead man. A proposition was started to report the matter to the general, but this was decisively negatived, as it would have looked like a request for protection. and would so affect the honor of the regiment.

There was the satisfaction that but one victim could be slain, for the aggressor in a fatal duel was sure to be punished by removal into some corps stationed at a distance.

Rupert was silent during these discussions, but he silently determined that he would, if the opportunity offered, take up the gauntlet, for he argued that he was the primary cause of the feud; and, remembering the words of M. Dessin and Maître Dalboy, he thought that, skilful as a swordsman as Muller might be, he would yet have at least a fair chance of victory, while he knew that so much could not be said for any of the other officers of his regiment.

The opportunity occurred two days later. Rupert, with his friend Dillon, went down to the large saloon, which was the usual rendezvous with his friends Fairholm and Loveday. The place was crowded with officers, but Rupert soon perceived his friends, sitting at

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a small table. He and Dillon placed two chairs there also, and were engaged in conversation when a sudden lull in the buzz of talk caused them to look up. Captain Muller had just entered the saloon with a friend, and the lull was caused by curiosity, as his boast had been the matter of public talk; and as all noticed that two officers of the 5th were present, it was anticipated that a scene would ensue.

A glance at Dillon's face showed that the blood had left his cheek; for, brave as the Irishman was, the prospect of being killed like a dog by this native swordsman could not be but terrible to him, and he did not doubt for a moment that he would be selected. Captain Muller walked leisurely up to the bar, drank off a bumper of raw Geneva, and then turned and looked round the room. As his eyes fell on the uniform of the 5th, a look of satisfaction came over his face, and fixing his eyes on Dillon, he walked leisurely across the room. Rupert happened to be sitting on the outside of the table, and he at once rose and as calmly advanced towards the German.

There was now a dead silence in the room, and all listened intently to hear what the lad had to say to the duellist. Rupert spoke first and although he did not raise his voice in the slightest, not a sound was lost from one end of the room to the other.

"Captain Muller," he said, "I hear that you have made a boast that you will kill the first officer of my regiment whom you met. I am, I think, the first, and you now have the opportunity of proving whether you are a mere cut-throat or a liar."

A perfect gasp of astonishment was heard in the room.

Dillon leaped to his feet, exclaiming,—

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"No, Rupert, I will not allow it! I am your senior officer." And the gallant fellow would have pushed forward, had not Lord Fairholm put his hand on his shoulder and forced him back, saying,—

"Leave him alone: he knows what he is doing."

The German took a step back, with a hoarse exclamation of rage and surprise at Rupert's address, and put his hand to his sword. Then, making a great effort to master his fury, he said,—

"You are safe in crowing loud, little cockerel; but Captain Muller does not fight with boys."

A murmur of approval ran round the room; for the prospect of this lad standing up to be killed by so noted a swordsman was painful alike to the German and English officers present.

"The same spirit seems to animate you and your friend Sir Richard Fulke," Rupert said, quietly. "He did not care about fighting a boy, and so employed a dozen of his soldiers to murder him."

"It is a lie!" the captain thundered. "Beware, young sir, how you tempt me too far."

"You know it is not a lie," Rupert said, calmly. "I know he told you he was afraid to fight me, for that I was more than his match; and it seems to me, sir, that this seeming pity for my youth is a mere cover of the fact that you would rather choose as your victim some one less skilled in fence than I happen to be. Are you a coward, too, sir, as well as a ruffian?"

"Enough!" the German gasped. "Swartzberg," he said turning to his friend, "make the arrangements; for I vow I will kill this insolent puppy in the morning."

Lord Fairholm at once stepped forward to the Hessian captain.

"I shall have the honor to act as Mr. Holliday's sec-

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ond. Here is my card. I shall be at home all the evening."

Rupert now resumed his seat, while Captain Muller and his friend moved to the other end of the saloon. Here he was surrounded by a number of German officers, who endeavored to dissuade him from fighting a duel in which the killing of his adversary would be condemned by the whole army as child murder.

"Child or not," he said, ferociously, "he dies tomorrow. You think he was mad to insult me; it was conceit, not madness. His head is turned; a fencing-master once praised his skill at fence, and he thinks himself a match for me—me! the best swordsman, though I say it, in the German army. No, I would not have forced a quarrel on him, for he is beneath my notice; but I am right glad that he has taken up the glove I meant to throw down to his fellow. In killing him I shall not only have punished the only person who has for many years ventured to insult Otto Muller, but I shall have done a service to a friend."

No sooner had Rupert regained his seat than Dillon exclaimed,—

"Rupert, I shall never forgive myself. Others think you are mad, but I know that you sacrifice yourself to save me. You did me an ill-service, my lord," he said, turning to Lord Fairholm, "by holding me back when I would have taken my proper place. I shall never hold up my head again. But it will not be for long, for when he has killed Rupert I will seek him wherever he may go, and force him to kill me too."

"My dear Dillon, I knew what I was doing," Lord Fairholm said. "It was clear that either he or you had to meet this German cut-throat."

"But," Dillon asked, in astonishment, "why would

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you rather that your friend Rupert should be killed than I?"

"You are not putting the case fairly," Lord Fairholm said. "Did it stand so, I would certainly prefer that you should run this risk than that Rupert should do so. But the case stands thus: In the first place, it is really his quarrel; and in the second, while it is certain that this German could kill you without fail, it is by no means certain that he will kill Rupert."

Dillon's eyes opened with astonishment.

"Not kill him! Do you think that he will spare him after the way he has been insulted before all of us?"

"No, there is little chance of that. It is his power, not his will, that I doubt. I do not feel certain; far from it, I regard the issue as doubtful; and yet I feel strong confidence in the result; for you must know, Master Dillon, that Rupert Holliday, boy as he is, is probably the best swordsman in the British army."

"Rupert Holliday!" ejaculated Dillon, incredulously.

Lord Fairholm nodded.

"It is as I say, Dillon; and although they say this German is also the best in his, his people are in no way famous that way. Had it been with the best swordsman in the French army that Rupert had to fight, my mind would be less at ease. But come now, we have finished our liquor, and may as well be off. We are the centre of all eyes here, and it is not pleasant to be a general object of pity, even when that pity is ill-bestowed. Besides, I have promised to be at home, to wait for Muller's second. I will come round to your quarters, Rupert, when I have arranged time and place."

The calm and assured manner of Rupert's two friends did more to convince Dillon that they were speaking in earnest, and that they really had confidence in Rupert's

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skill, than any asseveration on their part could have done, but he was still astounded at the news that this boy friend of his, who had never even mentioned that he could fence, could by any possibility be not only a first rate swordsman, but actually a fair match for this noted duellist. Upon the way up to the barracks, Rupert persuaded his friend to say nothing as to his skill, but it was found impossible to remain silent, for when the officers heard of the approaching duel there was a universal cry of indignation, and the colonel at once avowed his intention of riding off to Lord Athlone to request him to put a stop to a duel which would be nothing short of murder.

"The honor of the regiment shall not suffer," he said, sternly, "for I myself will meet this German cut-throat."

Seeing that his colonel was resolute, Rupert made a sign to Dillon that he might speak, and he accordingly related to his astonished comrades the substance of what Lord Fairholm had told him. Rupert's brother officers could not believe the news; but Rupert suggested that the matter could be easily settled if some foils were brought, adding that half-an-hour's fencing would be useful to him, and get his hand into work again. The proposal was agreed to, and first one and then another of those recognized as the best swordsmen of the regiment took their places against him, but without exerting himself in the slightest, he proved himself so infinitely their superior that their doubts speedily changed into admiration, and the meeting of the morrow was soon regarded with a feeling of not only hope, but confidence. It was late before Lord Fairholm rode up to the cornet's.

"Did you think I was never coming?" he asked, as he

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entered Rupert's quarters. "The affair has created quite an excitement, and just as I was starting, two hours back, a message came to me to go to head-quarters. I found his lordship in a great passion, and he rated me soundly, I can tell you, for undertaking to be second in such a disgracefully uneven contest as this. When he had had his say, of course I explained matters, pointed out that this German bully was a nuisance to the whole army, and that you being, as I myself could vouch, a sort of phenomenon with the sword, had taken the matter up to save your brother officer from being killed. I assured him that I had the highest authority for your being one of the best swordsmen in Europe, and that therefore I doubted not that you were a match for this German. I also pointed out respectfully to him that if he were to interfere to stop it, as he had intended, the matter would be certain to lead to many more meetings between the officers of the two nationalities. Upon this the general after some talk decided to allow the matter to go on, but said that whichever way it went he would write to the generals commanding all the divisions of the allied army, and would publish a general order to the effect that henceforth no duels shall be permitted except after the dispute being referred to a court of honor of five senior officers, by whom the necessity or otherwise of the duel shall be determined; and that in the case of any duel fought without any such preliminary, both combatants shall be dismissed from the service, whether the wounds given be serious or not. I think the proposal is an excellent one, and likely to do much good; for in a mixed army like ours, causes for dispute and jealousy are sure to arise, and without some stringent regulation we should be always fighting among ourselves."

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At an early hour on the following morning a stranger would have supposed that some great military spectacle was about to take place, so large was the number of officers riding from Liege and the military stations around it towards the place fixed upon for the duel, The event had created a very unusual amount of excitement, because, in the first place, the attempt to murder Rupert at the mill of Dettinheim had created much talk; the intention of Captain Muller to force a quarrel on the officers of the 5th had also been a matter of public comment, while the manner in which the young cornet of that regiment had taken up the gage, added to the extraordinary inequality between the combatants, gave a special character to the duel. It was eight in the morning when Rupert Holliday rode up to the place fixed upon, a quiet valley some three miles from the town. On the slopes of hills on either side were gathered some two or three hundred officers, English, Dutch, and German, the bottom of the valley, which was some forty yards across, being left clear. There was however, none of the life and animation which generally characterize a military gathering. The British officers looked sombre and stern at what they deemed nothing short of the approaching murder of their gallant young countryman; and the Germans were grave and downcast, for they felt ashamed of the inequality of the contest. Among both parties there was earnest though quiet talk of arresting the duel, but such a step would have been absolutely unprecedented. The arrival of the officers of the 5th, who rode up in a body a few minutes before Rupert arrived with Lord Fairholm and his friend Dillon, somewhat changed the aspect of affairs, for their cheerful faces showed that from some cause, at which the rest were unable to

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guess, they by no means regarded the death of their comrade as a foregone event. As they alighted and gave their horses to the orderlies who had followed them, their acquaintances gathered round them full of expressions of indignation and regret at the approaching duel.

"Is there any chance of this horrible business being stopped?" an old colonel asked Colonel Forbes, as he alighted. "There is a report that the general has got wind of it, and will at the last moment put an end to it by arresting both of them."

"No, I fancy that the matter will go on," Colonel Forbes said.

"But it is murder," Colonel Chambers said, indignantly.

"Not so much murder as you think, Chambers; for I tell you this lad is simply a marvel with his sword."

"Ah," the colonel said, "I had not heard that; but in no case could a lad like this have a chance with this Muller, a man who has not only the reputation of being the best swordsman in Germany, who now has been in something like thirty duels, and has more than twenty times killed his man.

"I know the ruffian's skill and address," Colonel Forbes said; "and yet I tell you that I regard my young friend's chance as by no means desperate."

Similar assurances had some effect in raising the spirits of the English officers; still they refused to believe that a lad like a recently-joined cornet could have any real chance with the noted duellist, and their hopes faded away altogether when Rupert rode up. He was, of course, a stranger to most of those present, and his smooth boyish face and slight figure struck them with pity and dismay. Rupert, however, although a little

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